

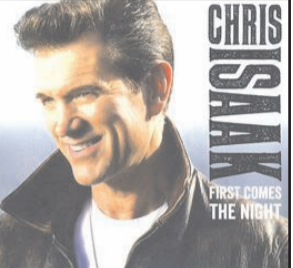
# What's on... What's gone...

Entertainment

## ALBUMS

### POP

**Chris Isaak**  
*First Comes The Night*



We've had a couple of Chris Isaak albums in the last few years, but we struggled to find much to say about them. Well composed and sung tunes, often with intelligent lyrics, but all a bit, well, worthy. Often a euphemism for dull. Still best known for *Wicked Game*, a career-defining tune. He's popular in the States, but they have lower standards than us.

This new album is completely different, however. He's gone to Nashville and, if not making a country album, it's an album that's heavily influenced by a country style of composing, though lyrically he's avoided songs about beer, and women who've done got up and gone.

Opens *First Comes The Night* and *Please Don't Call* are good pop tunes, the latter in particular having a strong chorus. They're immediately likable and interesting, somewhere between Mark Knopfler and the Traveling Wilburys. Isaak's voice is often compared to that of Roy Orbison and that is particularly noticeable on track three, *Perfect Lover*.

*Down In Flames* is a more rockabilly tune (with hints of The Jordanaires) and the only one with lyrics on the sleeve notes: "Kennedy got in a Lincoln/Caesar got it in the back/ Somebody told me Hank Williams died in this Cadillac", it's a witty and entertaining tune (another lyric is "Elvis died or did he?") and shows why Isaak is renowned for his humour.

*Reverie* that follows is very Isaak, with some of the sound of *Wicked Game*. There are 17 tracks on here, including bonus ones, so we're not going to list them all, but it's an entertaining album that seems more than a cut above much of his more recent work. This is out now.

JMC

## WORLD

**Kimmo Pohjonen**  
*Murder Ballads*



Last week we reviewed Kimmo Pohjonen's latest album (a take on accordion-led prog with classical leanings), but this week it's one he did a couple of years ago. It's in Finnish but it's wonderful

(English translations of the lyrics are supplied).

The songs are all stories about murders and murderers. The tales are told in various degrees of bloodthirsty glee, or rather joyful world-weariness. The first song is *Keisari Aleksanteri*, in which vocalist Heikki Laitinen seems to roll his tongue rather lovingly around the tale of regicide, accompanied by accordion player Kimmo Pohjonen. The song tells of the death of Alexander in a bomb attack: "His legs were broken/Both of them were shattered/fractured in many places/His wounds were terrible. The noble ruler, the Great Tsar protector of the millions sank down into death."

Next up is *Rekilauluja Murhamiehistä*, which contains some kind of rogue's reminiscences from a prison cell: "Because of my wild nature/I don't intend to bow my head" he says, before telling of tales when "they had to carry the blood away / in a damned cows' bucket."

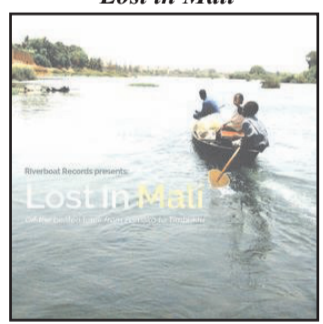
"I have been stabbed with a knife/and struck with an iron weighing-bar/I've been jumping on the floor/seven times, holding my guts in," he fondly recalls.

Musically, it's a mix of accordion-led folk, sea shanties and the avant-garde but it's never less than pleasing, with the vocals are sung, spoken or chanted.

The main attraction is the fact that you can't understand the words, so they wash over you as part of the music, the whole creating an otherworldly atmosphere. Given the topic and the tone, Nick Cave is the obvious comparison, but it's rootsier than anything Cave would do.

JMC

**Various Artists**  
*Lost in Mali*



This new release from Riverboat Records features up and coming artists from Mali; we'd say "ones you've not yet heard of" but you probably haven't heard of many people from Mali, though there is a good list: Tinariwen, Amadou and Mariam, Toumani Diabaté, Ali Farka Touré and of course the unique Salif Keita.

The tracks on here aren't breaking any new ground and there are clear influences from across the world, from reggae to music from other parts of Africa, and the sounds range from your stereotypical "world" to slicker sounds that are more familiar to western ears.

Opener Nainy Koné and *Ne Sabou* is one of the former, a repetitive African groove under slick vocals. The same is true of Ali Baba Cissé's *Kaya*, a laid-back rootsy tune.

Miria's *Union Malian Des Aveugles* opens with funky guitar and could go anywhere until the very African groove and vocals come in. There's lots of bass guitar and harmony in the chorus.

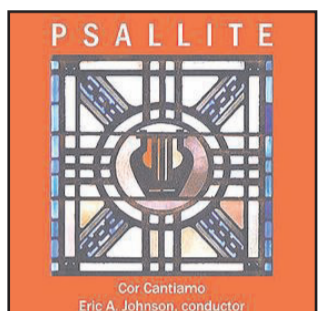
Barou Drame's *Diagatoula* on the other hand is a more stripped down and traditional sound with a two-string guitar providing the backbone, and percussion from krakebs, giving a sound that's

leaning towards gnawa. This taste of ancient music is followed by the bright and sprightly *Louanse* from Kabako Bourama (ft Ramata Diakitè) while Kas2 Kastro's *Adjobawla* is reggae, complete with tom tom fills. Easy on the ear, but the CD assures us that this is the music that's being played now on the radios of Mali.

JMC

## CLASSICAL

**Cor Cantiamo Psallite**



This is a rather wonderful album and will appeal both to people who like singing and choirs, and those who don't care much about choirs but like nice music.

