



Jerry Leger
Early Riser
(Latent Recordings)

Toronto country troubadour Jerry Leger is the quintessential storyteller, contemplating the Canadian Dream on album opener "Factory Made," while he lays his insecurities on the line on "To Let Me Go." It is that vulnerability that makes the records such a fascinating listen. *Early Riser* is the perfect combination of great musicianship and outstanding songwriting. It is not always easy to top yourself, but Leger proves his best days are anything but behind him.

—KEN KELLEY



Bryan Potvin
Heartbledwhite
(Independent)

He is perhaps best known to audiences as a member of the Northern Pikes, but Bryan Potvin shows that he is just getting better and better with age. While he may not be the most prolific musician going today (*Heartbledwhite* is his second solo release in the last 14 years), it is obvious he values quality over quantity—and no one's complaining about that! What quality there is to be found on this recently-released album: Potvin leans on his pop roots for tracks such as "Standing By You" and "Crazy," while showcasing a marvellous depth to his songwriting on "Hide Away," as well as the haunting "You Are Not Alone."

—KEN KELLEY



Old 97's
Most Messed Up
(ATO/Universal Music Canada)

For the past 21 years, the Old 97's have been one of the best Americana bands going. With their newest album *Most Messed Up*, they have little difficulty holding onto this designation. They strike somewhat of a defiant tone with the excellent album opener "Longer Than You've Been Alive," a song that serves as a testament to the ups and downs of the music biz and that this group has weathered through the storm. The album is catchy and speaks volumes. The group delivers a raucous set of songs including "Give It Time," "Nashville" and "Intervention," all of which will leave you wanting more.

—KEN KELLEY



Gregg Allman & Friends
All My Friends
(Rounder Records/Universal)

I happened to listen to the new Black Keys album just before this album and on reflection, I realized why I never liked the Keys: because they're a poor, soulless reflection of the real thing. And what constitutes the real thing? I would suggest this phenomenal recording honouring Gregg Allman's years of blues singing and shouting that on this two-CD package culminates in a magnificent version of "Whipping Post." As for Allman's friends? Some of the best working in music today, including Derek Trucks, Susan Tedeschi, Keb' Mo', Dr. John, Vince Gill, Eric Church and many others.

—CHARLES MANDEL



Michael Jackson
Xscape
(Epic)

Jacko's estate releases a series of previously unrecorded songs for *Xscape*; most of which were songs that Jackson rejected during original recording sessions. Apparently, the singer would over-record and then pick the best, which clearly these are not. They're not bad, but they're not great. Jackson's voice sounds raw on many of them and they don't crackle with the funk-groove energy the singer was capable of on his best works. Polished after the fact by a number of top-notch producers, including Timbaland, *Xscape* is for hardcore Jackson fans.

—CHARLES MANDEL



Ontario singer-songwriter Rory Taillon is touring his new record *It's Not Black & White* throughout New Brunswick this month. Submitted photo.

Q+A

KEN KELLEY

Rory Taillon might only be 25 years old, but there is an old rock 'n' roll soul lurking within him. With his new record *It's Not Black & White*, the Oshawa, Ont.-based singer-songwriter conveys an undeniable sense of urgency through his music. But he also wants to give the listener pause for thought, as evidenced by the title of his latest record. Rory comes to New Brunswick for three shows, starting on May 21 at Sackville's Bridge Street Café (8 Bridge St.) before hitting Moncton's Plan b Lounge (212 St. George St.) on Thursday, May 22, and Tuesday, May 27. Rory spoke with Here Magazine last week about where his love of classic rock music comes

from and how people often jump to conclusions without knowing the full story.

Listening to the songs on *It's Not Black & White*, you can hear a definite influence of classic rock running through your songs. Where did your love of that music come from?

My father is a total classic rock nut. He was always playing Jimi Hendrix and Led Zeppelin when I was growing up. I wasn't initially into it when I was younger. I sang in choirs and listened to a lot of pop music. But once I got to high school, I started to branch out and sing in rock bands. I picked up a Jimi Hendrix record and was just blown away by the passion that he brought to the music. It seemed like a good fit for my own music.

The title of your record seems to speak volumes in terms of being a general commentary on the way people think these days. Too many people feel as though there is no middle ground when it comes to just about everything and they see things, for lack of a

better term, in black and white. Funny enough, I didn't intentionally set out to accomplish that with this record. The songs aren't all about the same thing or share similar outcomes or anything like that. With just about anything these days, whether we are talking about the environment or mental illness, there is always what you see and what you hear, but we often miss what is in between. Things don't affect any two people the exact same way.

This is going to be your third tour of Atlantic Canada. What keeps you coming back?

I love it there. It seems as though people in Atlantic Canada just seem to like and appreciate music more than other parts of the country. People on the East Coast seem to be more willing to go see someone they might not be familiar with than in larger cities. Plus, it is always just so much fun. Why wouldn't I want to come back?

[a] Ken Kelley is a Moncton-based writer, music fanatic and author of the entertainment blog musicnerd.ca.