

september/october 2006

issue 286

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GUITAR SHORTY INTERVIEWED

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INSIDE: 2006 Gift Guide: Pt.1



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Published by Martin Wahl
Communications

Editor & Founder Bill Wahl

Layout & Design Bill Wahl

Operations Jim Martin
Pilar Martin

Contributors

Michael Braxton, Mark Cole, Dewey Forward, Steve Homick, Chris Hovan, Nancy Ann Lee, Peanuts, Mark Smith, Dave Sunde, Duane Verh and Ron Weinstock.

Photos of Guitar Shorty courtesy of Alligator Records

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Address all Correspondence to....

Jazz & Blues Report
19885 Detroit Road # 320
Rocky River, Ohio 44116

Main Office 216.651.0626
Editor's Desk ... 440.331.1930

Comments...billwahl@jazz-blues.com
Web www.jazz-blues.com

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GUITAR SHORTY INTERVIEWED

By Dave Sunde



There are few times in life that you have the opportunity to speak with someone who has forgotten more about the blues and music in general than most people will remember in a lifetime. I recently had the opportunity to not only listen to, but to learn from a true certified blues "Road Scholar," who narrated for me an exciting musical journey spanning five generations and whose career continues not only to thrive, but flourish to this day.

Born in Houston, Texas in 1939, David Kearney (Guitar Shorty) struggled through the breakup of his parents' marriage at a very young age. At the age of six David went to live with relatives in Florida. It was during this time that he found refuge in the sounds of the guitar. "I was so amazed by the sound of my Uncle Willie's guitar, we would just sit on the porch after dinner, I would sit on my uncle's lap and I would put my hand in his and press down on the strings and we would just play and imitate the sounds we would hear all around us," said David speaking from his home in Los An-

geles on a rare off day from the road. "I would come home from school and sneak in to my uncle Willie's bedroom and try my best to imitate him playing the guitar. I couldn't hardly get my arms over the guitar, so I would fall down on the floor and throw tantrums because I couldn't do what I wanted. Grandma finally had enough of all that and one morning she told my Uncle Willie point blank, I want you to teach this boy how to 'really' play the guitar before I kill him," said Shorty

Fast forward through years of late night static filled AM broadcasts crackling the southbound airwaves out of Cincinnati that helped further develop David's appreciative musical ear. T. Bone Walker, B.B. King and Gospel innovator Sister Rosetta Tharpe were the late night companions who spent late evenings influencing Shorty's future singing and playing style. David credits his grandmother for influencing his desire to sing in the church choir. "I had such a high pitched voice at the time, but I really loved singing in the choir and I really enjoyed those times," said David.

David's uncle soon realized that he needed a real guitar teacher. His grandma was instrumental having David meet his guitar teacher "WASH."

"He was left handed, played the guitar right handed, and at first I thought he was a midget, but later I learned he was actually a dwarf. We would meet twice a week for lessons and I picked up things so fast and found myself getting bored easily. I would skip ahead and complete 2-3 lessons ahead of time," David said.

It's during this chapter of the story where David said WASH told him "Someday he would be paying to see me play the guitar." David stated that "I just shrugged it off and couldn't comprehend it." After much practice, David became good enough to start traveling to Tampa to play gigs with Walter Johnson's band on a regular basis. "Walter would sit me on a stool

in front of a music stand and he would have me turn my volume all the way down and go through the motions like I was playing. He would tell me what key I was in and tell me to follow along with the band and act like I was playing with the rhythm section. He told me eventually he would allow me to turn up the volume and that is how I got started playing in a band," David relates.

It's during this time where the nickname "Guitar Shorty" comes into being. "There was a promoter in Florida named Dewey Richardson. I was playing weekends with Walter Johnson when at the end of the show, Richardson announced that there is going to be a very exciting new guitar player named Guitar Shorty at next week's show. I was very curious and excited, but at the same time I became very nervous. Now everyone else in the band was in on the joke except me. I spent the entire next week practicing to be sure that I was ready when I got to play with this new guitarist. When it was time for the gig, I was peeking thru the curtain and trying to get a glimpse of this mysterious guitar player. I sat backstage with the rest of the band while the promoter was introducing him to the crowd. The announcer says Ladies and 'Gentleman, please welcome Guitar Shorty.' I start looking around at the rest of the band and they were all looking back at me laughing. I then realized the joke and it hit me that I am supposed to be the exciting new guitar player. I froze and several of the band members had to pick me up and carry me out on the stage. Once I thawed out, I started to play and the crowd went nuts."

The time spent playing with Walter's band opened doors for other gigs playing with Ray Charles, Guitar Slim,

Otis Rush, Sam Cooke and others. It was during this time that Shorty's guitar teacher's words came true. "One Night as I was playing on stage with Ray Charles, I looked down in front and there WASH, my guitar teacher, holding two tickets and pointing to his heart, reminding me of the almost prophetic words he had said years earlier," said Shorty.

Over the ensuing years, Shorty has continued to deliver a steady stream of rockin' albums showcasing that full, deep resonant voice, intricate razor sharp guitar playing and the time tested desire to serve up enough low down blues to permanently cement his reputation as a solid, "one of a kind" live performer.

The story takes a interesting turn - forward to Vancouver, 1962. In the midst of nonstop playing and recording, Shorty meets and falls in love with a girl named Marsha, who just so happens to be the sister of one James Marshall Hendrix, better known in music circles as Jimi Hendrix. After meeting Hendrix at a family reunion,





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Shorty finds out that not only is Jimi familiar with Shorty's music, but Hendrix tells Shorty how much he has influenced his style and how he had patterned his playing style after him. "Jimi told me he would go AWOL from the military just to see me play. He said I was one of the most amazing guitar players he had ever seen," said Shorty

And that is not the end of the story, either.....

Just when you think the story can't get any better, Shorty's current projects with Alligator Records have delivered a one-two punch that blues music lovers will still be reeling from years down the road.

With the first release of WATCH YOUR BACK (Alligator 2004), Shorty delivered the goods to an audience desperate to hear music packing power and passion. It was classic Shorty - strong vocals, witty lyrics and enough in your face screaming guitar to satisfy even the most jaded listener. On his new release for Alligator, WE THE PEOPLE, produced by Wyzard and Brian Brinkerhoff, Shorty doesn't just rest on his past laurels and pick up where he left off...on the contrary, he decided to kick the ballistic buffet into overdrive, playing with a zeal and passion that is very hard to imitate, and all but unmatched in today's music scene. His lyrical insight adds color and dimension to the black and white reality of everyday life... "We The People" and the track "Cost Of Livin" is a social commentary right out of today's headlines. Without a doubt, Shorty has recorded his benchmark "THIS IS HOW TO ROCK" album that artists following his footsteps will be referring back to for years to come.

When asked what major differences he noticed on WE THE PEOPLE compared to the previous release, Shorty said "I had my producer's wife, who is a voice teacher, share some vocal tips with me. She noticed while I was singing I would throw my head back when I hit the high notes, and as a result, my voice would get hoarse and I could hardly talk at the end of the night. She taught me that I needed to keep my head down on the high notes, and since I have been doing that it has been an amazing difference," said Shorty. The album WE THE PEOPLE has a raucous sound to it, like it was recorded live in the studio. Check out the cut "Sonic Boom" to see what I mean. Shorty said it best, "That is what I was going for. I want that real live sound...dark and loud like a thundercloud."

The one and only disappointment I had with the album is the lack of clear disclaimer gracing the cover. It is only fitting that Alligator run a label on future copies stating the clear truthful facts: PLAYING THIS CD AT LOUD VOLUME LEVELS MAY RESULT IN A LACK OF ABILITY TO KEEP YOUR VEHICLE WITHIN THE LEGAL SPEED LIMITS - PLEASE DRIVE AND LISTEN TO THIS ALBUM AT YOUR OWN RISK.....

Guitar Shorty's Latest Release WE THE PEOPLE is available now on Alligator Records. Cleveland area readers can see Guitar Shorty live in concert September 21 opening for Johnny Winter at the House Of Blues.

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BLUES WATCH

By Mark Smith

New Release Blues..... WOW, with a release schedule this hot you won't soon be missing the warmth of summer: **G. Love- Lemonade**; **Maria Muldaur-Heart of Mine: Love Songs of Bob Dylan**; **Anthony Gomes- Music Is the Medicine**; **Kelly Joe Phelps- Tunesmith Retrofit**; **Jeremy Spencer- Precious Little**; **Albert Cummings- Working Man**; **Chris Whitley- Dislocation Blues**; **Delbert McClinton- Live From Austin, TX**; **Rory Block- The Lady and Mr. Johnson**; **Bill Perry- Don't Know Nothing About Love**; **Fiona Boyes- Lucky 13**; **Otis Rush- Troubles, Troubles**; **Professor Longhair-Rock 'n Roll Gumbo**; **The Nighthawks- Blue Moon in Your Eye**; **Johnny Winter- Rockin Bluesman**; **Studebaker John & The Hawks- Self-Made Man**; **Johnny Adams- The Great Johnny Adams R & B Album**; **Don Nix- I Don't Want No Trouble**; **Rory Gallagher- Live at Montreux**; **Georgie Fame & The Blue Flames- Yeh Yeh**; **Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown- Down South in the Bayou Country**; **Guitar Shorty- We the People**; **Robben Ford- City Life**; **Sherman Robertson & BluesMove- Guitar Man Live**; **Lil Dave Thompson- Got To Get Over You**; **Johnny Lee Schell- Schell Game**; **Trudy Lynn-I'm Still Here**; **The Kelly Richey Band- Speechless**; **Andy Fairweather Low- Sweet Soulful Music**; **Memphis Slim- Memphis Slim**; **Buddy Guy- Everyday We Have the Blues**; **Bill Lupkin- Where I Come From**; **Jeff Lang- Prepare Me Well**; **Tab Benoit- Best of the Bayou Blues**; **Barrelhouse Chuck and the All Star Blues Band Featuring Kim Wilson- Got My Eyes on You**; **Chris Smither- Leave the Light On**; **Furry Lewis- Fourth & Beale**; **Canned Heat- Instrumentals 1967-1996**; **Billie Holiday- God Bless the Child: The very Best of Billie Holiday**; **Mitch Kashmar- Wake Up & Worry**; **Sue Foley- Live in Europe (DVD only release)**; **Watermelon Slim- Big Shoes to Fill**; **The Robert Cray Band- Live from Across the Pond**; **Snooks Eaglin and His New Orleans Friends- The Sonet Blues Story**; **Various Artists- Battle of Hastings Street: Raw Detroit Blues & R & B From Joe's Record Shop 1953-1954**; **Ruth Brown- Brown Is Beautiful**; **Billie Holiday & Lester Young- The Complete Recordings**; **Fabulous Thunderbirds- Live From London (DVD only release)**; **Kilborn Alley Blues Band- Put it in the Alley**; **Dave Gross- Take the Gamble**; **Memo Gonzalez & Bluescasters- Live in the UK**; **Katherine Davis & The Chicago Boogie Ensemble- Rock this House- Live!**; **Eddie Burns- 2nd Degree Burns**; **The Calvin Owens Show- I Ain't Goona Be Yo' Dog No Mo': Blues Orchestra Volume 2**; **Phil Guy- He's My Blues Brother**; **Barbara Carr- Down Low Brother**; **Mark Hummel- Ain't Easy No More**; **William Lee Ellis- God's Tattoos**; **Eddie Kirkland- Democrat Blues**; **Bo Ramsey- Stranger Blues**; **Porterhouse Bob and Down to the Bone- Shoutin' at the Grave.... More awards blues.....** Well, the Grammy's *Æ* and the Blues Music (formerly W.C. Handy) Awards are now a matter of history. So what's left in the blues award world? Well how about magazine awards?

