

There isn't anything faux about **Mark Winkler**. Like the California hipster he honors on *Mark Winkler Sings Bobby Troup* (Rhombus), he's the real deal. "When I sing 'Lemon Twist' I imagine I'm wearing a turtleneck and holding a martini and all is right with the world," says Winkler. "When I sing Bobby Troup, I can't help but feel cool." And cool—Dave Frishberg cool, swimming pool cool, Sunset Strip cool—he is. Preparing to follow up his 2000 success *Easy the Hard Way* with another mix of originals and standards, Winkler stumbled across a few of Troup's '50s recordings. He has since become an unrepentant Troupaholic. With reckless panache, he dives headlong into the Troup songbook. All the classics—"Route 66," "Walkin' Shoes," "Girl Talk," "Baby, Baby All the Time"—are here. Lesser-known gems like "Three Bears" and "Hungry Man" shine equally bright. Winkler's laid-back style suggests a cocktail shaker filled with one part Jane Monheit and two parts Donald Fagen—a spirited combination of cabaret verve and jazzy-FM reserve. There are also distinct echoes of Matt Dennis' indolent urbanity. How delightful, then, to discover that Winkler has unearthed the previously unrecorded Troup-Dennis collaboration "Learn to Love." Given to Winkler by Dennis himself (just weeks before his death), it is a gorgeous homage to two musical geniuses by a budding third.

Around the time that Mark Winkler started rummaging through the Bobby Troup songbook, saxophonist **Bob Rockwell**, now living in Denmark, was itching to honor another undersung hero of American jazz and pop, Alec Wilder. Fortunately

for us, Rockwell's first call went out to his singer-pianist pal **Ben Sidran**. Wading into the elegant complexity of Wilder's work, Sidran spent three months absorbing the fragile beauty of such classics as "The Winter of My Discontent," "While We're Young" and "Lady Sings the Blues." Then, together with Rockwell, bassist Billy Peterson and drummer Kenny Horst, he traveled to Rockwell's hometown of Minneapolis to lay down the 12 tracks that fill *Walk Pretty* (Go Jazz). Result? A superbly thoughtful and intelligent tribute that's as profound as it is lyrical. (Wilder devotees may question the absence of his most famous composition, "I'll Be Around." I suspect, though, that Rockwell and company wisely recognized the song's severe overexposure.) Fans of Sidran's spare, sandy vocals (imbued with a whip-smart worldliness worthy of Mose Allison) might be similarly disappointed to learn that he sings on only five selections. Consider it a case of quality exceeding quantity. Rambling from the relaxed confidence of the title track, through the sly restlessness of "Discontent" and "South to a Warmer Place" and on to the sweet *que sera sera* fatalism of "If Someday Ever Happens Again" and resigned desolation of "A Long Night," Sidran proves himself, yet again, an inveterately resourceful troubadour.