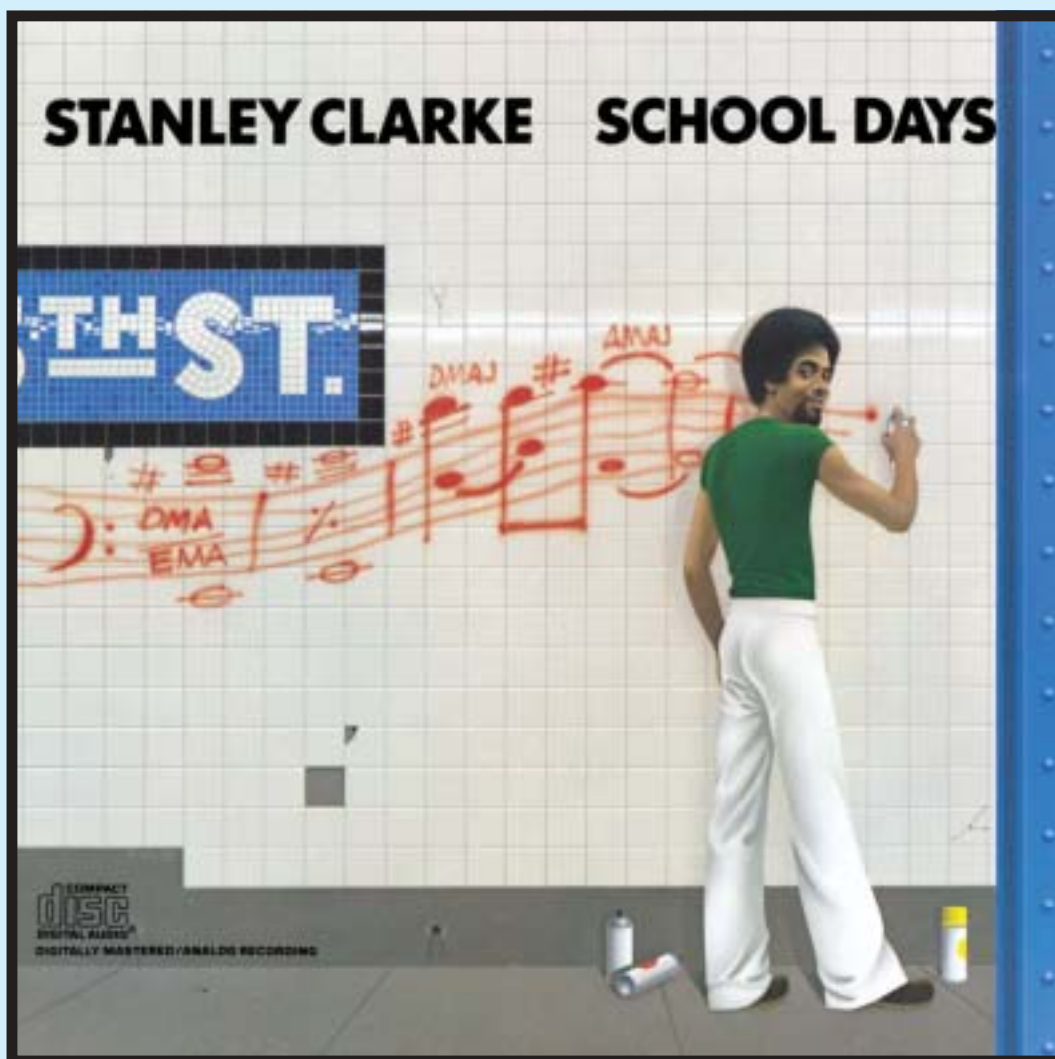


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**LOOKING BACK:**  
**STANLEY CLARKE'S SCHOOL DAYS**  
**30 YEARS LATER**

# Jazz & Blues Report

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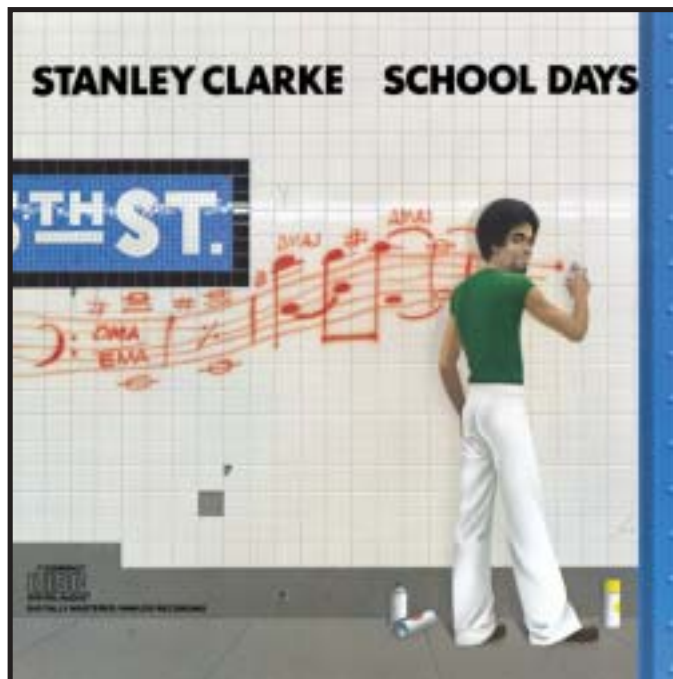
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## LOOKING BACK: STANLEY CLARKE'S SCHOOL DAYS 30 YEARS LATER



By Brian Gilmore

**T**hirty years ago, in June 1976, as America prepared to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the nation's independence, jazz bassist Stanley Clarke entered the famed Electric Ladyland Studios in New York City ready to record his fourth album as a leader.

Clarke's work that summer with an astounding group of musicians would ultimately become one of those moments that, to borrow the words of jazz critic Nat Hentoff, would reaffirm jazz as the 'sound of surprise.'

By the summer of 1976, Stanley Clarke was, of course, a star in the music world. The bass had never really had a star in jazz (Charles Mingus was the only one who came close) so Clarke's emergence with his impeccable credentials was significant

for the popularity of the music.

Notably, Clarke, a native Philadelphian, was a key member of the jazz-fusion powerhouse quartet, "Return to Forever," the band that, more than Miles Davis or Weather Report, took fusion to the masses. Clarke was also classically trained and had earned his musical stripes playing with hard boppers such as Horace Silver and Art Blakey. He also had his own recordings as a leader to his credit such as the album "Journey to Love" and the well received single, "Lopsy Lu." Yet, in the summer 1976 Clarke recorded a song called "School Days" and forever changed the perception of the bass player in jazz.

"It is beyond a hit record," Clarke admits when he was in Washington D.C. in December 2005 for a weekend

stand at Blues Alley, "it is a bass anthem." Clarke is stating only what many have said over and over since the song's release.

Ivan Bodley, a friend of Clarke, an accomplished bassist himself, and a writer calls the song "the greatest bass anthem of all time."

In the 30 years since the appearance of "School Days," on the marvelous album of the same name, Clarke's ferocious foray into funk has become more and more entrenched in the folklore of jazz-funk. One of the monumental failures of Ken Burns' film "Jazz," is its refusal to honestly comment on many of the highly successful jazz excursions into electricity such as "School Days" in a more specific and meaningful way.

During the weekend of shows Clarke played at Blues Alley in that December in 2005, the lasting excellence of "School Days" was evident: the song always received the loudest and warmest reception from those in attendance when Clarke and his trio launched into it. Moments into his now familiar melody and riff, Blues Alley began to buzz louder, and patrons around the club would whisper or acknowledge the song to their neighbors with just two words: "School Days."

"Anyone who seriously wants to learn to play the bass has to buy that record and learn to play that song," Clarke remarked in 2001 in an interview with Ivan Bodley. Many young bass players probably quit after hearing Clarke unleash his fury on "School Days;" others found their stride in the song's challenges.

Clarke recalls composing "School Days" while on tour with "Return to Forever" and as it seemed at the time, in a lot of respects, it wasn't a difficult moment for Clarke. "I came up with the lick, pretty fast," he says. He adds that the song has a "defiance" to it that still can be heard today. "The way it was mixed, the engineer had no choice but to turn it loud," Clarke says, "it's just so aggressive." Clarke's comments are not the egotistical boasting of a talented musician either. Some who were there know.

The quartet that Clarke assembled for the tune, "School Days," in fact, would be called top notch today by any standards. The versatile Gerry Brown, who of late has kept time for the soul singer Jeffrey Osborne, was on drums; David Sancious, who earned critical acclaim playing with Bruce Springsteen before the Clarke sessions, was on keyboards, and Ray Gomez of Casablanca, Morocco, was on electric guitar.

"I knew I was in a history making situation," Gomez says of the famous session by e-mail, "the fusion greats were the follow ups to Cream, Hendrix." Gomez, who had played with Lenny White and Narada Michael Walden before the celebrated date with Clarke, doesn't disappoint either on "School Days." His aesthetic rapport with Clarke and the others is evident from the beginning.

Clarke sets the tone with crisp rhythms full of thundering funk bass licks that Ivan Bodley calls popping "over chord changes." Clarke's licks call forth many of the great funk bassists of the day including Larry Graham and George Johnson, but Clarke's work is more expansive and melodic; it reflects his classical music training, improvisational

skills, and his willingness to embrace the sound of the moment in 1976 – funk.

