Recent years have seen a slow but welcome trickle of Nordic singer-songwriters playing acoustic, rootsy music, from Emiliana Torrini's sweetly hush hush *Fisherman's Woman* (2005) to Ane Brun's heartbreaking *A Temporary Dive* (2005) via the likes of Maria Solheim and A Camp, the Americana side project of The Cardigans' Nina Persson. Now, after two best-selling albums in her native Sweden, 24 year old Elin Ruth Sigvardsson is the latest to move into international waters with an eponymously-titled compilation of the best tracks from each. “It’s a little bit early to make a greatest hits,” she says shyly, “but it’s been a while since I recorded my first album *[Saturday Light Naive (2003)]* so its nice to pick out my favourite songs from both.” First single *When It Comes To You* was a massive airplay hit upon its original release in Sweden, and now with a bit of a production tweak it looks poised to capitalise on the new acoustic movement with a residency on the Radio 2 playlist, and the genre’s man of the moment, fellow Swede José González, is reportedly a fan.

Having recently completed a tour with the Cosmic Rough Riders, Elin has been picking up fans like velcro along the way with her engaging live performances and proven songwriting chops. Hugely inspired by Bob Dylan, she once made a pilgrimage of sorts to the Zimmerman family home in Hibbing, Minnesota whilst on a sightseeing tour of the States. “I went over for three weeks and took the greyhound buses around the Midwest. It was just a small boring village, really, pretty much like the one I come from originally – really bad weather and stuff,” she laughs. “But it was still magic to just walk around the streets where he actually grew up and see his house and all that. I’m not usually obsessed with bands or artists, but this was kinda cool.” It wasn’t always so, however. Dylan was a staple in Elin’s house as a child and like any teenager she initially rebelled against her father’s tastes. “I couldn’t stand him! Or Leonard Cohen. I just couldn’t really appreciate it until I found it on my own, when I was a little bit older,” she explains.

Having been in the public eye for a number of years now, Elin has attracted some rather choice (and some quite dubious!) comparisons along the way, including the usual nod to Joni Mitchell, but also to modern pop acts like KT Tunstall and the moodier art-pop constructs of Fiona Apple. My suggestion of a slight vocal similarity with Aimee Mann is teasingly brushed aside. “People always want to compare,” she laughs. “Especially new female artists. They’re really quick to compare us to each other I think. I guess I don’t take it too seriously when people compare me to anyone because it’s different from person to person. They hear different things in the music; for instance, I can’t really see any connection between me and Joni Mitchell except that we’re both kinda folk.”

Given her almost overnight success back home – at age 21, her many glowing accolades included two Swedish Grammy nominations and a Songwriter Of The Year award – it would be understandable for someone in her position to have a hard time dealing with the limelight. “I try not to focus on that too much,” she shrugs. “I try and keep focused on what I’m doing. It was great fun, but I don’t think it affects me as a person all that much. I’m 24, so I guess there’s plenty more time.” So there won’t be any Lene Marlin-style disappearance, no urge to give it all up for the quiet life? “I’m glad I had some time to do a lot of touring and stuff back in Sweden first, but I really feel ready to see other countries and play my music in other places now. I mean, I’ve had to change some stuff – my name mostly – but I kinda like it. Ruth is a family name so I wanted to use it.”

As Joni herself once sang, “something’s lost but something’s gained in living every day” and making the most of every opportunity is clearly a part of Elin’s agenda.

Alan Pedder