Living Blues has just published its list of winners as voted upon by its critics and readers. As is often the case the critics and readers found little common ground. Here's a few of the more notable awards: Blues Artist of the Year- Male: **Little Milton** (critics), **B.B. King** (readers); Blues Artist of the Year- Female: **Irma Thomas** (critics), **Shemekia Copeland** (readers); Best Blues Album- Contemporary: **Eddie Burns- 2nd Degree Burns** (critics), **Buddy Guy- Bring 'Em In** (readers); Most outstanding musician-guitar: **Magic Slim** (critics), **Buddy Guy** (readers); Most outstanding musician- harmonica- **Big George Brock** (critics), **Sam Myers** (readers); Most outstanding musician- keyboards: **Floyd Dixon** (critics), **Pinetop Perkins** (readers); Best live performer- **Bobby Rush** (critics), **Chick Willis** (readers); Most outstanding blues singer: **Etta James** (critics), **Soloman Burke** (readers). Congratulations to all the winners!! That's it for this month. See ya!

At the Rock Hall...

CLEVELAND – On September 20, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum will present a screening of Gandulf Hennig's remarkable film, *Fallen Angel: Gram Parsons*. The film examines Gram Parsons and his musical legacy. Parsons' sister, Diane, will appear with filmmaker Gandulf Hennig to screen the film and field questions about both the project and Parsons.

Hennig's film, described by *The Observer* as "A must-see for anyone who cares about music," features appearances by Keith Richards, Emmylou Harris, Dwight Yoakum, Bernie Leadon and others. *Fallen Angel*, which is available on DVD from Rhino, engages with the mythology surrounding its subject and, finally, helps its audience to see just why Gram Parsons has cast such a long shadow.

At only 26 years of age, Gram Parsons died on September 19, 1973. Celebrated as a pioneer in the area of country rock, Parsons preferred to call his genre "Cosmic American Music." After forming a series of early bands, including the International Submarine Band, Parsons joined the Byrds and gave focus to their celebrated recording *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*. After leaving the Byrds, Parsons would go on to form a deep kinship with Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones, form the Flying Burrito Brothers with Chris Hillman of the Byrds, and make two solo recordings featuring a young Emmylou Harris and members of Elvis Presley's band, including inductee James Burton.

The presentation will take place at 7p.m. in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum's Fourth Floor Theater. The screening is free to the public with reservations. Guests can call 216.515.8426 for to reserve tickets.

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum is the non-profit organization that exists to educate visitors, fans and scholars from around the world about the history and continuing significance of rock and roll music. It carries out this mission both through its operation of a world-class museum that collects, preserves, exhibits and interprets this art form and through its library and archives as well as its educational programs.

The Museum is open seven days a week from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. On Wednesdays the Museum is open until 9:00 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.



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JOE LOVANO Streams of Expression BLUE NOTE

Saxophonist Joe Lovano leads a large ensemble (expanded from his Nonet) for two suites that encapsulate 1950s Cool and 1960s avant-garde.

The Birth of the Cool Suite, a three-part suite conducted by Gunther Schuller (who also plays French horn), flirts with Fifties Cool and showcases tightly arranged horns. It begins with the languid "Prelude/Moon Dreams." Part 2 includes two interludes continuing on a similar theme but picks up the tempo, and Part 3, "Boplicity/Postlude," swings lightly and spotlights fine soloists.

The more adventurous five-part Streams of Expression Suite demonstrates the collective spontaneity and ideas that can flow within an ensemble. The suite was written for Lovano's ensemble and commissioned by the 2001 Monterey Jazz Festival to honor Miles Davis' 75th birthday, but due to 9/11, the ensemble was unable to perform

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at Monterey.

Not part of the suites, three other varied pieces – “Blue Sketches,” “Buck-eyes,” and “Big Ben” – admirably showcase Lovano and friends.

At his expressive best, Lovano sizzles on the front line, supported by colleagues Tim Hagans and Barry Ries (trumpet), Larry Farrell (trombone), Charles Russo (clarinet, bass clarinet), Steve Slagel (soprano & alto sax, flute), Michael Parloff (flute), George Garzone (tenor sax), Ralph Lalama (tenor sax, clarinet), Gary Smulyan (bari sax, bass clarinet), James Weidman and John Hicks (piano), Dennis Irwin (bass) and Lewis Nash (drums). On some parts, Lovano uses a specially designed double soprano saxophone, an Aulochrome which sounds like two soprano saxes playing simultaneously. It was designed specifically for him by famed instrument maker Francois Louis.

Lovano shows the full range of his skills on this CD and encourages stellar contributions from his talented musicians. Full of color and harmony, there are plenty of surprises in store for the listener on this enticing addition to Lovano’s discography. *Nancy Ann Lee*

GUITAR SHORTY

We The People ALLIGATOR

As testimony to the adage that “age ain’t nothin’ but a number,” Guitar Shorty’s new disc sounds even stronger than his very respectable 2004 outing *Watch Your Back..* This Sunshine State sexagenarian plays with an energy and attitude that sounds several decades his junior, triangulating blues, rock and r&b into the most infectious of hybrids. It’s a mix that years ago inspired his young brother-in-law - some kid named Hendrix- and hasn’t lost its power in the new century

From the title number (with acerbic lyrics so *a propos* for the imminent election season) on Shorty piles on track after ear-grabbing track, building a momentum, instrumentally and lyrically, that barely lets up anywhere during the set. What songs he didn’t contribute on are replete with irony (“I Got Your Number”) or *double-entendre* (“Fine Cadillac”) tailor-made for his blues-savvy vocals. The only problem Triple-A or satellite radio programmers may have with this set is settling on a par-

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ticular track or two for airplay- there are plenty of candidates.

If justice prevails *We The People* should make a star of Shorty. Pick this disc up and try to decide if it’s the guitar licks, the tunes or the vocals that are the ultimate attraction. Worth the money!!

Duane Verh

Guitar Shorty is appearing live at House of Blues Cleveland on Thursday, September 21 on a bill with Johnny Winter.

AL DI MEOLA

Consequence of Chaos TELARC

Al Di Meola’s fifth Telarc album begins a “new and refreshing period” for him, as he returns to playing solid-body electric guitar, backed by his marvelous core team (keyboardist Mario Parmisano, drummer Ernie Adams, percussionist Gumbi Ortiz) and special guests: pianist Chick Corea, drummer Steve Gadd, pianist-keyboardist Barry Miles, bassist John Patitucci and others.

After performing around the world, Di Meola retains the flavor of his special musical blend—a stunning mixture of jazz, World, funk and rock—with pretty melodies, uncomplicated textures, an array of colors and beats, appealing harmonies and an uplifting, modern sound. Written 12 years ago but recorded on both electric and acoustic guitars for this album, his ballad “Azucar” (performed with Gadd, Miles, Patitucci and Ortiz) cries for lyrics. Likewise, his ballad “Cry For You,” performed as a duo with Corea, has a tuneful romantic bent. Yet, there’s plenty of power in core group tunes such as the funk-Latinate numbers “San Marco,” “Tao,” “Red Moon,” and “Tempest.”

Di Meola was born in Jersey City, New Jersey on July 22, 1954. He began playing guitar at age eight and by his teens was fortifying his technique with jazz, bossa nova and a little classical. While at Boston’s Berklee School of Music, he got a call from Chick Corea inviting him to New York for a Return to Forever band rehearsal before a Carnegie Hall performance. That was his big break. After three landmark fusion albums, RTF disbanded in 1976 and Di Meola began his solo career. He made his Telarc debut with 1998’s *The Infinite Desire*, followed by *Winter Nights* (1999), *The Grande Passion* (2000), *Flesh On Flesh* (2002).

Every tune on this CD is a gem. And that’s what you’d expect from an award-winning jazz-fusion pioneer who’s sold more than six million records (including

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three gold albums) and who continues to musically explore and grow. This is a splendid recording with music so captivating you’ll want to listen again and again to pick up all the nuances.

Nancy Ann Lee

WILLIAM CLARKE

The Early Years Vol. 1

The Early Years Vol. 2

WATCHDOG RECORDS

It’s been way too long since William Clarke passed away. While his Alligator recordings are central to his recorded legacy, his widow, Jeannette Clarke-Lodovici continues to supplement that body of music with previously unissued recordings. Two volumes of Clarke’s *Early Years* have been issued on Watchdog Records, and will certainly be of considerable interest to fans of Clarke, modern blues harp and the West Coast mix of jump and Chicago blues.

Clarke certainly sang with as much authority and conviction as he played the harmonica with his big fat tone (on regular harp as well as on chromatic harmonica), showing the influence of his mentor, the late George ‘Harmonica’ Smith. Smith is heard on both of the two volumes with playing on a terrific untitled slow blues on Volume 2, while Clarke’s harp is heard behind Smith’s vocal on *Teenage Girl* on Volume 1. Others who make guest appearances here include Smokey Wilson on *Fine Little Mama* on Volume 1 and Johnny Dyer on Volume 2. A bonus on Volume 1 is the presence of Hollywood Fats on six tracks including Clarke’s easy rocking instrumental in the vein of *Off the Wall*, *Hittin’ Heavy*, the slow midnight after hours feel of a feature for his chromatic playing, *Blues Afterwhile*, as well as the imaginative rearrangement of Sonny Boy Williamson II’s *Keep It To Yourself*, set to the *Help Me/Green Onions* melody.