Gomez acclimates Clarke's riffs with his beautiful sonic guitar parts that echo seemingly off in the distance but this is illusionary. Gomez is there step for step. It is a perfect addition. Those over the years who remember Clarke's bass parts also remember Gomez screaming behind Clarke and keeping the song locked into forward motion. It is probably why the song was well respected in the jazz world, and also accepted and adored among rock fans as well.

Ken Rose, the legendary producer of David Bowie's "Ziggy Stardust" and countless other classic albums in a variety of genres, produced "School Days;" he admits that the sound achieved is intentional. "We always looked at making Stanley's records more along the rock style," Rose says by e-mail. "By that I mean we took our time getting the sounds just right and there was no aversion to overdubbing to bring things out."

Rose adds that the efforts to achieve a special sound for the album created a little friction with drummer Gerry Brown, but nothing major because of the amount of time spent obtaining that right sound. "Gerry Brown" Rose says, "...was more used to the typical jazz session where it was set up and play." This did not ultimately affect Brown's drums; his performance is powerful as well.

As for the rock edge that was sought out on "School Days," it is especially significant in the case of guitarist Ray Gomez...because Gomez almost didn't make it on the record. Clarke envisioned guitarist John McLaughlin, the Mahavishnu Orchestra leader, as part of the record. "I was in the studio waiting for John...but what happened was John was late," Clarke recalls. Ray Gomez, a guitarist that Clarke describes as "confident" and "cocky" seized the moment. "John ain't here, I got my guitar." Clarke remembers Gomez saying "So we went," Clarke says.

Gomez as it turns out was the perfect guitarist to drive Clarke into the heart of his new adventure into jazz-funk. Gomez had even gone as far to tell Clarke well before the studio sessions that "he was the right guy for his next album."

Gomez also recalls rehearsing at Studio Instruments Rental (SIR) before the date with Clarke, so by the time of the "School Days" record date he was more than ready anyway, despite the fact that he wasn't the first choice. "We rehearsed early in the day in the studio, noon until evening," Gomez recalls. The band did two takes. "The second take was the one," Gomez says, "all live." It sounds live.

Clarke recalls two takes as well: "one that appears on the album" and one other. He adds that he knew the moment it was recorded that the band had done something special, something that would last for a long time.

Although many musicians such as Clarke who have delved into the electric sound over the years have been criticized for the choice, it is hard to be critical of "School Days" without being accused of being pre-disposed to a bias against the style. The song simply embraces every necessary element that jazz music traditionally has showcased (unless you want it to swing). It is a song that states





Stanley Clarke today. Photo by Grover White

a strong theme and maintains its emotion. Yet, it is also a song of a great soloist – Stanley Clarke on bass. His improvisational portion that ties the song to its end has been talked about since its was recorded.

“It is the most complete thought I had ever produced up until that time,” Clarke states. The solo, Clarke describes, gathers momentum throughout until Clarke guides the band back into his grip and the powerful theme he states at the beginning using the funk patterns that were so popular at the time. The band is locked together bouncing loudly, rhythmically; stretching the limits of theme more and more. It is a risky song but one that is accessible, poignant. “School Days,” almost appropriately, ends quietly, eases out to Clarke’s humming vocals that are too well known in the music world for their brevity.

Following the completion of the album “School Days,” Clarke didn’t name the album or the song. “I had no idea what to call it,” he admits. In fact, it wasn’t until the album was being prepared for release, when his manager Ron Moss pressed him for a title, that he says he finally decided to call it “School Days.” He simply focused in on the “fun” in the song, calling it “crazy,” a song for people in school at the time. The title, however, has long been said by lovers of the album to be stating the obvious: Clarke was taking the doubters and the fakers to school.

That fall when the album was released on Epic in stereophonic sound, Clarke, Gomez, Brown, and Sancious were on tour playing “School Days” night after night to packed houses across the country. Robert Palmer, the legendary New York Times reviewer caught the group at the Palladium in New York and described the performance as “the most musical jazz rock” he had ever heard. The reviews for the song and the album were all consistently strong as well.

Rolling Stone Magazine reviewer Michael Rozek described the title cut “School Days” in the publication’s November 18, 1976 issue as a “gorgeous orchestral conception” that was mixed “effortlessly.” The L.A. Times praised the album as well and singled out the title cut, “School Days,” as a “veritable textbook of ideas.”

By December 1976 as Clarke, Gomez, Sancious, Brown, and others continued touring, Leonard Feather, the well respected jazz critic caught Clarke and his band in Santa Monica and soon declared Clarke a “virtual folk hero” for “liberating” the bass from the “repetitious monotony of its last decade.”

By January 1977, Feather wrote again on Clarke, this time as a feature, and the Times declared Clarke’s album “School Days” its album of the week. It was just more evidence of the lasting impression the song would make upon the music world.

“School Days” is, indeed, a song that will forever define the jazz-funk period and will elevate Clarke, along with Jaco Pastorius, as a leader in the development of the modern electric bass sound over the last 30 years. It all began truly coming together 30 years ago, in the hot summer of 1976 in New York City, when most of us were thinking about fireworks and independence. “School Days,” the song, 30 years later now, is still full of an independent spirit.

Brian Gilmore, who lives in the Washington, D.C. area, is a poet, lawyer and the author of “Jungle Nights and Soda Fountain Rags: Poem for Duke Ellington” (Karibu Books 2000). The LP **School Days** has been available on CD since 1987 on Epic/Legacy Records.

Stanley Clarke will be reunited with George Duke in concert Saturday, August 19 at 8 pm at the Ohio Theatre, Playhouse Square in Downtown Cleveland.

## BLUES WATCH

By Mark Smith

**New Release blues....Wow!!** A bumper crop of new discs is ready for harvest in a store near you. Check out the following new releases: **Watermelon Slim- Big Shoes to Fill**; **Savoy Brown- Blues, Balls and Boogie**; **Chris Thomas King-Rise**; **Keene Brothers- Blues and Boogie Shoes**; **Jimmy Witherspoon- Roots**; **Gary Primich- Ridin’ the Darkhorse**; **Big George Brock and the Houserockers- Club Caravan**; **Ivory Joe Hunter- Since I Met You Baby**; **Li’l Ed and the Blues Imperials- Rattleshake**; **Doug MacLeod; Where I Been**; **Jimmy Thackery & the Cate Brothers- In the Natural State**; **Walter Trout- Full Circle**; **Sherman Robertson & Bluesmove-Guitar Man, Live**; **R.J. Mischo-He Came to Play**; **B.B. & The Blues Shacks- Live**; **Memo Gonzalez & The Bluescasters- Live**; **Ronnie Baker Brooks- The Torch**; **John Cephas & Phil Wiggins- Shoulder to Shoulder**; **Keb’ Mo’- Suitcase**; **Ray Charles- Definitive Soul: Atlantic Years**; **Eddie Turner- The Turner Diaries**; **Xavier Rudd- Food in the Belly**; **Kelly Joe Phelps-Tunesmith Retrofit**; **Bettye LaVette- Child of the Seventies**; **Billy Price- East End Avenue**; **Jimmy Duck Holmes- Back to Betonia**; **Johnny Winter- Rockin Bluesman**; **Albert Cummings- Working Man**; **Robben Ford- City Life**; **Matt Schofield Trio- Live**; **Albert King- Stax Profiles**; **Don Nix-**

*I Don't Want No Trouble-* Studebaker John & The Hawks-  
*Self Made Man;* Albert Castiglia- *A Stone's Throw;* Jer-  
 emy Spencer- *Precious Little;* Nick Moss and the Flip  
 Tops- *Live at Chan's ;* Al Basile and Duke Robillard-  
*Groovin' in the Mood Room;* Jay Geils, Gerry Beaudoin  
 and the Kings of Strings- *Featuring Aaron Weinstein;* Eddi  
 Reader- *Live at the Basement;* C.J. Chenier- *The Desper-*  
*ate Kingdom of Love;* Bill Perry- *Don't Know Nothing About*  
*Love;* Rory Gallagher- *Live at Montreux;* Bill Lupkin-  
*Where I Come From;* Bill Lupkin & Chicago Blues Coaliti-  
 on- *Live at the Hot Spot;* Anson Funderburgh and the  
 Rockets- *Blast Off: Best of;* Rick Holmstrom- *Live at the*  
*CafÉ Boogaloo;* Mark Selby- *On;* Tom Rigney & Flam-  
 beau- *Off the Hook;* Ry Cooder- *The Border/Alamo Bay;*  
 Detroit Blues Band- *Playin' It Cool....Award Time blues....*

On June 15<sup>th</sup> the National Endowment for the Arts awarded  
 a National Heritage Fellowship to Mavis Staples. The award  
 is the country's highest honor in the folk and traditional arts.  
 By receiving the award, Mavis joins an esteemed group  
 including her father, Pops Staples, as well as B.B. King,  
 John Lee Hooker, Michael Doucet, Shirley Ceasar, Albertina  
 Walker, Doc Watson and Bill Monroe. According to the NEA  
 press release, "Fellows are chosen for their artistic excel-  
 lence, cultural authenticity, and contributions to their field....  
 Fellowship recipients are nominated by the public, and then  
 judged by a panel of experts in folk and traditional arts on  
 the basis of their continuing artistic accomplishments and  
 contributions as practitioners and teachers. This year a nine-  
 member panel reviewed 217 nominations for the 11 fellow-  
 ships." NEA Chairman Dana Gioia said, "In this 40th anni-  
 versary year of the NEA, it is particularly appropriate that  
 we honor these master artists whose dedication and ex-  
 ceptional artistry have enriched our nation's cultural land-  
 scape." That's it for this month. See ya!

