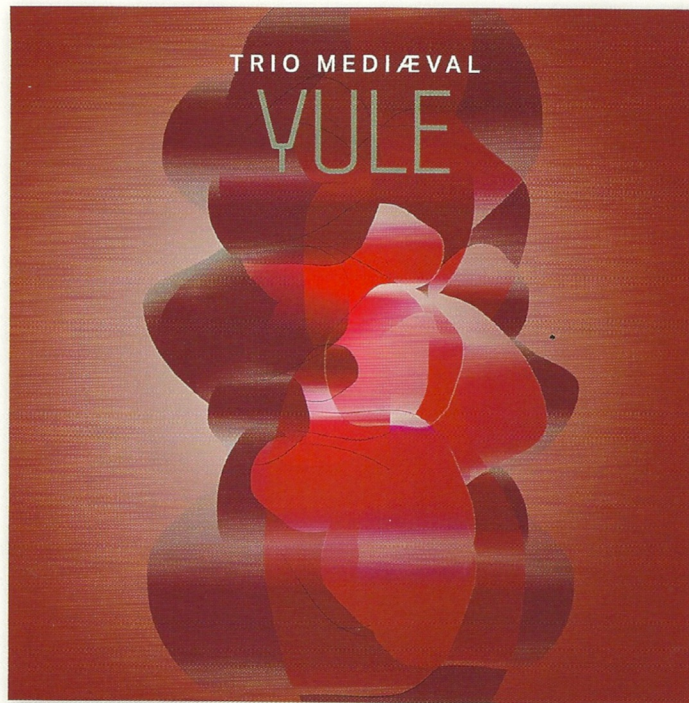


TRIO MEDIÆVAL

Yule

2L 2L-180-SABD, 1x SACD/1x Blu-ray

It's too early (or late) to review a Christmas album but this defies the seasons if you're an audiophile. As you now know the form, 2L gives you a huge choice of digital playback formats/rates by including an SACD and a Blu-ray, so there are no excuses for not comparing the two through your own system and with no pressure. This time the Christmas music pre-dates the usual familiar material as the Norwegian vocal trio, accompanied by traditional instruments, explore 'pre-Christian secularity' and the Northern European contribution to the celebration. Recorded in Oslo's Sofienberg Church, it sounds breathtaking.



JEREMY MOHNEY

Pennies From Heaven

Octave Records OCT-0056, SACD

Part of Octave's new Jazz Classics series, this disc focuses on swing-era classics rather than a particular decade, the songs including such dead certs as 'Stardust', 'Summertime' and 'Ain't Misbehavin'. Mohney, on vocals and tenor saxophone, leads a talented five-piece band through superbly recorded sessions that send the listener back to a time when giants like Crosby, Sinatra, Hoagy Carmichael and Nat 'King' Cole walked the earth. Irresistible.

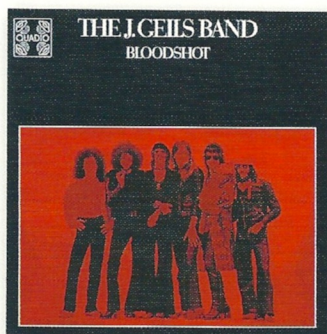


SIMON & GARFUNKEL

Bookends

Mobile Fidelity UDSACD 2257, SACD

As penultimate albums go, S&G's opus from 1968 may be overshadowed by 1970's final effort, *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, but it's arguably the equal. Each track is a slice of perfection, Simon's song-writing embracing everything from the light-hearted 'At The Zoo' to wry politics to 'Mrs Robinson', part of the soundtrack to the hugely successful *The Graduate*. The SACD does this gorgeous set proud. The only complaint? Too short at under 30 minutes.



THE J. GEILS BAND

Bloodshot

Atlantic/Rhino BA2 7269, Blu-ray

Full marks to Rhino for respecting the 4.0 quad mixes of the '70s. The group's third album, from 1973, was the one which alerted the world outside the northeast US that here was a band that rocked harder than any since The Detroit Wheels. The quad mix is fascinating, letting you lean into '(Ain't Nothin' But A) House Party', 'Southside Shuffle', 'Give It To Me' and other faves, but their vintage R&B attitude suggests mono via a jukebox might be the truest way to savour it.



GENESIS

Selling England By the Pound

Analogue Productions CAPA002SA, SACD

In Mike Mettler's in-depth coverage of this 1973 Genesis album [*HFV* May '25] he cites Analogue Productions' 2023 'Atlantic 75' release as the best-sounding vinyl version; its digital sibling is a knock-out, too. This is pure prog rock covering the same tragic view of what's happened to England as observed many times before by The Kinks. If you love pomp, pretence and epic songs more than sublime melodies and witty lyrics, this could be your cup of Earl Grey.



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Audiophile Masters: Volume XI

Octave Records OCT-0053, SACD

One of the best so far in the boutique label's series of 'audiophile' system-stretchers, this will appeal across the board to fans of pop and rock. Alicia Straka, Jeremy Mohney, Rebecca Folsom and Katie Mintle provide superlative interpretations on 'Woodstock', 'All Of Me', 'Cheek To Cheek', 'Blackbird' and six more, eclectic choices unified by their superlative sound quality. For those yet to try one of Octave's SACDs, this is a great one with which to start. ☺



BAD COMPANY

Bad Company

Analogue Productions CAPA0095A, SACD

With a lineage of Free, King Crimson and Mott The Hoople, plus the patronage of Led Zeppelin, this was one of the most eagerly anticipated rock albums of the '70s, and it didn't disappoint. Air-guitar classic 'Can't Get Enough' plus 'Movin' On', 'Rock Steady', the title track – this is a stunning debut, and this SACD lets you hear the attack of Mick Ralphs' guitar with heightened precision while showcasing Paul Rodgers' perfect vocals. One of the best hard rock albums of all time.