Volume 2 sports his interpretation of Louis Jordan’s *Early in the Morning*, and his strong singing on *The Feeling’s Gone*, and *Bloody Tears on My Pillow*. I would argue that none of his contemporaries were as strong as Clarke both a singer and harp player, not to mention that he was a fabulous songwriter.

These latest two posthumous discs are more than welcome additions to the available recordings by Clarke as they contain a number of superb performances. The only quibble is the CD packaging could be printed a bit more

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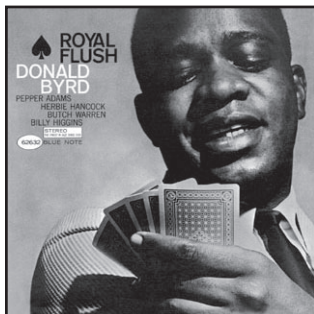


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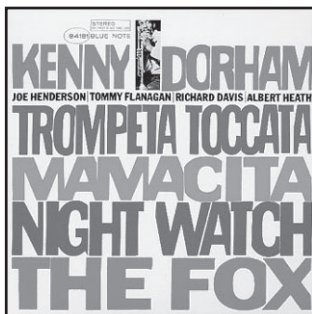
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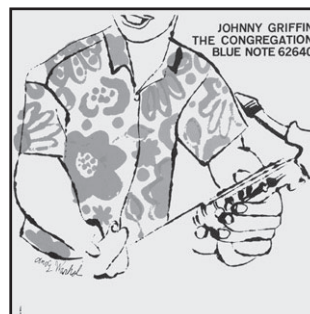
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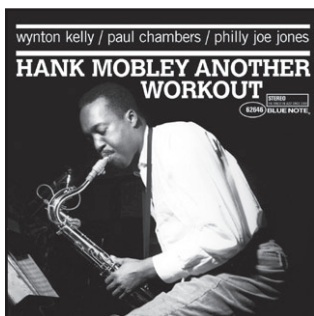
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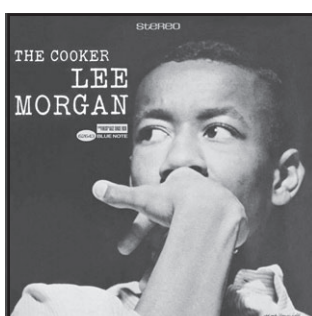
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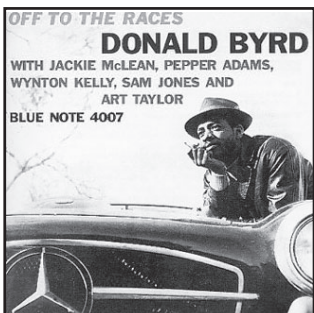


The Cooker, Lee Morgan

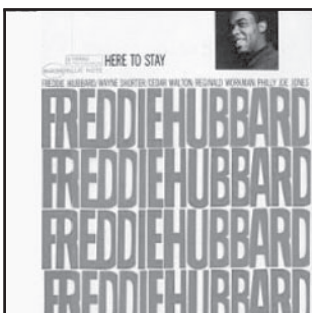


It Might as Well be Spring, Ike Quebec

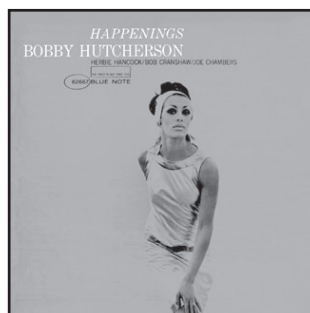
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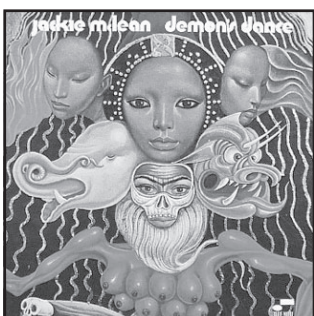
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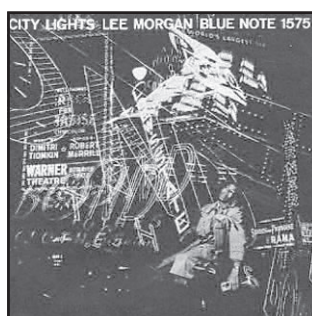
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STEFON HARRIS

African Tarantella:

Dances With Duke

BLUE NOTE

Vibraphonist Stefon Harris and his exceptional chamber jazz ensemble built around his acoustic quartet (pianist Xavier Davis, bassist Derrick Hodge, drummer Terreon Gully) and featuring Greg Tardy (clarinet), Steve Turre (trombone), Anne Drummond (flute), Junah Chung (viola), and Louise Dubin (cello) deliver two re-orchestrated Duke Ellington suites and a work by Harris.

As reworked by Harris, Ellington's *New Orleans Suite*, is a melodic tour-de-force, providing for some soulful renderings in the three movements: "Thanks for the Beautiful Land on the Delta," "Portrait of Wellman Braud," and "Bourbon Street Jangling Jollies." Colorful and melodically engaging, the pieces allow space for Harris' intelligent improvisations as well as spotlighted moments from other musicians.

The movements of *Queen's Suite* contain graceful passages without sacrificing soul. The bluesy "Sunset and the Mocking Bird" and the pensive ballad "The Single Petal of a Rose" again allow for inspired solos from Harris and solid orchestral accompaniment from his cohorts.

The final masterpiece, *The Gardener Meditations*, is Harris' commissioned work from The Wharton Center at Michigan State University and contains three parts, "Memoirs of a Frozen Summer," "African Tarantella," and "Dancing Enigma." This lovely work draws from personal experiences and speaks to Harris' "transition into the world of jazz."

Harris' outstanding sixth Blue Note album places him at the vanguard of the current jazz scene. Still in his early 30s, Harris shows musical maturity beyond his years. It's no wonder that he's been consistently recognized in critics polls and with Grammy nominations for his broad-based talents.

On this outing, he excels. His arrangements and performances sparkle with passion, elegance and creativity, making for a totally absorbing listen.

Nancy Ann Lee

FIONA BOYES & THE FORTUNE TELLERS

Lucky 13

YELLOW DOG

An Australian Bonnie Raitt? An outback Memphis Minnie? By the time this review is over, Fiona Boyes could possibly have more tags on her than the clearance rack at a Goodwill store, thanks to **Lucky 13**, her first American label release after toiling Down Under for at least a decade.

And, much like the fabled Cleveland weather, if you don't like what you are getting, wait three minutes or so because it is going to change. Boyes leaps from style to style, starting with Mark "Kaz" Kazanoff's harp pushing "Chicken Wants Corn" out of the starting gate before Stan Smith's clarinet and Marcia Ball's piano takes "Celebrate The Curves" in a honky tonk direction. "Stranger In Your Eyes" is a mix of jazz and blues as "High Cotton" is an all out revival of sorts. "Pigmeat Lover" visits New Orleans as Boyes then channels the spirit of Jackie Wilson during "Hold Me." Basically you name the form of music, any form, and it is on **Lucky 13**.

"Steady Rollin'" Bob Margolin is Boyes' secret weapon, though, working his slide magic throughout and giving a heartfelt duet with her on "Red Hot Kisses." She even takes a crack at southern mountain jazz aka rockabilly via "Rockabilly On The Radio."

Lucky 13? Not at all. There's no chance of fate here, just the talent of Fiona Boyes turned loose on the American listening public.

Peanuts

CEDAR WALTON

One Flight Down

HIGHNOTE

Recorded in April 2006, this nine-tune studio session by pianist Cedar Walton adds agreeably to his voluminous discography. Performing with bassist David Williams, drummer Joe Farnsworth and guest Vincent Herring (alto sax), Walton demonstrates why he remains one of jazz's greatest treasures.

The first two tracks, "One Flight Down" and "The Rubber Man," are lyrical, upbeat Walton originals spotlighting Herring. Although Walton's a splendid composer, the most enjoyable tracks here are the trio versions of standards by Billy Strayhorn ("Lush Life," "Raincheck"), Duke Ellington ("Day-

dream"), and others. Veteran Walton is widely known for his collaborations with Ron Carter and Billy Higgins and is at his best transforming tunes in a three-some.

Walton's light, melodious stylings underpinned with astute accompaniment from his team, lend sparkle, vitality and ingenuity to the selections. "Lush Life" becomes a swinging gem spiked with a quote or two. It's hard to imagine that anyone could refresh the warhorse "Time After Time," but under Walton's lead it's given a swinging new tempo. Williams plays melody head and plucks solos on a lively interpretation of the Sam Jones composition, "Seven Minds." Originally written for a bass choir and containing unison passages from Williams and Walton, it's a captivating piece in Walton's regular repertoire. The finale, Freddie Hubbard's "Little Sunflower," is a pulsating nearly 10-minute spree, full of quotes (one from "I Love Paris"), style shifts and imaginative improvs.

This trio excels. Farnsworth hasn't been with Walton as long as long-time colleague Williams (who anticipates Walton's every move), but the drummer's flexible and astute enough to know how to intuitively build excitement into each tune. This "keeper" recording captures 72-year-old Walton in transcendent form, performing this studio session with the same flowing dynamism as in his live performances.

Nancy Ann Lee

THE ROBERT CRAY BAND

Live From Across The Pond

NOZZLE RECORDS 2-CD SET

Prior to the release of Robert Cray's breakout recording, **Strong Persuader**, I happened to listen and record off the radio a live broadcast of the 1982 Long Beach Blues Festival among whose highlights was a young Robert Cray. One could hear a definite Albert Collins influence even if Cray's guitar playing didn't quite have Collins' fretful sound. Yet Cray's serpentine guitar playing had its own charms.

Over two decades later, Cray remains one of the few blues acts to break through and reach a pop audience in that period. After many studio albums, Cray and his Band have just issued this live 2-CD set from shows at Royal Albert Hall where he was opening for Eric Clapton.

He perhaps has left behind the Jesse Fortune number *Too Many Cooks*, but still

performs *Phone Booth*, and several songs from **Strong Persuader**, including *Right Next Door (Because of Me)*, *I Guess I Showed Her* and *Bad Influence*; along with other numbers that he has added over the intervening years such as *Poor Johnny*, and his anti-Iraq War number *Twenty* from his recent studio recordings. Perhaps because of his success, Cray has been criticized by some for the clean sound. Some would accuse his music of being antiseptic, although the performances here belie that claim as Cray invests quite a bit of passion into his performances. Cray's clean, urbane delivery of songs and his guitar playing should be viewed as more of style than relating to the substance of his performances. This music comes off much more successfully than the heavy metal sound of some blues rockers and is a good summing up of what he has meant musically for over two decades.

