

The radical in the group is banjo player and producer Scott Vestal who routinely plays on the curve. He keeps the lid on until the last track and his original composition *Night of the Comet*, then bursts into alternative mode and puts himself and all the musicians through their paces. Mark Schatz is especially impressive keeping it all together as the number features various changes to pace and emphasis while the solos are allowed to depart the strictest sense of the melody. Nice work. (HW)



**NORMALLY ANOMALY**  
**THE MIKE STEVENS PROJECT**  
 Mike Stevens Music  
 (No Number)

I have no idea how to categorize *Normally Anomaly* and I think that's the point. Mike Stevens has exploded the paradigms of the harmonica and gone light years from his more familiar bluegrass role guesting with Jim & Jesse and playing at The Grand Ol Opry.

Conventional instrumentation includes drums (Greg Lee), guitars (Jeff Getty), bass (Dean Hibma), Bil Eldridge sings a couple and of course there's harmonica. Unconventional instrumentation includes sounds from Hank's Toyota and most crucially the harmonica not synthesized but going through a bullet mic, a low budget guitar processor and a looping delay. The effects are varied, remarkable and defy a simple explanation, the music needs to be experienced. Eight of the most complicated tracks can be performed live and I can only wonder about the split brain agility that kind of performance would require. *Normally Anomaly* is an event in blues, jazz, hard rock, alternative,

really alternative, and brand new art forms in music he's been dreaming up. Literally dreaming. *A Walk in my Dream* is fascinating and alien (footfalls included), about as alien as the Strange Birds who click and make the most inexplicable and extraordinary sounds. Very eerie, like the *Taxman Boogie*. That'd be the dark weirdness in the back of the checkbook, rivalled only by the monsterish deep voiced Gila Babi who sounds guilty, like it's eaten something inappropriate. There's major personality in every cut, Mike's translated a chunk of himself into music and what a sense of humor.

In *Left Lane People* he asks "what is that guy thinking?" then proceeds to play the driver's brainwaves. At the bottom of the jacket in the very small print there's a little apology saying "Excuse me for Track 15" Huh? There is no Track 15! Well course there is and it's really funny. *Normally Anomaly* is not going to be for everyone. It's wildly innovative, it's not dull and sure isn't

tame; I'm exhausted after listening and it makes me want to yell. Right on Mike. (HW)

**SALES TAX TODDLE**  
**RICHARD GREENE & THE GRASS IS GREENER**  
 Rebel REB-CD-1737

*Sales Tax Toddle* is a project with a musical mission at it's heart. Most usually found with the futurist fiddlers of the bluegrass scene, on this recording I hear Richard Greene dip deliberately into history. He's chosen his instrumentals from the public domain and found his songs in the immediately recognizable repertoire of Bill Monroe. The mission, perhaps the test, seems to have been to step into the time of the piece and uncover rather than cover it with an entirely fresh arrangement suitable to the period. He entrusts Peter Rowan, foremost interpreter of Bill Monroe with the songs and unadorned by tenor or baritone vocals Rowan outdoes himself. Greene's compositions *Done Gone*

