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Riviera Maya Jazz Festival

reviewed

Jazz & Blues Report

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ON THE COVER

Luis conte played gongas and percussion as a special guest with Sacbe on Saturday night's show for the 2007 Riviera Maya Jazz Festival. Photo by Fernando Aceves



"Buffalicious"
Our original mascot from the early Buffalo Jazz Report days – mid '70s. He is older now, but global & still very cool!



Riviera Maya Jazz Festival reviewed

Live Music By
The Caribbean Sea



The beach at Playa del Carmen was packed all three nights

By Bill Wahl

All photos ©2007 Fernando Aceves unless otherwise noted

Last year came to a sand, sea and palm tree filled closing for this writer as I attended not one, but two jazz festivals in the sunny Caribbean region. The first was the Blue Bay Jazz Fest in St. Croix in November, which was reviewed in our December issue. The second came just two weeks later, November 29-December 1, in the area just south of Cancun, Mexico known as Riviera Maya. While the St. Croix event was the first in what will hopefully be a series, the Riviera Maya Jazz Festival for 2007 was the fifth annual event.

The festival was organized and produced by Fernando Toussaint, a very talented and popular jazz drummer who works with the Riviera Maya Tourism Board. I have to say, Fernando and his workers did a mar-



Festival Producer Fernando Toussaint also played drums with Aguamala and Sacbe

velous job in putting this three day event together, from the morning press conferences each day with the artists to be featured that night, to the staging, sound and lights – all of which were first class – right on down to the superb graphics on the posters, flyers and t-shirts. In addition to all of that, he also played with two of the bands at the festival.



Marcus Miller headlined the first night

The headliners for the evening shows were Marcus Miller on Thursday, Tower of Power on Friday and George Benson on Saturday. The three opening acts were all Mexican bands - Aguamala, Los Dorados and Sacbe. All six of these bands were very different from each other, making this quite a diverse festival. The stage was set up on the beach at Mamita's, which is a restaurant and bar in Playa del Carmen, the main city in the Riviera Maya region and the home to many fine hotels. It was set up perpendicular to the sea, so the crowd had pretty much unlimited room to sit or stand on the beaches in front of many of the other hotels and eating/drinking establishments down the shoreline. And the entire three-day festival was completely free of charge to anyone wishing to stroll down to the beach. The stage was huge and the massive banks of speakers certainly indicated right off the bat that it would probably be very loud up front. It was, though not at all oppressive as I did spend quite a bit of time very close to them. As is usually the case when I review this type of event, my notes only provide me with some hints to jog my memory, as it is hard enough to read what I have written when I can see what I am writing. In the case of many live shows, it is dark when I am writing so the notes are quite a disaster. No problem though, as I figure the stuff I remember is the important stuff anyway.

The first night started about a half our or so late, which is not so bad considering all the technical situations that arise and problems that need to be ironed out. Aguamala is a band led by Fernando Toussaint, the festival producer mentioned above. The other three members of the band, who play guitar, keyboards and bass, are considerably younger and are no doubt learning much from the veteran drummer. They played in a jazz-rock vein and often reminded me of the style played by Alan Holdsworth. They went over well with the younger members of the audience for sure, and they apparently have garnered a loyal following in the area. For much of the older part of the crowd the big hit of their set was when they performed with a slew of singers, a particular standout being the very talented lead



Marcus playing bass clarinet, with saxophonist Keith Anderson and trumpeter Patches Stewart

singer Caro Montes. I would very much like to hear more from her...have to look into that!

Aguamala warmed up the crowd well for Marcus Miller and his band. Classically trained on the clarinet from childhood, Miller became well known as the bass player for Miles Davis throughout the 80s. He and his regular touring/recording sextet came out on all cylinders and had the crowd dancing right away. They mixed things up with some funk originals, their versions of pop songs such as Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground" and The Beatles "Come Together," and three from the Miles period, "Amandala," "Jean Pierre" and the final encore "Tutu." They also played a sweet version of the standard "When I Fall In Love, on which Miller played the bass clarinet and also featured his outstanding harmonica player Gregoire Maret. A very nice set.

Friday night's show opened pretty much on time with Los Dorados, a quartet from Mexico consisting of tenor sax, guitar, bass and drums. They played in a more improvisational style bringing to mind some of the European jazz from the ECM label as well as jazz-rock jam bands. While the music may have been over the heads of some in the audience, you will get that sort of thing with the diversity of the bands at this festival. They did a particularly nice job on their ballads, and pretty much everyone in the crowd could relate. I ran into a guy from Europe who really enjoyed them stating that they reminded him of King Crimson. Interesting.

Then, changing gears, Tower of Power took the stage a-blasting and the 10-piece band with 5 horn players brought the crowd to their feet and had many dancing. It didn't seem to matter that they didn't know many of the songs T.O.P played from their 4-decades in the business, they were into it. Many of the young couples were slow dancing and necking during the ballads – a perfect complement to the beautiful backdrop of the moon, the stars and the sea. Led by singer/tenor saxophonist Emilio Castillo, Tower of Power still has four original members in the band – Castillo, baritone saxophonist Stephen "Doc" Kupka, bassist Francis Rocco Prestia and drummer David Garibaldi. They played their hits such as "You're Still A Young Man," "What Is Hip?" and "So Very Hard To Go" along with many others in quite a long set, and had the beach packed with people of all ages.



