

## EVA SALINA & PETER STAN

**Sudbina** Vogiton 616892553045

Vida Pavlovi was one of the greatest of all Serbian Roma singers, possessed of a voice to entwine you in visionary sadness. She passed away in 2005, after a life sadly replete with all the melancholia and discomfort of which she sang with such assurance, but also after selling hundreds of thousands of records. Listening to Vida's own albums again, I'm struck by how tied her hands and ambitions were, within gaudy sleeve artwork, false bonhomie and inappropriate celebration. But her effervescent cries of entrapped and essential vitality created a startling realism at odds with her constricted milieu. Together with accordion maestro Peter Stan, Eva Salina has placed Vida, in this tribute, into a quieter, more strenuously supple and breathable, safe space.

In a career devoted to revisiting similarly empowered Balkan Roma vocalists, the duo have come to specialise in superbly played flights of imaginative recreation and imagination. I'm still taken with Eva Salina's last album, a record devoted to the work of Šaban Bajramović. *Sudbina* is a more absolute, intrinsic, poetic understanding of a quieter icon's place within Balkan song and society.

Salina has the fearless outsider's ability to create an unshowy and selfless patina of intimate drama with Peter Stan's unpredictable and characterful playing of multiple influences on his accordion. She quietly impresses her dark, poised voice upon the landscape and legacy that inspired her, often imploring for space outside Stan's claustrophobic, beautifully suffocating inventiveness.

*E Laute Bašalen Taj Roven* refers to the Roma Holocaust, in explicit acknowledgement of this music's tough reflection of suffering: "The violins, full of sadness, are crying for us." It's an emotional but mirthless twist-ed dance in line and out of time.

"Give me peace because you are devouring my heart," Salina sings in *E Dadeći Čajori*. But the whole album is both stoical and defiantly elemental, a record of visceral feeling. Darkness dances with rural stir, sacred and perishable.

[www.evasalina.com](http://www.evasalina.com)

John Pheby

## LES POULES À COLIN

**Morose** Les Poules à Colin LPC003

The four young women and one young man who are members of this Québécois band describe themselves as having grown up in the back stages of traditional music festivals and concerts in their part of Canada. You can hear this in their fiddle- and banjo-driven reels accompanied by that distinctive foot-tapping and in the excellent timing of their delightful harmony singing. Surnames like Marchand, Pitre and Savoie-Levac will also be something of a giveaway to those who know this music.

You can also hear that they do not want to simply reproduce the music of their venerated parents. Clearly they have been influenced by the mass of other readily available music and have integrated elements from bluegrass, Cajun, country, pop and jazz into the mix, but the dominant influence throughout is from their own traditions, especially from Quebec's great traditional musicians in Lanaudière, an area famous for its living heritage.

Four tracks in the middle of the album exemplify the top quality of what is available here. Following an exciting instrumental, two female voices combine to give the superb delivery of a ballad *La Volerie* and this is given sophisticated but appropriate accom-

paniment. Then it's another traditional song, a superb one of anguish in the loss of love, *Belle Exodina*, followed by a change of mood as more banjo, fiddle and podorythmie introduce the best of the excellent instrumentals on the album.

This is by some distance the most engaging album to reach these ears so far this year. [lespoulesacolin.com](http://lespoulesacolin.com)

Vic Smith

## DÀIMH

**The Rough Bounds** Goat Island Music GIMCD005

This is the seventh album from the Highland Scottish folk band who describe themselves as "champions of straight-in-the-eye Highland music". The band started 20 years ago and is still based in West Lochaber and the Isle of Skye.

Dàimh have developed a very distinctive, exciting sound that captures the wild grandeur of traditional Highland and Gaelic music. On this album they have further enhanced the sonorous depth and muscularity of their instrumental sets by adding an additional fiddler (Alasdair White) to their already-powerful musical engine-room of Angus Mackenzie (highland pipes, border pipes, whistles), Gabe McVarish (fiddles), and Ross Martin (guitars). The band's six-strong line-up is completed by Murdo Cameron (accordion, mandola) and Ellen MacDonald (Gaelic vocal).

The four Gaelic songs on the album are refreshingly unusual and seldom heard, and young Ellen MacDonald's vocal is lissom and limpid with a soft, sweet tone. She delivers the mouth-music sets '*S Trusaidh Mi Na Coil-leagan* and *Bodach Innse Chro* at a satisfyingly purposeful, punchy pace with zesty accompaniment by the band.

The instrumental sets on the album are a mix of traditional tunes and those composed by the band members. The up-tempo instrumental sets are characterised by Dàimh's signature sound: rocket-fuelled pipes and whistles, chewy-gutsy fiddle-playing, and driving guitar and mandola. *The 12th Of June* is a cracking set of fiery jigs, led by surging bag-pipes and fiddles, percussively punctuated by syncopated rhythmic guitar, mandola and bodhrán. *Mary's Fancy* is an utterly thrilling strathspey-and-reel-set driven by darkly dramatic Highland pipes, gristy fiddles and growling guitar and mandola. Dàimh are absolute masters of the exhilarating 'lift-off' effect when switching from one tune into another, conjuring a smouldering musical fris-

*Les Poules à Colin*



son that causes the hairs on your neck to stand on end. There is a dark fire at the heart of Highland music, and nobody ignites it better than Dàimh.

[daimh.net](http://daimh.net)

Paul Matheson

## FREDA PALMER

**Leaffield Lass** Musical Traditions MTCD 375-6 (Double CD)

Here is another of those 'the ones that nearly got away' stories. Rod Stradling was seeking out recordings of Freda for this project and knew that Mike Yates had recorded a number of her songs and that there was a smaller number recorded by Steve Roud and by Gwilym Davies. As usual he wanted to access the *Roud Index* for information and numbers for the booklet notes. There he found references to four recordings made by Alison MacMorland mentioned in one of Alison's books. An email conversation ensued in which it was established that Alison had recorded lots of songs and stories from this Oxfordshire singer, some at an earlier date than the others, and that she was in good voice at the time. These were to become the main source of the 135 minutes and 56 items that make up this double CD.

Freda was born in 1908 and from quite a young age she was working with her mother as a glover and a lot of songs came to her that way.

These CDs have a great deal to teach us – not just the songs themselves, but also, for instance, about the repertoire of a singer who would have started singing about a century ago. The earlier collectors would have been delighted to find the likes of *Faithful Sailor Boy*, *Banks Of The Sweet Dundee*, *Up In The North* but would probably have neglected to note others – rural comic ditties, music hall songs. They might not have been so keen to encounter *After The Ball Was Over*.

Steve Roud and others are encouraging us to give more importance to the 'process' that songs undergo when sung by our rural song performers rather than focusing on their 'origin'. This brings singers like this one much more to the fore.

The 44-page booklet is of the high standard that we have come to expect from Musical Traditions and the collectors, other enthusiasts and transcribed interviews with Freda herself all contribute to building a picture of her life and her singing.

[mtrecords.co.uk](http://mtrecords.co.uk)

Vic Smith