

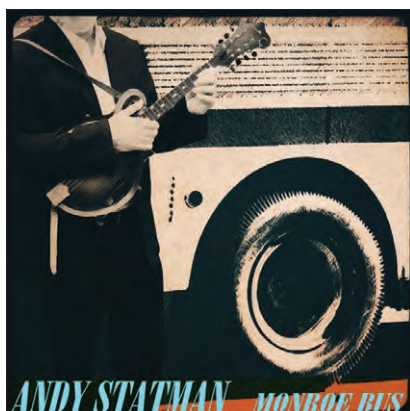


MUSIC ●●●●● SONICS ●●●●●

Glenna Bell: *Let Freedom Ring: Songs for a New Generation.*
Glenna Bell Music.

Acclaimed Houston-based singer-songwriter Glenna Bell returns in grand fashion with a digital-only seven-song celebration of freedom, commitment, abiding passion, truth, and the persistence of memory. In her captivating, tremulous voice, Bell delivers her impeccably crafted songs with so gripping a sense of commitment as to bring chills at times. Such disarming intensity is especially haunting on the heartache waltz titled “Right Here Beside Me,” wherein a departed lover is eerily evoked in a trembling chant of “You’re right here beside me” over weeping pedal steel. In a similar vein, the stark declaration “You will make it,” a repeated sentiment in the like-titled song, delivered from the edge of despair over a lonely acoustic guitar, portends not survival but inchoate inner tumult, despite the singer’s seeming optimism that “you’ll contend and you’ll contend again.” On the other hand, the ragtime-based “So Many Good Times with You” celebrates a joyous relationship in the here and now, whereas the old-school-styled folk anthem “Let Freedom Ring” calls for “every woman, every man” to join together in pursuit of inevitable, positive change. Rarely has a septet of songs packed so visceral a punch. **David McGee**

Further Listening: Terry Allen: *Juarez*



MUSIC ●●●●● SONICS ●●●●●

Andy Statman: *Monroe Bus.* Shefa.

Since emerging in the 1970s, string and reed instruments virtuoso Andy Statman has produced consistently remarkable work, not the least being re-energizing klezmer music for new generations of roots music fans. On his latest album he returns to one of his principle influences, namely bluegrass music, and in particular the music of bluegrass patriarch Bill Monroe. In true Statman fashion, however, no Monroe tunes are covered; rather, Big Mon’s style and sensibility inform a baker’s dozen Statman originals, with empathetic support from a bevy of fellow instrumental masters and with such sonic clarity as to give the affair a live, spontaneous feel. The gracefulness of Monroe’s mandolin playing is reflected in Statman’s elegant soloing on the title track’s gentle bluegrass swing, whereas the sheer, rambunctious, adventurous spirit of the music Monroe made informs breathtaking solos by mandolin, guitar, clarinets and cornet on the rollicking “Statman’s Romp.” On “Reminiscences,” suitably introspective, Statman’s tender picking is spiritually enhanced by Glenn Patscha’s church organ support and a heart tugging coda courtesy the Statettes clarinet contingent. Jazz, gospel, and pure mountain strains elsewhere make this ride worthy of both the Monroe and Statman legacies both. **DM**

Further Listening: Chatham County Line: *Sharing the Covers*; Tim O’Brien Band: *Tim O’Brien Band*



MUSIC ●●●●● SONICS ●●●●●

Jason Ringenberg: *Stand Tall.*
Courageous Chicken.

Jason Ringenberg and his band Jason & the Scorchers lit speakers on fire in 1981 with their thrashing blend of country and punk. Ringenberg started a solo career in 1992 while continuing with the Scorchers, but this is his first solo album in 14 years. He wasn’t sure if he had any originals left in him, but a fertile month as artist-in-residence at Sequoia National Park resulted in seven stand-out songs. Two college buddies form the rhythm section, and talented guests on steel guitar, banjo, mandolin, strings, etc., fill out the sound. It’s funny that a cover, “Many Happy Hangovers to You,” is the one track that echoes the gleeful emotional spite of many Scorchers’ songs. On Dylan’s “Farewell, Angelina,” Tom Miller’s percussion work almost steals the show. The originals are some of Jason’s best. There’s plenty of twang and distortion, but an unexpected folk influence (Guthrie, Seeger) shows up in the melodies, chord changes, and word choices. Four character sketches—of John the Baptist (“a real humdinger”), the Ramones, John Muir, and an unwilling, slavery-hating Confederate soldier—will have you spitting out the consonants with Jason at the top of your lungs. **Stephen Estep**

Further Listening: Woodbox Gang: *Drunk as Dragons*; Farmer Jason: *A Day at the Farm with Farmer Jason*