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Love, Janis!

# Jazz & Blues Report

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**Martin-Wahl**  
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# Love, Janis!

**Hanna Theatre,  
Playhouse Square  
Cleveland**

**Reviewed by Bill Wahl**

Janis Joplin is one of the few artists whose albums I have owned in LP, 8-Track, Cassette and CD formats. That would be her 1968 debut with Big Brother & The Holding Company on **Cheap Thrills**, to her solo debut **I Got Dem Ol' Kozmic Blues Again Mama**, through to her final album, 1971's **Pearl**. Although she was in life, as she is today, a rock/blues legend, her short career only spawned those three major albums, all on Columbia Records, plus an earlier Big Brother album on Mainstream Records. Obviously, I was a big fan of Joplin back in the days, so upon hearing of the play **Love, Janis** at the Hanna Theatre my interest was definitely piqued.

This play was written in by Randal Myler inspired by a book with the same name by Laura Joplin, Janis' sister. It is based on letters Janis wrote to her parents after she left Port Arthur, Texas in 1966 to pursue musical pastures in San Francisco and soon traveled with Big Brother & The Holding Company. She continued sending the letters home right up until she was found dead in her apartment just five years later.

The letters say a lot about Joplin as a person, and mirror her different moods. Some are actually quite funny, some show her loneliness, some her awe with regard to her new found fame and actually having some money. The best part is that these letters are real. You will get a true glimpse into what made her tick rather than what a playwright wants

you to see. It is just the letters, and some interviews she did...there is no other spoken word added. I will not tell you anything more about what is in these letters, or the interviews. I know that a lot of play and movie reviewers like to spill all the beans for you before you go. Luckily, I am not a play or movie reviewer, so I will not spoil it for you. Indeed, it would be a disservice to do so.

The role of Janis for the performance on January 11 was played by Helen Coxe and Mary Bridget Davies. That's right...two Janises. Coxe played "Janis the person," and had the main speaking role – reading the letters to her parents, nearly all of which ended with "Love, Janis." Davies portrayed "Janis the musician," obviously the more challenging of the two roles as she had to sing all the songs. Not surprisingly, I was more than a bit leary about how well that role would be played. Singing many of Joplin's tunes is tough enough for most singers. But to sing so many of them in a play actually portraying Joplin is a monstrous feat. Well, Davies nailed it right from the start and just never let up. While she won me over right away, the real test was going to be the 8th song in..."Ball and Chain." She nailed that one as well. OK – sold! The rest would be a piece of cake. Davies has guts, heart, soul and a powerful delivery to spare.

While many of those reading this who live in the Cleveland area may not be familiar with Mary Bridget Davies, they certainly should check her out...whether at this play or with her own band. She, along with the musicians in the **Love, Janis** band are from



## On The Cover

Mary Bridget Davies as Janis Joplin in a scene from "Love, Janis" at the Hannah Theatre, Cleveland

Cleveland or other parts of the area. The Mary Bridget Davies Group, formerly known as Blues On Purpose, has played many N.E. Ohio clubs and has recently been doing the blues festival circuit. Her role as Janis the singer is currently played on alternate nights by Lauren Dragon, who I believe is from Cincinnati, where **Love, Janis** played before Cleveland. By the time you read this, Dragon will have been replaced by Katrina Chester, who played the role in the Off Broadway production of the play in New York and is supposed to be fantastic herself. She will then be in alternate performances with Davies. **Love, Janis** has just been extended for a second or third time, and will continue at least until February 26. If you want, you can find out who is playing the role on which performances at [www.playhousesquare.com](http://www.playhousesquare.com).

The songs you will hear are:

From the Big Brother & The Holding Company era, which produced the 1967 album **Big Brother & The Holding Company** and 1968's **Cheap Thrills** – “Piece Of My Heart,” “Down On Me,” “Bye, Bye Baby,” “Turtle Blues,” “Women Is Losers,” “I Need A Man To Love,” Gershwin’s “Summertime” and Big Mama Thornton’s marvelous “Ball And Chain,” in my view the show’s standout performance (my date for the evening concurred, so it must be unanimous).

After the intermission came the Kozmic Blues Band era which produced the 1969 album **I Got Dem Ol’ Kozmic Blues Again Mama** and the Full Tilt Boogie Band, with which she released the **Pearl** album in 1971 – a record she would not live to finish (an instrumental had to be added to add more time to the LP). Those songs are “Mercedes Benz,” “A Woman Left Lonely,” “Work Me Lord,” “Try (Just A Little Bit Harder),” “To Love Somebody,” “Me And Bobby McGee,” “Little Girl Blue,” “Move Over,” and the encore “Get It While You Can.”

The band fits this production like a glove. One can bet that they keep getting better and better each night, so seeing it at the end of the run is actually a plus. The musicians for the Big Brother & The Holding Company

songs are Ben Nieves/lead guitar, Mark McGuire/rhythm guitar, Herb Pruitt/bass and Bill Ransom/drums. Nieves and McGuire are actually members of the Mary Bridget Davies Band, while Pruitt and Ransom are players I’ve been familiar with for many years. For the Kozmic Blues Band songs Kristine Jackson/trumpet, Ken LeeGrand/tenor sax and Ed Ridley/keyboards are added. Ridley stays on for the Full Tilt Boogie Band songs. Though Joplin got a lot of flack at the time for adding horns to her music with the Kozmic Blues Band, they sure sound just fine today! Ransom, Pruitt, LeeGrand and Ridley played in the earlier 1999 performances of **Love, Janis** at Cleveland Playhouse, before it went to New York. You’ll love Nieves rock ‘n’ roll movements about the stage on some of the songs, such as jumping on top of a speaker and laying on his back on the floor.

I thought Helen Coxe did very well in the Janis the person role in both the letters and the interviews. Davies also answered some of the interviewer’s questions, sometimes they would both blurt out an answer at once. There is no question that the spoken parts interspersed with the music numbers made the whole experience the great success that it was. The audience that night was ecstatic and were brought to their feet on several occasions after some of the songs. And then there was the standing ovation with shouts and screams at the end, before and after the encore.

The only minor faults I could find were that a few of the instruments did not exist in 1969. But, That is something only a musician or collector would pick up on. While it may bother some nitpickers out there (let’s face it – how many people are going to notice something as anal as that), it does not bother me for a good reason. When you try to make a musician use an instrument he or she is not familiar with for the sake of authenticity, they could suffer. In short, you’d be sacrificing the music for props. After all - this is Janis...it is about the music. The other one, again which very few will notice, is that some of the Kozmic Blues songs and the Pearl songs

were not quite where they belonged, chronologically speaking. I believe one or two had horns that should not have. But the fact is, that I didn’t even notice it until I put this review together, and the songs flowed very well. So it is, in the end, a moot point. Some things I noticed that did add to authenticity were that all the mics and guitars had cords, and they used monitors on the floor rather than earpieces. The Janis costumes and hair pieces, jewelry and the like were very authentic looking, and the slides of Janis photos and psychedelic patterns on the screen behind the stage added a nice touch.

The only player I have not mentioned is Paul Floriano, who did the part of the male interviewer. He was not actually on stage, or if he was – I sure did not see him.

As for the volume, earplugs were available if anyone wanted them, but I found them completely unnecessary. Sure, it was rather loud, and I would have been disappointed if it were not. It is a part of the true Janis experience.

Kudos go out to Sam Andrew, the Music Director for **Love, Janis**. Andrew was the guitarist and a founding member of Big Brother & The Holding Company, and joined Janis’ Kozmic Blues Band (and played on the Kozmic album) after she left Big Brother. He also wrote some of the Big Brother songs, such as “Call On Me,” and co-wrote “I Need A Man To Love” with Janis. I’d say he knows more than a thing or two about Janis Joplin.

The intimate atmosphere of the Halle Theatre, where the audience is seated in chairs, four each at a table, certainly added to the overall experience. Don’t miss out on this experience yourself...check it out while you still have time. If you need any info I have not covered in 1600 words, go to [www.playhousesquare.com](http://www.playhousesquare.com) - wait for Janis to pop up and click on her. Tickets are on sale at the Playhouse Square Ticket Office; at [www.PlayhouseSquare.com](http://www.PlayhouseSquare.com) (same clicking instructions) or at 216-241-6000. Have a great time!