## At the Rock Hall...

### Rock Hall Announces Programming Around "Bob Dylan's American Journey: 1956-66" Exhibit

#### Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Inductee Robbie Robertson and others to Celebrate Bob Dylan's American Journey

CLEVELAND – The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and  
 Museum has programmed a series of evening events relat-  
 ing to the current featured exhibit, Bob Dylan's American  
 Journey: 1956-66. The exhibit, which was curated by Ex-  
 perience Music Project, is located on the Museum's top two  
 floors and is open until September 7, 2006.

With the exception of the evening with Robbie  
 Robertson, these events are free with a reservation. Please  
 RSVP to [edu@rockhall.org](mailto:edu@rockhall.org) or call 216.515.8426. The sched-  
 ule of programming is as follows:

**Wednesday, August 16, 7pm – An Evening with  
 Elijah Wald** - At seventeen, Elijah Wald went to New York  
 to study with musician Dave Van Ronk, who became Wald's  
 friend and mentor. Van Ronk, who years before had be-  
 friended a young Bob Dylan, was one of the major figures  
 on the Greenwich Village music scene from which Dylan  
 emerged. Years later, Elijah Wald got together with Van Ronk  
 to write Van Ronk's remarkable story. What resulted was  
 The Mayor of MacDougal Street, a book that brings its read-  
 ers into the heart of the New York City that Bob Dylan en-

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countered as a young man sleeping on Dave Van Ronk's floor.

Wald's relationship with Dave Van Ronk went beyond that, however. He arranged and played guitar on Van Ronk's *Let No One Deceive You: The Songs of Bertolt Brecht*, wrote liner notes for four of Van Ronk's CDs, producing two of those, and is the archivist of Van Ronk's reel-to-reel tapes.

Elijah Wald's other books include *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues*; *Josh White: Society Blues*; *River of Song: Music Along the Mississippi*, which accompanied the PBS series of the same name, for which he was writer and music advisor; *Narcocorrido*, a groundbreaking study of the modern Mexican ballads of the drug trade and contemporary politics and *Riding with Strangers: A Hitchhiker's Journey*. He won a 2002 Grammy Award for his album notes to The Arhoolie Records 40th Anniversary Box, for which he was also nominated as a producer.

Wald will discuss Van Ronk, Dylan, and the Greenwich Village scene, at times pulling out a guitar to make his points musically.

**Wednesday, August 23, 7pm – An Evening with Elliott Landy** - Elliott Landy, born in 1942, began photographing the anti-Vietnam war movement and the underground music culture in New York City in 1967. He photographed many of the underground rock and roll superstars, both backstage and onstage, from 1967-69.

He made some of the most lasting images of Bob Dylan and The Band, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Joan Baez, Van Morrison, Richie Havens, and many others, documenting the music scene during that crucial rock and roll period which culminated with the 1969 Woodstock Festival, of which he was the official photographer.

Afterwards, Elliott moved on to other inspirations and art forms, photographing his own children and travels, creating impressionist flower photographs and doing motion and kaleidoscopic photography in both still and film formats. His photographs have been published worldwide for many years in all print mediums including covers of *Rolling Stone*, *Life*, the *Saturday Evening Post* and album covers, calendars, photographic book collec-

tions and more.

He has published *Woodstock Vision*, *The Spirit of A Generation*, in book and CD-ROM format, and authored the book *Woodstock 69, The First Festival*. He is currently publishing a series of limited edition lithographs of his classic rock photographs. Landy will discuss his remarkable career and the time he spent with Dylan, The Band, and others among rock and roll's luminaries.

**Wednesday, August 30, 7pm – An Evening with Michael Gray** - Michael Gray is the author of *Song and Dance Man #3: The Art of Bob Dylan* and, more recently, *The Bob Dylan Encyclopedia*. Praised by authors Greil Marcus and Christopher Ricks, celebrated in the pages of *Rolling Stone* and *Time*, Michael Gray is often considered to be the first writer to take Dylan seriously from a literary perspective. The first edition of *Song and Dance Man* forced many to reconsider the field of music-writing, which prior to that time had been looked upon as little more than a territory reserved for fan ravings. Gray's subject matter, Dylan the writer, was the perfect vehicle for this assault on preconceptions about what music writing could be.

Michael Gray will join us to discuss Dylan and his own work on this 20th century master.

**Tuesday, September 5, 7pm – An Evening with John Simon** - After attending Princeton, John Simon joined Columbia Records as a producer-in-training. His first pop record was *Red Rubber Ball* by The Cyrkle. He went on to produce some of the biggest records of the 1960s: Janis Joplin and Big Brother and the Holding Company's *Cheap Thrills*, most of Simon and Garfunkel's *Bookends*, Leonard Cohen's first album, the first album by Blood, Sweat and Tears and the first two albums by The Band.

In addition, Simon went on to produce the music of The Last Waltz, Steve Forbert's *Jackrabbit Slim*, Michael Frank's *Tiger In The Rain*, David Sanborn's *Heart To Heart*, and albums by John Hartford, Gil Evans and Mama Cass Elliott, as well as working with Taj Mahal, Eric Clapton, Bonnie Raitt, Dave Mason, Howlin' Wolf, Bob Dylan, Dr. John, Phoebe Snow, Joni Mitchell and many others. His most recent album productions have been

for The Band (Jericho), A.J. Croce and Jackie Cain & Roy Kral and a new album by Hirth Martinez.

In the early 1970s, Warner Brothers released two albums of his songs, which were universally critically acclaimed. Instead of going on the road, however, he chose to stay close to home and family life. Now, with his kids grown, he is resuming his solo career.

Recently, the Japanese company, Pioneer/LDC Records commissioned two new albums of his songs. In the spring of 2001, Japanese label Dreamsville released Simon's tribute to Hoagy Carmichael entitled *Hoagyland*. He has recently performed at, among others, The Bottom Line, Fez and the Blue Note in NYC and four tours in Japan, including the Blue Note in Tokyo.

Simon will discuss his remarkable work with The Band during the years that they first joined together with Bob Dylan. The evening promises to be the perfect lead-in to the centerpiece of our Dylan programming, an evening with Robbie Robertson.

**Wednesday, September 6, 7pm – Hall of Fame Series with Robbie Robertson** - Tickets: \$10, on sale Monday, July 31 through Ticketmaster and the Museum box office

Robbie Robertson is one of the most significant contributors to the American songbook. His eclectic musical sense came through an early introduction to country music and through the influences of his parents, a Mohawk mother and a Jewish father. Robertson's early forays into Native American music happened at his mother's childhood home, Six Nations Reservation. Later, a cousin taught Robertson to play the guitar, and not long after the young Jamie Robbie Robertson began writing his own music. As Robertson's songwriting evolved, he absorbed the sounds of the Native American Indian tradition, rural country music, big band music, and early rock and roll music that would together color his writing style.

In 1958, Robertson joined the Hawks, the band of rockabilly legend Ronnie Hawkins, and connected with fellow sidemen Levon Helm, Rick Danko, Garth Hudson, and Richard Manuel. The group eventually became the backup band for another rising star, Bob Dylan, and supported the folk singer-songwriter's legendary 1965-

1966 tour. Shortly thereafter, they became known simply as "the Band."

Fueled by Robertson's narrative style and a fascination with the American South and its music, the band made a series of now-legendary recordings, including *Music From Big Pink* and the self-titled masterpiece. After the filming of an all-star concert by Martin Scorsese later released as *The Last Waltz*, the band broke up on Thanksgiving Day 1976. That project, however, solidified Robertson's longstanding creative relationship with Scorsese, which ultimately resulted in his recording a number of soundtracks for Scorsese.

In 1980, Robertson composed the score to Scorsese's classic *Raging Bull*, going on to work with the filmmaker on soundtracks for *The King of Comedy* and *The Color of Money*. In 1987, Robertson released his self-titled solo debut, which featured guest appearances from Rick Danko, Garth Hudson, U2, Peter Gabriel, Daniel Lanois and Gil Evans. Robertson's conceptual piece, *Storyville*, was released in 1991, followed by the 1994 release of *Music for the Native Americans*, a collection of tracks inspired by Robertson's Native American Indian roots. Robertson's latest work, *Contact From the Underworld of Redboy*, was released in 1998.

Most recently, Robertson executive produced a five CD and DVD box set of the Band, which was released in 2005.

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum is honored to present a special Hall of Fame Series with Robbie Robertson, during which he will discuss the many layers of his remarkable career.

### About Bob Dylan

Few figures in the history of Ameri-

can popular music have reached the status of Bob Dylan. As the man who showed the world that popular music could be classified as art, Dylan has created a distinctly American body of work to match the legacies of Walt Whitman, Louis Armstrong, and his early musical hero, Woody Guthrie.

Dylan's lyrics and songs unearth and revitalize the American folk and blues tradition, serving as a key link in the chain that extends from Southern work songs, blues and Anglo American ballads to the many contemporary singer-songwriters for whom Dylan is a main influence.

But Dylan's story is not simply that of a musical evolution. As a public figure and artistic innovator, he has taken and chronicled a journey emblematic of modern America's own development.