Tower of Power came out blasting. Baritone saxophonist Stephen "Doc" Kupka, right, is one of the four remaining original members

Fernando Toussaint was back at the drums on Saturday night, performing with Sacbe, a band he and his brothers Eugenio Toussaint (piano, keyboards) and Enrique Toussaint (bass) formed in Mexico City 30 years ago. They are legends in Mexican jazz, and although they disbanded some time ago they get back together now and then for special reunions such as this one. As good as Fernando was in the jazz-rock mode on Thursday, he seemed really in his element with Sacbe. The band had a special guest on this night; Cuban-born percussionist Luis Conte played



Sacbe featured the Toussaint brothers with Luis Conte, center
PAGE FOUR

the entire set with them. Conte is a master on an arsenal of instruments including congas, timbales and bongos and has toured and recorded with some of the biggest names in music today.

This extremely talented unit played some of the finest Latin jazz I have heard live in a very long time, and each song sounded very different from the one before it. In addition to some songs by the master pianist and songwriter Claire Fischer, they varied the set with a variety of tempos and also got into some fine modal pieces. Between Conte and Toussaint it was a percussion extravaganza at times. I noticed several people in the crowd walking around "air drumming." That kind of thing is *always* a good sign! On Sunday afternoon someone asked me what my personal favorite band was at the festival. My quick reply was Sacbe.

Of course, as would be expected, the favorite of the majority of the crowd was George Benson, the main headliner for the 2007 Riviera Maya Jazz Festival and a star in both the jazz and pop worlds. Benson came out dressed in white and did what he does best – played some crowd-pleasing jazzy R&B/pop with a very tight band. He was in good form with that rich, full voice he is famous for. His guitar work, which many of us would have liked to have heard much more of, was certainly very fine indeed.

Benson is such a good guitarist that many critics and fans complained when he focused more on vocals after the success of "Breezin'" in the mid-'70s. But, as he mentioned at the morning press conference, he was a singer before a guitar player. Obviously it would be difficult to turn down such a lucrative career, so he went the more commercial route and has had great success with many more songs such as "On Broadway," "This Masquerade," "Give Me The Night," "Turn Your Love Around" and so many more. He pretty much covered them all in his rather compact set, which closed out the 2007 Festival.



George Benson gave the crowd what it wanted...hit after hit after hit



The beach at Playa del Carmen Photo: B. Wahl

Once again, hats off to Fernando and all who worked on the festival for doing a fantastic job. If you are interested in checking it out for later this year, go to www.rivieramayajazzfestival.com. If you can not connect, try googling it as the site is currently not working as I write.

Which brings us to some words about the region of Mexico where all this took place. Riviera Maya covers the area from Playa del Carmen south to around Tulum along Highway 307 on the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula. Playa del Carmen is just south of Cancun, so the Cancun Airport would be your point of entry by air. The area is quickly becoming more and more well known for its white sand beaches and the turquoise water of the Caribbean Sea.

It is also becoming known for “all-inclusive” hotels and resorts. I stayed at one – The Grand Palladium – which is actually owned by the Fiesta Hotel Group of Spain. I was



One of the many lobbies at the Grand Palladium Photo: B. Wahl

just one of a large group of media people...writers, TV and radio people from all over who were also staying at the Palladium, and we all agreed that it was quite an experience. The first night I became friends with members of the group from Mexico City, and we went out to see a dance show at the lounge, and went later to check out the disco (still as big a thing in Mexico as it was when I was in Cancun 20 years ago). I had margaritas in both places and it seemed very strange not to have to pay for them. It was the same for an incredible buffet breakfast in the morning and likewise enjoyable dinner that night. Eat and walk! And, it is the same with the bar later and even the mini-bar in the room. You pay one price per night to stay, they put a color-coded wristband on you, and you are all set for your entire stay. On top of that, the price per night is extremely reasonable (I don't want to quote prices, but you will be surprised). I did get a massage, which is one of the few things not included in “all-inclusive.”

The lobbies (there are several) are huge, luxurious in a tropical kind of way and open on each end, and each has several restaurants, a bar and many other amenities. The large rooms are in many buildings scattered about, which you can reach by riding the little train or walking the covered bridges that run throughout the area. There is also a fantastic beach, pool, spa and much more. My room, which seemed to be the norm, was quite large and well appointed, and has a balcony. I can't really say enough about this place to do it justice. To really get a better idea of the experience the Grand Palladium has to offer and see some pictures, you need to check their site at www.fiestahotelgroup.com and navigate to Riviera Maya and Palladium. Or it might be easier, at least at first, to go to www.locoringo.com/



One of the many covered wooden walkways at the Grand Palladium Photo: B. Wahl

kantenah/palladium.html.

The night I arrived in Mexico I joined up with the group at a very fine Mexican restaurant in downtown Playa del Carmen. Yaxche (pronounced Jag-shey) Maya Cuisine is a top-notch eatery featuring a wide array of food inspired by the Maya and their cooking traditions, as well as many other traditional entrees from Yucatan.