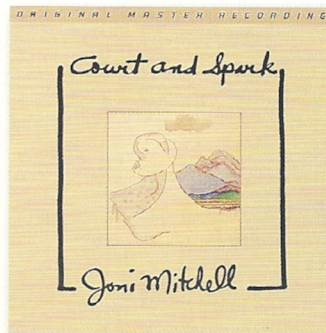


URANIENBORG VOKALENSEMBLE

Fred Over Jordan

2L 2L-179-SABD, 1x SACD/1x Blu-ray

The 2L label is the way to go if you're fascinated by comparing digital formats; its releases are like audio tool kits. This flute/organ/synthesiser set is a celebration of Christmas and Advent, recorded in a church. The appeal – even for secular souls – is the provision of both SACD and Blu-ray with no fewer than ten mixes, from the SACD's stereo and 5.1 DSD up to a 9.1.4 Dolby Atmos presentation on the Blu-ray. Hours of fun aside, the sound is gorgeous.

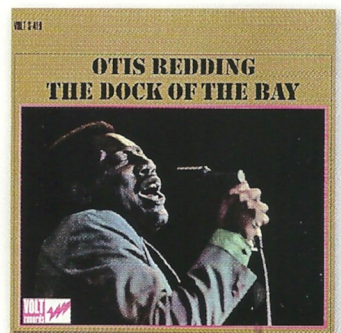


JONI MITCHELL

Court And Spark

Mobile Fidelity UDSACD 2273, SACD

Is it possible to pick Joni's best? After the abundance of reissues, box sets, deluxe LP releases and other celebrations of her music in the past five or so years, this one still stands out as *Blue*'s main challenger. I prefer it – so shoot me. With the likes of 'Free Man In Paris', 'People's Parties', 'Help Me', and even 'Twisted', it explains as much as any of Mitchell's albums why she's considered the female answer to Dylan for sheer genius. And this SACD sounds spectacular.



OTIS REDDING

The Dock Of The Bay

Analogue Productions CAPA0055A, SACD

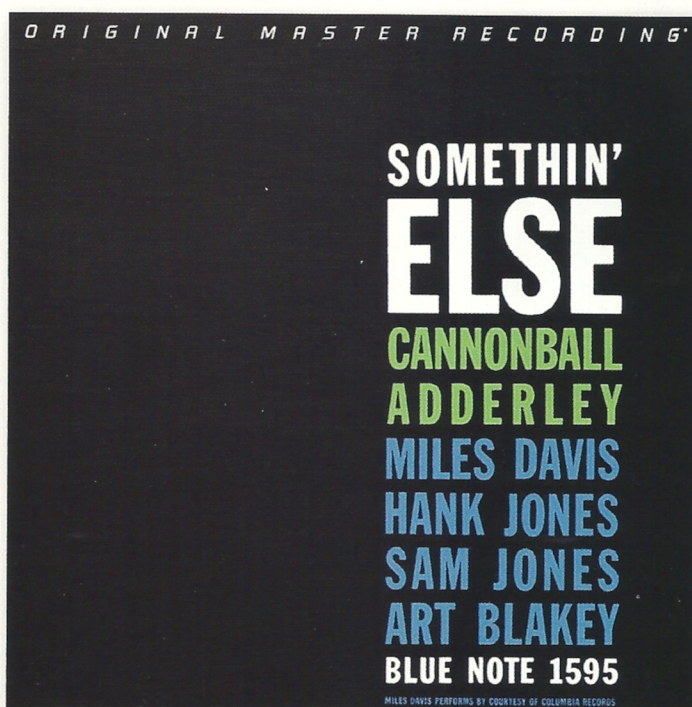
The first posthumous release after Redding's death on 10 December 1967 was issued in February the following year. But it was no hastily assembled act of opportunism. Though comprised of singles, B-sides, and previously released tracks to support the title song (then at No 1 in the singles chart), it holds together as if born a record of new material. That attests to the quality of the music, and I've rarely heard it sound as good as on this Bernie Grundman-mastered SACD.

CANNONBALL ADDERLEY

Somethin' Else

Mobile Fidelity UDSACD 2270, SACD

There's little one can add about this masterpiece, saxophone deity Adderley joined by Miles Davis (trumpet – though you knew that), Hank Jones (piano), Sam Jones (bass) and Art Blakey (drums). Released on Blue Note in 1958, it's regarded by every sane critic as one of the greatest jazz albums of all time. Here 'accessibility' is the highest praise, not a back-handed compliment: even those who think they abhor jazz will find it irresistible. As for its audiophile chops, *Somethin' Else* is a textbook example of why some consider the sonic character of 1950s jazz to be the pinnacle of the recording arts. Astonishing.



LOU REED

Berlin

Mobile Fidelity UDSACD 2277, SACD

Reed, a misery who made Leonard Cohen sound like The Archies, delivered this concept album in 1973, dealing with topics of drug abuse, prostitution, the demi-monde, etc. It lacks the wit of, say, Tom Waits, but offers moments of both fiery rock and *tendresse*, Reed aided and abetted by a roster of A-list British musicians. It's also an important album in the Reed canon, as it references his eponymous debut and The Velvet Underground. ⇨