The exhibit features more than 150 artifacts, including Dylan's 1949 Martin 00-19 guitar, typed and handwritten lyrics, rare concert posters and handbills, signed albums, and dozens of photographs. At the center of the exhibit are four films exploring different facets of Dylan's career, with rare performance footage and interviews with Dylan and other artists.

In addition, three viewing stations allow visitors to watch excerpts from the Dylan films *Don't Look Back* and *Eat the Document*, as well as an interview with Dylan himself. Throughout the exhibit space are seven listening stations that enable visitors to hear Dylan's musical evolution and innovations during this 10-year period.

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum is the nonprofit 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 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.

August 2006 • Issue 285



Singer-songwriter Fiona Apple has some jazzy things happening on her new CD *Extraordinary Machine* on Epic Records. Live Nation will present Apple in concert at Cain Park in Cleveland Heights on Thursday, August 10 at 7:30 pm.

## International Songwriting Competition Announces 2006 Judges

**Tom Waits, Brian Wilson, Sean Paul, Robert Smith (The Cure), Craig Morgan, And Cassandra Wilson Are Among This Year's Celebrity And Music Executive Judges**

The International Songwriting Competition (ISC) is now accepting entries for 2006. One of the largest songwriting competitions in the world, ISC offers entrants a chance to share in over \$150,000 in cash and prizes, including an Overall Grand Prize package of \$25,000 (US) in cash and over \$20,000 in merchandise, unmatched by any other songwriting competition. ISC winners benefit from extensive press and publicity, gaining exposure and recognition from an international music market of industry professionals and fans.

ISC is unique because of its judges. Since its inception, ISC has become internationally renowned for having the most prestigious judging panel of any songwriting competition in the world, offering entrants the unprecedented opportunity to have their songs heard by the industry's top recording artists and influential music executives.

The ISC 2006 judging panel includes:

Tom Waits; Brian Wilson; Sean Paul; Charlie Walk (President, Epic

PAGE SEVEN

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Records); Monte Lipman (President, Universal Records); Mona Scott-Young (President, Violator Records); Jerry Lee Lewis; Cassandra Wilson; Robert Smith (The Cure); Craig Morgan; Rosanne Cash; John Mayall; Isaac Brock (Modest Mouse); John Scofield; Mark Chesnutt; Amy Ray (Indigo Girls); Darryl McDaniels (Run DMC); MercyMe; Macy Gray; Tiësto; Peter Hook (New Order); Frank Black (Pixies); Jeff Stinco (Simple Plan); Medeski Martin Wood; Charlie Musselwhite; Blue Man Group; Steve Lillywhite (Senior VP A/Producer, Columbia Records - credits include U2, Rolling Stones, Peter Gabriel, etc.); Angel Carrasco (President, Discos 605/Sr. VP A Sony/BMG Latin America; Larry Willoughby (VP A, Capitol Records, Nashville); Alexandra Patsavas (Owner, The Chop Shop Music Supervision - credits include The OC, Grey's Anatomy, Without A Trace, Carnivale, Rescue Me); Barbara Sedun (VP Creative, EMI Music Publishing Canada); Bruce Iglauer (Founder/President, Alligator Records); Cameron Strang (President, New West Records); Cory Robbins (Founder/President, Robbins Entertainment); Dan Storper (President, Putumayo World Music); Thomas Brooman (Co-Founder/Artistic Director, WOMAD); Danny Epstein (Music Supervisor, Sesame Street/Sesame Workshop); Tara Griggs-Magee (Executive VP Gospel/Urban Music, Sony Records); Emily Wittmann (Vice-President, Nick Records); Leib Ostrow (CEO, Music For Little People); Betty Pino (DJ, WAMR and pioneer of Latin music radio); and Manolo Gonzales (Senior VP, Regional Mexican A and National Promotion, Univision Records).

ISC is open to musicians, artists, and songwriters at every level from amateur to professional. Artists may submit as many songs as desired in each category or enter the same song in more than one category.

Entries are accepted online or by mail. For more information or to enter ISC 2006, please visit [www.songwritingcompetition.com](http://www.songwritingcompetition.com). The deadline for submission is October 16, 2006.

ISC offers 18 different categories to enter: Pop/Top 40, AAA (Adult Album Alternative), Rock, Country, Americana, R/Hip-Hop, Blues, Folk/Singer-Songwriter, Jazz, Gospel/Christian, Latin Music, Instrumental, Dance/Electronica, World Music, Children's Music, Lyrics Only, Teen, and Performance.

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## Mohican Blues Festival: Saturday, August 19

The Mohican Blues Festival is well known as "Ohio's Blues Invasion." It attracts music fans from all over Ohio and surrounding states for a day of incredible entertainment and good food. The event's rustic backdrop is the beautiful hills of the Mohican River Valley providing an atmosphere that is conducive to great performances and a wonderful festival experience.

Fans have been treated to truly legendary performances at the Mohican Blues Festival. Greats such as Robert Junior Lockwood, Big Jack Johnson and Wallace Coleman have blazed trails for later generations to follow, explore and build upon while making their own contributions to the ever expanding vocabulary of Blues.

The Blues Fest pays homage to the rich and colorful traditions of the Blues while showcasing its evolution into the future, an approach apparent in this year's line-up. This is the most ambitious production of the fest to date. The line-up consists entirely of 'touring bands' thus the by-line "Awesome from Start to Finish!" "This is no publicity hype" state promoters Fred & Barb Coffin of Mohican Entertainment Ltd., "all of these performers are 'headliner' capable."

Joe Bonamassa is current star in the blues-rock genre. John Primer was a moving force in the Chicago electric Blues scene and is one of the early architects of Rock and Blues guitar. Mississippi Heat is a Blues 'super-group' consisting of a virtual "who's who" of veteran Chicago bluesmen



**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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including world renowned harmonica player Pierre Lacoque, vocalist extraordinaire Inetta Visor and legendary guitarist Lurrie Bell. A real deal Bluesman, Willie Pooch has 'paid his dues' supporting Blues royalty such as Elmore James and is now fronting his own awesome group The Upsetters. Young upstart Chris Canas has been burning up the fest and club circuit with his own brand of showmanship and Blues proving its relevance to today's youth. The incomparable Patrick Sweany will redefine tradition embracing and defying all that has come before while forging what is yet to be. This very ambitious roster is poised for a show that will be an experience to remember.

The Mohican Blues Festival is unique; there really is no other event like it. It has a 'down home' kind of feel, very relaxed and friendly. The artists are often in the crowd enjoying the other acts stopping for a handshake or photo with a fan. This is an event that everybody enjoys including the fans, the performers and the staff.

The Mohican Blues Festival will be presented on Saturday August 19 at the Mohican Reservation Campgrounds seven miles south of Loudonville, Ohio off of S.R. 3 on Walley Road. Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the gate with special group rates available. Free convenient parking.

More information or to purchase tickets call or Email: 877-NEW-FEST or 419-368-3090, blueshawk@bluesinvasion.com; visit online at [www.bluesinvasion.com](http://www.bluesinvasion.com).

## B.B. King in Concert August 20



See **B.B. King** in concert at **Cain Park** Sunday, August 20 at 8 p.m., The concert is part of B.B.'s 80th Birthday Celebration!



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	8 TBA
	15 TBA
	22 TBA
	29 DUKE ROBILLARD
<b>WEDNESDAYS</b>	<b>AUGUST</b>
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## THE HOLLYWOOD BLUE FLAMES/ THE HOLLYWOOD FATS BAND

Road To Rio/Larger Than Life  
DELTA GROOVE RECORDS • 2-CDs

The late Michael Mann, known as Hollywood Fats, was not only influential in delving into retro blues styles before it was common, but developed such a strong style that both Albert King and Muddy Waters attempted to recruit him for their bands (and Mann was in King's Band at Wattstax).

The Hollywood Fats Band was legendary in Southern California and Fats' influence extended to other guitarists starting from Junior Watson, who were themselves highly influential. The Hollywood Fats Band which included Al Blake, vocals and harmonica, Fred Kaplan on keyboards, Larry Taylor on bass and Richard Innes on drums was one of the top outfits on the West Coast and probably can be credited for the distinctive amal-

gamation of Chicago and other blues styles into West Coast swing, popularized by others.

After Fats' early death, the band broke up, but reunited with young guitarist, Kirk 'Eli' Fletcher and issued the fine Delta Groove disc **Soul Sanctuary** a few years ago. Subsequently Fletcher has become featured first with The Mannish Boys and more recently with Kim Wilson as part of the current edition of The Fabulous Thunderbirds.

**Road to Rio** is the band's follow-up release on Delta Groove and continues in the same vein as the band captures the feel of classic fifties and sixties blues recordings with mostly original material. Opening with the title track, a rocker with some stinging, slashing fretwork from Fletcher, the band covers a variety of moods and settings such as the John Lee Hooker flavored one-chord boogie *Everybody's Blues*, with Blake adding nice harp and Kaplan some nice piano besides Fletcher's atmospheric guitar riff, or *Coffee Grindin' Man* where Blake evokes the late Sonny Boy Williamson II.

*Steady Rollin'* is a harp-flavored number suggestive of some of Billy Boy Arnold's Vee-Jay recordings while there is a nice reworking of Willie Love's *Long Black Cadillac*, also known as *V-8 Ford* and *Down at Your Buryin'*, with Fletcher ably playing in a restrained Joe Willie Wilkins vein while Blake again shows his affection for Sonny Boy Williamson. *Gumbo Grinder* spotlights pianist Blake starting off as a Professor Longhair flavored rumba before *Gone Away*, an acoustic duet between Blake on guitar and vocal and Kim Wilson on harp.