Located on 8th Street, just off of the city's famous 5th Avenue pedestrian thoroughfare, Yaxche is easy to find. After a lot of confusion caused by the airline which resulted in my missing my ride from the airport, when I finally made my way into Playa del Carmen I could not have wound up at a better spot. We were seated in the courtyard with all kinds of exotic plants, trees, shrubs and Mayan stone art. The food was unlike any Mexican restaurant this gringo has ever been to. We saw no burritos or tacos, but were treated to a variety of entrees that looked as great as they tasted. And the margaritas were just what the doctor ordered! If you ever find yourself in Playa del Carmen, by all means do not miss out on a meal at Yaxche. And the strolling musicians were a nice touch too...and they were very good. While I wish I had taken some pictures, it was very low light and I'm sure the flash would have been bothersome to most of the other patrons. You can find out more about them, and see some pictures as well at www.mayanuisine.com.

attractions beyond the animals, birds, fish and the like. You can also swim in stone tunnels, walk through a butterfly pavilion, follow a river into the Caribbean where you can interact and swim with dolphins, visit a true size replica of an old Mexican cemetery, visit a Mayan village where you can see how life was when the Mayan civilization lived in this area, watch scheduled Maya ceremonies with the men and women dressed in authentic traditional attire, see replicas of Mayan houses with their wood & palm leaf roofs, and a whole lot more.



One of what looked to be hundreds of different and colorful graves at the cemetery at Xcaret Photo: B. Wahl

We saw not only some giant turtles, but also some little baby ones and somewhat larger ones in big ponds where they would be able to grow to full size before being set free. Our guide told us that only one out of every one thousand baby turtles makes it to full size in the wild. You can also witness Mayan traditions and customs through the work of weavers and craftsmen through out the park. And if you get hungry...which you will...they have a fantastic buffet with all kinds of Mexican food and a massive collection of peppers to go along with your meal. So watch out! If this sounds at all interesting, check out Xcaret if you visit the area. You can find out lots more at www.xcaret.com.

While I could only do so many things in my brief stay in the area, there is a lot more to do than we have touched on here. Spend a day shopping and enjoying outdoor restaurants throughout the downtown region of Playa del Carmen, as there is a lot to do in the city alone. Swim in the clear Caribbean or walk miles on the beaches. Some in the press group snorkeled and did the zip-lines over jungle foliage at Chikinha, and others visited Punta Venado Park and rode an ATV through the jungle before checking out the caves. Or...just lounge around, relax, re-group and enjoy the warm sun. But whatever you do, the music never has to be the only attraction when you go to a jazz or blues festival in a tropical locale. And I am sure few would travel to such a place and spend the money just for the music anyway. But, put the music and the tropical atmosphere together and you get one fine vacation.



Some of the parrots-without-bars at Xcaret Photo: B. Wahl

There are many things to do in the area, and Xcaret Eco-Theme park is definitely one of them. Shortly after you enter the park you see several large and very colorful parrots comfortably perched and without a cage or restriction of any kind. There are so many different species of wildlife throughout the park it is every bit as good, if not perhaps better, than any of the well-known zoos I have been to over the years. But, it is quite different than any zoo with its other

Apollo Theater Announces Final Phase of Expansion, Renovation and Restoration

NEW YORK, New York – The Apollo Theater has announced a series of new initiatives designed to deepen its partnerships with artists and audiences nationwide and broaden the opportunities it provides for future generations. The Apollo also today launched the public phase of a nationwide capital campaign designed to support the ongoing restoration of the Theater and its programmatic initiatives. These initiatives include:

- **Restoration and Expansion:** The Apollo's ongoing, comprehensive restoration and expansion will provide more than 4,000 square feet of additional space within the Theater for community and education programs. Additionally, the Apollo will install state-of-the-art stage equipment for performers, improve backstage accommodations, make critical improvements to the building's infrastructure, and enhance the patron experience by restoring the Theater to its former glory.

- **The Apollo Theater Archive:** In the months leading up to its 75th Anniversary Season in 2009-10, the Apollo is creating an archive of its historic collection of documents, photographs, audio and video recordings, artifacts, and other memorabilia and ephemera as part of its ongoing mission of preserving and making available its legacy. The Archive will feature many components: a traveling exhibition, a publication, a documentary, concert programs, and, in collaboration with Columbia University, an oral history project. The Apollo will also partner with the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture in its "Save Our African-American Treasures" project.

- **Collaborative Artistic Partnerships:** The Apollo is developing collaborations with a number of New York City's preeminent performing arts institutions and artists, including New York City Opera and Carnegie Hall in the 2008-09 season.

- **Walk of Fame:** To honor legendary performers with close ties to the institution, the Apollo will install a Walk of Fame on the 125th Street sidewalk in front of the landmark Theater.

The legendary Apollo Theater has been a driving force in shaping America's music and cultural landscape for nearly 75 years. A distinctively American landmark, it is the one of the only institutions in the nation where emerging talent and legendary performers share the same stage, thereby becoming part of an exceptional community of musicians and artists. Throughout its celebrated history, the Apollo has consistently been a model of innovation and excellence and a creative catalyst for Harlem, the city of New York, and the nation.

"The Apollo Theater is one of America's preeminent cultural landmarks, and continues to play an essential role in shaping the performing arts in America," said Jonelle Procope, President and CEO, Apollo Theater Foundation, Inc. "Since the days of Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong to Celia Cruz, the Jackson Five, Jay-Z, and beyond, the Apollo has embraced and promoted the contributions of black and Latino artists, securing its great history as

America's most respected and enduring cross-cultural venue."

