

MUSIC REVIEW

Songs for Shut-Ins

New releases by Langhorne Slim, Selwyn Birchwood and Rod Abernethy reflect the current moment.



Langhorne Slim

PHOTO: MICKEY BERNAL/GETTY IMAGES

By Barry Mazor

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New releases by Langhorne Slim, Selwyn Birchwood and Rod Abernethy —singer-songwriters with very different musical backgrounds—all reflect our shut-down, shut-in times.

Langhorne Slim, “Strawberry Mansion” (Dualtone Music). Born Sean Scolnick in 1980, Langhorne Slim grew up in southeast Pennsylvania, attested to by his performing name (Langhorne, Pa., was his home town) and the title of this latest album, which nods to his two grandfathers’ Philadelphia neighborhood. With strong pop sensibilities, hooky melodies and alternative country-inflected lyrics, he has been recording for 15 years and has been a strong touring act. Many first heard his amiable earworm choruses in national ad campaigns for Travelers Insurance (“Worries”) and Coca-Cola (“Put It Together”). Then he relocated to East Nashville, Tenn., just in time for the tornado that hit the neighborhood in March and the Covid-19 pandemic that quickly followed.

In Langhorne Slim's melodically capable hands, the darker passing moods and thoughts are all delivered in frisky, good-natured style, backed by his multi-instrumentalist friends and co-producers Paul DeFiglia and Mat Davidson. The songs are like feel-better missives from a whimsical but reliable buddy.