*Check out the review of Janis’ boxed set **Box of Pearls** in this issue.*

## Jazz meets Dance

### Garth Fagan Dance performs Ohio Premiere of new masterwork "Life: Dark/Light"

"Fagan and Jazz: a pairing made in heaven" at the Ohio Theatre, Cleveland on February 25

**CLEVELAND** – Garth Fagan Dance brings its acclaimed, jazz-infused work to the Ohio Theatre at Playhouse Square for one night only on Saturday, February 25, 2006 at 8:00 p.m. Co-presented by DANCECleveland and Cuyahoga Community College, this Ohio premiere of Fagan's most recent work *Life:Dark/Light* is lauded to "achieve a prominent place in the ever-growing canon of Fagan masterpieces" (Rochester Democrat and Chronicle-11/2005.)

Set to the music of jazz violinist Billy Bang's 2001 release *Vietnam: The Aftermath*, the work grew from Bang's own experiences of fear, loss and life rejuvenated during his service in the Vietnam War. Arranged into a three movement format taken from the title *Life:Dark/Light*, it has been likened to a choreographic concerto with the dancers as elements of the work. Garth Fagan Dance will also perform *Prelude* with music by Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) and Max Roach, *Sonata* and the *Afternoon*, music by Johannes Brahms, *Touring Jubilee 1924* (Professional) music by Preservation Hall Jazz Band and *Translation/Transition* to music by the Jazz Jamaica All Stars.

Now in its 35th season, Garth Fagan Dance, is known for founder and Tony Award winning choreographer of Disney's *The Lion King* - Garth Fagan. Jamaican born Fagan continually hones his imaginative, original movement style drawing from modern dance, Afro-Caribbean influences and ballet. The "Fagan Technique" tests a dancer's virtuosity. Currently a Distinguished Professor of the State University of New York, Fagan was one of only twelve Ameri-



A scene from Garth Fagan's *Life:Dark/Light* - coming to the Ohio Theatre at Playhouse Square in downtown Cleveland on Saturday, February 25

can scholars, artists, professionals and public figures to receive the 1996 title Fulbright 50th Anniversary Distinguished Fellow. He is also the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, the prestigious three-year Choreography Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and honorary doctorates from the Julliard School, the University of Rochester, Nazareth College of Rochester, and Hobart and William Smith Colleges. In recognition of his contribution to modern dance, Fagan received the Dance Magazine Award for "significant contributions to dance during a distinguished career" and the New York Dance and Performance "Bessie" Award for Sustained Achievement.

For tickets call 800-766-6048, 216-241-6000 or visit online at [www.tickets.com](http://www.tickets.com). Prices are \$20, \$30, \$40 and \$47. Groups of 10 or more receive discounted tickets by calling 440-914-0744. For more information visit [www.dancecleveland.org](http://www.dancecleveland.org) or [www.tricpresents.com](http://www.tricpresents.com). For subscriptions to DANCECleveland's 50th Anniversary Season, call 440-914-0744. Season tickets for the Cuyahoga Community College 2005-06 Performance Series are available at 216-987-4400.

In collaboration with Young Audiences of Greater Cleveland, members of Garth Fagan Dance will participate in a Residency for students of the Cleveland Municipal School District the week prior to the February 25th performance. Garth Fagan Dance will be featured in a Lecture Demonstration performance for the Showtime at High Noon Series on Friday, February 24 from noon to 1 p.m. at the Ohio Theatre. For reservations call 216-987-4940. Professional dance students may attend a Master Class, date, location and time to be determined, call 440-914-0744 or e-mail [skeyes@dancecleveland.org](mailto:skeyes@dancecleveland.org). At the Saturday, February 25 performance, there will be a 7 p.m. pre-performance Lecture and a post-performance Q and A session. Both are open to ticket purchasers.

Celebrating its 50th Anniversary Season, DANCECleveland is one of the nation's oldest, and northeast Ohio's only, organization dedicated solely to presenting national and international modern dance companies and is known as a premiere presenter of modern dance in Northern Ohio and beyond.

Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) division of Performing Arts pre-

sents significant contemporary artistic programming of the highest quality for our diverse multicultural regional audiences. These arts and cultural experiences are designed to stimulate, enlighten, educate and mutually enrich both the artists and our community.

Major Funders: Ohio Arts Council, National Endowment for the Arts, Heartland Arts Fund, National Dance Project of The New England Foundation for the Arts, The George Gund Foundation, The Cleveland Foundation, The George W. Codrington Foundation, The John P. Murphy Foundation, and Kulas Foundation.

## Eric Burdon at Rock Hall Feb. 13

**1994 Inductee to perform and discuss career, including historical significant of the British Invasion**

**CLEVELAND** – The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum and Xerox Global Services present a Hall of Fame Series with Eric Burdon on Monday, February 13 at 7 p.m. in the Museum's 4th Floor Theater.

Tickets are \$10 and are on sale through Ticketmaster or at the Museum box office.

As the lead singer of the Animals, Eric Burdon was one of the driving forces of the British Invasion. His unique voice and the powerful blues-rock repertoire of the Animals sealed the band's place in modern music history with hits such "House of the Rising Sun," "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" and "Don't Bring Me Down."

The Animals original line-up changed after 1966 and Burdon kept the group going with various players performing under the billing Eric Burdon and the Animals. Burdon used the Animals to explore far more psychedelic territory and move the groups music beyond the R&B realm. After the Animals, Burdon achieved new successes as a solo artist, when he hooked up with a group of L.A.0based musicians who eventually joined to form War. War achieved notable success with hits such as "Spill the Wine" and "Lowrider."

Burdon was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a member of the Animals in 1994.

In 2004 Burdon released his first solo studio album in many years called My Secret Life.

In early 2005, Burdon ventured to new frontiers with a boogie-woogie project featuring Pete York on drums and Christoph Steinbach on piano as The Blues Knights. The trio did a very successful mini-tour through Greece. In late 2005 Burdon went back to the studio with nearly the same pool of musicians again with producer Tony Braunagel. The album is being released in January 2006.

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum exists to educate its visitors, fans and scholars from around the world about the history and significance of rock and roll music. The Museum carries out this mission through its efforts to collect, preserve, exhibit and interpret this art form.

The Museum is open seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. On Wednesdays the Museum is open

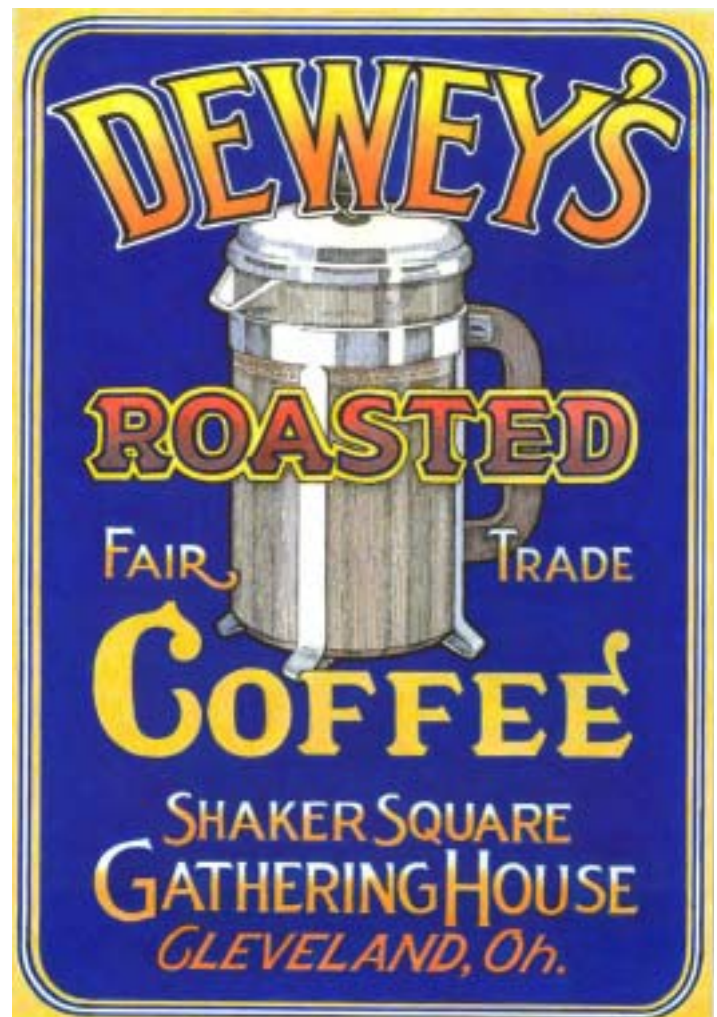
until 9 p.m. Museum admission is \$20 for adults, \$14 for seniors (60+), \$11 for children (9-12) and children under 8 and Museum members are free.