"The Apollo's legacy as a resource for musicians—amateurs and legends, across genres and generations—and as a showcase for the artistic heritage of Harlem and of America is unmatched," said Richard D. Parsons, Chairman of the Board, Apollo Theater Foundation, Inc. "We are calling on people around the country to join us in supporting the continued revival of this uniquely American cultural treasure. Together we can ensure its future as a seminal force in musical history."

In conjunction with the restoration and new programming initiatives, the Apollo has been in the quiet phase of a national \$96 million capital campaign to support the Theater's renovation, expansion, and future programming initiatives. Led by Richard D. Parsons, Chairman of the Board of the Apollo Theater and board members Quincy Jones and Alfred C. Liggins III, the Apollo campaign has raised \$51.5 million to date and is now launching the public phase of the campaign concurrently in six cities: Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, D.C.

Grammy Salute To Jazz Pays Tribute to Legends Sonny Rollins and McCoy Tyner

SANTA MONICA, California — The Recording Academy will spotlight the classical and jazz genres with special events held during Grammy Week. The Grammy Salute To Classical Music and Grammy Salute To Jazz events celebrate musical styles and honorees that have made significant contributions to our culture. Each event will feature live performances and a special presentation of The Recording Academy President's Merit Award to accomplished artists in honor of their professional achievements. This year's Grammy Salute To Classical honorees are Lang Lang and Earl Wild. The Grammy Salute To Jazz honorees are Sonny Rollins and McCoy Tyner. The 50th Annual Grammy Awards will be broadcast live from Staples Center in Los Angeles on the CBS Television Network on Sunday, February 10 from 8 – 11:30 p.m. (ET/PT).

Legendary jazz greats Sonny Rollins and McCoy Tyner will be honored at Grammy Salute To Jazz. Rollins is a two-time Grammy -winning tenor saxophonist and 2004 Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award recipient. He emerged at the height of the bebop jazz movement, and his illustrious career has consisted of more than five decades of recording. Since 2005 he has recorded on his own record label, Doxy Records. Five-time Grammy -winning Tyner is a jazz pianist whose style has become one of the most identifiable sounds in improvised music. He has released nearly 80 albums and in 2007 formed his own record label, McCoy Tyner Music, in partnership with the Blue Note Jazz Club.

The presentation of the President's Merit Awards to Rollins and Tyner will take place on Tuesday, Feb. 5 from 7 – 10 p.m. at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles and will feature a cocktail reception, live performances and appearances by the honorees and the Gibson/Baldwin Grammy Jazz Ensembles.

Established in 1957, The Recording Academy is an or-

ganization of musicians, producers, engineers and recording professionals that is dedicated to improving the cultural condition and quality of life for music and its makers. Internationally known for the Grammy Awards — the preeminent peer-recognized award for musical excellence and the most credible brand in music — The Recording Academy is responsible for groundbreaking professional development, cultural enrichment, advocacy, education and human services programs. In its 50th year, The Academy continues to focus on its mission of recognizing musical excellence, advocating for the well-being of music makers and ensuring music remains an indelible part of our culture. For more information about The Academy, please visit www.grammy.com.

Celebrating the Sound of Stax during Black History Month at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum

CLEVELAND, Ohio - In honor of Black History Month, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum has planned a month-long tribute to Stax Records. This year marks the Rock Hall's 12th annual celebration and will include a series of free public programs designed to give both Stax aficionados and beginners alike a closer look into the record label that changed the face of music over the past 50 years.

Located in Memphis, Tennessee, Stax Records was founded in 1957 and quickly became a safe-haven for tolerance in a racially divided area of town. One of America's first interracial groups, Booker T. & the MGs, formed at Stax. The record company was also home to legendary singers like Sam & Dave, Otis Redding, the Staple Singers and Isaac Hayes and produced hits like "Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay," "Soul Man" and "Knock on Wood." In 2007 the record company celebrated its 50th anniversary and signed R&B singer Angie Stone.

The Museum will also feature Stax Records as the special Black History Month topic of the unique K-12 level interdisciplinary educational program, Rockin' the Schools, in which students will examine landmark performances, while connecting ways that Stax artists' lives and art portray important historical moments.

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 \$22 for adults, \$17 for seniors (65+), \$13 for youth (9-12), \$18 for adult residents of Greater Cleveland. Children under 8 and Museum members are free. For general inquiries, please call 216.781.ROCK.

For more information and a listing of The Rock Hall's 2008 Black History Month schedule of events, go to www.rockhall.com and click "Events."

Producer Phil Ramone to host new film series - Recording: The History of Recorded Music

Phil Ramone, 14-time Grammy winning producer/engineer has been tapped to host, narrate and co-produce the upcoming documentary series, *Recording: The History of Recorded Music*.

The eight-part *Recording* series tells the story of American culture by focusing on the dynamic relationship between technology and music and how they have been a force of innovation for each other—affecting how we listen, live, love and relate to one another—and how American popular culture has been spread around the world through recorded music.

From Thomas Edison's cylinder phonograph to Steve Jobs iPod, *Recording*, using a combination of archival footage, in-depth interviews and performances with a wide range of artists and music executives, will offer an in-depth chronological exploration of the history of sound recording and its progression.

"I am thrilled to be a part of this important project," Phil Ramone said. "*Recording* is an entertaining and highly informative journey through our country's cultural history, told through the subjects I have focused on my entire career - music and technology. This story of American music and the story of music technology go hand-in-hand. What we hear, alone and as a society, is very much influenced by the technology of the day. *Recording* is an unusual and new look at music that forces each of us, inside and outside of the industry, to ask, 'what's next?'"