A very nice release that will please his fans...and even some who have shied away from his more recent work.

Ron Weinstock

JOHN McLAUGHLIN

Industrial Zen

VERVE

Darting, dancing thematic lines and solos of equally high velocity are, not surprisingly, the order of the day on the fusion guitar pioneer's latest set.

With dense and busy rhythmic and textural business underneath, McLaughlin has not slowed down in his mature years. Personnel varies track by track but the basic mix of acrobatic bass guitar, hyperactive drums and various synthetics behind the leader and saxists Bill Evans and Ada Rovatti remains fairly uniform in sound and energy.

Guests appear on some of the most interesting cuts. (Relatively) young guitar-slinger Eric Johnson joins in on "New Blues Old Bruise" and tabla master Zakir Hussein adds fire to

"To Bop or Not To Be". Rovatti contributes the most jazz-like presence to what's primarily a feast for hard-core fusion fans.

Duane Verh

JOHNNY "GUITAR" WATSON

Best Of The Funk Years

SHOUT FACTORY

Having issued the excellent two CD compilation of Johnny 'Guitar' Watson, as well as all of his DJM recordings and his last CD, Shout Factory has continued their releases with a special value CD of the original Gangster of Love, Johnny "Guitar" Watson.

Best of the Funk Years. This is taken exclusively from his DJM recordings, *Ain't It a Bitch*, *A Real Mother For Ya*, *I Need It*, *Superman Lover*, *What the Hell Is This*, and *I Want to Ta-Ta You Baby*.

Obviously anyone compiling this volume could have done it slightly differently, but this does have the most well-known tracks from this time of his career and is a representative slice of his influential recordings from this Watson era.

Ron Weinstock

JEFF HEALEY & THE JAZZ WIZARDS

IT'S TIGHT LIKE THAT

STONY PLAIN

Widely known as the guitar phenom with the peculiar "lap" playing style, the Canadian blues-rockers leads a second life as a traditional jazz trumpeter. It's an incarnation well known to patrons of Healey's popular Toronto music club (where the food ain't bad either). *It's Tight Like That* is as hot a session of any genre one might run across these days. Packed with early jazz hotties including "Basin Street Blues" and "Shiek of Araby", Healey and his pals turn out jams that are true to the form and bust-out fun as well. Reedman Christopher Plock and violinist

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SAT 23	SWAMP BOOGIE BAND
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	13 KENTUCKY THUNDER	11 KENTUCKY THUNDER
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Drew Jurecka are standouts in a lineup graced by the presence of British "trad" pioneer, trombonist Chris Barber.

For those whose only exposure to early jazz might be the end credits of a Woody Allen film, *It's Tight Like That* might be the ideal entry path. It's solid, entertaining fare in any case.

Duane Verh

MITCH WOODS

**BIG EASY BOOGIE
CLUB BB DVD/CD**

As the anniversary of Katrina passes, it's still rough to envision New Orleans as a place of merriment but Bay Area jump boogie pianist/vocalist Woods helps ease the lingering pain with this intimate tribute to the masters that birthed the Crescent City's distinctive r&b sound. It's a sound that spawned stacks of hits for hometown artists such as Fats Domino and Ernie K. Doe and was exported to the West Coast as a number of Big Easy fellas became session stalwarts for Specialty Records and other imprints.

This two-disc set highlights Woods' session and stage work with members of Fats Domino's band and supervised by Domino's working partner Dave Bartholomew. Woods' originals are cast in the classic New Orleans mold and made more authentic thanks to the support of legends including drummer Earl Palmer and tenor man Herb Hardesty. DVD interviews include both of these gents plus recording pioneer Cosimo Matassa. Any fan of this sound or anyone looking to get to know it would be well served with this set.

Duane Verh

PATRICIA BARBER

**MYTHOLOGIES
BLUE NOTE**

With the 2003 Guggenheim Fellowship award singer-pianist-composer Patricia Barber received, she created one of the most ambitious works of her career for her fifth Blue Note recording, her tenth overall.

Mythologies is a song-cycle based on Greek mythology, using parts of Ovid's epic poem, *Metamorphoses*, as a foundation for the 11 tunes on this disc featuring Chicago-based Barber's regular quartet and guests. While the subject matter may seem stuffy, Barber's varied compositions, her soft mid-range vocals, meaningful lyrics and piano accompaniment engage the listener as she sings about the sculptor who fell in love with a statue he made (Pygmalion), the god with artificial wings who flew too close to the sun and fell into the sea (Icarus), the daughter of Zeus and Demeter abducted by Hades to reign with him over the underworld (Persephone), and the vain youth doomed by the goddess Nemesis to fall in love with his own reflection, waste away and drown in Echo's pond (Narcissus).

Barber, guitarist Neal Alger, bassist Michael Arnopol, and drummer Eric Montzka are supported on this project by special guests (including background vocals from Choral Thunder) on some tracks. Alger shines in the spotlight, especially his raging electric guitar solos on the jazz-rock tunes, "Opheus/Sonnet" and "Whiteworld/Oedipus." Saxophonist Jim Gailloro deserves mention for nicely enhancing three tracks, most notably for his heartwarming solo on the lovely ballad, "Narcissus."

I've been hooked on Barber's creativity since her barefooted live performance at the Chicago Jazz Festival more than a decade ago and I've enjoyed every recording project she's

released. Barber's a unique talent whose imagination seems unlimited. She's an intelligent musician whose ideas are always cutting edge, yet accessible and ear-pleasing. As with her previous albums, Barber has written tunes containing pleasing melodies, storytelling lyrics and a lot of surprises.

Nancy Ann Lee

VARIOUS ARTISTS

**Eisenhower Blues
EMPIRE MUSICWERKS**

While J.B. Lenoir waxed a blues protesting the hard times during the administration of President Eisenhower during the 1950s, most of the recordings compiled on

Eisenhower Blues lack such a topical center but simply are strong blues recordings with most having a down home flavor. Long-time collectors will have some or many of these performances, but these remastered sides sound really strong. Others will discover a number of little-known artists that have much to say.

There are a couple of gems from Lenoir, including the title track and the lively medium tempo boogie, *Fine Girls*. The CD opens with John Brim's topical *Tough Time*, with Jimmy Reed on harmonica. Others heard here of note include Jody Williams (as Little Papa Joe) doing a peppy *Lookin' For My Baby*; Harp player and vocalist Dusty Brown (recently heard on Severn's Chicago harp anthology) on his fine downhome *Yes, She's Gone*; more downhome harp and vocals from Little Sammy Davis (who is still active and is occasionally on Imus' radio show) doing *1958 Blues* based on the *Rollin' & Tumblin'* riff; and Joe Hill Louis' *Jealous Man* (as Johnnie Louis) which sports a wild guitar break.

There is Sunnyland Slim's *Goin Back to Memphis*, another *Rollin' & Tumblin'* variant; Willie Egan's wild Fat Domino-inspired rocker *Wow Wow Wow*; a couple from Baby Boy Warren with Calvin Frazier on guitar and Washboard Willie (I believe on washboard), including *Mattie Mae*, adapted from a John Lee 'Sonny Boy' Williamson recording; an early Albert King recording (showing a bit of Elmore James influence), (*Be on Your Merry Way*); and Little Willie Foster's tough *Fallin' Rain Blues*."

There are other equally fine songs by others on this collection with annotation from Bill Dahl making for a treasure trove for the blues fan.

Ron Weinstock

HOT CLUB OF DETROIT

**Hot Club of Detroit
MACK AVENUE**

Formed in 2003, The Hot Club of Detroit makes their recording debut with this 13-tune collection in the style of Django Reinhardt and company in 1930s Paris.

Led by guitarist Evan Perri, these talented musicians keep the gypsy spirit vibrantly alive, performing Reinhardt favorites such as "Belleville," "Stompin' at Decca," "Anouman," and tunes by other composers, including Fats Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose" and two by Perri ("Swing One" and a variation on "The Godfather" theme). Performing with Perri are accordion player Julien Labro, bassist Shannon Wade, clarinetist Dave Bennett and rhythm guitarists Paul Brady and Colton Weatherston. While all of the cats can play, Labro stands out, especially on Perri's brisk number, "Swing One."

The son of a jazz guitarist, Perri started out playing bass

while growing up in Grosse Pointe, Michigan. He began playing rock guitar when he was 18 and was introduced to Reinhardt's gypsy jazz while attending college. When he returned to Detroit, Perri decided to form his own gypsy jazz group and, while at Wayne State studying music, taught a few of the best guys to play the music. The group went through some personnel changes and won first place in the 2004 Detroit International Jazz Festival competition and a 2006 award for Best Traditional Group. They continue to play various clubs and festivals as well as holding their own "Djangofest" each year.

New and old fans of this style of music will love this recording. The HCOD's polished light and lively performances make for satisfying listening and should grab new generations of fans not aware of the Reinhardt legacy. *Nancy Ann Lee*

WALTER TROUT AND FRIENDS

Full Circle
RUF RECORDS

For his first studio disc in five years, guitarist/singer Walter Trout has assembled a number of the high profile blues artists he has played with over the course of his 35 plus year career as a blues musician including John Mayall, Jeff Healy, Guitar Shorty, Junior Watson, James Harman, Coco Montoya, Bernard Allison, Deacon Jones and Finis Tasby.

This assembled talent gives Trout a chance to try on various shades of the blues rather than focusing solely on the scorching guitar on which he has built his reputation. "She Takes More Than She Gives" is a slow, grinding blues with a ringing guitar tone straight from the Santana bag of tricks while "A Busy Man" features James Harman's laid back vocals and

DID YOU MISS DUKE ROBILLARD AT THE SAVANNAH?

If so, you didn't have to. It was booked to late for our July-August issue, but we covered it in our August Web Special. Be sure to check our site for updates. It was a great show!
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harmonica but with a hard twist of a Trout guitar solo that separates the track from Harman's typical hipster jive which tends to wear a bit thin over the course of his own discs. "Workin' Overtime" could have been lifted straight off any number of 70's blues rock discs with its crunchy riffs and power chords. Mixing things up even more, Trout grabs the acoustic for "Firehouse Mama" with Eric Sardinas, throws down an over the top West Coast instrumental jumper with Junior Watson on "Slap Happy" and provides a steamy counterpart to Deacon Jones' cool B-3 grooves on "After Hours."