## Black History Month at Rock Hall

**CLEVELAND** – In celebration of Black History Month, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum has planned a month-long tribute to Funk music. Co-curated by Warren Zanes, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum vice president of education, and Thomas Sayers Ellis, Professor of Poetry at Case Western Reserve University, the month promises to be pure groove!

Funk music, like Soul and R&B, is an African-American music of self-determination. Funk music appeared on the scene in the Sixties, fueled by the rise of the Civil Rights Movement, the growth of African-American consciousness and the growing influence of record labels such as Detroit's Motown and Stax/Volt in Memphis.

Characterized by syncopated rhythms, powerful horn sections, bright rhythm guitars and thick bass lines, Funk music became the definitive black music of the Seventies. Also like Soul and R&B, Funk music often contains progressive lyrics and messages of freedom and protest on top of high-energy, electrified dance music. James Brown, Parliament-Funkadelic, the Ohio Players, Chic, Earth, Wind and Fire and the Commodores made Funk the ultimate party music in the Seven-



ties and Eighties, not just for their bizarre conceptual humor, but also their sheer excess: huge ensembles of musicians and dancers, all jamming on the same groove as long as they possibly could, tearing the house down.

#### **Black History Month Funk programming:**

**Wednesday, February 8, 7 p.m.**, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum - Clyde Stubblefield and John "Jab'o" Starks, both legendary drummers and veterans of the James Brown Band, will talk about their histories and the grooves they innovated. Stubblefield and Starks are the most sampled drum tracks in the world. A not-to-miss inside look at Funk's beginnings and its legacy. This event is free with a reservation. Call 216.515.8426 to RSVP.

**Wednesday, February 15, 7 p.m.**, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum - A special Black History Month edition of From Songwriters to Soundmen: The People Behind the Hits featuring Nile Rodgers of Chic. A member of Harlem's Apollo Theater house band, producer of Mick Jagger, Diana Ross, Madonna, INXS, and many more and co-leader of Chic, Rodgers remains one of the most important musical figures of the last several decades. He will discuss his unparalleled career and his role as R&B's ambassador to rock. This event is free with a reservation. Call 216.515.8426 to RSVP.

**Thursday, February 16, 7 p.m.**, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum - Whiting Award honoree, poet and Case Professor Thomas Sayers Ellis explores the funk aesthetic as it emerged in DC Go-Go and as it continues to inform his poetry. Segments of the film *The Pocket* will be shown as part of the performance. This event is free with a reservation. Call 216.515.8426 to RSVP.

**Friday, February 17, 9 p.m.**, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum — DC Go-Go comes to Cleveland! The Godfather of Go-Go, Chuck Brown, will perform. A hero of Go-Go, Brown is a legend in R&B circles. Opening the show will be Familiar Faces, a DC Go-Go band comprised of members of Rare Essence and other prominent Go-Go bands. Tickets are \$5 and go on sale January 20 through Ticketmaster ([www.ticketmaster.com/216.241.5555](http://www.ticketmaster.com/216.241.5555)) or at the Museum box office.

**Wednesday, February 22, 7 p.m.**, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum - Hall of Fame series with inductee Bootsie Collins. Collins was inducted into the Rock and Hall of Fame in 1997 as a member of Parliament-Funkadelic. He was also a sideman with James Brown and the leader of Bootsie's Rubber Band. Bootsie Collins has lived at the heart of the Funk story and he will explore his career from the inside with Thomas Sayers Ellis, Associate Professor of English at Case Western Reserve University. This event is SOLD OUT.

Friday, February 24, 9 p.m., Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum — The Funk Finale! The Ohio Players take Cleveland hostage for a special appearance at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Tickets are \$10 through Ticketmaster ([www.ticketmaster.com/216.241.5555](http://www.ticketmaster.com/216.241.5555)) or at the Museum box office.

For more information on concerts and special events call 216.515.8444 or visit [www.rockhall.com](http://www.rockhall.com)



## **David Sanborn & Chris Botti at Palace Theatre**

**CLEVELAND** - Jazz veteran David Sanborn and hot young trumpeter Chris Botti have teamed their considerable talents on a successful concert tour that will include a stop at Playhouse Square Center's Palace Theatre in downtown Cleveland on Wednesday, February 22 at 7:30 p.m.

The driving force for saxman David Sanborn's multiple Grammy-winning career has been his reluctance to rest on the laurels of any one musical style. It is sophistication, phrasing and ultimate musicianship which enables him to effortlessly slide from jazz to R&B, then onto funk and blues, and it has served him well, as one of the pre-eminent instrumentalists for the past three decades. Sanborn has truly helped define the saxophone's contemporary sound. His CD, **Closer**, was released in 2005, the most recent of an amazing 22 solo albums.

Although alto sax is the 60-year-old Sanborn's instrument of choice, he also plays the acoustic piano. Now a *New Yorker* (by way of St. Louis and Tampa), David earned the reputation for being both an improvising jazz instrumentalist and a busy R&B/pop/rock session player.

David was only 23 years old when he was stricken with polio. As part of his rehabilitative therapy, he was introduced to the saxophone. It was an introduction with consequences quite beyond the imagination of his parents, doctors or anyone else. With polio behind him, Sanborn went on to become a teenage sideman, playing sax on the fertile jazz and R&B club circuit in St. Louis. After studying music at Northwestern University and the University of Iowa, he joined Paul Butterfield as part of the Butterfield Blues Band in 1967 (with whom he played at Woodstock).

Jazz heavyweights featured Sanborn on their albums in the '70s, and that decade found him spending two years with Stevie Wonder's band before backing David Bowie,



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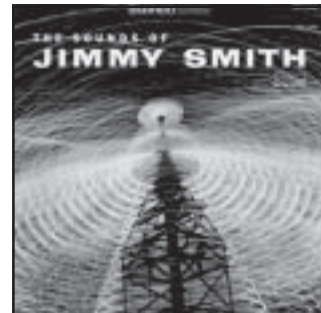
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the Rolling Stones, Albert King, James Brown, Donny Hathaway, Carly Simon and other major non-jazz stars.

In 1975, Sanborn recorded his own debut album, **Taking Off**. His initial Grammy win in 1982 for **Voyeur**, became the first of many. David went on to score films, host his own weekly nationally-syndicated radio show, as well as the after-hours critically acclaimed TV series "Night Music."

Since his 1995 solo debut album, **First Wish**, Chris Botti has emerged as one of the most popular and promising new arrivals on the contemporary jazz scene. Four years after that debut album, Botti was chosen by Sting to spend two years on the road as his featured soloist. Not only did the tour showcase his talents to a new audience, it created a lasting bond with Sting, who has since sung on Botti's albums **To Love Again** and **When I Fall In Love**.

An impressive scrapbook of critical raves of both his studio and stage work with the likes of Paul Simon (on his 15-month 1990 world tour), John Barry, Joni Mitchell, Marc Cohn and Natalie Merchant have awarded Botti credentials as a musician's musician.

After five acclaimed solo albums, the Oregon-bred composer/performer has finally stepped from the sidemen shadow

to the spotlight of center stage.

Tickets for David Sanborn and Chris Botti's Palace Theatre concert are \$30, \$25 and \$15, on sale at the Playhouse Square Ticket Office; PlayhouseSquare.com or at 216-241-6000.

## Paul Shapiro's Midnight Minyan brews soulful Jewish music

**CLEVELAND** – The Jewish Community Center (JCC) of Cleveland is pleased to present the dynamic meeting of down home jazz and rhythm and blues with Jewish music in Paul Shapiro's Midnight Minyan on Saturday, March 4 at 8 p.m. in Stonehill Auditorium at the Mandel JCC (26001 South Woodland Road in Beachwood).

As part of the JCC's Educational Surround Events Series, Paul Shapiro will lead a free workshop on Friday, March 3, 2006 from 4 to 5 pm, which explores the musical elements that create Jewish sonorities. What Makes Music Sound Jewish? will take place at the Hillel Center at Case Western Reserve University (11291 Euclid Avenue).