The series, which is in production, will be accompanied by a traveling museum exhibition on the history of music and technology. Over 2,000 songs, 500 hours of archival video, 20,000 still photographs, over 160 interviews by major artists, composers, executives, historians, and technologists, will be part of the largest multi-media music database ever assembled. In addition, the producers are preparing a companion book, DVD and digital soundtrack series, and are in discussion with all labels to release a *Recording* branded "best of" American music series.

"We have received unprecedented cooperation within the industry, including major labels, ASCAP, BMI, RIAA, and the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences," said Larry Rosen, the executive producer and creator of the series. "Even more importantly artists from every genre have agreed to appear in the series, from singer songwriters like Billy Joel and Paul Simon, to rockers like Peter Frampton and music legends like Les Paul, Dave Brubeck, Smokey Robinson, and B.B. King."

Producers expect the series to be completed in early 2009 and available for distribution later that year or early 2010. The series is being shot in high-definition with Sony HDX900 24P HD cameras utilizing Dolby 5.1 Surround Sound. At every opportunity, the producers are transferring archival footage to high definition formats to improve quality without sacrificing historic validity.

In addition to Rosen and Ramone, credits for the series include: Executive Producers Lee Rosenberg and Ramsey Lewis; Co-Producer Bruce Ricker; Writer/Co-Producer Steven Dupler; Production Supervisor/Co-Producer Brad Bernstein; and Director of Photography Jim O'Donnell.

BLUES WATCH

BY MARK SMITH

New Release blues.... The release schedule is heating up already as bands are trotting out the discs they will be featuring at the summer festivals that are on the horizon....**Roomful of Blues-** *Raisin' A Ruckus*; **Eric Lindell-** *Low on Cash, Rich in Love*; **Ray Bonneville-** *Goin' By Feel*; **Betty Harris-** *Intuition*; **Elliot Sharp's Terraplane-Forgery;** **B.B. King-** *B.B. King & Friends*; **Otis Taylor-** *Recapturing the Banjo*; **Greg Koch and Other Bad Men-** *Live on the Radio*; **Bob Hite-** *Dr. Boogie Presents Rarities from the Bob Hite Vaults*; **Etta James-** *Live in New York*; **Bob Brozman-** *Post Industrial Blues*; **Guitar Mikey and the Real Thing-** *Jam Zero I*; **Carlos Johnson-** *Live at B.L.U.E.S. on Halsted*; **Robert Cray-** *Live at the BBC*; **B.B. King-** *Live*; **Anthony Gomes-** *Anthony Gomes Live*; **Sean Costello-** *We Can Get Together*; **Ray Reed-** *Where the Trinity Runs Free*; **Kevin Mark-** *Cuttin' Loose*; **Bernard Allison-** *Chills & Thrills*; **Popa Chubby-** *Deliveries After Dark*; **Harrison Kennedy-** *High Country Blues*; **Rory Gallagher-** *Live In Europe*; **Little Arthur Duncan-** *Live at Rosa's Blues Lounge*; **Carolyn Wonderland-** *Miss Understood*; **Piano Red-** *Diggin' The Boogie 1950-1956*; **Tommy Castro, Deanna Bogart, Ronnie Baker Brooks & Magic Dick-** *Legendary Rhythm & Blues Revue*; **Kelly Richey-** *Have you experienced The Kelly Richey Band....Live?*; **North Mississippi Allstars-** *Hernando*; **Sharrie Williams-** *I'm Here to Stay*; **The Reverend Peyton's Big Damn Band-** *Big Damn Nation*; **Al Basile-** *The Tinge*; **The Blind Boys of Alabama-** *Down in New Orleans*; **Michael Bram and the Alternators-** *Self Titled*; **Jubal Kane-** *Flying High*; **Catherine Russell-** *Sentimental Streak*; **Luther Allison-** *Underground*; **Randy McAllister-** *Dope Slap Soup*; **Webb Wilder and the Rednecks-** *Born to be Wilder- Live*; **Jacob -Alex Mason-** *Town and Country.....* **A Smaller Room blues....** Sadly, as we went to press, I learned the Bob Enos, Trumpet player for **Roomful of Blues**, passed away on January 11th, from an apparent heart attack on the eve of the band's departure for the Ultimate Rhythm and Blues Cruise. I had the great good fortune of interviewing Bob a couple of times over the years and found him to be witty, thoughtful and full of mischievous energy. His high notes floating above the horn-driven roar of the band were always a major feature in Roomful's sound. I'm sure he will be greatly missed by the band and fans alike. He is survived by his wife Jill, sons Louis, Jude and Joseph and daughter Elizabeth. Contributions for his children's education can be sent to Bob Enos Memorial Scholarship Fund, c/o TD Bank North, 127 South Street, Wrentham, MA 02093.Rest in Peace Bob.... That's it for this month. See ya!

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We only bring you
the Cream of the Crop!



PHANTOM BLUES BAND

Footprints
DELTA GROOVE

The Phantom Blues Band has returned with a new disc full of bluesy old school sounds.

