

BETTYE LAVETTE | DEWOLFF | MAGGIE BELL | JOAN ARMATRADING | ZOOT MONEY | THE ZOMBIES | GERRY JABLONSKI

# BLUES MATTERS!

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*Our name says it all!*

## Elly Winger Little Red Wagon

*Rabbit Hole Records*

This beautiful album straddles the line between blues and folk in a most satisfying way. The superb guitarist and singer Elly Winger, a 2014 inductee into the New York Blues Hall of Fame, wrote or co-wrote nine of the 13 tracks. Two others, *Down The Line* and *Wild Ox Moan*, are traditional numbers. This is primarily an acoustic album, featuring expert fingerpicking and excellent slide. Winger is aided by the guitarist and producer Stephen Miller; their styles mesh perfectly. The playing is crystal clear. Winger's fine vocals are far forward in the mix, you can actually make out the words. They cover a cornucopia of life's joys and travails. *The Girl In The Tree House* is a paean to the magic of childhood. *For Fred*, a slow, bluesy, fingerpicked number, celebrates the joys of taking chances. 'Thank you for getting me to dance/Thank you for getting me out on the floor,' Winger sings. 'Thank you for getting me to dance/I'd forgotten that sometimes that's what music is for.' One of the finest cuts is the traditional number *Wild Ox Moan*. The stellar guitar arrangement is credited, and properly



so, to Geoff Muldaur, who recorded it some years ago. This is country blues indeed. One of the bluesiest cuts is *El's Kitchen*, an instrumental on which the rhythmic guitar is accented by fiddle. And the title cut is a breakup song enhanced by slow, bluesy slide. Each song is distinct, yet the album forms a stylistic whole. *Shade*, 'I'm looking for mercy/looking for shade' features moving solos on slide guitar and electric organ. *Hard Livin'* is a fuller, almost poppier song with singers oohing in the background, 'it's hard living with a soft heart,' Winger sings. *I Say Love* carries the warning

that if you can't take the pain, you're not prepared for love. 'And will you walk in trust/though your steps may be unsure?' Winger asks. I say love. There's not a false note on the album. Every song's a gem. Great listening for a lazy Sunday afternoon.

*M.D. Spenser*