Advance tickets are \$20 for the general public, \$18 for JCC members, \$19 for seniors, and may be purchased by calling 800-766-6048 or going online to [www.tickets.com](http://www.tickets.com). Tickets may also be purchased at any Tops Market in Northeast Ohio. Tickets at the door are \$20; only full-priced tickets are available the night of the performance. All tickets are general admission seating.

Group rates (\$16 per ticket) are available for 10 or more by calling 216-593-6258.

New York-based saxophonist/flautist/composer Paul Shapiro ([www.PaulShapiroMusic.com](http://www.PaulShapiroMusic.com)) has been active in New York's creative music scene for over two decades. He is best known for his recording and performance work with an astonishingly diverse array of musicians and producers: Queen Latifah, Ofra Haza, Marc Anthony, Frankie Knuckles, Ben Folds Five, Janet Jackson, Naughty by Nature, Lou Reed, Khaled, Brian McKnight, Majek Fashek, Towa Tei, Marshall Crenshaw, N'Dea Davenport, Mariah Carey, Satoshi Tomile, and Yoko Kanno's Cowboy Bebop.

Throughout the eighties he led his own avant-funk band, Foreign Legion, which was featured on Emergency Records' compilation "This is the Funk." In the early nineties Shapiro started to record for many of the new producers of dance music and hip-hop. His full-length soprano sax improv can be heard on NuYorican Soul's anthemic "The Nervous Track." In 1994 Shapiro became a founding member of Brooklyn Funk Essentials, an international group of instrumentalists, spoken word artists and rappers who recorded for RCA and Shanachie Records. Shapiro wrote the score for Cheryl Dunye's critically acclaimed film *The Watermelon Woman* in 1998. Other composition credits include *The Sun Gets Blue*, a musical by William Electric Black, and *Presque Isle*, a play by Joyce Carol Oates. In 2004 Shapiro was commissioned by the Museum of Jewish Heritage to compose a new score that would accompany the 1925 silent boxing classic "His People," which was filmed on the lower eastside of New York.



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## JANIS JOPLIN

### Box of Pearls

#### COLUMBIA/LEGACY BOXED SET

Having just seen the play *Love, Janis*, I was all primed for this 5-disc set, which brings together all four of Janis Joplin's albums in one box, along with a bonus CD of rare, previously unissued tracks. While I believe it was first issued in 1999, it was again reissued in August of 2005. I doubt if there are many, if any, differences between the two – but there are many differences between this box and the 1993 3-CD set titled *Janis*.

This set features the four albums in their entirety - *Big Brother & The Holding Company*, *Cheap Thrills*, *I Got Dem Ol' Kozmic Blues Again Mama!* and *Pearl*. Each also has four bonus (one has three) tracks of live recordings from the band represented on the album, and each comes in a mini LP cover replica with the original artwork front and back.



The fifth CD contains two outtakes from the *Cheap Thrills* studio sessions and three live tracks from the Kozmic Blues Band recorded in Amsterdam and San Francisco in '69. These cuts are said to be available only in this set.

Where this box differs from the 1993 *Janis* set is that the complete albums were not represented in that version. That was a bit of a bummer for anyone hoping at the time to replace their Joplin vinyl with all her CDs in one sweep. Instead, two important songs from *Cheap Thrills* were replaced with much weaker versions - "Summertime" with an alternate take, and "Ball & Chain" with a live version.

Not only does *Box of Pearls* contain all *Janis*' albums in their original glory, the sound quality has been greatly improved - not just from the original CD versions (which probably didn't sound as good as the LPs), but from the 1993 box. These are the cleanest sounding Joplin recordings money can buy as we break open 2006.

Also enclosed in this longbox is a 36 page booklet with each album represented with its own section, all the recording and track information and rare photos. An essay is also included for each album, the first written by Sam Andrew (Big Brother and Kozmic Blues guitarist) and Jud Cost; and the other three by John Byrne Cooke (Joplin's road manager from '67-'70). Very interesting reading. The psychedelic artwork on the box appears to be patterned after *Janis' Porsche*, which was on display for some time at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.

If you prefer to buy single CDs, each of the Expanded Edition reissues of her four albums are also available, each with the same bonus tracks as are included on the four main CDs in the box. In either case, each album has been digitally mastered from the original source tapes for superb sound quality. The production of each album was overseen by Bob Irwin, the mastering Vic Anesini at Sony Music Studios in NYC, and the entire project was completed with the consultation and full approval of the Joplin estate. But, if you want to pick up all four albums, this set is pretty much a no-brainer. Throw in the book, the fifth CD, and you have one fine *Janis Joplin* collection.

Once again, the hats go off to the folks at Legacy Recordings for another excellent boxed set of reissued classics.

*Bill Wahl*

## HORACE SILVER QUINTET

### Silver's Blue

#### EPIC/LEGACY

Made at a time in jazz history when the more blues-oriented, less frenetic hard bop was flourishing—on the East Coast USA particularly—the music on this CD captures pianist Horace Silver (b. 1928) on what is considered one of his finest albums. Two recording dates in 1956 yielded the seven tunes on this CD, finalizing Silver's contractual obligation with Columbia under a contract signed around 1955 by Art Blakey, which gave each of Blakey's sidemen a separate contract.

Group members who recorded with Silver during that summer were Donald Byrd (trumpet), Joe Gordon (trumpet on 2 tracks), Hank Mobley (tenor saxophone), Doug Watkins (bass), Art Taylor (drums) and Kenny Clarke (drums on 2 tracks).

Touted as a master at composing tuneful melodies, Silver contributed three of the seven tunes (the title number, "To Beat or Not to Beat," and "Shoutin' Out"). The remaining tunes are interpretations of swinging standards such as the Gershwins' "How Long Has This Been Going On?," Frank Loesser's "I'll Know," Mobley's "Hank's Tune," and the Buddy Bernier-Jerry Brainin classic, "The Night Has A Thousand Eyes."

Adding to the enjoyment of this CD reissue produced by Michael Cuscuna, the 16-page liner booklet contains historic photos, original notes by Leonard Feather and "A Reminiscence" by Silver. It's an ear-pleasing representation of where Silver and his sidemen were in 1956 and should continue to give lasting pleasure to listeners.

*Nancy Ann Lee*

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## WILLIAM CLARKE

### Live In Germany

#### WATCH DOG

The late William Clarke had established himself as among the premiere harmonica players and performers in blues when he passed in 1996. His widow, Jeanette Clarke Lodovici, has previously issued some unreleased studio recordings for Clarke's many fans and has just produced a new CD, **Live in Germany**, (Watch Dog) that should be welcome by Clarke fans and those who love great blues harp.

From the opening notes of *Blown' Like Hell*, a torrid instrumental showcasing his strong driving play and full tone, to the closing moments of *Lollipop Mama*, Clarke was in top form. He was backed by a terrific band that included John 'Marx' Markowski on guitar (and vocal on Charles Brown's *I Cried Last Night*), Willie Brittle on bass and Eddie Clark on drums.

Most of the performances are interpretations of some terrific, but not over-recorded numbers from Muddy Waters, Walter Horton and Mercy Dee Walton. Clarke's strength as a singer is such that he can make a classic like *One Room Country Shack*, his own. New releases of Clarke are very welcome, but it's a bonus that the music is as good as it is here.

Ron Weinstock

## JOE WILLIAMS

### Havin' A Good Time!

#### HYENA RECORDS

Hyena has just issued this posthumous release by the great Joe Williams. Recorded at Pio's in Providence, Rhode Island in the snowy winter of 1964, this tape was among the items that the Estate of Joe Williams gave the Hamilton (NY) College Jazz Archive.

This is a club recording with the great blues and ballad singer backed by the Junior Mance Trio (Bob Cranshaw on bass and Mickey Roker on drums) with Ben Webster joining the proceedings. The sound is generally good with Williams' voice and Webster's sax having a definite presence in the mix. The backing trio can be felt, if not as prominent, listening to this, although Mance has plenty of space for his strong, bluesy piano playing.

There is a real nice mix of material opening with the Duke Ellington number *Just a Sittin' and A Rockin'*, using the lyrics of the Delta Rhythm Boys 1946 rendering of this number and a nice song for Webster who took the solo on Ellington's original. It's followed by *Kansas City Blues*, Williams' rendition of the Pete Johnson-Big Joe Turner blues classic *Piney Brown Blues*, with Williams pointedly saluting the Boss of the Blues in his intro. While not sure he knew all the words of the standard *That's All*, Williams more than gamely handles it for the request of the audience member who braved the blizzard conditions for the show.