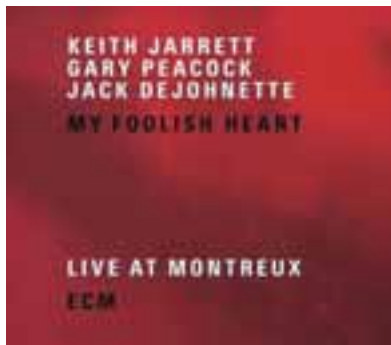
First attracting notice for their work with Taj Mahal, their Delta Groove debut, *Out of the Shadows*, drew further attention, while the band's members are in demand for various touring acts and recordings, so guitarist Denny Freeman, now part of Bob Dylan's touring band, only appears on several of tracks here. The rest, Mike Finnigan, vocals and keyboards; Johnny Lee Schell, vocals and guitar; Larry Fulcher, vocals and bass; Joe Sublett, saxophone; Darrell Leonard, trumpet; and Tony Braunagel, drums, are still such a strong unit even without Freeman's fine playing. The rhythm section lays down the groove, the horns mix taut riffs and the soloists keep things fresh and concise.

Despite the name, this band mixes in southern soul along with straight blues. It opens with Finnigan covering Howard Tate's *Look at Granny Run*, while displaying his versatility on the classic ballad, *Cottage For Sale*. His rendition of Ray Charles' classic blues, *A Fool For You*, is nicely done although not far removed from Charles' original. He shows himself to be quite a good interpreter of Ray Charles here. Schell reworks Freddy King's *See See Baby* as well as a nice bit of Rufus Thomas funk, *Fried Chicken*, although not as strong a singer here. Exceptional is his vocal on Darrell Leonard's *A Very Blue Day*, with a fine trumpet solo and an evocative melody that evokes Horace Silver and Herbie Hancock. Fulcher treats us to Earl Randle's deep soul ballad, *Leave Home Girl* and his reggae-flavored *When the Music Changes* is a stunning closer.

Not a weak track to be found here, and some exceptional ones by a band that sounds incapable of putting out a poor disc.

Ron Weinstock

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KEITH JARRETT/GARY PEACOCK/ JACK DEJOHNETTE

My Foolish Heart ECM RECORDS

On their 18th ECM release, Keith Jarrett (piano), Gary Peacock (bass) and Jack DeJohnette (drums) perform an array of standards live at Montreux's Stravinsky Auditorium in July 2001. In his liner notes for the two-disc set, Jarrett claims he was holding on this concert recording "until the right moment presented itself."

Disc one (about 60 minutes) launches with the Miles Davis tune "Four," followed by a warm, lovely 12:35-minute reading of the title tune, and impressive remakes of "Oleo," "What's New," "The Song Is You," as well as a playful take on the Andy Razaf-Fats Waller ragtime tune, "Ain't Misbehavin'."

Disc two (also about 60 minutes) begins with another perky Razaf-Waller tune (featuring DeJohnette's best solo), "Honeysuckle Rose," and includes this world-class trio's fresh takes on jazz and pop standards such as "You Took Advantage of Me," "Straight, No Chaser," "Five Brothers," "Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out to Dry," "On Green Dolphin Street," and "Only the Lonely."

At any tempo, Jarrett exudes feeling and imagination, demonstrating his total command of the keyboard and an extensive historical perspective. Peacock and DeJohnette match Jarrett's enthusiasm and flair in spotlighted solos and support.

Jarrett says this recording "shows the trio at its most buoyant, swinging, melodic and dynamic." I wholeheartedly agree. Each tune they play grabs your attention. It's a tough call considering their vast output, but this may be their best-ever recording. A 16-page liner booklet containing color photos and Jarrett's notes documents the concert.

Nancy Ann Lee

BOOGIE WOOGIE AND BLUES PIANO

Mosaic Select 30 MOSAIC SELECT 3 CD SET

While it is not clear where the style of piano called Boogie Woogie originated, by 1928 it had clearly surfaced in Chicago where Clarence 'Pinetop' Smith named it on a recording, Pinetop's Boogie Woogie. As Dan Morganstern writes in the booklet accompanying the new Mosaic Select set, **Boogie Woogie and Blues Piano**, boogie woogie was a piano idiom rooted in the blues, "a rolling, romping and infectious approach to the keyboard ... Its chief characteristic is a forceful, repetitive (but by no means unvaried) 'walking' bass line pitted against a blues melody line in

the treble marked by cross rhythms, usually (but not always) at a fast tempo." The Mosaic Select 3-disc set collects 72 of the finest recordings from the idiom's peak period of popularity in the late thirties and early forties from recordings originally on such labels as Victor, OK, ARC, Columbia, Bluebird and Vocalion, and includes such masters of the style as Albert Ammons, Meade Lux Lewis, Pete Johnson, Jimmy Yancey and Cripple Clarence Lofton along with recordings by others including Harry James, Joe Sullivan, Benny Carter, and Red Allen.

A thunderous boogie played with "A Left hand From God," can be heard from the opening moments as we are introduced to Meade Lux Lewis' reviving his classic *Honky Tonk Train Blues*, one of the classic piano and train instrumentals of all time. It's followed by a couple more efforts by Lewis as well as fellow Chicagoan Albert Ammons with two takes of his dazzling tour de force, 'Shout For Joy, in turn followed by the great Kansas City pianist, Pete Johnson and the great shouter Joe Turner on *Roll 'Em Pete*. These recordings, along with the appearance of the trio at the legendary Carnegie Hall concert, **From Spirituals to Swing**, helped launch boogie woogie into a National craze, with the Boogie Woogie Trio and Turner booked into Cafe Society, the legendary Greenwich Village Club that was the first major integrated nitery, and the trio recorded the spectacular *Boogie Woogie Prayer* together, and were joined by trumpeter Harry James for several recordings. The first of the three discs concludes with eight heart pounding duets between Johnson and Ammons.