Those that need their fix of Trout's blistering guitar work will find plenty of it spread over the balance of the tracks. "Who's Listenin' In" re-unites Trout with former Bluesbreaker band mate Coco Montoya who joins Trout in a twin lead that sounds like the two have been sharing the stage together for the last 20 years rather than having gone their separate ways that long ago. On "Wrapped around Your Finger" and "Clouds on the Horizon" Trout gets sucked into aggressive guitar duels with Guitar Shorty and Joe Bonamassa who cut their host no slack and have the favor returned.

While bringing in guests on every track often reflects the need to pump up a flagging career that isn't the case here: Trout is simply sharing his guitar wealth with some well known friends. *Mark Smith*

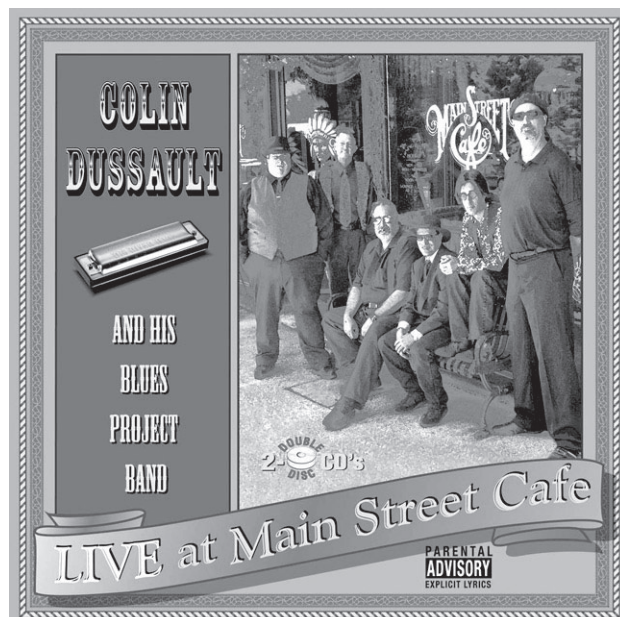
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MIKE STERN
Who Let The Cats Out
HEADS UP

Guitarist Mike Stern first came into the limelight through his work with Miles in the early eighties, and I well remember being *very* impressed with his performance at a Davis concert in Cleveland. He's had a good number of solo albums since then, showing that he is equally comfortable in a number of styles with the different releases.

For his Heads Up debut Stern reassures us of that fact, and does it all within one program of 11 well crafted original pieces – delving into straight-ahead, fusion, funk, Caribbean, blues, rock and whatever...and it all works. Not unlike I witnessed at a recent Duke Robillard performance, Stern shows us here the many facets of electric guitar in a set so varied that never comes close to bogging down with the “sameness” heard on too many CDs and live performances these days.

With musicians such as Dave Weckl, Jim Beard, Roy Hargrove and others in various groupings, Stern and cohorts deliver what may just be his best outing to date. **Bill Wahl**

NICK MOSS AND THE FLIPTOPS
Live at Chans

BLUE BELLA RECORDS

By now the story is part of blues legend: College kid Bruce Iglauer was so taken with the raw power of Hound Dog Taylor and the Houserockers that he used a small inheritance to fund the recording of a disc that served as the launching pad for what is now the world's largest independent blues label, Alligator Records. So, why the Alligator Records history to start out this review? Well, this could be the sound of history repeating itself. Blues fans Bob McLaren and Roy Souza have been so taken with Nick Moss and the Fliptops over the years that they hounded the band into recording this live disc in their home stomping grounds of Rhode Island. Joined by Monster Mike Welch on a number of cuts the band (Moss on guitar and vocals, Gerry Hundt on bass, guitar and harmonica, Victor Spann on drums and Willie Oshawny on piano, organ and bass) reveals ample justification for the zeal of their fans. While all too many bands pepper their live sets with chestnuts pulled from the tourist campfires like “Sweet Home Chicago” or “Reconsider Baby” Moss and crew mix hot wire renditions of lesser known classics from Freddie King, “I love the Woman,” Jimmy Witherspoon, “Your Red Wagon,” Buster Benton by way of Magic Slim, “It's Good in your Neighborhood,” and Earl Hooker, “Wine-O –Baby Boogie,” with Moss' own material to create a fantastic set of Chicago blues that will shake the tailfeathers of everyone from the beginner to the most hardened of blues fan. Skipping the caution that too often creeps into the mix when the tape is rolling live the band plays with an abandon that surely had the crowd at Chan's on the dance floor flailing about as the boogies and shuffles connected to their hips and feet.

With the abundance of guitar talent found within the band this could have been little more than a six string delight but the band wisely takes advantage of Oshawny's prowess on keyboards to produce a well balanced collection that will find the air guitarists in the crowd fighting for space with the piano aficionados that keep the likes of Mitch Woods and Miss Honey Piazza in business. Produced by music fans for the sheer joy of sharing their secret with fellow blues fans who haven't had the chance to catch Moss and the Fliptops live this is one of the best live discs to hit my player in some time. Sign me up as a convert. **Mark Smith**

PAGE TWELVE

Globe Trotting

SUGARCANE COLLINS
Way Down The River
SUGARCANE COLLINS.COM

Australian vocalist/guitarist Collins' self-released work is packed to the gills with the sort of energy and enthusiasm for traditional blues that charged the work of Brit revivalists such as Duster Bennett.

A powerful and engaging singer, Collins keeps this set of sparsely-backed originals varied and interesting structurally.

His romanticism might not sit well with everyone- all won't be persuaded by fictional tales of Texas prison breaks- but his obvious love for the genre comes through on every track and certainly suggests that he's a strong live performer. This one is available now at Collins' website at www.sugarcaneollins.com, where you can sample some of the tracks. A U.S. release is set for November. **Duane Verh**

Martin's Cooking Corner

RARE BLEND

Stops Along the Way TOUGH STREAM MUSIC

Having spent an inordinate amount of time this year with Alton Brown and Bobby Flay this disc comes to me...

Rare Blend, could be coffee... no, perhaps exotic teas from far away lands, or a interesting blend of various and delicious spices to bring back sweet audio aromas of the past ... Eureka!

Now, before you laugh, hear me out. In the same sense there was a very identifiable progressive rock sound in the mid to late 70s, think of it as... *andouille sausage, and chopped fresh oregano*. There was also a very identifiable fusion sound, say... *blue crab claw meat and roughly chopped garlic*. There was a tone, a timbre to the recordings, the feel of both time and space and genres borrowed from each other blurring the lines between both. The result-musical Gumbo... Rare Blend seems to do just that...a mix of very identifiable sounds and influences all blended artfully so you can pick each one out and savor it on its own, or enjoy the mixture as a whole. Here's the recipe.

The Stock:

2 cups	Tangerine Dream, Pink Floyd, Jan Hammer
1 cup	Weather Report, Brand X
1 lbs	Bebop Deluxe w/extra dash of Bill Nelson's tone
2 cups	Tony Williams, Bill Buford
2 tbls.	King Crimson, Gentle Giant
2 cups	Beck, Keaggy, Santana and Di Meola

The Roux:

1 portion	Victor Samalot (Electric and Acoustic Guitars)
1 portion	Bobbi Holt (Keyboards / vocals)
1 portion	Jeff Scott (Fretted and fretless bass guitars)
1 portion	Vince Broncaccio (Drums & Percussion)

Place in CD player and cook over medium heat for 60 minutes or until all 13 tracks are done. Let stand off the heat until the mixture in the gumbo pot has finished playing.

Good eats! Visit www.rareblend.net

Jim Martin

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Jazz & Blues Report 2006 Gift Guide • Part 1

For most of the past 30 years, we have featured our annual Holiday Gift Guide on the November-December issue. This year we are changing that. The 2006 Gift Guide begins with this issue and will carry over the next issues through the end of the year. That would include the November-December print issue as well as the October and December web issues available for download at jazz-blues.com. We'll probably wait until November to call it the Holiday Gift Guide. After all...it is still going to be warm, sunny and nice outside (or, so we hope) for quite some time...so no need to rush things. We will also be featuring a stand alone Gift Guide on our site which will combine the items covered in these columns along with boxed sets, DVDs and other goodies from previous issues, and even earlier years, which we feel would make great gifts. You'll also note that we go beyond jazz and blues to feature items that would make great gift ideas for your friends or family who might not be jazz or blues fans at all. Keep in mind, these in our regular issues are all newly-reviewed titles, so although they appear in the gift guide, you'll probably want to pick up some of these for yourself. You'll see more next month, but it all starts now!

CHICK COREA & GARY BURTON

Live at Montreux 1997

EAGLE ROCK ENTERTAINMENT

Appearing together at the Montreux Jazz Festival for the first time in 1997, pianist Chick Corea and vibraphonist Gary Burton deliver a scintillating seven-tune duo set. Performing mostly tunes from their new album, *Native Sense*, released three months after their Montreux collaboration, they prove how compatible they are as musician-improvisers.

There's not a dull moment on this DVD, partly because of the excellent camera work and effective use of video techniques, partly because both piano and vibes are melody instruments, but primarily because these two musicians had begun performing occasionally together in 1972 with the release of their ECM album, *Crystal Silence* and would work together on many future recording projects such as *Duet* (1978); *In Zurich*, 1979; *The Lyric Suite for Sextet* (1982) and other albums.

As they weave their way through lively numbers such as "Love Castle," "Native Sense," "Rhumbata," and others, they prove how well they anticipate and pick up on the other's lines and improvisations and, together, keep each tune moving along at an invigorating pace. Close-up camera angles capture Burton's four-mallet work and Corea's fingerings.

Thoroughly enjoyable, this DVD documents one of the best live-recorded jazz concerts and it's as fresh today as it was nearly 10 years ago. The varied fare includes a couple of Latinate pieces, a Monk composition ("Four In One") as well as Corea's compositions. Liner notes by Michael Heatley put everything into proper context. This is the only known Corea/Burton DVD and it's a treasure!

Nancy Ann Lee

NORMAN GRANZ' JAZZ IN MONTREUX

Presents Joe Pass '75

EAGLE ROCK ENTERTAINMENT (DVD)

Norman Granz signed Joe Pass (b. 1927—d. 1994) to Pablo records in 1973 and for the next two decades would continue to record and nurture the guitar legend to international fame.

This new DVD captures two nights of solo performances and the Montreux Jazz Festival in France by the then 48-year-old Pass.