With Kaplan on organ, Fletcher rips off *Third Degree Burn*, while Blake is featured on the Little Walter styled harp feature, *Dr Blake's Boogie*, with the band channeling the sound of the Aces. Another highlight is the reworking of a Chicago urban blues, *Sharpest Man in Town*.

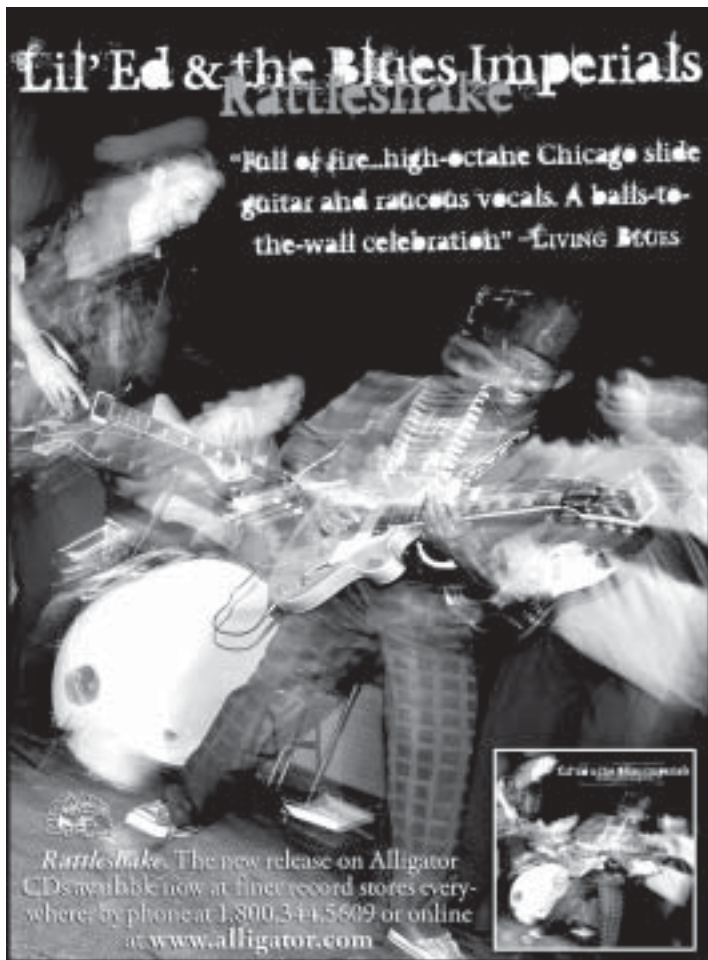
Three additional selections feature Fletcher's mentor, guitarist Junior Watson (Fletcher's mentor with Jr's *Boogie Rocket*), showing Watson's affection for Memphis guitarist Willie Johnson.

In addition to the bonus tracks there is a bonus CD, The Hollywood Fats Band, **Larger Than Life**, comprised of previously unissued live recordings of this band and only the second available CD of this legendary unit. There is some slight material (Fats delivering the lyric on *Nasty Boogie Woogie*), but Fats takes the lead with a brilliant instrumental *Fats Fries One* (which sounds based on Gatemouth Brown's *Okie Dokie Stomp*) and a fine rendition of Freddie King's *Sidetracked*.

Two tracks from a Monterey Blues Festival find the band backing Eddie 'Cleanhead' Vinson on two very good performances and there are also two fine guest vocals from the great Roy Brown along with their own tasty renditions of songs from Billy Boy Arnold, Big Joe Turner and A.C. Reed. Its frustrating that there is so little that this band made together so we should be grateful to have it available and this only can hint at just how good this band may have been.

Added to the Hollywood Blue Flames disc, this makes for good value as well as plenty of good music.

Ron Weinstock





## RAHSAAN ROLAND KIRK

### Brotherman in the Fatherland

HYENA

A release of a previously unissued concert recording by the great Roland Kirk is welcome news, and if much of producer Joel Dorn's liner notes is nonsensical, the release of this German concert, **Brotherman in the Fatherland**, will be welcome by fans of the legendary multi-instrumentalist, despite its title.

At this March 3, 1972 Munich concert, Kirk was accompanied by Ron Burton piano, Henry Pete Pearson "Mettahias" on bass, Richie Goldberg on drums and Joe 'Hablo' Texidor on percussion for a ripping good program that grows on one with repeated hearings.

Kirk is heard on tenor saxophone, flute, nose flute, manzello, stritch and clarinet on the selections which include his interpretations of top 40 hits by the Carpenters, *Close to You*, and the Temptations classic *My Girl*, along with several numbers associated with John Coltrane, Billy Strayhorn's *Lush Life*, Mongo Santamaria's *Afro-Blue* and Trane's own *Blue Train*. This last number, which closes the album, is a seventeen-minute musical tour de force. The medley of *Seasons* and *Serenade to a Cuckoo*, showcase Kirk's skills as a flautist from the almost 'classical' opening to the vocalized playing that was highly influential (Kirk is the primary source of Jethro Tull flautist Ian Anderson's style). Kirk can be so playful at one moment, then a little bit later he can take it to the basement equal to any blues player, and elsewhere take things out almost as if speaking in tongues with his sax.

I really did not fully appreciate just how good this disc is until the fourth or fifth time I listened to it. Every time I listen to it, I notice something new. I was fortunate to see Rahsaan Roland Kirk live and any strong new live recording of this master is always welcome. I might suggest the Rhino anthology of Kirk, **Does Your House Have Lions: The Rahsaan Roland Kirk Anthology**, for those unfamiliar with his music, but any fan of Kirk will want this latest release of concert performances and more are promised. **Ron Weinstock**

## JOHN LEE HOOKER, JR

### Cold As Ice

TELARC

Ok, so he's the son of one of the most prominent and prolific bluesmen to ever strap on a guitar. Does John Lee Hooker Jr. deliver the goods or is he just cashing in on the big marquee name?

This disc is firm evidence that Jr. could enter the witness protection program and still have tongues wagging about his talents. Mostly steering clear of the straight boogies that were his father's calling card, ("Oh Baby" being the notable exception) Jr. instead grooves to horn driven R&B, Soul, Funk and, of course, the Blues. This musical backdrop proves the perfect launching pad for his well crafted tales of infidelity, "You Blew It Baby," disgust at two-faced friends "Fed Up," calculating women, "Cold As Ice," losing it all, "Wait Until My Change Comes," sexual prowess, "4 Hours Straight/Blues Man," and getting stuck in the wrong relationship, "Trapped."

He also includes a heartfelt homage to his father, "Do Daddy," and covers one of his biggest hits, "I'm In the Mood." The real curve ball in this set is the light, jazzy, "I

Got to Be Me" which could have dropped straight off a George Benson disc.

Overall this is a fine effort that should serve to remove Jr. from the reflected spotlight of his father and place him firmly in the center of his own stage.

**Mark Smith**

## DANNY WEIS

### Sweet Spot

MARSHMELLOW RECORDS (CANADA)

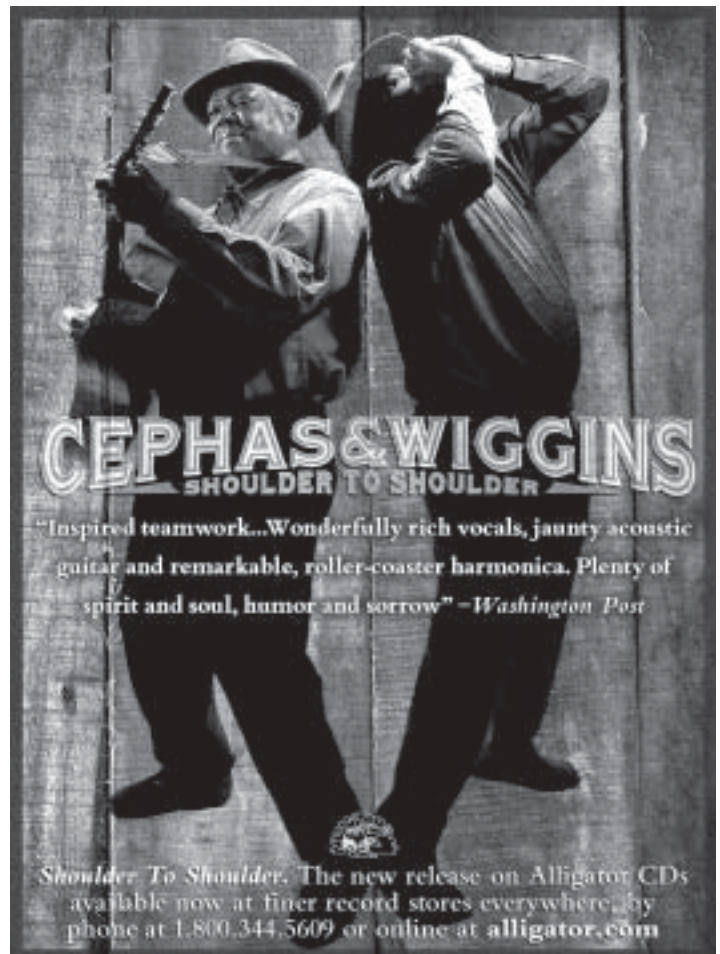
The fact that guitarist Danny Weis's resume includes a stint with the iconic psychedelic-era troupe Iron Butterfly may be either a plus or minus in the minds of jazz-rock listeners.