The second of the discs is a bit more varied with some of the focus shifted to vocalist Turner who fronts Pete Johnson and His Boogie Woogie Boys, which also includes trumpeter Hot Lips Page and alto saxophonist Buster Smith on *Cherry Red* and *Baby Look at You*; then shouts in front of Ammons, Johnson and Lewis on *Cafe Society Rag*, before shouting in front of combos led by pianist Joe Sullivan and Benny Carter. We are then treated to three distinct takes of *Down The Road A-Piece* by the Will Bradley Trio with pianist Freddie Slack, which became a staple of piano led combos in the post-World War II period. Selections by Teddy Wilson, Lionel Hampton and Red Allen illustrate the spread of boogie woogie as it became a national fad (this set limits itself to small combos and does not include examples of the big band variations).

The final disc opens with a piano solo by Mary Lou Williams before presenting us with 17 tracks by the great Jimmy Yancey, one of the greatest blues and boogie pianists of all time. A former baseball player in the Negro Leagues, he was a groundskeeper at Comiskey Park as well as a pianist of great emotional depth and rhythmic vitality. His music eschewed flash for a lyrical, almost poetic quality with what Morganstern notes idiosyncratic harmonies although every one of his numbers ends in the key of E. His boogies are not played at quite a breakneck as Ammons, Johnson or Lewis were capable of but, his treble lines are perhaps more interesting. And his bass work is varied and propulsive, if not as powerful as the others, as can be heard on *Yancey's Stomp*. Slow blues like *Five O'clock Blues* were his forte as his subtle touch and treble embellishments lend a melancholy flavor to his performances. His poetic piano perhaps is stronger than

his unmannered vocals, but his earnest delivery compensates for any vocal limitations, and one will not find any better examples of blues piano than his work here.

Five tracks by Clarence Lofton, with Big Bill Broonzy on guitar, close this collection with touches of ragtime mixed in with boogie as on *Strut That Thing*, which echoes Speckled Red's classic *Dirty Dozens*, and lyrics that would be echoed by Little Johnny Jones a decade later, with a solid rag-tinged boogie bass, strongly played right-hand boogie riffs and melodic decorations. Also included is the marvelous *Brown Skin Gal*, which has more great piano and lyrics and commanding singing.

Long-time collectors have many of these recordings, but some of the reissues of this material have been out-of-print for a number of years. Mosaic Select has put together this strong collection of music that belongs in any credible collection of blues and boogie woogie piano. Dan Morganstern's essay also provides the historical context mixed with insights on the recordings and performers. Available from www.mosaicrecords.com. *Ron Weinstock*

ELIANE ELIAS

Something for You:

Eliane Elias Sings & Plays Bill Evans

BLUE NOTE

Brazilian-born pianist vocalist Eliane Elias is probably best known for her Brazilian jazz albums. On this album marking her return to Blue Note, she serves up a subtle straight-ahead session celebrating the music of the late pianist Bill Evans.

Forged with bassist Marc Johnson (her husband, who played in the last Evans trio) and drummer Joey Baron, this 17-tune set is a tour-de-force that contains tunes by Evans, Harold Arlen, Herb Ellis, George Gershwin, Victor Young, one tune by Elias, and more.

Elias is at her best at the keys, swinging lightly and mixing her approach with single lines and chording. Her mid-range voice is appealing and enhances those tunes on which she sings. But it's really her piano chops that keep the listener engaged. One of her best tunes is the sprightly, swinging instrumental take on Gershwin's "But Not For Me." Elias sings lyrics by Gene Lees and improvises nicely on piano for an uptempo version of the Bill Evans tune, "Waltz for Debby." Her soft voice lacks the dynamics of peer singers, yet is best suited for tunes like the only Brazilian song on the disc, "Minha." The set caps off with Bill Evans performing "Introduction to Here's Something For you" from an original cassette tape he gave to Johnson.

The laid-back fare of pleasant ballads doesn't push the envelope but adequately honors Bill Evans. Nice for arm-chair listening.

Nancy Ann Lee

POPA CHUBBY

Electric Chubbyland

VOL 1 AND 2

BLIND PIG

Those who have followed Bronx native Popa Chubby through his career know that while he's found in the blues racks in the record stores his placement there is only one of convenience since he could just as easily fit amongst rockers such as Jeff Beck, Joe Satriani and, yes, Jimi

Hendrix.

While some blues artists throw in a little rock here and there they seem embarrassed to break too far out of the standard blues straightjacket. Chubby, on the other had, isn't afraid to celebrate rock guitar as a natural progression of electrified blues guitar. On these two discs, he sets the standard blues on the shelf and explores the wild terrain through which Hendrix cut such a broad swath. While Hendrix purists will sniff that he's no Jimi, that's not much of a criticism as no one since Hendrix has proven to be so consistently ground breaking and inventive. That being said, Chubby lights plenty of fires here and replicates the wild abandon and spirit, if not the exact notes, of some of Hendrix's best work.