Recorded on July 17 and 18, 1975, these are enthralling performances to absorb, in spite of some minor restoration glitches. Pass plays 16 tunes (about 79 minutes). The first night's concert includes the pensive ballad "More Than You Know"; a swinging uptempo version of "It's A Wonderful World" (where

you can really appreciate his picking/strumming technique); a gentle take on the Brazilian jazz classic, "Mahna De Carnaval"; a brisk "Joe's Blues"; a lovely well-constructed ballad reading of "I'm Glad There Is You," and more.

By popular demand, Pass was brought back for a second night. He plays an imaginative version of "Summertime" featuring single note lines, slides, and chords. His take on "Li'l Darlin'" is delightfully light and cheery. Other tunes include "The Very Thought Of You," "You Are the Sunshine Of My Life," "How Long Has This Been Going On," and others.

From all angles, the camera work is excellent especially the zoom shots that show Pass' fingering and strumming. Some sound glitches on the first night (on only a couple of tunes) are worked out by technicians before Pass continues and do not



THE WAY THINGS GO is a fresh take on traditional Blues from the veteran Bluesman. **CLEVELAND FATS** once again shows that he is a master singer, guitarist, and songwriter highlighting his talents on nine originals and three covers. This recording includes the re-teaming with his former boss and mentor **ROBERT LOCKWOOD, JR.** and special guest **BILLY BRANCH** on harmonica.



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reoccur the second night.

Joe Pass was such an inventive player. His improvisations remain as fresh today as they were 31 years ago. This DVD invites you to fall in love with the jazz guitarist and his formidable talents, whether you've heard him before or not.

Nancy Ann Lee

MILES DAVIS

Cool & Collected

COLUMBIA/LEGACY

This brand new compilation from Columbia/Legacy would be a fantastic introduction for anyone who is only somewhat familiar with the late, great Miles Davis. Those who have perhaps only heard his name associated with the term "jazz giant," or have maybe only heard his version of Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time" on a smooth jazz station can get an insight into who Miles really was, musically speaking, all contained on one tidy CD.

Starting off with the classic "So What" from the likewise classic *Kind Of Blue* album, the listener is taken on a somewhat career-spanning journey, culminating with a brand new remix of "It's About That Time," originally from *In A Silent Way*. The remix, though a short 3:40, features new recorded parts by Carlos Santana, and others. In between there are eleven more songs, including several with John Coltrane and Cannonball Adderley. There is one, "E.S.P.," with the Shorter/Hancock/Carter/Williams quintet, and one, "Summertime," with

an orchestra arranged and conducted by Gil Evans. Two of Miles' 80s crossover recordings, the above-mentioned "Time After Time" and the Michael Jackson hit "Human Nature" are included as well, filling in some of the later years. Some of the earlier songs on the set include "Milestones," "Stella By Starlight," "Round Midnight," "Bye Bye Blackbird," "Fran Dance" and "Seven Steps To Heaven."

Indeed, this is a very cool and very listenable set of music from Miles. It is obviously aimed at both the jazz and non-jazz markets, hence it is understandable why certain periods were omitted altogether – as including them would have defeated the purpose. Again, this would make a great, inexpensive gift for someone you might want to introduce to Miles. *Bill Wahl*

KING CURTIS

Live At The Fillmore West

RHINO/ATCO

ARETHA FRANKLIN


Live At The Fillmore West

RHINO/ATLANTIC

Rhino Records has recently released two classic soul albums from 1971 featuring King Curtis and Aretha Franklin, both recorded live at The Fillmore West in San Francisco.

The King Curtis CD features the saxophonist with Billy Preston on organ and "The Kingpins," Curtis' band which included Cornell Dupree on guitar, Truman Thomas on electric piano, Jerry Jemmott on bass, the super-funky Bernard "Pretty" Purdie on drums and Pancho Morales on congas. Also on hand were The Memphis Horns, led by Wayne Jackson and Andrew Love. Curtis and friends, many of the big names in soul and funk in that era, were in top form for the three nights of concerts represented in these recordings. The setlist includes Curtis' own "Soul Serenade" and "Memphis Soul Stew," along with songs such as "A Whiter Shade Of Pale," "Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I'm Yours," "Mr. Bojangles," "Ode To Billie Joe" and "Buddy Miles' "Changes." This reissue contains 5 bonus tracks not on the LP or previous CD issue on Koch Records. All are alternate takes of songs from different nights, except the previously unissued version of George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord," with Billy Preston on vocals. Sadly, just after the album entered the charts King Curtis was murdered – knifed outside his Manhattan apartment in August of '71. This album went on to become his best-selling ever, and reached #9 on Billboard's R&B Chart, later breaking into the top 60 on the Pop Chart.

The very same 3 nights in March of 1971 Aretha Franklin performed concerts at the same venue, which were recorded as well. Both on the same nights...what a bill. That, of course, made it very handy to have King Curtis, The Kingpins, Billy Preston and The Memphis Horns back up Aretha as well. Recorded at the height of her career, hitwise, Aretha delivers an outstanding performance with more energy and all around party atmosphere than heard on her many studio sides. The original LP issue is represented on Disc One of this two CD set, with ten tracks including "Respect," "Spirit In The Dark," "Make It With You," "Bridge Over Troubled Water," "Don't Play That Song," "Dr. Feelgood" and "Love The One You're With." The song "Spirit In The Dark" is reprised near the end of the set as Ray Charles, spotted in the audience, is brought up to perform with Aretha. Both versions of that song were edited on the original LP, but are included in their entirety here. The second CD contains 13 additional bonus tracks, which are alternate record-



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ings from other nights and the previously unissued cuts "Call Me," "Mixed Up Girl," "Share Your Love With Me," "You're All I Need To Get By" and "Don't Play That Song." This album would go on to top the R&B Charts and made the Top 10 in Pop.

Both releases were remixed for CD reissue and have good sound for the period. Both also have a booklet with photos and well-written, newly-penned notes by David Nathan. Very nice, feelgood stuff from the King and Queen. **Bill Wahl**

VARIOUS ARTISTS

That's Entertainment! The Ultimate Anthology of M-G-M Musicals

TURNER CLASSIC MOVIES/ RHINO MOVIE MUSIC

Turner Classic Movies Music and Rhino Movie Music revisit the centerpiece of their longstanding collaboration with this expanded and upgraded version of their 1995 five-disc collection from the golden age of M-G-M studio musicals. This new six-CD set includes songs from the earlier set, plus music never before released.

Documenting the three patchwork "That's Entertainment" musical films (released in 1974, 1976 and 1994), this collection provides nearly eight hours of listening pleasure, 135 tracks collected from original M-G-M musicals released between 1929 and 1957. Included are unforgettable soundtracks from more than 75 musicals such as *The Wizard of Oz*, *Meet Me In St. Louis*, *Singin' In the Rain*, *Easter Parade*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Brigadoon*, *An American In Paris*, *Show Boat*, *Gigi* and more. Songs are performed by big stars such as Judy Garland, Fred Astaire, Tony Martin, Lena Horne, Bing Crosby, Frank

Sinatra, Debbie Reynolds, Gene Kelly, and numerous others.

Gems such as "I Got Rhythm," "Thou Swell," "Easy To Love," "They Can't Take That Away From Me," "Dancing In The Dark," "Fascinating Rhythm," "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," "Taking A Chance On Love," "Lover Come Back To Me,"

"The Lady Is A Tramp," "Just One of Those Things," and other songs on this set have also become jazz standards.

Among tracks added that were not included in the original 1995 set are: three Bing Crosby duets (with Frank Sinatra, Louis Armstrong, Grace Kelly) from the 1956 film, *High Society*; Doris Day singing "Ten Cents A Dance" and "Shakin' the Blues Away"; Elvis Presley leading the prison band through "Jailhouse Rock"; and a performance from *Silk Stockings*, spotlighting Fred

Astaire and Janis Paige. The sixth disc features 25 demos, outtakes and complete versions of songs never released before. Still, even with sound quality improved on 30 percent of the tracks, it may not be enough incentive for owners of the 1995 edition to purchase this new edition.

While it may bother some listeners that CD tunes are not arranged in chronological order, it apparently makes more sense in the onscreen versions. Enhancing the attractively packaged set is a well-organized, informative, four-color, 108-page book containing historical facts about M-G-M studios, the musicals, the original films, and individual songs and artists.

An American Songbook treasure for both music and film fans, this CD set will have listeners reminiscing about all the great Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer musicals. **Nancy Ann Lee**

JOE LOVANO ENSEMBLE

Streams of Expressions: Featuring *The Birth of the Cool Suite* by Gunther Schuller

Hailed by *New York Times* as "one of the greatest musicians in jazz history," saxophonist Joe Lovano reunites with the great composer, conductor, and musicologist Gunther Schuller on *Streams of Expression*, and draws upon everything from the cool school to late-era Coltrane, offering a holistic take on jazz, present and future.



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TOMMY EMMANUEL

The Mystery
FAVORED NATIONS CD
Live At Her Majesty's Theatre,
Ballarat Australia
FAVORED NATIONS DVD

Fans of finger style guitar will want to check out these two new releases from Australian born Tommy Emmanuel. Playing guitar since four and performing professionally at six, Tommy was inspired by Chet Atkins, who he got a chance to record with on the Grammy-nominated album, *The Day The Finger Pickers Took Over The World*.

His new CD on Favored Nations finds him recording solo in the studio on a program blending folk, country, jazz, and pop with ease on twelve songs, mostly his own compositions. Two of the three that are not are Billy Joel's "And So It Goes" and Merle Travis' "Cannonball Rag," which he performs along with his own "Gameshow Rag."

He does some amazing work throughout, often playing two parts at once, and due to his broad scope of music, the proceedings never fall into a rut. One song, "Walls," features a female singer, his fiancée Elizabeth Watkins, as they do a duet on a folk/country/pop oriented piece. Emmanuel sings and plays all the instruments for that song on an otherwise all solo acoustic guitar outing.

If you like the CD and want more, or if you prefer to watch Tommy at work on your home theatre system, check out the just-released DVD recorded live live at Her Majesty's Theatre in Ballarat Australia. Tommy presents another diverse set of music, again performing solo, this time live before an audience of fellow Australians.

Those who question whether he overbubbled any parts on the studio CD will have any doubts squelched after watching his performances here. He does sing on a few cuts, and Elizabeth joins him singing four others. Some of the 16 songs from the set are heard on his Favored Nations CDs, including the new one reviewed above. Some commentaries and personal tidbits from Tommy are seen between some songs, which does understandable bother some people who would rather watch the concert by itself and view the extras later.