What that background appears to bring to *Sweet Spot* is lead work that's got a better grip of the rock side of this musical fusion than most jazzers deliver. Weis smokes through a set grounded in the funky but melodic mid-70's fusion style of bands such as the Brecker Brothers. Solid technique meets with rock attitude on a tasty, varied set of mostly original fare.

That said, Weis offers the unexpected as well. After burnin' on tracks including the title number and a hot bluesy jam "Graham Street Shuffle," he takes on the classic "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" solo-style with a light touch and much authority.

With plenty of hot, "top-down" weather ahead- even for the Great Lakes region- *Sweet Spot* makes for first-rate cruisin' fare.

**Duane Verh**





## DAVID KIMBROUGH, JR

Shell Shocked  
B.C. RECORDS

As the son of Mississippi blues legend Junior Kimbrough, David Kimbrough Jr. has the genetic ingredients to be a bluesman. With a few major clashes with the law and a long term incarceration to his credit he also has a number of first hand experiences with the blues.

This isn't just blues as a family tradition: its blues the hard way, one defeat at a time with only the music to offer redemption. With much of this disc written behind the walls of the storied Parchman Farm State Penitentiary (which served as home to many first generation bluesmen) the tone is one of bewilderment at his circumstances coupled with a glimmer of hope for the future based on hard earned insight into the source of his problems. "I Don't Do the Things I Used to Do" tells the story in no uncertain terms with Kimbrough trying to convince himself that he isn't going back to the bottom as if telling himself that over and over will ward off the temptations that can take him there in a matter of moments.

With stark, hypnotic grooves provided by North Mississippi hill country peers like Garry Burnside and Jimbo Mathis this disc is a slow burning glimpse into the blues as they existed before they were co-opted by rock and roll into an endless party. Straight, with no chaser to take away the sting.

Mark Smith

## DAVID BERGER & THE SULTANS OF SWING

Hindustan

SUCH SWEET THUNDER

This is the fourth recording of composer/arranger/conductor David Berger and his band, The Sultans of Swing, formed in 1996. Vocalist Aria Hendricks, daughter of vocalist Jon, joins the 15-musician band for this performance recorded in Sweden in September 2005.

Included in the 13-tune fare are five tunes by Berger, as well as songs by Thad Jones ("No Refill"), Joel Frahm ("A Whole New You"), Johnny Mercer ("Too Marvelous For Words"), and Ray Noble ("The Very Thought of You"), the latter two featuring vo-

calist Hendricks without much luster. But it's her raw vocals on the rowdy blues number "I Don't Hurt Anymore" that seem to suit Hendricks' style perfectly.

Arrangements are complex, smooth and intriguing, solos are well-executed, and the band can swing tidily. Occasionally, there's a rousing chart driven from underneath by heavy-hitting drumming from Jimmy Madison. Although, for the most part, Berger's arrangements rightfully tend to spotlight the sparkling work of reeds and horns in both section work and solos. Listen all the way through and you'll love them!

For more information, check out [www.sultansofswing.com](http://www.sultansofswing.com).

Nancy Ann Lee

## MISSISSIPPI HEAT

One Eye Open - Live at  
Rosa's Lounge, Chicago  
DELMARK

This is another new Delmark offering in both CD and DVD. Mississippi Heat is the wonderful group that Isreali-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 seen varying personnel in his group, but they have always had a strong Chicago blues ensemble sound that supported the vocalists and the soloists. Its 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 Valldeneu 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 Dad 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 Dad thankfully focuses on the performers with some crowd shots mixed in but not to distraction. Like Tail Dragger's Dad, 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 fine to your liking.

Ron Weinstock

## MODERN TRADITIONS ENSEMBLE

New Old Music  
ADVENTURE MUSIC

Five musicians stretching over two generations comprise the Modern Traditions Ensemble, which performs nine Brazilian choro classics. Isaias de Almeida (mandolin), Naylor Proveta (soprano sax, clarinet), Israel de Almeida (7-string guitar), Benjamin Taubkin (piano) and Guello (percussion) deliver some lively and lovely tunes studio-recorded in Sao Paulo, Brazil in June 2003.

This is one of the prettiest Brazilian music albums to come across my desk. Liner notes describe this as 'a special encounter,' which likely means this is not a regular working group. It should be. Their gorgeous renderings of the lively opener, "Proezas de Solon (Solon's Exploits)," the graceful "Vibracoes (Vibrations)," and every other tune (by Pixinguinha and other composers) will enrapture fans of the genre.

Instrumental prowess is impressive. Melodies are warm, calm and

beautiful. Improvisations are dazzling. And the team plays together (in a relaxed manner) like they've known each other forever. This is a five-star album you'll want to play over and over.

*Nancy Ann Lee*

## JEREMY SPENCER

### Precious Little

#### BLIND PIG

Back when Fleetwood Mac was Peter Green's blues band, slide guitarist/vocalist Jeremy Spencer provided the group with energetic Elmore James covers and spunky originals strongly influenced by that same blues master. Spencer soon thereafter emerged in the counterculture's burgeoning Christian subgroup- b/k/a/ "Jesus Freaks" and recorded with a group called the Children of God. His new disc quotes James more directly than it does the New Testament and its quality play and congenial atmosphere will likely win Spencer more than a few converts.

Not that there isn't a good lesson or two about the wrongful ways of the world encased in some of Spencer's lyrics, but the low-key delivery of these messages should not put most listeners at un-ease. Spencer's voice seems much more youthful than his grizzled countenance on the disc's jacket and his slide work, both electric and acoustic, is an underplayed pleasure throughout the set. The Scandinavian band behind him matches Spencer in its sure-handed and laid-back character, delivering sparing, subtly textured support.

Even with the lyrical urgency of tracks such as "Trouble and Woe" and "Psychic Waste", the overall atmosphere of *Precious Little* is an inviting one and one that listeners should find more appealing with repeated plays.

*Duane Verh*

## JAMIE DAVIS

### It's A Good Thing

#### UNITY MUSIC LLC

Great male jazz vocalists are a rarity. Thus, it's a genuine treat to hear baritone Jamie Davis weave magic with his rich, deep tonalities, vitality and pristine articulation. On 12 tracks, Davis fronts a first-rate big band comprising members of the Count Basie Orchestra (with whom he toured for three years) and additional top instrumentalists from Los Angeles.

Davis shows influences of Joe Williams, Lou Rawls and other first-rate male vocalists yet displays a confident, sensual style all his own as he works his way through pop and jazz standards expertly conducted by Shelly Berg. Arrangements by Aaron Linton, Allyn Ferguson, Tom Hart, Bob Ojeda and others add oomph to gems such as Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely," George Harrison's "Something," Cole Porter's "Night and Day," Thelonious Monk's "Straight No Chaser," Ray Noble's "The Very Thought of You," and others. Davis' passionate ballad renderings of "Besame Mucho" and "My Funny Valentine" are sultry listening delights, enriched by Berg's piano backing and solos.

Bio information at [www.jamiedavis.com](http://www.jamiedavis.com) doesn't reveal where (or when) Davis was born but he spent time in Ohio, attending high school in Mansfield and majoring in music at Ohio State University. He performed in a touring group



Guitarist/vocalist/songwriter **Duke Robillard** will be appearing at **The Savannah** in Westlake on Tuesday, August 29 - one night only. Robillard, who formed the band Roomful of Blues in 1967, plays around 250 shows a year. The W.C. Handy Awards named him "Best Blues Guitarist" two years in a row in 2000 and 2001. He currently records for the Canadian label Stony Plain, which he teamed up with in 1994. In addition to his own albums, he has produced and played on two albums with the late Jimmy Witherspoon, two with Kansas City piano king Jay McShann, comeback CDs for Billy Boy Arnold and Rosco Gordon and a superb album of guitar duets with the jazz legend Herb Ellis. See page 9.

## stanley clarke



george duke

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while in the U.S. Army and later returned to Ohio where he joined a 13-musician band. He next moved to New York to further his vocal studies and in 1975 moved to the San Francisco Bay area where he began leading his own groups. Davis released his first solo CD, "It's All About Love," in February 2002.

Davis' voice is sublime, instrumental solos are dazzling, section work is tightly blended and the band swings with bold, brassy fervor. The CD should definitely leave big band fans wanting more. Included in this nicely-packaged set is an informative 38-minute DVD, "The Making of It's A Good Thing," which documents the April 17-18, 2005 Los Angeles studio session and features interviews with Unity Music co-producers Sam Beler, Greg Errico, Berg, Davis and many of the band members. *Nancy Ann Lee*

## LOS LOBOS

### The Best Of Los Lobos: Wolf Tracks RHINO

Back in 1984, during my days of promoting concerts, I had the pleasure of bringing Los Lobos to Cleveland just as their first full-length album **How Will The Wolf Survive** was making some serious waves. At that time, I believe they were the first band I'd ever heard open the show with their current big hit...in this case, the title track from that album. Now that takes some balls! Five songs from the Wolf album appear on this 20-song best of set...the title track, "Evangeline" and "A Matter Of Time," along with the rocker "Don't Worry Baby" and Cesar Rosas' accordion-driven mexican excursion "Corrido #1."

