

THIS WEEK'S CD RELEASES

By Adam Woods



Mathew E White

Fresh Blood

Domino, out tomorrow ★★★★★

Drawing on a coterie of skilled musicians, White makes luxuriant, laboriously-arranged records the way they used to. Joyous, amorous and glowering by turns, *Fresh Blood* evokes the smoulder of Stax and Muscle Shoals, and the deep-pile Seventies studio indulgences of Harry Nilsson. White's whispery voice is arguably the weak link, but you could get lost in the music for weeks.



Marc Almond

The Velvet Trail

Cherry Red, out tomorrow ★★★★★

Almond has maintained a prolific, restless career that has taken him well beyond the normal confines of pop. *The Velvet Trail* – a collaboration with hit songwriter Chris Braide – finds him on approachable terrain. Melodramatic, if a little tidy, Braide's smart pop sense extracts pathos from Almond on songs such as *Zipped Black Leather Jacket* and *Minotaur*.



Rebecca Ferguson

Lady Sings The Blues

RCA, out tomorrow ★★★★★

You can count on one finger the number of *X Factor* finalists who should even contemplate the songs of Billie Holiday and, fortunately, that one person is Rebecca Ferguson. Sensibly, she doesn't attempt to approximate Holiday's one-off voice, but her elegantly pained delivery is a respectable stand-in. The settings are posh and orchestral, rather than nakedly jazzy.

