lashed with a knowing restraint. *Say Something*, one of many break-up big ballads here, draws on country piano and strings to close this accomplished comeback on a graceful rather than bombastic note.

Mark Beaumont

The Scratch

Pull Like A Dog

MUSIC FOR NATIONS/SONY MUSIC IRELAND

Irish folk-metallers build a whole new genre for their own private playground.

They cut their teeth busking on the streets of Dublin, but Irish folk-metal crew The Scratch are way too talented and inventive to be constrained to churning out stodgy crowd pleasers for pennies.

Pull Like A Dog is their third album, and it finds them perfecting their unique blend of Celtic folk and intense and intricate metal. The result is thrill, kicking in with uncontainable adrenaline via series of fast and fiddly riffs, and skilfully stirring the emotions with the warm, traditional music of their ancestors. *Pullin' Teeth* is a battle cry, with vocalist, cajon player and percussionist Daniel O' Lang spitting fury over riffs that match the likes of System Of A Down for heaviness. That's contrasted by the tear-jerking, quiet reflection of *I Hope All Is Forgiven*.

The Scratch sound like no one else but deserve to be heard by many.

Emma Johnston

Thirsty Quireboys

God Bless America – Best Of Thirsty *CADIZ ENTERTAINMENT*

Spike pays tribute to fallen bandmate by singing his songs.

Tracking the status of the Quireboys and their diaspora in recent years has been a little confusing, with frontman Spike being fired from the band by bandmate Guy Griffin in 2022, and co-founding guitarist Guy Bailey pursuing his own project, Thirsty, with Russian poet Irina D. Then a legal wrangle ended with Griffin rebranding his version of the band as Black Eyed Sons, leaving Spike to reclaim the Quireboys name.

The year before, though, Bailey had died after a short illness, which prompted Irina D to plan a Thirsty compilation, with Spike guesting. That expanded into Spike fronting this album of re-sung Thirsty tunes, and his improbably weathered vocal tones put a different, grittier complexion on numbers such as *10, 7 And Possibly 6*. Bailey's songcraft still shines, though, particularly on the softly organ-accompanied *Even Keel* and the soulful, slinky blues of *Libertine*.

Johnny Sharp

The Dead Daisies

Live Plus Five

THE DEAD DAISIES LTD

2025 live set gets physical release with added extras.

Although this Australian-American supergroup released a 12-song live set on streaming and download platforms last year, taken from their UK tour-closing appearance at Stonedead festival, it takes longer these days to turn around such 'content' on old-fashioned CD and vinyl. So, as extra incentive being now they're ready to offer something to hold in your hands, they've added five numbers from other dates on the tour. Punters who are happy with the digital version (highlights of which include a fiery *I Wanna Be Your Bitch* and a lusty, infectious *Going Down*) won't find anything indispensable in standard blues-rock covers such as *Black Betty*, but a boogie-boosted go at *Last Time I Saw The Sun* is a worthy invitation to the party.

Johnny Sharp