Los Lobos has continued on from that debut 22 years ago with a slew of albums offering additional doses of Tex-Mex, traditional Mexican songs and roots rock, and, in fact, will be releasing a brand new album next month (we'll cover it then). This set covers not only the Warner Bros. years through 1992, but also samples music from two '99 and '02 albums on the Hollywood and Mammouth labels. It closes with a previously unreleased cut from the '90 **The Neighborhood** sessions titled "Border Town Girl." Three songs are included from their '87 Wolf follow-up, **By The Light Of**

PAGE FOURTEEN

**The Moon**, one from their '88 traditional Mexican album **La Pistola Y El Corazon** and two from '92's **Kiko**, including "Kiko And The Lavendar Moon." There are also two from **La Bamba: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack**... "La Bamba" and "Come On, Let's Go."

A very well put together collection of music from David Hildago, Cesar Rosas, Conrad Lozano, Louie Perez and Steve Berlin...or, in short...Los Lobos. *Bill Wahl*

## XILKE

### Await

#### MOKOSOUND RECORDS (DUTCH)

Xilke is a Dutch singer who has just issued a most impressive new CD, presumably her debut release. The listener can easily become mesmerized right off the bat with her low and very smooth voice over the slow groove of the title track, sparsely backed by background voices, Fender Rhodes guitar, piano, bass and sampled drums.

After an interlude, she breaks into the driving funk of "Temptation," with pretty much the same instrumentation as "Await" though with very different results - and with a real live drummer on hand. Although she has said that Diane Reeves was a major influence, by the third song in we are definitely hearing flashbacks to the best work of Grace Jones, and beyond...and that continues on. And, by all means...that is a good thing. Every song on this disc is a fresh and different treat, with differing backings, some of which include horns.

Xilke has taken her intelligently written lyrics and performed them in a program where she mixes jazz, groove, Euro-Lounge, funk, pop, blues, new soul (nu-soul), world, spoken word and God knows what else. She and her musicians also inject African influences in some tracks, for example...it sounds as though there is a Kalimba (African Thumb Piano) - or at least a sampled one - in the slow groove/funk cut "Nothingness."

Some of the music, such as the pretty much straight jazz (clarinet and all) "Ancient Visions" is rather, let's say normal; while other songs, such as the next, and closing, cut "Leaving" are very strange, perhaps even a bit spooky. And that is what makes

this disc such a joy to listen to...incredible diversity and some very unique instrumental arrangements for a singer who is very intriguing herself. Definitely a fantastic listening experience from start to finish.

You should most definitely check Xilke out at [www.xilke.com](http://www.xilke.com). *Bill Wahl*

## HARMONICA SHAH

### Listen At Me Good ELECTRO-FI

It's no insult to call this old school style blues. With nary a nod to rock or soul, the 12 cuts featured on this disc could just as easily have come from an early 1960s Chess Records session.

Backed by the top notch crew of Willie "Big Eyes" Smith on drums, Mel Brown on guitar and Julian Fauth on piano, Harmonica Shah lays his vocals and just right harmonica work over the hard hitting electric blues that have kept Chicago's working class blues bars filled for years.

This isn't the feel good party blues favored by the tourists. This is blues about the senselessness of gun fights, "Bullets Don't Care," the agony of getting dumped, "Standing in the Cold Rain," being too broke to even help the bums, "I've Got to Help My Own Damn Self," disgust at someone who bends the truth a bit too much, "Lies, Lies, Lies" and the need to get out from under a string of problems, "I Wish a Thief Would Steal All My Burdens and Pain." There's nothing the least bit fancy here.

All the tunes percolate at a mid-tempo pace which requires careful placement of every note since the uncluttered production leaves no where to hide. With the exception of "Detroit Jump" Shah mostly leaves the harmonica pyrotechnics for another day and instead focuses on capturing just the right feel with as few notes as possible.

Shah delivers his vocals in the same direct, unadorned fashion as Muddy Waters, who would feel right at home with this line up of tunes.

*Mark Smith*





**LISA BELL**  
**It's All About Love**  
**SELF-PRODUCED**

Following up her 2002 release, *Dare To Be*, which focused on renditions of standards, the ultra-talented Colorado-born vocalist Lisa Bell delivers an array of 12 tunes, including eight co-written originals. Accompanied by a fine crew of home-base musicians and backup vocalists, the versatile Bell displays a rich mid-range voice and rich style that holds appeal for crossover fans of pop, country, and blues.

There's not a dull tune in the bunch. One entertaining number is the bluesy "Ain't Divorce Grand," co-written with Lance Bendiksen and her regular pianist John Armstrong. While Bell's in peak form at any tempo, ballads such as "Here I Am" and "Faraway Friends" show off her lovely voice that has enthralled fans at jazz clubs and major festivals as well as performances with various vocal ensembles, orchestras, musical theater productions and more.

Bell's been inspired from a young age by vocalists such as Dionne Warwick, Ella Fitzgerald, Carmen McRae, Karen Carpenter and others. Her teen-age talents won her a scholarship to the Conservatory of Music at the University of Missouri-Kansas City where she graduated with a B.A. degree in Communications and Vocal Performance.

Clever and catchy, the songs on this disc hold appeal for a wide-ranged audience. This should be a benchmark session for other female vocalists. Bell's pleasant voice, original and diverse material, accomplished side musicians, and sense of humor make this the best vocal album to come across my desk in ages. Bell is definitely a talent deserving of wider exposure. Check out her website at [www.lisabellmusic.com](http://www.lisabellmusic.com).

*Nancy Ann Lee*

**BUTCH CAGE & WILLIE B. THOMAS**  
**Old Time Black Southern String Band Music**  
**ARHOOLIE RECORDS**

This new release is one of those rare recordings that features an African-American blues fiddler - namely James 'Butch' Cage. He and guitarist Willie B. Thomas are heard on a disc with a title that is slightly misleading, insofar as the two are heard on a program of mostly down-in-the-alley blues with Cage's vigorous, rough-hewn fiddle complemented by Thomas' rhythmic guitar.

The duo was recorded by folklorist Dr. Harry Oster in Zachery, Louisiana in the 1950s and selections by them were issued on the Folk-Lyric album, **Country Negro Jam Session** (later available on Arhoolie who had acquired the Folk-Lyric label). Arhoolie issued several other selections on the CD **I Have to Paint My Face**. With the exception of one track, the music here is previously unissued. Much of it is comprised of traditional blues themes or their renditions of blues standards such as *Some Day Baby* (the Sleepy John Estes song sometimes known as *Worried Life Blues*), *Mean Old Frisco*, *The Dirty Dozen*, *Rock Me Mama*, *Easy Rider Blues*, *Careless Love Blues*, *Since I Layed My Burden Down* and *You've Gotta Move*. On the latter two, Rosalie Wilkerson takes the lead on vocals - (with Cage and Thomas enthusiastically joining her - while Robert

Jenkins sings on *I Had a Dream Last Night (All I Had Was Gone)*.

This is far from polished and one can imagine the house parties with the corn liquor flowing as the two kept the music running all night long. As the blues would get shouted, Thomas would keep a good beat with his rhythm and Cage's fiddle would be like a buzzsaw. A good time can be had listening to this. Ron Weinstock

# DVDs

**THE JEFF HEALEY BAND**  
**Live At Montreux**  
**EAGLE EYE MEDIA DVD**

Blues-rock guitar phenom Jeff Healey leads another musical life, which this publication will deal with in the near future. But in the meantime this live set from the 1999 Montreux Jazz Festival will be good news for the many fans of this Toronto-based axe-meister. Packed with solid on-stage renditions of Healey favorites, including his debut smash "Angel Eyes", *Live At Montreux* is the sort of straightforward no-frills performance set this label has consistently turned out. For those who've never eyeballed this blind guitarist's unique "lap" style, the close-ups provide a perspective on Healey's remarkable technique that's bound to impress. Then there's his unexpected active stage presence that pushes aside preconceptions of what some folks can do.

Healey's singing and playing are in fine form and his band delivers solid support. Bonus tracks from 1977 reveal a longer-haired Healey and some equally strong performances. *Live In Montreux* is an excellent package and a must-have for Healey fans.

*Duane Verh*

**OTIS RUSH & FRIENDS**  
**Live At Montreux 1986**

**EAGLE EYE MEDIA DVD & EAGLE RECORDS CD**

There is no question about it, Otis Rush is one bluesman I can never get enough of.

To quote our own Ron Weinstock in a recent review of a Rush reissue on Delmark first time..."One of many blues artists in the post-B.B. King style....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." Right, while some blues artists are obviously more gifted in either their guitar or vocal work, Rush is equally adept at both. This mix adds up to a performer who is on top of his game both in the studio or in a live club or concert setting. He's influenced many other bluesmen, and also many big blues-rock names such as Eric Clapton (in a big way) Peter Green, Jeff Beck, Mike Bloomfield, Stevie Ray Vaughan and many others.

Apparently Clapton was instrumental in setting up this Rush appearance at Montreux. Rush and his band play a driving, spirited set including "You Don't Love Me," Otis

PAGE FIFTEEN



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originals “Tops,” and “Right Place, Wrong Time,” Albert King’s “Natural Ball,” and T-Bone Walker’s “Mean Old World.” Then there is more fun in store as Clapton joins Rush and company for “Crosscut Saw” and two more Rush originals, “Double Trouble” and “All Your Love (I Miss Loving).” Then it all steps up a notch as Luther Allison joins Rush and Clapton for a version of “Every Day I Have The Blues.”