Clearly, with a stained glass window on the sleeve and a title like *Psallite*, there's a religious theme: the sleeve notes say *Psallite* is an exhortation to sing for joy, and the Cor Cantiamo presents a sample of such music from the 16th century up to the present day, taking in a couple of spirituals on the way. The works are mostly based on or inspired by psalms. Some of the works were commissioned by SDG Music Foundation as part of its worldwide Psalms Project.

It's a rich album, by which we mean that it doesn't make for good background music; it's too demanding. This is not light and frothy church music you'd play at Christmas, but meaty and heartfelt songs that were written to be performed for the Almighty.

The opening piece is inspired by *Revelations* and as awe-filled as you might expect. It was written by Ily Matthew Maniano, who is only 28. This is followed by *Chantez a Dieu* (Psalm) 96, written by Sweelink (1562-1621) a Renaissance motet that's both traditional in sound but also illustrative of how traditional Maniano's modern piece was.

*Psalm 41* by Gavin Bryars (b 1943) is more mournful and a depiction of yearning, the psalm being a plea to God not only for protection from one's enemies but also from temptation to sin (which you knew of course, as did we, and Wikipedia never came into it).

*Hard Times* almost strays into wistful Clannad territory, as it opens with a haunting soprano and lyrics that are more modern than biblical. It's a good bridge into the first spiritual, *By And By*, a tune you'll recognise as the narrator lays down a heavy load and repents, trying on his robe at the gates of hell. This is followed by a sudden dive back 400 years and *Exultate Deo*.

And there you have it, really; there's no point listing to all the tracks. You've got to want to embrace the music, and family members who dislike this level of intense praise may find it a bit much, but it's a powerful CD. If you're a singer and want to study the technicalities, we guess there's much to appreciate. The booklet includes all the texts.

Cor Cantiamo is a touring

chamber choir in residence at Northern Illinois University, founded to promote contemporary choral music and foster new composers. The conductor is Eric A Johnson.

This is released tomorrow (Friday) on Divine Art, dda 25133.

JMC

**Galina Grigorjeva**  
*Nature Morte*



Even the most average of indie rock bands can litter the internet with glowing reviews and references (usually written by friends and family we guess, and as for all those five-star reviews on Amazon, pfah!) but we always find it surprising that talented people can exist and produce world-class music without causing so much as a ripple in cyberspace.

Such is the case with this, an enjoyable choral album, all the better for not being quite as devotional as the one above, though again it's not happy-smiley carol singing. Grigorjeva (born 1962) is reportedly one of Estonia's most popular composers and this CD, recorded in her honour and in her presence, is performed by the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir.

In the sleeve notes, Grigorjeva says she is uncomfortable being called a composer of religious music as it sounds "a bit pretentious", though she adds: "Anything that has not been given from above, does not flow from above and has no sense at all."

Possibly because of that attitude, the music is less overtly religious than on the CD above but has more of a folk/roots feel to it, blending sacred music with music from outside the Church. It's still fairly reverential, though.

The programme starts off relatively traditional for choral church music but gets more modern (even avant-garde) as it progresses, and the sleeve notes stress that she evokes not only Christianity but more pagan beliefs. Another way of putting it is that the music starts off being familiar to western ears but towards the end dives deeply into a more eastern European/Russian sound.

There are pieces for vocals and string quartet, mixed choir and male choir.

The music sounds as if she pays utmost attention to detail but it also flows well, too, and there's a lot of silence, which can work effectively if used properly.

This came out last week on Ondine (ODE 1245-2).

JMC

## CREDITS

Stock photos from dreamstime.com; each photographer's name is given in brackets at the bottom of the story.

All photographs labelled submitted have been sent into the "Chronicle", therefore we cannot supply copies.

## COMPETITION

# Win a family ticket to Gulliver's this Easter



There's eggs-travagant Easter fun for everyone at Gulliver's this spring!

We've teamed up with the children's theme park company to give away three family tickets for unforgettable days out.

Throughout the Easter Extravaganza weekend on March 26th and 27th there are lots eggstra special activities planned at Gulliver's World in Warrington and Gulliver's Kingdom at Matlock Bath, as well as Gulliver's Land at Milton Keynes.

Look out for Easter-themed competitions and entertainment on the main stage, including the Easter Bunny Parade and the ultimate in springtime fun — the Big Bunny Bounce!

Gulliver's is open daily throughout the Easter school holidays, with an enormous selection of rides, shows and attractions to discover — and the best news is, everything's designed with kids in mind! Car parking is always free at Gulliver's and there is a great selection of on-site food offers, or bring your own Easter picnic.

For full details of opening times and to book, visit: [gulliversfun.co.uk](http://gulliversfun.co.uk)

To be in with a chance of winning a family ticket for four people to visit Gulliver's this Easter, answer this simple question.

Which of these young animals isn't associated with Easter?

- Bunny
- Chick
- Puppy

Send your answer to the *Chronicle* at 11, High Street, Congleton CW12 1BW using the coupon below by Thursday, 3rd March.

• Terms and conditions apply. Tickets are non-refundable, non-transferable and cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. The family Easter Extravaganza prize is valid for up to four people (at least one adult and one child). Winners will be contacted by Gulliver's hotline to arrange their visit to their preferred park on a mutually agreed date up to 31st May, subject to availability.

## Gulliver's @ Easter

Send entries to: the Chronicle, 11 High Street, Congleton CW12 1BW by Thursday, 3rd March.

NAME.....

ANSWER..... [www.gulliversfun.co.uk](http://www.gulliversfun.co.uk)

DAY-TIME PHONE.....

ADDRESS.....

Theme Parks

Small print: we don't use entries for anything other than this competition, so there are no data protection concerns. Don't forget your name, address and a daytime telephone number.