

BUM NOTES



Forever Cool – Dean Martin

Alcohol. It's the first thing that comes to mind when his name is mentioned. I love the quote: "You're not drunk if you can lie on the floor without holding on." Martin had that whole act as a permanently pissed crooner down pretty well, and biographies say it often was an act. He would sip from a glass of apple juice onstage, and apparently would rather be playing golf or watching shoot 'em TV Westerns than carousing until all hours. Dino oozed cool as well as booze – he had the whole deal – that voice, the talent, the personality. To some of the current crop of "stars", talent means leaving your undies in the limo and personality is checking into rehab aged 11. *Forever Cool* is a 14-track collection with Martin posthumously teaming up with an interesting collection of bedfellows. The purists will scream that the project is sacrilegious – one review dubbed it "Sleight Of the Singing Dead", not bad, but if it brings Martin's music to a new generation, so be it. The Robbie Williams track is probably the pick – alcohol is a common theme between the two, Joss Stone's take of *I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me* is worth a listen. Paris Bennett, an American Idol finalist (if that show really was a singing contest she would have won), does the business on *Baby-O*. Other collaborators include Charles Aznavour, trumpeter Chris Botti and Martina McBride, described somewhere as "the Celine Dion of country music" – be afraid, be very afraid. Kevin Spacey is a bloody good actor – *American Beauty* is a marvellous film – but I have no idea what he is doing duetting on *King Of The Road* and *Ain't That A Kick In The Head*. Which is exactly how it sounded. Sorry Kev, but don't give up your day job. – STEVE WILLIAMS

Lifeline – Ben Harper and The Innocent Criminals.

Remember those old one-man bands? You know, those weird-looking blokes with a drum on his back, playing a ukulele, harpsichord and glockenspiel simultaneously, shaking maracas in his ear holes, crashing cymbals between his knees. I'm not saying Ben Harper does this (maybe in the privacy of his home) but he is a true singer-songwriter-guitarist. *On Lifeline* he wrote all the songs, plays on every track and produced the CD. Speaking of production, it really is old school; recorded and mixed in a week on a 16-track analogue tape machine. There was none of the usual computer wizardry involved – and it shows. Refreshing and raw, he lets his lyrics cut through without wallpapering over them with layers of overdubs. Harper and his band had just come off a European tour, rehearsing the new songs during the sound checks and went straight into a studio in Paris. He'd always wanted to record there "because it's Paris". Fair enough, beats the hell out of Dumbf**k Idaho or Mooloolongatta Queensland. The City of Light inspired *Paris Sunset #7* – an instrumental featuring Harper's trademark howling slide guitar. Other picks include the haunting title track, the Dylanesque *Fool For a Lonesome Train*, and the pace picks up on *Put It On Me* and *Say You Will*, which includes a history lesson with the line "like Marie Antoinette said to Louis XVI: 'Man, I think we're going down.'" I don't remember that quote from school. Harper and his band had the guts and talent to bypass the omnipresent Protools audio software by recording a stripped back CD and it delivers. *Lifeline* definitely doesn't have an acoustic or unplugged sound; it has the exact opposite – a strong, complex release – definitely one for your CD rack under B or H, depending on your filing system. – STEVE WILLIAMS

