

Notes and Bars and Songs

—Three Albums Worth Considering

THE STILLS HAIL FROM Montreal, but spend most of their time in New York City these days. That is, when they are not on the road touring in support of their third and, to these ears, most accomplished CD to date. *Oceans Will Rise* has some enchanting melodies, great rockers, and an apocalyptic tone in its lyrics. The album stands out for its fresh approach, with varied styles rolled into the tunes, and for its resolve to not give in to whatever may be looming out there.

Everest is another band on the run having opened for Neil Young in Canada in late fall and in the dead of winter. “We didn’t imagine playing these kinds of venues, opening for Neil, even a year ago. That’s certain,” says singer and songwriter Russell Pollard. They take a quiet lunch somewhere backstage, and seem to be completely enjoying the moment. The songs on their debut CD, *Ghost Notes*, reveal a band of accomplished musicians well versed in a variety of styles. Echoes of The Band, later Tom Petty, and even Neil Young are in evidence, though Russell notes that “Pretty Things from L.A. and sixties British pop kind of covers it for me.” At once expansive and intimate, the music creates its own unique

vibe. Even the longer songs, complete with guitar solos, sustain a melodic impetus that makes Everest a real band playing real music.

Doug Andrew has been singing, playing, and writing songs for a very long time. He is a Vancouver boy, and one of his band’s best-known songs is called “Down on the Fraser”, a moving and articulate ode to a place and time that is only recently behind us. Gone but not forgotten, thanks to Doug’s way with a song. That is true for much of what he and his band, The Circus in Flames, share with audiences on tour and on disc. The new album is *A Little Bit of Gasoline*, and is well worth finding. It is music firmly based in the rootsy blues of an era that boasted of Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams and eventually the rock and rollers who had a foot in the sod, like Carl Perkins. But it is all very much updated, electric guitars percolating, backbeats abounding on a few tracks, and a jaw-dropping range of vocals. Doug’s voice, nearly baritone, is rich and evocative. The tune “Henry William” is an inspired example of all that this artist and this band are about.

— Jim Tobler