Also on the program are a couple of Fats Waller classics, *Ain't Misbehavin'* and *Honeysuckle Rose*, some other standards and Williams' hit *Alright, Ok, You Win*.

I suspect the presence of Webster is a factor in the release of this material which is a welcome addition to Williams' discography and a release that is consistently enjoyable. It also leads to anticipation of further releases of Williams recordings from the Hamilton jazz Archives.

Ron Weinstock

## OTIS RUSH TAIL DRAGGER MISSISSIPPI HEAT ZORA YOUNG

### New Delmark blues releases

#### DELMARK RECORDS

#### Otis Rush

News of a previously unissued live recording of **Otis Rush** from the mid-seventies created much excitement among blues enthusiasts. Rush, a Mississippi native, moved to Chicago and became part of the West Side Chicago blues scene playing some blistering guitar and singing with great fervor. One of many blues artists in the post-B.B. King style, Rush's first recording for the Cobra label, *I Cant Quit You Baby*, charted on the R&B charts, and was followed by early recordings including *All Your Love (I Miss Loving)*, *My Love Will Never Die*, and *Three Times a Fool*. After the Cobra label folded, he briefly was on Chess and then Don Robey signed him but only issued one single, *Homework*. Many of these songs have become part of the modern blues repertoire and covered by such blues-rock acts as John Mayall, Led Zeppelin and J. Geils. He was one of the artists featured on the legendary **Chicago, The Blues Today** series and has had a number of albums issued over the past three decades.

Delmark issued **Cold Day in Hell** in the mid-1970s and it had received a fair amount of airplay on rock station WXRT which led to WXRT recording and broadcasting Rush in performance from Chicago's Wise Fools Pub in January 1976. Now about three decades later, this performance is available for all blues lovers on a new Delmark CD, **All Your Love I Miss Loving**. Featuring his superb band of the time with Bob Levis on second guitar, Bob Stroger on bass, Jesse Green on drums and Alberto Gianquinto (ex-James Cotton, ex-Santana) on piano, Rush is in superb form opening with B.B. King's *Please Love Me* and redoing his *All Your Love* and *It Takes Time* as well other songs from King, T-Bone Walker and Chuck Willis. To hear Rush, one of the most intense guitarists in the blues, laying out his soul singing *You're Breaking My Heart*, or rearranging T-Bone Walker's *Mean Old World* to the melody of *I Cant Quit You Baby*, one is treated to a performance that will reaffirm for many of us why we love the blues, to paraphrase Steve Tomashefsky's liner notes. Few blues artists put as much soul into their performances and reach the level that Rush at his best achieved, and he was at his best that January 1976 night at the Wise Fools Pub.

#### Tail Dragger

Another new Delmark release is one of two that is on CD and DVD. James Y. Jones, the Chicago blues singer, took his stage name Tail Dragger from a Howlin Wolf song. This was fitting insofar as Wolf was a mentor and heavy influence on him as reflected in his singing, stage act and his music which employs some of the grooves and melodies associated with some of Wolf's classic recordings, even tossing in a yodel-like Howl on several tracks. His new CD and DVD on Delmark are both titled **My Head is Bald, Live at Vern's Friendly Lounge, Chicago**. He certainly benefits from a terrific band that has Billy Branch on harmonica, Lurrie Bell on Guitar, Kevin Shanahan on guitar, Bob Stroger on bass, Kenny Smith on drums and Willie Young on tenor sax. Jimmy Dawkins replaces Shanahan on *My Head is Bald*. Tail Dragger contrib-

uted all the songs except Jimmy Dawkins' "So Ezee." One song, *Cold Out Doors*, is a DVD bonus track not on the CD. While one would be hard-pressed to call the Tail Dragger a major artist, he certainly entertains with a program that evokes the Wolf. His vocals are slightly slurred and don't have Wolf's crispness nor is he as forceful as Wolf was, but still is a very enjoyable singer with the band rocking behind him. Billy Branch is typically outstanding while Lurrie Bells stinging lines and riffs evoke Hubert Sumlin's playing with Wolf. The rhythm duo of Stroger and Smith provide a solid foundation for everybody else. Songs like *Tend to Your Business*, *My Woman is Gone*, and the title track, are typically of the solid evocation of Wolf's music present throughout and it's entertaining to watch the DVD to see Tail Dragger singing for the woman, working the crowd and egging his musicians on. I was also impressed by the camera work and production on the DVD, which really gives a sense of that evening at Vern's Friendly Lounge. This is certainly welcome as an entertaining release that should appeal to fans of classic Chicago blues.

#### Mississippi Heat

Another new Delmark offering in both CD and DVD formats is Mississippi

Heat, *'One Eye Open - Live at Rosa's Lounge, Chicago*. Mississippi Heat is the wonderful group that Israeli-born Pierre Lacocque has organized and fronted using some of the finest, if not best known Chicago blues musicians. Mixing in some choice blues classic with his own fine originals, Lacocque has been varying personnel to his group, but they have always had a strong Chicago blues ensemble sound that supported the vocalists and the soloists. It's hard not to notice Lacocque's strong harp playing that evokes Carey Bell at times with his vocalized playing and fat tone. This edition of Mississippi Heat also benefits from the stunning guitar of Lurrie Bell and the strong rhythm of Chris 'Hambone' Cameron's keyboards, Sturling Banks' bass and Kenny Smith on drums. While Lurrie Bell takes two nice vocals on *Muddy Waters' 19 Years Old*, and T-Bone Walker's *Cold, Cold Feeling*, it is a wonderful vocalist, Inetta Visor, who currently fronts the band and introduces Pierre as "the man who came up with the plan" for the opening instrumental, *Rosa's Strut*, that showcases his playing and the band's nice ensemble sound as they provide that nice walking tempo behind him. After Lurrie Bell's fine delivery of *19 Years Old*, Ms. Visor takes the mike to deliver Frederick Knight's amusing *I've*

*Got to Sleep With One Eye Open*, as she has to keep her eye open to keep her man from loving her all night, which is quite a different take than the usual story of the mistreating lover who is way too quick. Guitarist Max Valdeneu takes the lead here. Pierre opens on chromatic harp as Inetta sings his *Dirty Deal* about being "so in love, I could not see he was giving me a dirty deal." *Cool Twist* is a nice rocking dance tune while the DVD only *Moanin' and Cryin'* is a fine slow blues followed by *She Ain't Your Toy*, where Inetta gives a male friend some advice. Eddie Harris' *Listen Here* provides Pierre with another showcase of his harp as the performance concludes in a most satisfactory fashion. The DVD thankfully focuses on the performers with some crowd shots mixed in but not to distraction. Like Tail Dragger's DVD, the focus is on the music and the performers and let that do the talking. There is some really strong Chicago blues here as well and whichever format you choose, you should find it to your liking.

#### Zora Young

The final new Delmark release is from Zora Young, *Tore Up From the Floor Up*. Young has been part of the Chicago club scene for several decades and first recorded in the early 1980s. She has developed an international reputa-

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tion through touring and has a small body of recordings including a 2002 Delmark disc, **Learned My Lesson**.

Here she is supported by a band that includes guitarist Pete Allen and Bobby Dirninger on keyboards with horns added to two tracks. She is heard on a mix of originals and songs associated with (among others) B.B. King, Bobby Bland, and O.V. Wright. Certainly there is nothing wrong with the material from the opening reworking of Bobby Bland's *Love of Mine* to the ballad medley of *Since I feel For You/Silhouettes*, and the low-key down-home groove of Muddy's *Two Trains Running*. Her own material is pretty good including the title track or her topically laced *Til the Fat Lady Sings*. There is also a brief interview to close this release.

This is played and sung well enough, but while enjoyable I found little in Young's vocals or the band that was striking and memorable that would stand out among similar recent blues releases.

**Ron Weinstock**

## JESSICA WILLIAMS

### Live at Yoshi's – Volume 2

MAXJAZZ

Pianist Jessica Williams excels in this live-recorded nine-tune trio set with bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Victor Lewis, a sumptuous follow-up to her spectacular Volume 1 recording, reviewed in the JBR September-October 2004 issue (online at [www.jazz-blues.com](http://www.jazz-blues.com)).

