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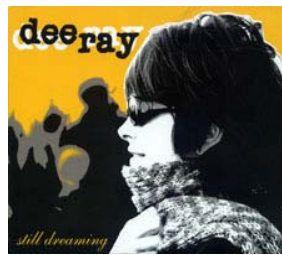
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**OF NOTE:** This month's CD reviews.


**Dee Ray**  
Still Dreaming  
by Chuck Schiele

Dee Ray's Still Dreaming is a pop-rock record outfitted with the musical garb of the alternative era. The songs are written well, the band is very good, the production is solid, and the singer (Dee Ray) is putting it out there for real. The ten cuts slither their way through a variety of soundscapes and musical situations in terms of both their rhythmic ideas and established moods.

'Other Side' is a track that stands above much of the rest as its own individual thing. And that's good. This song manages to make reference to many of the classic moves from the encyclopedia of rock school while also finding its own unique voice in a few of the unwritten pages. And since rock music has been played for such a long time, and in every which way possible, including all fusions and fissions therein, this is hard to do. But the band does it, here.

'Rattle' also takes an interesting approach in that the tune rides on a driving punkably rhythm section in support of its legato vocal flying over the top. Most folks decide to sing with the drummer in this situation, rendering a very staccato result. Fun song.

The band is comprised of Dee Ray (vocals, bass), who wrote the lyrics and cowrote the music with (guitarist) Johnny Ford. Sue del Guidice plays new-wavish keyboards and Alan Leasure is on drums. Co-producer Brian Stratman contributes on various percussion instruments. Each band member does a great job at their respective posts, keeping things interesting, fresh, and live in their craftsmanship.

Together, the band's combined talents prove to make a very good record. I have one complaint, however. Several tunes sound too much like the Pretenders' Chrissie Hynde to simply say that they are making noble reference or wearing that influence on their sleeves. I have to admit that the very first tune threw me for a loop because I really did think that I had popped in a Pretenders' CD by mistake. In fact, I actually got out of my chair and popped it back out to check. Mind you, it's a very good song as all the songs are, but in a few cases the delivery is an incredible incarnation of HYnde. (I love Chrissie, mind you!) However, based on the uniqueness of Ray's own musical territory, I would suggest getting lost (way lost) in that territory.

Having said that, this is one hell of a bumpin', bouncin' rock record that will keep you jumping on the bed all day and night. Visit [www.deeray.com](http://www.deeray.com) to check it out for yourself.



**Grand Canyon Sundown**  
Grand Canyon Sundown  
by Jody Wood

Listing Neil Young, Willie Nelson, Jerry Garcia, Johnny Cash, and John Prine as influences, one gets a pretty clear picture about what to expect from the boys in Grand Canyon Sundown. Fortunately, they deliver the goods on this collection of mostly acoustic alt-country and folk-rock.

The songs ramble along like a ride in the old Chevy I learned to drive on the back roads of Alabama - pretty slow for the most part, with an occasional smooth straightaway where it's cool to step on it a little.

As far as instrumentation goes, Grand Canyon Sundown brings out all but the kitchen sink on this one. Acoustic, electric, and bass guitar meet drums, steel guitar, harmonica, fiddle, and mandolin to mingle like old friends with a good bottle, and the songs might well have been born from such a situation. Harmonizing well, almost everyone in the band is listed with vocal credits on their Myspace page.

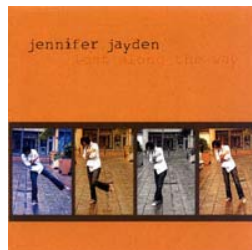
With regard to everyone in the band, I suppose it would be rude to continue without proper introduction. Paul Cruz plays guitar and bass and sings, along with John Postelnek on six-string, bass, vocals, and violin. David Farrell also takes a run at guitar, bass, vocals, and mandolin. Seamus Steele handles the drums, with Drew Danforth on keys. Junior Cat warms things up on the harp, with Doug Meyer adding some fine touches on pedal steel.

For me, the slower songs really stand out the most. 'River Roll,' 'Fly Tonight,' and 'Goodnight Sweet World' are my favorites. The steel guitar on the latter reminds one of good old-time country western music, which has clearly had some influence on these boys. 'Sail These Seas' is the one I wanted to hear over and over. The harmonica and distorted guitar stir up a little ruckus in the middle of a well-crafted campfire song fit for the radio. With a chorus about passing the bottle around, it got plenty of play.

'In My Dreams' sounds like one that might get the hippy girls dancing around up front and 'Beneath the Surface' would be the ideal follow up to keep them there. This might be where the jam band part comes in, judging from the online description of themselves. This is a solid set-ending jam for sure.

'Band of Gypsies' rounds out the album on a light-footed, uplifting note. What it lacks in originality as a song title, it makes up for by sounding like something that gets everyone in the bar tapping their feet or playing drums on the console with a foot out the window.

Over all, the boys from Ramona fork up a good dose of what feels like a good time that's worth trying to get in on if you have the time and the right group of people.



**Jennifer Jayden**  
Lost Along the Way  
by Chuck Schiele

Hmmm. Jennifer Jayden's Lost Along the Way takes an interesting approach.

The liner notes begin with the warning: 'album may contain mistakes. Entire album was recorded live, on a blank stage, on a cruise ship using ProTools LE and a Mac G4. Only two overdubs were done: sax and electric on track 11. This music is in its purest form. Autotune was not an option.'

That's a bold statement on a number of levels. And so is the result.

Falling easily into the acoustic music category, this record is emblematic of the coffeehouse music staple. It is supported with light percussion, another guitar, and sax. Jayden likes to sing about wide open themes such as truth, jealousy within the context of real-life situations and scenarios. And she sings with a vocal delivery that's passionate, powdery, thoughtful, and skillful, not far