

ASIE PAYTON

Worried

Fat Possum-Epitaph

Asie Payton is dead now—he was found slumped over his tractor in a Mississippi field—and this album stands as his legacy, one that makes you wish he'd recorded more in his 60 years. This is the real juke joint deal, where the best part of a century of blues comes together, even incorporating a '60s soul hit, a cover of Joe Tex's "Skinny Legs And All," that shows Payton could have been a soul contender. But on *Worried*, it's apparent that he was an unknown blues giant—"Worried Life" stands tall, its feel going back to the

Delta days of Charlie Patton, through Robert Johnson and Howlin' Wolf. Even with electricity, there's very little of the urban Chicago feel here. This is rawer, with Mississippi mud as its grounding—earthy and very, very real. The guitars moan, and even when Sam Carr's drums kick more than a backbeat, as on "I Love You," you're never going to think of this as influenced by hip-hop the way R.L. Burnside's recent remix album was. Perhaps the most poignant track is the solo reprise of "I Love You," just Payton and his guitar, the blues at its most basic and moving. In his voice and fretwork you can hear not just one lifetime of pain, but generations of it. Fat Possum is helping keep this music alive, and this might well be the little label's best release yet.

>>>Chris Nickson

OUT:

June 15.

FILE UNDER:

The Mississippi blues.

R.I.Y.L.:

Junior Kimbrough, Howlin' Wolf, Charlie Patton.



TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS

Echo

Warner Bros.

Unfairly labeled a staunch traditionalist by baby-boom critics, Tom Petty keeps selling records to young folks because, like Neil Young, Petty can play in front of people half his age without condescending. Petty's story in the '90s encompasses remarkable highs (the sly single "Mary Jane's Last Dance," the adventurous *Wildflowers*, the underrated *She's The One*) and forgivable lows (*Into The Great Wide Open*). File *Echo* somewhere between *Great Wide Open* and 1985's *Southern Accents*—a fine addition to the catalog that will be better summarized

OUT:

April 13.

FILE UNDER:

Pure American rock.

R.I.Y.L.:

Neil Young, Byrds, Wilco, Jack Logan.

by a hits compilation someday. Petty doesn't sound as spry as usual here; with crotchety vocals and an abundance of mild tunes, *Echo* sounds like Petty's writing for the Wilbury crowd. Fans wonder why Petty bothers with "solo" albums (*Full Moon Fever*, *Wildflowers*) since half the Heartbreakers—particularly ace guitarist Mike Campbell—play on them. But for the past decade, Petty's ability to be undemocratic on the solo albums has made them his best, while "and the Heartbreakers" records like this one come out a bit muddy. Still, *Echo* manages a few keepers—the Beatlesque "This One's For Me," the howling "Won't Last Long"—and Petty's lyrics, wry as ever, celebrate the losers with empathy: "You need elephant balls/If you're not gonna crawl/On your hands through this world."

>>>Chris Molanphy

Richard Buckner · bloomed

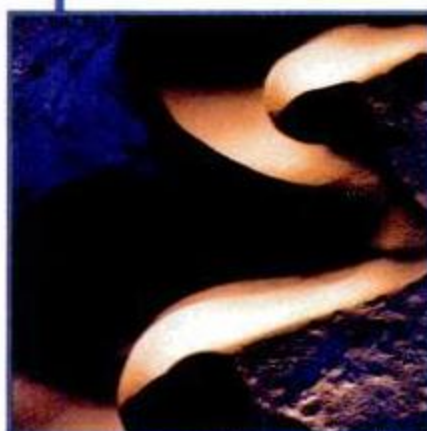
plus 5 bonus tracks

Finally back in print, fully re-mastered and containing 5 previously un-released bonus tracks, Richard Buckner's 1994 debut established him as one of this, or any, generation's most important artists.



RACHEL'S Selenography

Quarterstick



OUT:

June 8.

FILE UNDER:

Contemporary chamber music.

R.I.Y.L.:

Ryuichi Sakamoto, Steve Reich's *The Desert Music*, Gastr Del Sol, Astor Piazzolla.

You're lying in the tall grass of summer, the Earth's cooling curve nestled in the small of your back, lost amongst the stars strewn in the night sky. Or watching afternoon sunlight streaming through the venetian blinds, as dust motes dance at the command of an unseen choreographer. What music do you hear? *Selenography*, the superlative fourth album from Louisville, Kentucky, unit Rachel's, will save you the time and expense of transcribing those fleeting daydreams on to orchestral scores and hiring a chamber ensemble to perform them. Mating the can-

do spirit of indie rock with the measured perfection of classical music, cuts like "A French Galleasse" and "Kentucky Nocturne" lay the album's foundation in slow, graceful pirouettes anchored by piano, guitar and viola. But elsewhere, Rachel's discretely introduce a wider palette of timbres and rhythms than showcased previously: café accordion on "The Mysterious Disappearance Of Louis LePrince"; spoken passages by Uzeda's Giovanna Cacciola; the minimalist pulse underpinning "An Evening Of Long Goodbyes." Despite the instrument's percussive rigidity and limited touch-sensitivity, Rachel Grimes elicits surprising fluidity from a harpsichord on "Honeysuckle Suite." Just under an hour in length, these 12 compositions unfold with deliberate relish, never racing impatiently towards the final cadence.

>>>Kurt B. Reighley

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