Williams (born 1948, in Baltimore) studied at the Peabody

Conservatory from ages nine to 17. In 1968, she moved to Philadelphia where she worked with Philly Joe Jones and others and played electronic keyboards (and B-3) with local rock bands before relocating to San Francisco in 1977. By the mid-1980s, Williams had gained some notice as house pianist for Keystone Korner and had developed her signature style, documented mostly in recordings for small labels.

As on Volume 1, Drummond and Lewis tastefully augment her style. Here, the threesome serves up fresh readings of standards such as Miles Davis's "Flamenco Sketches," a swinging "Why Do I Love You," a playful Monkish take on "Lulu's Back In Town," and a poignant rendering of "Summertime." Included on this set are four diverse Williams originals: the pretty ballads "Spoken Softly" and "Soldaji," the waltzing Monk-inspired "Elbow Room" and the straight-ahead gem "Dear Gaylord."

A melodious player, Williams caresses each tune as if she were discovering its beauty for the first time. Her elegant arrangements, spacious phrasing, unexpected twists of technique, and plenty of imagination make for totally satisfying listening.

**Nancy Ann Lee**

## DOUG MACLEOD

Dubb

BLACK & TAN

Years ago in the Washington D.C. area, legendary WPFW-FM blues radio personality Jerry 'The Bama' Washington would play at least a couple of times a month an evocative song, *Night Bird*, by one Doug MacLeod (some may be familiar with Eva Cassidy's recording of this song). Hearing this led me to the **No Road Back Home** album that MacLeod, Dennis Walker and Bruce Bromberg produced. MacLeod has since compiled a fairly extensive discography and established himself for his evocative vocals, guitar and songs, rooted in the blues tradition but speaking from personal experiences.

In recent years he has eschewed the electric guitar, preferring to perform and record acoustically with the focus on his intricate fingerstyle guitar as well as slide playing, and his intimate

vocals. His most recent disc on the Dutch Black & Tan label it titled **Dubb**, which refers to the nickname the late legend George 'Harmonica' Smith gave him. He's backed by bassist Denny Croy and drummer Dave Kida with Carl Sonny Leyland adding some piano for several tracks. Songs that spin some philosophical take on relationships, (*If You Going to the Dog House*) mix with songs about a woman who really gets down and upsets the neighborhood (*She's Boogy'n*), a touch of cynicism about our supposedly public spirited politicians (*Dubb's Talkin' Politician Blues*), observations of someone who can't stop yapping (*One Fool Show*) and a lying lover (*\$50 Wig* with its line "You got a \$50 wig, setting on a \$5 head), and a touch of the *Dust My Broom* melody (*North Country Woman*).

Some songs I am sure will grab you more than others, but certainly Macleod's songs ring a bit bluer than some award-winners – and his understated approach stands out with so much rocked out music these days. Seems like some good material to cover in here as well. Definitely a release to check out.

**Ron Weinstock**

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## LAFAYETTE GILCHRIST

### Towards The Shining Path

HYENA

If Lafayette Gilchrist's "lid" evokes an image of Monk, that's not the end of it. The idiosyncrasy that permeates the Baltimore-based pianist's compositions will only reinforce the picture. It's an eccentricity marked by the quirky Monk-like angularity found in abundance in "heads," bass lines and in Gilchrist's own solo stretches.

Underneath lies funk from a classic jazz perspective and in the hands of the leader (also a member of saxophonist David Murray's nonet) and his seven-piece crew (four horns and rhythm) it's a format for inventive and highly charged workouts. This is music that is creative, strong, fun and that refuses to sit still long enough to pigeon-hole.

Gilchrist has the makings of a major jazz figure and listeners are encouraged to sign on early. *Duane Verh*

## ELVIN BISHOP

### Gettin' My Groove Back

BLIND PIG

Okay, for those of you late to class, here's the deal on Elvin Bishop: Raised in Tulsa, he took to the blues at an early age. He moved to Chicago to pursue a college degree he and was soon introduced to the Southside blues scene where he not only learned at the feet of legends such as Little Smokey Smother and Otis Rush, but soon had a fateful meeting with a young Paul Butterfield which led to the formation of the Paul Butterfield Blues Band.

Once Michael Bloomfield joined the fold the band introduced the concept of twin lead guitars and soon proceeded to cut some of the discs that finally brought the blues to a wider white audience including the self-titled *Paul Butterfield Blues Band*, *East West* and *The Resurrection of Pigboy Crabshaw*. Bishop eventually took off on his own and put a number of songs on the charts including *Travelin' Shoes* and *Sure Feels Good*. In 1975 he scored big with the cross over single, *Fooled Around and Fell in Love*, which featured future Jefferson Starship vocalist Mickey Thomas on lead vocals. Bishop continued a prolific output of new material through the 70's and 80's with no new hits and slowed down considerably in the 90's with only a couple of releases on the Alligator label.

Bishop is now ready to jump start his recording career with this new effort on Blind Pig which marks his first entry into the recording studio in several years. Unlike too many of his past efforts where his frequent focus on goofy novelty type tunes and the quest for another cross over hit have masked his considerable talent on both guitar and vocals, this release seems tightly focused and hot wired into the blues. Kicking things off with the gritty *What the Hell Is Going On*, Bishop hits a number of blues bases including and Allman Brothers inspired slide instrumental, *Sweet Dreams*, the highly funky *That's My Thing*, *Blues Train* and *Got To Be in New Orleans*, and southern fried soul that would fit nicely on a Blind Boys of Alabama disc, *I'll Be Glad*. Deep John Lee Hooker style blues make an appearance on *Come On Blues* which features plenty of raw guitar and Bishop's desperate plea for the blues to help him make it through a tough spot.

Unable to leave without a party, Bishop closes the disc with *Party Til the Cows Come Home*, a jumping little number that lives up to its title. If Bishop ever lost his groove he's got it back big time on this disc. *Mark Smith*

## RAZIA

### Magical

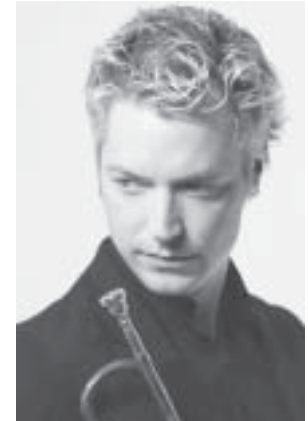
RAZIASAID MUSIC

An interesting album has come from a singer known as Razia, who was born in Madagascar, an island just a bit less than twice the size of Arizona located 250 miles off the south-east coast of Africa. While she has been billed as a smooth jazz vocalist and likened to Sade, perhaps the best description I've seen is "NYC world beat meets the sultry soul of Madagascar." True, like Sade she has a very smooth voice, and is quite sensual, but the world rhythms add a whole different dimension to her music. There is actually quite a lot going on here.

The songs, all originals co-written by her acoustic guitarist, are lyrically rich, and most groove long in a medium tempo fashion, though some slow it way down. The arrangements are fresh, and she is backed by guitars, keyboards, bass and drums (live and programmed) with some tracks adding sax, trumpet and violin. Three percussionists are also on hand for the recording, adding to the world/island music effect. The background vocals, with Razia joined by three other voices, are rich and very smooth.

Razia, who grew up listening to traditional Malagasy music, The Beatles, Bob Marley, and James Brown, certainly has a sound that should appeal to a variety of tastes. Sweet stuff. If you want more information, go to [www.raziasaid.com](http://www.raziasaid.com), where you can also sample some tracks. *Bill Wahl*

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## BUDDY GUY

Bring Em In  
SILVERTONE RECORDS

Buddy Guy is one bluesman who has been enjoying a mighty successful career in recent years. He is one of the few blues artists to play Cleveland's House of Blues since it opened in late 2004, and I believe the only one to play there twice. His latest disc is a collection of well-known (and well-chosen) songs mixed with some originals with very good production quality.

Guy's impressive vocal range stands out as he opens the disc in a very high register on Curtis Mayfield's "Now You're Gone," and, after Wilson Pickett's "Ninety Nine And One Half," he drops it way down low for his original "What Kind Of Woman Is This." While some may yearn for more power guitar work from Buddy than is heard on most of the album, he does let it loose on Screamin' Jay Hawkins' "I Put A Spell On You," for which he is joined by Carlos Santana. The two of them really go at it for a while there.

