

A Matter Of Taste



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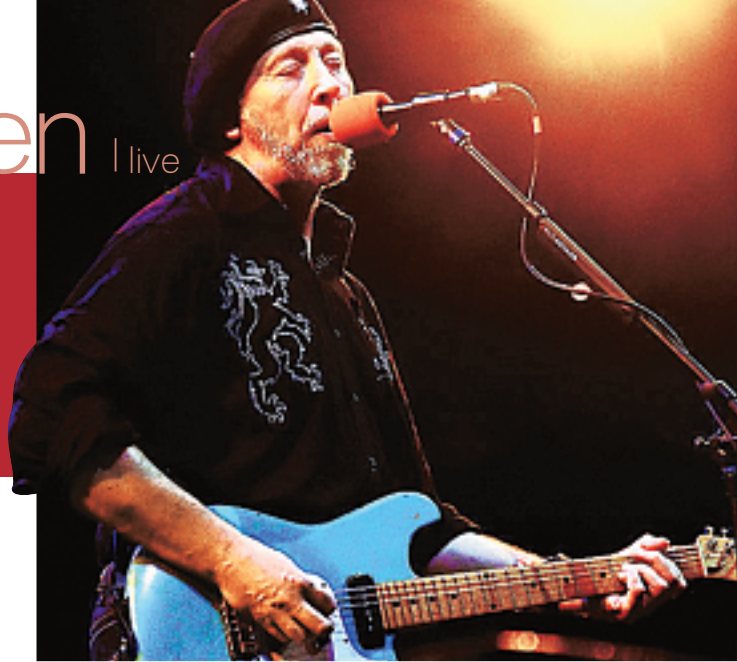
It's rare to find people whose music tastes are exactly like yours, but that's part of the fun

JAZZ LEGEND Duke Ellington, who's credited with many interesting quotes on jazz, blues and music critics is believed to have once said: "There are two kinds of music. Good music and the other kind." But what's good and what's the other kind is entirely a matter of individual taste. Mentioning Ellington's quote, a recent article in *Uncut* magazine said perhaps The Beatles are one those rare bands on whom there is a consensus. Everybody thinks The Beatles made great music. Come to think of it, when I used to blast music as a teenager living with my parents, the only band that they didn't object to were The Beatles. Indeed, my mother, who turned 80 this year, once confessed to me back in the 1970s that she found Paul McCartney (as he looked on the covers of many of the band's LPs) "cute". I remember trying to get her to check out Mick Jagger, my then favourite rockstar but the response wasn't encouraging.

It's not easy to find people who like all the music that you like. I get quite a few responses to this column that border on the hostile. I've had one or two readers who have even said I write about "noise" and not "music". But then, I'm sure even Ellington would have agreed that one man's noise can be another's melody.

It may be rare to come across people whose tastes in music mirror yours but just think of it in another way: how boring would it be if you constantly encountered people whose playlists are exactly like yours? That's one reason why I like to experiment with other people's music selections. It's one of the best ways of discovering new music. I mentioned *Uncut*, the UK music magazine at the beginning of this column. With each month's issue, *Uncut* gives out a complimentary CD of compiled music, which is like a treasure trove if you're into discovering new bands.

Very often *Uncut's* free CD is related to the magazine's theme. Songs that inspired the Rolling Stones could be one; a famous musician's picks could be another. Usually, the music on the CD has something to do with the cover story of the magazine. This month, which marked the 150th issue of the magazine, *Uncut* has a feature on the magazine's list of the 150 best albums of the decade. And the accompanying CD has 15 tracks from *Uncut's* 150 albums of the year. Fifteen tracks from 150 albums can't be representative, unless *Uncut* decides to have sequels with forthcoming issues, but what struck me was how the CD helped me discover music that had slipped by me over the past several years.



YEARS OF WORK

British singer-songwriter Richard Thompson's work spans almost five decades

I'd never heard the band Lift To Experience so the track from their album *The Texas-Jerusalem Crossroads* was a real surprise. I learnt that the band are a trio (not sure whether they're still around) from Texas. Their music reminded me a bit of singer-songwriter Jeff Buckley, who died from drowning when he was just 30. Lift To Experience's song *Just As Was Told* reminded me of Buckley's dark, emotional and bittersweet album, *Grace*, which came out in 1994.

The *Uncut* CD had a song from Ryan Adams' *Heartbreaker* album (2000), which was not bad. I'm no great fan of the prolific Adams who seems to churn out albums at a frenetic pace. But there were tracks that really made the grade, such as Okkervil River's excellent *Our Life Is Not A Movie Or Maybe* from 2007's *The Stage Names*; The Felice Brothers' *Don't Wake The Scarecrow* from their eponymous album that came out last year; The Hold Steady's brilliant *First Night* off their 2006 album *Boys And Girls In America*; and Drive-By Truckers' lovely jam-heavy *Lookout Mountain* from *The Dirty South* (2004).

As well as these, there were tracks from others - bands such as Wilco, Calexico and the Willard Grant Conspiracy and singer-songwriters like Richard Thompson and Robert Wyatt. The last two I'd not really heard much - a track here and there. Thompson, a British singer-songwriter, is a former member of the legendary folk-rock band, Fairport Convention, and has a body of music that spans nearly five decades. And Wyatt, a founder member of the influential Soft Machine, is also British and one of the pioneers of progressive and fusion genres in rock. Thompson is 60 and Wyatt 64 (and confined to a wheelchair); both are still active, recording and releasing new music. I have Wyatt's *Comicopera*, released in 2007, which demonstrates that you don't have to be a spring chicken to be hip and edgy.

It's not often that you get a playlist that's so engaging that you'd be hard put trying to re-organise it. *Uncut's* free CD this time is like that. And on the blog version of *Download Central*, I've put the links to some of these tracks just so that you can try them out for yourself.

To give feedback, stream or download the music mentioned in this column, go to <http://blogs.hindustantimes.com/download-central/>



INNOVATIVE

Robert Wyatt (top), a pioneer in progressive and fusion rock; *Uncut* magazine (below) with its 150 best albums of the decade list



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