But, that being the only flaw, I'll add

that the camera work is very well done (with just enough close-ups of his fingers), as is the sound, which is offered in Dolby Digital Stereo and DTS Surround.

Two very fine offerings from Tommy Emmanuel. *Bill Wahl*

ROY ORBISON

The Essential Roy Orbison
GEORGE JONES

The Essential George Jones
JOHNNY CASH

Man In Black DVD
LEGACY RECORDS

Except for the recent exceptional Big Al Anderson CD on Legacy, where he mixed country, jazz and pop – we don't cover country music very often. But with the gift-giving season shortly being cleared for takeoff – these three items would all make very good options for the right person on your list.

Although Roy Orbison is not a country singer, he actually did start there prior to passing through rockabilly and rock & roll before pretty much forging his own musical genre with a slew of lost love ballads. *The Essential Roy Orbison on Monument/Legacy* briefly covers his early years on Sun Records before heavily focusing on the Orbison most are familiar with. That would be his Monument Records years, a label he began recording for in 1959. A year later his career took off with a bang with the first big lost love ballad titled "Only The Lonely," which hit #2 on the pop chart. This set is loaded with Orbison hits after that, such as "Love Hurts," "Crying," "Candy Man," "Dream Baby," "Leah," "Falling," "Mean Woman Blues," "Blue Bayou," "It's Over" and "Oh, Pretty Woman." We are now only up to 1963, and soon that song would reach #1.

Also included on this 2-CD set are another 19 cuts on disc 2 covering his years on MGM, Virgin, Warner Bros, Mercury and Orbison Records. It is loaded with gems, starting off with "You Got It" and four more tracks from his posthumous *Mystery Girl* album and ends with "Life Fades Away" from the *Less Than Zero* Soundtrack, released in 1987. Ironically, Roy Orbison died of heart failure the next year. A great sounding, well put together retrospective for an American music legend.

A country music legend is represented with a recent Legacy

reissue...that being George Jones. *The Essential George Jones on Epic/Legacy* covers his long and storied career beginning in 1954 and sampling his King, Mercury and United Artists recordings before delving into his Long association with Epic Records. The Epic period begins with the last 5 songs on disc one, 1971-3, and continues on with the first 19 out of the 20 on Disc 2. The final song, "Choices," was recorded in 1999 for an Elektra album. Another good sounding set of recordings, this would make a great gift for a "true" country music fan.

If you know someone who is into the late Johnny Cash - *Man In Black: Live In Denmark 1971 on Columbia/Legacy* is a good choice. This live DVD catches Cash filmed before a small audience covering such songs as "A Boy Named Sue," "I Walk The Line" "Folsom Prison Blues," "Me And Bobby McGee" and others before turning the stage over to Carl Perkins who does "Blue Suede Shoes" and "Matchbox." Then the Statler Brothers come on for two more songs before Cash returns with June Carter Cash for another three and The Carter Family do one before the four remaining songs featuring Cash, The Carters, and The Statlers with Perkins joining in for the finale.

Legacy Records has long been among the leaders in our annual gift guide with their marvelous reissues in jazz, blues and classic rock. Now after the merger of Columbia Records with BMG, the label has been reissuing much more material from the two labels and their subsidiaries' vast catalogues, which include Epic and RCA. More are on the way over the next issues as they are released, so stay tuned for your shopping ideas.

Bill Wahl

CLASSIC MUSICALS FROM THE DREAM FACTORY

WARNER HOME VIDEO 5 DVD SET

Making their debut on DVD, this five-DVD box set contains newly remastered films from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's golden era of the Hollywood musical. Each film runs about 100 minutes or so and each disc contains special features such as interviews about the making of the film, classic cartoons, theatrical trailers and more.

It's Always Fair Weather (1955) features Gene Kelly, Dan Dailey and Michael Kidd as three World War II buddies who, reunited 10 years later, find they strongly

dislike each other. Mix in a little romance, attempts at reconciliation and an effort to exploit their reunion on television and you have the plot. Highlights include the threesome's "trash-can lid" dance and Gene Kelly's solo dance on roller skates. But, although the music by Andre Previn is great, there are no memorable songs.

Summer Stock (1950) features Judy Garland as Jane Falbury, a young country gal struggling to run the family farm by herself. Gloria DeHaven stars as Jane's sister who returns home with a theatrical troupe that plans to stage a musical in the barn. Highlights include Garland's performance of the Harold Arlen-Ted Koehler number "Get Happy," Gene Kelly's "shuffle-squeak" dance routine using a sheet of newspaper and a loose floorboard, and Phil Silvers and Gene Kelly doing a country bumpkin dance.

Three Little Words (1950) is one of the best in the pack. The story takes place in 1919 and is about the Tin Pan Alley songwriting team of Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby. The film features their songs but takes some liberties with their adventures. Stars Fred Astaire (as Kalmar), Red Skelton (as Ruby), Vera-Ellen, Arlene Dahl, and Debbie Reynolds. Among the most familiar songs featured are "Who's Sorry Now," "Three Little Words," and "Nevertheless."

Ziegfeld Follies (1946) features Fred Astaire, Lucille Ball, Lucille Bremer, Fanny Brice, Judy Garland, Kathryn Grayson, Lena Horne, Gene Kelly, Red Skelton, Esther Williams, William Powell (as Ziegfeld) and others in a revue format of comedy sketches and musical production numbers with no real story line. High points are Lena Horne's singing of "Love," the song & dance team of Fred Astaire and Lucille Bremer doing "Limehouse Blues" on an elaborate Chinatown set, and a hilarious comedy sketch ("A Sweepstakes Ticket") starring Fanny Bryce and Hume Cronyn. Songs are by Harry Warren and Arthur Freed; George and Ira Gershwin; Ralph Blane and Hugh Martin; and Kay Thompson and Roger Edens

Till the Clouds Roll By (1946) tells about the music and life of composer Jerome Kern and features about 25 stars, including Judy Garland, Lena Horne, Van Johnson, Tony Martin, Dinah Shore, Frank Sinatra and Robert

Walker (as Kern). Songs include "A Fine Romance," "Yesterdays," "All the Things You Are," "Long Ago and Far Away," "Why Was I Born," "Ol' Man River," and more. Horne triumphs with her version of "Can't Help Loving That Man" and Sinatra closes with a rendering of "Ol' Man River."

These are entertaining films for viewers inclined to reminisce. Films are in color and offer subtitles in English, French and Spanish. The special features are equally entertaining and informative. A minor drawback is the lack of any liner or jacket notes listing the songs and composers. Suggested retail price for the set is about \$60; individual titles, \$19.97. *Nancy Ann Lee*

books

CHICAGO BLUES: PORTRAITS AND STORIES

By David Whiteis

(UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS 2006)

David Whiteis' new book, *Chicago Blues: Portraits and Stories*, is a collection of portraits of blues performers and venues that provides a sense of the diversity of the Chicago blues scene with an emphasis on its evolution as a living tradition among the city's African-American community. There are chapters devoted to departed masters as well as to a number of contemporary performers representing a diversity of approaches to the blues, and in the process provides an enlightening overview of a still evolving blues scene and tradition. The portraits are derived from articles that Whiteis wrote for a variety of publications including the *Chicago Reader*, *Juke Blues* and *Living Blues*, and it would be welcome for no other reason than making these available, but the book is more than that.

The first part of *Chicago Blues* is devoted to *Elder Spirits*, and includes chapters on Junior Wells, Sunnyland Slim and Big Walter Horton. What is surprising is how little has been written on these three and Whiteis' chapters are welcome for recounting the lives of these pioneers and masters of the post-war Chicago blues scene. As Whiteis notes, these three mentored him as he developed a knowledge and love of the blues, and his affection for them is ob-

vious as can be gleaned from what he states about Sunnyland Slim, "We weren't what you would call blood brothers. I don't claim to have been his intimate confidant. Nevertheless, I honestly believe that no one else ever taught me so much about life than Sunnyland Slim did. To hear that voice growl through the octaves, build into a lionine roar, and then soar into a leonine roar, and then soar into high-tenor declarations of freedom-bound blues passion"—or just spend time in the presence of this tender-hearted giant of a man—was to learn life lessons of the most profound and lasting kind."

The Second Part, "*We Gon' Pitch a Boogie Woogie!*" is an examination of blues venues past and present. There is a chapter on Florence's Lounge, the neighborhood lounge where Hound Dog Taylor and Magic Slim had held regular gigs before they began their years of touring which closed in the early 1980s; the celebrated Maxwell Street Market whose rich history is recounted along with the gentrification of Chicago, expansion of the Chicago campus of Maxwell Street and its destruction of this historical area with a promise of a restored and improved, but ultimately sanitized, area. Whiteis' bittersweet account of the last day of Maxwell Street brings the community that the University destroyed alive for us. The final chapter of this part, *Clubbing the Current Chicago Scene*, provides sketches of different venues including the Delta Fish Market and its successor, Wallace's Catfish Corner; the Starlite Lounge and the late Harmonica Khan who was a star in this neighborhood juke; and then taking in Denise LaSalle's show at East of the Ryan which includes a nice overview of her career in addition to his perceptive analysis of her oft salty performances that, like those of other modern soul and blues artists, transcend the dichotomy between sacred and profane.

The Next Part, *Torchbearers* is in Whiteis' words, "the heart of the book." The portraits of currently active performers who carry on the traditions of the elders. Perhaps these are not all major stylists but each "is representative of the music that remains prevalent on the contemporary scene, and each one's story exemplifies important facets of the 'blues life' as it is lived by contemporary artists..." Chapters devoted to Jody Williams, Bonnie Lee,

Billy Branch, Sharon Lewis and Lurrie Bell, give us an insight into their personal histories, the ups and downs they have faced and how they continue to preserve with their art. It is a reminder that blues is more than “just notes” or “just a feeling,” devoid of any broader context. Of course, one has to be a bit careful in objecting that the music’s cultural history is obscured and challenging the success of some teenage white prodigies while veteran blacks stay in obscurity and then be labeled as an ‘ignorant racist,’ as Billy Branch, one of the most eloquent teachers of the blues as well as a blues performer of the highest order. Chapters on Bonnie Lee, who first came up under Sunnyland Slim and later was associated with the late Willie Kent and Sharon Lewis, were revelatory about two women who keep doing what they love to do the most, while the chapter on Lurrie Bell detailed the travails of his life as well as his triumphs (musical and personal).