After a rendition of Eddie Floyd's "On A Saturday Night," he is joined by Tracy Chapman for a haunting version of Bill Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine" - one of the several standout tracks. "I've Got Dreams To Remember," the Otis Redding chestnut, finds him paired with guitarist/vocalist John Mayer and is the sweet ballad of the bunch. Dylan's "Lay Lady Lay" doesn't really work - might be one of those songs best left uncovered as Dylan's incredibly low vocals will always rule. The "Cheaper To Keep Her/Blues In The Night" medley, sans guests, does work quite well though.

Closing out the album are Guy's rendition of "Cut You Loose," for which he does cut it loose on guitar for the first time since his above meeting with Carlos; Keb Mo's "The Price You Gotta Pay" finds Buddy joined by the Stones' Keith Richards on guitar, and the closing tune is Guy's version of Isaac Hayes' soul classic "Do Your Thing."

On board with Buddy for most of this voyage on the seas of blues, R&B and soul are Willie Weeks/bass, Steve Jordan/drums, Bernie Worrell/keyboards and Danny "Kootch" Kortchmar/guitar. Keb Mo is heard on some of the songs, and horn players are added for several as well. Though some purists may feel left short, this is a good, solid crossover effort from Guy. **Bill Wahl**

## ART BLAKEY AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS

Drum Suite  
COLUMBIA/LEGACY

This reissue featuring drummer Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers adds three bonus tracks to the six tunes on the original LP. Three different Blakey bands are featured.

Recorded in 1957, tracks 1-3 feature The Art Blakey Percussion Ensemble with Ray Bryant (piano), Oscar Pettiford (bass, cello), Blakey or Jo Jones (drums) and three percussionists. They perform appealing beat-driven numbers: Blakey's original "The Sacrifice," Bryant's "Cubano Chant," and Pettiford's "Oscalypso."

The remaining tracks were recorded on two separate dates in 1956. Tracks 4-6 spotlight the Messengers' band version with Bill Hardman, (trumpet), Jackie McLean (alto sax), Sam Bockery (piano), Spanky DeBrest and leader Blakey. They perform the Gigi Gryce tune "Nica's Tempo" as well as Mal Waldron's "D's Dilemma" and Bill Harman's "Just for Marty." Bonus tracks 7-9 capture the short-lived Messengers line-up with Donald Byrd (trumpet), Ira Sullivan (tenor sax, trumpet), Kenny Drew (piano), Wilbur Ware (bass) and Blakey interpreting Byrd originals.

While the first three tracks demonstrate Blakey's traps mastery, the remaining tracks here sound more like the expansive, hard-bop band we've come to recognize. Adding the Byrd tracks ("Lil' T [aka The Third]," and two different takes of "The New Message [aka Little T]") was a wise choice, as those are most appealing. If you're confused about the bonus titles, reissue producer Michael Cuscuna offers clarifying notes in the 24-page liner booklet, which also contains the original LP notes, an essay by drummer Kenny Washington, and attractive historic black-and-white photographs.

Slipping this disc into my computer's CD drive made my spyware program go nuts, but this is an A-plus package that's chock full of music and musings!  
**Nancy Ann Lee**

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## ROD PIAZZA

For The Chosen Who  
DELTA GROOVE

Rod Piazza ... the Mighty Flyers' terrific new disc, is a combined CD-DVD package that may be amongst the best recordings of Piazza's lengthy recording career. One reason to the Mighty Flyers' success among the blues' top touring bands is the band's stability reflected by the long tenure of pianist Honey Piazza and bassist Bill Stuve. Guitarist Henry Carvajal and drummer Paul Fasulo are relative newcomers to the Flyers and fit in like they have been there for a decade.

This new disc includes a number of choice covers, none of which have been overrecorded, such as Jimmy Reed's *I'm a Love You*, Ted Garrett's *You Can Make It If You Try*, John Lee Williamson's *Ground Hog Blues*, Ike Turner's *She Made My Blood Run Cold*, and a pair from Jimmy Rogers *Broken Hearted Blues* and *Trace of You*. On several tracks Phil Guy plays lead guitar, Finis Tasby plays bass and James Gadson plays drums. Piazza sings as good as I've ever heard him, and the group as a whole sounds terrific. There are too many highlights to mention as everything is first-rate, but Kid Ramos adds some nice lead guitar for *Broken Hearted Blues* while guitarist Carvajal evokes Turner's tremelo-laced guitar style on *She Made My Blood Run Cold*. *Ground Hog Blues* is a wonderful duet between Honey's piano and Rod Piazza's vocal and harp while *Shoestring*, a Red Prystock number I believe, serves as a showpiece for

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Rod Piazza's superb harpwork, as does the slow *Honey's Blues*, with Piazza playing some brooding chromatic harp while Honey comes across like Otis Spann and Phil Guy adds some strong fills. Johnny Dyer joins for a vocal duet on Little Walter's *Gotta Find My Baby*, while label head Chortkoff wrote and plays harp on *Call Me Dangerous*.

This disc has a DVD bonus that includes a 23-minute documentary overview of the recording of the CD along with the performers' views on this recording and the blues. Two of the performances are also captured on video along with a gallery of photos to complete this absolutely terrific blues recording package.

**Ron Weinstock**

## HOUSTON PERSON

### All Soul

#### HIGHNOTE

On this 10-tune studio date recorded in June 2005, tenor saxophonist Houston Person leads a solid session that varies from quartet to sextet configurations and spotlights pianist Stan Hope, bassist Per-Ola Gadd, and drummer Chip White (Person's traveling rhythm section) as well as guests Eddie Allen (trumpet) and label mate Randy Johnston (guitar).

Gadd, from Sweden, is the newest member of Person's rhythm team. Hope (b. 1933) is a veteran who joined the Houston Person-Etta Jones band in 1986. Trumpeter Eddie Allen is a new collaborator with Person.

The drawing title track is launched by Person with a smoky melody head before Allen and Johnston take improvised solos. An uptempo swinging take on Benny Carter's "Wonderland" provides solo space for all. On a churchy quartet rendition of the ballad "Let It Be Me," Person's playing brings to mind Ben Webster's sound. The full band gives Miles Davis' "So What" a brisk bopping reading. Probably the best track is the soulful quintet rendition (sans Allen) of Percy Mayfield's "Please Send Me Someone To Love." Person contributes two originals, the pulsing opener "Why Not" and the chugging, bluesy closer "Put It Right There."

A couple of the tracks seem overly arranged and/or not in the bluesy style we usually associate with Person. Overall though, there are plenty of appealing numbers and spectacular solos from everyone to make this CD a listening treat.

**Nancy Ann Lee**

## GEORGE GRUNTZ

### Ringing the Luminator

#### ACT RECORDS

Part of the Act label's Piano Works Series, this CD features internationally known pianist-composer-bandleader George Gruntz as a piano soloist for the first time in his four decade career.

Recognized primarily as a big band leader, Gruntz (b. 1932 in Basle, Switzerland) displays many expressions as he works his way through 15 solo piano tunes, a mixture of his originals and popular standards such as Victor Young's "My Foolish Heart," Thelonious Monk's "Well You Needn't," Dizzy Gillespie's "A Night In Tunisia," and tunes by George Gershwin, Andreas Vollenweider, Ray Anderson and more.

Gruntz possesses an engaging, confident keyboard style and flawless technique that melds serious music with the language of American jazz. His interpretations range from sweepingly romantic to bluesy to spirited, swinging and playful. Alone at the keys, he proves why his big band direction has drawn so many fans: he hears with an all-encompassing ear.

This lovely recording made in a church in Zurich is a true treat for those of us who have admired his band leadership in live performance. It's wonderful to hear another side of this widely respected, talented musician.

**Nancy Ann Lee**

## JOHNNY GUITAR WATSON

### The Funk Anthology

#### SHOUT FACTORY

Few folk have had as much influence in the worlds of blues soul and funk than Johnny 'Guitar' Watson. As David

Ritz notes in the liner notes of the two disc, **The Funk Anthology**, Watson lends a long shadow over hip hop, with the track *It's About the Dollar Bill* exemplifying this best, although rappers have long sampled his grooves and Snoop Doggy Dogg lifted a trademark phrase from Watson's *Bow Wow* (Which Watson in performance referred to as the dog song). He was a major influence on folks as varied as Etta James ("He's my model. He taught me to sing blues. He taught me to sing ballads...."), Jimi Hendrix, The Vaughan Brothers (who linked him with Freddie, Albert and B.B. King of guitarists they admired... "He made magic," according to Jimi), Prince and too many oth-

ers to list as well as being admired by so many others like Marvin Gaye, the Neville Brothers and Lightnin' Hopkins ("The blues gets all over everything. Watson is all over the blues and the blues is all over him.").