That’s the CD version. Now if you’d rather listen and watch as well, you can pick up the DVD version of this live concert, which offers excellent video and sound in either stereo, Dolby 5.1 Surround or DTS. The program is different too. All the songs from the CD are here, but four additional tracks are added, including the Rush original that closes the set, “If I Had Any Sense, I’d Go Back Home.”

So choose your weapon, but whether it is the CD or DVD version of this show in Switzerland twenty years ago, you’ll be in for one fine experience. *Bill Wahl*

## books

### LOUIS ARMSTRONG’S NEW ORLEANS

by Thomas Brothers  
(NORTON 2006)

Thomas Brothers, a professor of music at Duke University and the author of *Louis Armstrong: In His Own Words*, has written a fascinating book on the upbringing and development as a musician of the great Louis Armstrong. The book interweaves an account of early twentieth-century New Orleans with a narrative of Armstrong’s life. As the book cover describes, “Drawing on a stunning body of first-person accounts, this book tells the rags-to-riches take of Armstrong’s early life and the social and musical forces that shaped him.”

The dark-skinned Armstrong grew up with low expectations for him in a world of Jim Crow legislation and vigilante terrorism, yet also grew up in the midst of a rich culture that included the ecstatic music of the sanctified Church, the blues of street musicians and the tradition of ragging a tune. It was a world of the clash of cultures even within the African-American community as the worlds of the uptown Negroes like Armstrong was distinct from the ‘cultured’ downtown ‘Creoles of color,’ although the pressures of Jim Crow would undermine the rigid barriers between the two and Armstrong would benefit from the differing musical standards from both communities, the more formal and learned performances by the Creole musicians as well as the uptown musicians playing by ear and their traditions of ragging the music.

In the words of Armstrong and his contemporaries we get a vivid sense of the world and the richness of the culture in which Armstrong was raised. We follow the youngster as he gets in trouble with the law and sent to the New Orleans Waif Home, working on the streets, marching in the second-line and carrying King Oliver’s horn. Others have focused on the poverty he was raised in and emphasized Armstrong’s music as a compensation for the deficiencies of his early life, but Brothers emphasizes that he

may have been poor but the culture he grew up in was very rich indeed.

Also interweaved in this account are the emergence of early jazz and the lives of legendary figures as Buddy Bolden and King Oliver whose lives are recounted by their contemporaries such as Bunk Johnson and Armstrong himself. And of course an account of the Storyville District as well as the various locations at which jazz emerged in the twentieth century.

This is an invaluable contribution to our understanding of early jazz and its most important figure. It is wonderfully put together and brings the world of the young Louis Armstrong alive. *Ron Weinstock*

### BLUE MONDAY: FATS DOMINO AND THE LOST DAWN OF ROCK’N’ROLL

by Rick Coleman  
(DA CAPO 2006)

Antoine ‘Fats’ Domino is one of the most significant performers of the last half of the twentieth century, yet because of his easy-going persona and his rather quiet life outside of performing, his contributions to blues and rock’n’roll have not been given their due. This biography by Rick Coleman, who authored the booklet for the Bear Family box set of Domino’s Complete Imperial Recordings, is twenty years in the making and hopefully will result in Domino being recognized as the pillar of modern American music that he is. The fact that Fats is unappreciated perhaps reflects a certain Eurocentrism that marks much of pop music writing and rock media that inflates the importance of popular, but derivative rock artists at the expense of true music innovators. After all Lynard Skynard is in the Rock’N’Roll Hall of Fame, but the much more original Johnny ‘Guitar’ Watson is not.

Domino is a private man and somewhat shy, despite his ability to thrill audiences when performing. Coleman traces his biography and development as a musician in the context of the times including his father’s move to the Ninth Ward area, then a relatively rural area near the Industrial Canal, to the horrible events around Hurricane Katrina which devastated Domino’s home that was still on the same tract of land his father had purchased decades before.

Domino grew up in one of the most remarkable musical cities this country has ever had. Coleman traces its history, including the infamous history relating to segregation of the races which is invaluable in understanding Domino’s impact, not simply on music but in bringing people of different backgrounds together. Given the general easy going image of Antoine ‘Fats’ Domino, one is likely to be surprised when reading this about the riots his live performances often engendered. These riots were most often the result of those who objected to whites and blacks attending an event together, and even worse in the racist eyes of many, dancing and socializing together.

Influenced by Amos Milburn especially, Fats Domino was one of the greats in a long-standing New Orleans piano tradition. Roy Brown’s Recording of *Good Rockin’ Tonight*, is the earliest shot in the musical revolution of modern rhythm and blues that generated rock and roll. From when he went in the studio and cut his speeded reworking



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of the traditional New Orleans song *Junker's Blues* as *The Fat Man*, Domino had a recording career that for about a decade and a half outsold anybody except for Elvis, and his music inspired performers including Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis, John Lennon and countless others.

Coleman traces Domino's recording and performing career as well as the major events of his personal life, but without focusing on scandals and then continues when Domino had ceased to be a major recording artist but remained a powerful live attraction on the oldies circuit and in Las Vegas. From when he first traveled to Europe in the mid-sixties, the adulation he received overseas led to regular tours there. And furthermore the level of his music remained consistently high. There is plenty of material here that was unfamiliar to me. I was not aware that of the many Domino-Bartholomew compositions, Domino's chief contributions were the lyrics and the basic music, which Bartholomew worked and elaborated on. Also, I was not aware that Bartholomew generally played a very limited role in Domino's live touring as we are given the details of the various persons who were members of the band and some of their foibles as well as musical contributions. But names like Earl Palmer, Roy Montrell, Herb Hardesty, Lee Allen and other names familiar to rock'n'roll and R&B collectors are part of this story as is label mate Rick Nelson.

Coleman has put together an impressive work that is long overdue. There is a factual quality of much of this, but again that is partly the result of Domino's own private nature. He is best when describing some of the recordings and performances and there is a thorough list of sources although a list of recordings would have been very welcome here, or at least a listing of available recordings. But this is simply a small quibble on a most impressive work about a true Giant and Legend.

**Ron Weinstock**

## THE LANGUAGE OF THE BLUES

by Debra DeSalvo

(BILLBOARD BOOKS 2006 )

This is self-described as an anecdotal dictionary of the blues, but it suffers some serious flaws, and while there is some useful information, it is far from authoritative or comprehensive. While it has some usefulness, it can be improved in so many ways. There are some 150 words and phrases which Ms. DeSalvo, former Blues Review editor, focuses on, in a volume that emphasizes the African roots of the blues, but at times does not focus on other meanings the terms have. One review in *Blues & Rhythm* notes the focus on sex and hoodoo, but oddly enough very little on traveling which is a significant theme of the blues.

Much is made of the fact she interviewed a number of blues performers and included the material with various entries. However much, if not most, of the interview material is irrelevant to understanding the language of the blues, or the entry. For example she briefly discusses crossroads focusing on the African conception which leads to a discussion of the Robert Johnson meeting the devil at the crossroad myth and notes that some believe it. Then she included a discussion of Robert Lockwood, Johnson's stepson, which bears very little relationship to the discussion of the term. This would have been better

included in a sidebar about Johnson and Lockwood. It would have also been instructive to include lyrics of several songs for specific terms to show contrasting meanings. As an example, Elmore James' *Standing at the Crossroads*, clearly does not have the connotation that some impute to Johnson.

Also some of her sources are not exactly scholarly. In an entry on the Delta, she discussed Charlie Patton working for Will Dockery. She provides as her reference correspondence with Stephen Lavee. There are lengthy published biographies on Patton by John Fahey, and Stephen Calt and Gayle Dean Wardlow that should have been cited. There is no excuse to not citing these sources while citing private correspondence. Then there is this statement "In '34 Blues', Patton nails the desperation and anxiety of unemployment, but something good came out of leaving the plantation this time-Patton went to New York and recorded twenty-nine songs for the American Record Company. When these recordings were reissued in the mid-1960s, they sparked great interest in this Delta cropper who came to be known as the father of the blues." On the same page there is Patton's picture which noted he recorded for Paramount and became that label's biggest selling artist. It was the reissue of Patton's recordings by Yazoo, which presented mostly the Paramount recordings that led to this recognition of Patton's music.

Discussing Canned Heat which some strained to drink the alcohol from, DeSalvo notes that Canned Heat adopted their name from the Tommy Johnson recording and that the members of Canned Heat used their fame to help their blues heroes citing their collaboration in John Lee Hooker's **The Healer**. Hmm, I would think that it was the classic double album, **Hooker and Heat**, recorded when Alan Wilson, the Blind Owl, was still alive that not only was the recording that led to Hooker's crossover but it stands up with the best recordings Hooker ever made. It was an album the ghost band that is Canned Heat is today would be incapable of producing. Sorry for perhaps going off topic, but so many entries here go off topic. (Again sidebars would have been useful). However the fact she is so imprecise with this, makes me suspect the accuracy of some other entries.

She does include some suggested recordings, but more lyric quotes for the entries would have been very helpful. Also there should have been more cross entries, such as in her discussion of policy numbers, cross references back to that entry should have been provided for some of the policy combinations. And there are numerous terms that are not discussed here. This is a really rough first effort and this work needs some serious reworking if it is going to be a useful tool, which probably also means she should find herself a collaborator and take into account the serious criticisms if she wants to put together a work that will stand up as scholarly and a reference.

**Ron Weinstock**







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