Part IV, “*The Soul Side of Town*, is devoted to Artie ‘Blues Boy’ White (who notes even down south some of the venues he used to play have closed), Cicero Blake and Little Scotty (the later a social activist as well as singer). The book concludes with a *Coda*, as Whiteis ruminates on the current state of the music and its future, observing that there seem to be new obstacles today to the music surviving, but also reminding us that the blues seems to have this ability to reinvent itself, and its new manifestations and performers may confound us and our expectations of what the blues should be, “yet again reveal itself to be a musical language that, once incubated and nurtured in its cultural milieu, can expand its scope and speak to a universal audience.”

Chicago Blues: Portraits and Stories, is invaluable for its lively, informative portraits of a variety of performers that help us appreciate aspects of the blues life. Furthermore, it raises significant questions of what the blues is, that goes beyond the current trend of focusing on playing notes and ignoring the culture and community the blues arose out of.

As Whiteis reminds us, the music is still deeply rooted there and continues to live and evolve, aiding us to appreciate the music in a deeper and more knowledgeable manner.

Ron Weinstock

End of Pt. 1 - More of the Gift Guide next month!

PAGE EIGHTEEN

Hang On...We Are Not Done Yet!

MORE CDs & DVDs

**FRED ANDERSON,
HARRISON BANKHEAD,
HAMID DRAKE**

Timeless:

**Live at the Velvet Lounge
DELMARK DVD OR CD**

Tenor saxophonist Fred Anderson delivers four tunes (about 66 minutes total) with bassist Harrison Bankhead and drummer Hamid Drake, recorded before a live audience in July 2005. Three cameras superbly capture the well-lit stage activities and Steve Wagner’s editing makes the visuals flow smoothly.

As for the musicians, Anderson gets a nice, hearty tone from his tenor as he works his way through his free-jazz improvisations. Hunched over and blowing streaming phrases and short bursts, he plays before a small audience in his club that used to be a neighborhood bar (Tip’s Lounge). Anderson tended bar there for an old family friend who died in 1981. Afterward, Anderson took over the bar and started offering music, but it would be awhile before his venue would become one of Chicago’s most notable jazz clubs.

Anderson is a storyteller whose phrasing style is almost conversational. His tonalities are crisp and clear and you hear influences of the AACM (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians), a continuing cadre of black musicians formed in the early 1960s. The seemingly shy tenor man doesn’t resort to aggressive high-pitched hawking and squealing. Instead, his playing is deliberate and very musical, mostly emanating from the mid- and lower-register, and his ideas are fertile and engaging. He and his trio mates are fascinating to watch as they respond to and spur one another.

Although all of their performances here are superb, the exciting ancient-to-modern finale (the title tune) is a breakout number that lasts for more

than 23 minutes and gives each player well-executed moments in the spotlight as they freely improvise, shift tempos, add surprises and excel on their instruments.

Anderson’s DVD was recorded at his old Velvet Lounge, then at 2128 S. Indiana. The club was soon to be demolished and re-established on nearby Cermak Road this year. The DVD contains an interview with Anderson—a brief but informative oral history that reveals his personal experiences and his musical path. This project is also available as a Delmark CD.

Nancy Ann Lee

**DAVID ‘FATHEAD’
NEWMAN**

**Cityscape
HIGHNOTE**

David ‘Fathead’ Newman has certainly come a long way from his initial appearance on wax, a session by Texas Blues Man, Zuzu Bollin (and Newman played on Bullin’s rediscovery album decades later). Best known for his fat sound while a member of Ray Charles’ legendary band in the late fifties and early sixties, Newman has had a distinguished career since leaving Charles and continues to perform and record showing little diminution in his music.

His latest HighNote release has him on tenor, alto and flute, leading a septet which includes his rhythm section of David Leonhardt on piano, John Menegon on bass and Yoron Isreal on drums. They are joined by Howard Johnson on baritone, Benny Powell on trombone and Winston Byrd on trumpet and flugelhorn. The notes observe that the septet format recalls the classic Ray Charles band of the fifties that Newman was part of, although a comparison that perhaps raises false expectations as this band is more of a straight Hard Bop aggregation that does not have the tight sound of Charles’ legendary band.

There is a nice mix of material including originals as well as standards such as the opening rendition of the theme from the James Bond movie, *Goldfinger*, Billy Strayhorn’s lovely *A Flower is a Lonesome Thing* and *It Was a Very Good Year*, that most associate with Frank Sinatra. *Goldfinger* is an attractive but hardly startling feature for Newman who sounds stron-

**jazz
& blues**

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ger on flute with a bit of Mid-Eastern flavor for the lively *Pharoah's Gold*, with Howard Johnson providing an arrangement of the 5/4 Claude Johnson theme, while Newman's tenor caresses the Strayhorn classic with the muted horn riffs of the others adding atmosphere.

Howard Johnson's original, *Here Comes Sonny Man*, has Newman on alto on a number that sounds like it could have been written as a theme for a seventies TV show. Newman returns to tenor on a romantic *It Was a Very Good Year*, which suggests that in his golden years, Newman still remains an authoritative player. Another flute feature is Newman's original, *Flankin'*, dedicated to his wife's late mom where he is backed just by his rhythm trio.

While the septet here perhaps lacks the tightness and authority that Ray Charles Band had, this is a strong set of straight-ahead jazz that should please many. **Ron Weinstock**

ANSON FUNDERBURGH & THE ROCKETS GUITAR SHORTY RONNIE EARL

The Best Of...

BLACK TOP REISSUES
SHOUT FACTORY

Shout Factory has been reissuing product from the catalog of the Black Top label, arguably the label that from the mid-eighties through its demise in the nineties, had the strongest catalog of blues releases in that period. Earlier releases included the discs of Solomon Burke and a Hubert Sumlin. Three new releases are "Best of" collections centered on three of the label's artists that do include recordings these performers made for other labels.

It was ironic that I received, **Blast Off — The Best Of Anson Funderburgh & The Rockets** the day word that Sam Myers, the great Mississippi vocalist had passed away. Its odd that this reissue does not mention featuring Sam Myers which appeared on most of the Rockets discs after Myers joined Anson and his varying lineup, especially since the band took off as one of the preeminent blues bands after Myers became featured. Not to say that the band was shabby with the original vocalist Darrell Nulisch who certainly turns in an ami-

able performance on Earl King's *Come On*, but a younger Nulisch simply had not developed the authority that Myers brought with his singing and harp as evident on *A Man Needs His Loving*, *Moose John Walker's Ramblin' Woman* or *Buddy Guy's* reworking of *Barrett Strong's Money, \$100 Bill*. Additionally Myers brought his considerable harp talent to the recordings and live dates. Anson himself displays his **sizzling playing as well as his impeccable taste**, and is featured on *Down at JJ's*. While the backing personnel changed over the years, they remained a tight, swinging outfit. There are numerous pleasures to be heard on all 17 selections, which are compiled from all nine Rockets recordings, including selections from the two Bullseye Blues albums and the two with Nulisch. One certainly hopes that at least a few of the Rockets CDs featuring Sam Myers including *Sins*, *Rack 'Em Up*, and *Tell Me What I Want to Hear*, are issued in their entirety.

David Kearney, best known as **Guitar Shorty**, was among the three major rediscoveries that Black top made (Robert Ward and Bobby Parker are the other two). The Florida born singer-guitarist was heavily influenced by Guitar Slim who made some choice recordings for Cobra Records and the LA based Pull label. For a period he was married to Jimi Hendrix' stepsister and would swap ideas with the future legend. Kearney had recorded a wonderful *My Way* or the *Highway* for the English JSP label before joining Black Top where he recorded three albums, *Topsy Turvy*, *Get Wise To Yourself*, and *Roll Over, Baby*. After leaving Black Top, there were live albums on Collectibles followed by *Evidence's I Go Wild* and more recently he signed to Alligator. Shout Factory's **The Best of Guitar Shorty: The Long and Short of It**, is taken from the JSP album, the three Black top CD and the *Evidence*. It is not as consistent because Shorty's latter albums are more tailored for rock audiences and lack some of the subtle touches and superior bands used by Black Top. Even still, the stunning remake of *Hard Life*, *You Better Get Wise to Yourself*, *Swamp Dogg's I Want to Report a Crime* and a duet with Carol Fran, *I'm So Glad I Met You* are all fine selections. The two cuts from the JSP disc, *No Educated Woman* and *Red Hot Mama*, are almost equal to the Black Top discs but using such first-rate play-

ers like Lee Allen Zeno on bass, Herman Ernest III, Shannon Powell or Raymond Weber on drums, David Torkanowsky on keyboards, Kaz Kazanoff on sax. Oddly the only number from Black Top that had South Central, his working band of the nineties, was a credible rendition of *Hey Joe*, a tribute to Hendrix which is ok, but there are some other selections that are missing, especially his rendition of Al Kooper's *(I Love You) More Than You'll Ever Know*, derived from Donny Hathaway's recording. Hathaway was a major influence on Shorty as a singer, but you would never know it from most of which has been written about him that focuses on his guitar playing and Hendrix connection. Given the more rock-oriented production of his recent recordings, his vocals also suffer. But if this gem had replaced the tracks from the *Evidence* album, then the title would be more accurate as opposed to really being *Almost The Best of Guitar Shorty*. Still this will have to do until *Topsy Turvy* and *Get Wise To Yourself* are reissued. The JSP may still be in print.

Ronnie Earl has established a lengthy catalog since leaving Roomful of Blues with albums on Bullseye Blues, Telarc and Stony Plain in addition to his fine discs on Black Top. On **Heart and Soul; The Best of Ronnie Earl** we hear Earl expanding his musical palette incorporating jazz influences in his playing and repertoire over the years leading to his instrumentally recordings of recent years. Vocalists supported by Earl include, Sugar Ray Norcia, with whom Earl recorded as Ronnie Earl Horvath in the late seventies before he joined Roomful of Blues, handling Guitar Slim's *You Give Me Nothing But the Blues*; Darrell Nulisch on the fittingly titled *Soul Searchin'*; Kim Wilson on *I Smell Trouble*; and Mighty Sam McClain on the stunning Earl original, *A Soul That's Been Abused* from Hubert Sumlin's Blues Party. Instrumental features include a wonderful interpretation of Earl Hooker's *Blue Guitar* as well as trading licks with Duke Robillard on *What have I Done Wrong*, from a 2005 Stony Plain recording, before closing with an instrumental rendition of *Drown In My Own Tears*, that features the great David 'Fathead' Newman. I am not sure whether this is really a Best of, but it certainly is a solid career retrospective of Mr. Earl's music.

Ron Weinstock

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