When he collapsed on stage in Japan during the second verse of *Superman Lover*, it ended a four-decade career that took him from Houston to the world and transformed Young John Watson into the Gangster of Love and Superman Lover. He was a pianist who could rock the boogie like Amos Milburn and a guitarist who wowed Frank Zappa with tracks like *Three Hours Past Midnight*. Then there is the incredible guitar showpiece from the mid-fifties space guitar plus his originals of *Gangster of Love*. I suspect Watson's recording of *One Room Country Shack* inspired Buddy Guy to do that number. Then there were his acclaimed piano album, the duets with Larry Williams which probably did not catch the mood of the audience turning to Motown, the two superb albums for fantasy which anticipated his maturation and his funkster era for DJM in the seventies.

The Funk Anthology has two and a half hours of Watson's music from his seven DJM albums From **Ain't it a Bitch** in 1976 to **Johnny 'Guitar' Watson and the Family Clone** (1981), as well as his last album in 1994, **Bow Wow** for Bellmark). There is at least one album that Watson did in the interim not represented, but this compilation made by his children certainly is full with some terrific music, some of which has become staples of blues and funk bands today, like *A Real Motha For Ya*, *Superman Lover*, *You Can Stay But the Noise Must Go* and *Bow Wow*. There's the humorous post-Watergate *I Don't Want to Be President* that he co-authored with Percy Mayfield (and on whose Atlantic recording of this Watson played). *I Want to Ta-Ta You Baby* has to be as sexy a love song as one is going to hear anywhere.

I am sure that some of those who complain about 'purists' in the blues will also dismiss this as funk and not blues, but the simple fact is for the 70s through the 90s this was as contemporary as the blues got. Shout Factory will be re-issuing the eight albums collected here separately, so this also serves as an introduction to those releases. These two discs will certainly keep things funky up quite nicely.

**Ron Weinstock**

PAGE FIFTEEN

**AHMAD JAMAL**  
**The Legendary OKEH**  
**& Epic Recordings**  
EPIC/LEGACY

Pittsburgh-born pianist Ahmad Jamal (1930—) is presented on this 21-tune reissue of three albums recorded and released at the dawn of his long, illustrious career.

Studio dates from 1951, 1952 and 1955 capture Jamal in peak form, interpreting an array of standards such as “The Surrey With the Fringe On Top,” “Love For Sale,” “Poinciana,” “Autumn Leaves,” “Perfidia,” “Squeeze Me,” “Old Devil Moon,” “The Donkey Serenade,” and other gems. Jamal contributes two originals, including “Aki and Ukthay,” a standout for its romanticism and movie-theme style.

Jamal competently switches moods, navigating tunes ranging from uptempo swingers to ballads to Latin numbers. His chops remain scintillating throughout as he constantly conjures up fresh interludes and grooves. Jamal’s amazingly diverse touch is, at times, light and airy and other times it is two-handed chordal and vigorous.

Guitarist Ray Crawford delivers sparkling moments in the spotlight and either bassist Eddie Calhoun (6 tracks) or Israel Crosby (15 tracks) agreeably solo and support Ahmad on these drumless sets. On “Don’t Blame Me,” Crawford’s muted plucking sounds like congas. You may not miss the drums at all.

Although no tune is over five minutes, there’s plenty of music to absorb and it’s a seamless recording despite the three separate recording dates and years in between. Included in the 16-page liner booklet are 1956 notes by Nat Hentoff and 2005 notes by Randy Weston/Brian Bacchus, as well as an array of photos from the original session released on LP. This is a wonderfully vibrant and imaginative display of the pianist’s talents that should satisfy his fans for years to come.

*Nancy Ann Lee*

# BLUES WATCH

**By Mark Smith**

New Release blues.... **John Long-Lost & Found**; **Delta Moon- Howlin’**; **Watermelon Slim- Watermelon Slim & The Workers**; **Deb Callahan- The Blue Pearl**; **Vargas Blues Band- Love, Union, Peace**; **Catfish Keith- Sweet Pea**; **Rose City Kings- Holler Out for More**; **Lee Rocker- Racin’ the Devil**; **Climax Blues Band- Rich Man**; **Sam Cooke- Love Songs**; **Etta James- Love Songs and The Ultimate Collection**; **Bettye LaVette- Take Another Piece of My Heart**; **Leadbelly- Collector’s Edition**; **Nina Simone- The Definitive Collection**; **Paul Butterfield- North South and Put It In Your Ear**; **Guitar Slim- Atco Sessions- 1956-1958**; **Otis Rush- Mourning in the Morning**; **Susan Tedeschi- The Best Of**; **Big Joe Turner- Boss Man’s Blues**; **Saffire the Uppity Blueswomen- Deluxe Edition**; **Various Artists- I Am the Resurrection; A Tribute to John Fahey**; **Eric Burdon- Soul of a Man.... What’s in a name blues....** The Blues Foundation has announced that its annual recognition of the finest in blues performances and recordings will now be called “**The Blues Music Awards**” instead of the “**W.C. Handy Blues Awards**.” “This is a move to bring broader visibility to the music we love.” noted Board President Kevin Kane. The 27th annual celebration of blues excellence, now known as “The Blues Music Awards,” will be held at the Cook Convention Center in Memphis on Thursday, May 11, 2006. The Handy name has been associated with the actual award since its inception in the Fall of 1980. Since the early ‘90s, the genre’s highest honors have been officially known as the W.C. Handy Blues Awards, in recognition of the man commonly referred to as “The Father of the Blues” because of his role in popularizing the music. Artists recording on the Blind Pig label racked up some impressive numbers with **Magic Slim & the Teardrops** pulling down five separate nominations, **Elvin Bishop** and the **Tommy Castro Band** pulling down two nominations each (and ironically enough facing off

against one another for **Contemporary Blues Album of the Year**), **Rod Piazza & the Mighty Flyers** pulling down three nominations for group and individual efforts and soul blues artist **Otis Clay** getting a nomination instead.... **Tragically quiet blues....** Blind Pig Records sadly announced the apparent end to up and coming blues singer **Renee Austin’s** recording career as a consequence of a paralyzed vocal chord. Austin’s 2003 national debut CD, *Sweet Talk*, sparked critical raves and predictions of greatness, with many comparing her to Janis Joplin and Tina Turner. It also led to a “Best New Artist Debut” W.C. Handy nomination and a slot on the PBS-TV film entitled *Blues Divas*. Her second Blind Pig release, *Right About Love*, impressed critics with her stunning vocal dynamism, her passion, and her remarkable versatility. In an open letter to her fans and supporters, Austin broke the heart-rending news, “I want to start by thanking all of my friends, family, fellow musicians, and fans for all the love and support you have given me over the years. As most of you know I released my second CD with Blind Pig Records *Right About Love* on August 16th. It is a piece of me that I am very proud of and a culmination of lots of hard work from many people. As some of you know I had to have surgery on September 13th to remove a lump on my thyroid gland. I feel blessed to be able to tell you that I am doing fine and the lump turned out to be cancer free. I regret to inform you all that as a result of the surgery my left vocal chord has been left paralyzed and is not working. The result of this is I can talk softly but I cannot sing. In the last couple of weeks after lots of medical opinions and various hospital visits my condition has been diagnosed as likely permanent. This means that I probably will never be able to sing again. I am working hard with a speech therapist to see if I can beat the odds and God willing raise my voice in song once again someday. Until that time comes I must say goodbye to you all as a singer and thank you again for all of the love and support you have given me. I thank God for the opportunities He gave me to live out my dream even if only for small window of time. I trust that He has a plan for my life and whatever that is, I will put my heart and soul into it just as I did my music. From the bottom of my heart- please know I thank all of you for your kindness to me and I will remember it always. May God Bless each of you.” .....That’s all for this month. See ya. Mark

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**Newsday, NYC 11/2005**

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