Grab a beverage of your choice, fire up the air guitar and rock your way through some fine guitar work.

Mark Smith

ANTONIO SANCHEZ

Migration

CAMJAZZ

Born in Mexico but now based in New York, drummer Antonio Sanchez makes his debut as leader with this eight-tune session featuring Chris Potter (tenor and soprano sax), David Sanchez (tenor sax and no relation to the leader), Scott Colley (bass) and guests Pat Metheny (guitar) and Chick Corea (piano).

Aside from the lively opener, "One for Antonio," written by and featuring Corea at the piano and the graceful "Arena (Sand)" spotlighting its composer, Metheny, the remaining tunes omit piano and guitar to fulfill the leader's penchant for 'drums playing free.' The disc features some innovative original tunes built on various tempos and featuring the saxophonists in unison or as soloists. Sanchez builds dramatic traps work drama into each tune, one of the best being "Greedy Silence," a tempo-shifting, dynamic number and the lengthiest at 10:53 minutes. Sanchez and crew also serve up novel interpretations of Joe Henderson's "Inner Urge" and, for the finale, a drums-guitar duet with Metheny on Miles Davis' "Solar."

Before this recording, Sanchez polished his chops as sideman to Michael Brecker, Danilo Perez, Avishai Cohen, Paquito D'Rivera, Chick Corea and Pat Metheny. You'll hear influences of these musicians in his compositions and the band's performances on this promising debut disc.

Nancy Ann Lee

PAUL LAMB & THE KING SNAKES

Snakes & Ladders

SPV BLUE LABEL

British harpist and vocalist Paul Lamb & the King Snakes is a highly regarded band led by the leader's harp and vocals, but their new SPV Blue disc, *Snakes & Ladders*, was my first exposure to their music. This is a live recording from September 2006 which captures them in front of a receptive, enthusiastic audience on a variety of material which has parallels to the music of The Thunderbirds or Rod Piazza & the Mighty Flyers.

Lamb is joined by guitarist/vocalist Chad Strentz, who the booklet notes is influenced by some of the bluesy jazz

guitarists like Tiny Grimes. Lamb's son Ryan is on guitar on much of this; Raul de Pedro Marinero on lead guitar, Rod Demick on bass and Sonny Below on drums. It's a tight ensemble and gets a rocking groove going on the opening *Crazy For Me*, with its *Bo Diddley/Not Fade Away* groove. *Adopted Child* is the lengthiest performance with some terrific harp while son Ryan takes lead on the Guitar Slim classic, *The Things I Used to Do*. The excited audience is quite into the performances here, including when Paul Lamb does several numbers in tribute to the legendary Sonny Terry such as *Your Better Mind* and *Easy Rider*. This was recorded in a theater although I suspect the ideal place would be a crowded bar with a packed dance floor as they certainly work *I Got My Mojo Workin'* in fine form.

The various singers are all capable vocalists, but no one stands out. They bring the songs to life and the band plays wonderfully, even if the tempo is a bit too frantic. Fans of strong blues bar bands and blues harp will certainly find many delights on **Snakes & Ladders**.

Ron Weinstock



CATHERINE RUSSELL

Sentimental Streak

WORLD VILLAGE RECORDS

I became of Catherine Russell when she appeared as a backing vocalist on the wonderful Marie Knight tribute to Reverend Gary Davis. She is the daughter of the legendary bandleader, Luis Russell, and bassist-vocalist Carline Ray, and has worked with Jimmy Vivino's Little Big Band, Steely Dan, Paul Simon, Cyndi Lauper and others.

In the 90s, her mom was subbing on bass with Doc Cheatham so she came down and later regularly saw the late trumpeter and started singing with him and the spirit of his music lives in this, her marvelous new album.

This recording is produced by Larry Campbell, who also contributes guitar, violin and mandolin to this project that showcases Ms. Russell's marvelous way with a song. And, there is a fine collection of songs presented here for Ms. Russell, including *I've Got That Thing*, which her father wrote and recorded (it was released as by King Oliver who was ill that day); *Kitchen Man*, a vaudeville blues co-written by Andy Razaf that was a staple of so many singers of that time with its double entendre-filled lyrics; Hoagy Carmichael's *New Orleans*; the Wilder-McGlohon *South to a Warmer Place* (with Rachele Garniez's accordion and Campbell's violin evoking a French bals-musette); Nellie Lutcher's playful *You Better Watch Yourself, Bub*; Willie

Dixon's *I Don't Care Who Knows* (originally done by Harold Burrage for Cobra); Garniez's *Broken Nose* (again with her accordion) and the sultry Harburg-Gensler *Thrill Me*.

Campbell evokes a variety of influences including Alberta Hunter, Billy Holiday, Ivie Anderson, and Nellie Lutcher throughout this disc. I find Holiday an apt comparison as she phrases the lyric. She does not come across as a Holiday sound-alike in the manner of a Madeline Peyroux, but rather her delivery and timing is reminiscent of Lady Day, and the backing is so complimentary and sympathetic.

Many tracks eschew drummer while several tracks have horns and strings, yet never overwhelm the vocals and the lyric and one can appreciate Campbell's marvelous mandolin solo chorus on *Broken Nose* as simply one of the elements that make it such a splendid performance. The acoustic bent of the performances here lend this disc a flavor of the thirties and forties cabaret scene yet everything sounds so contemporary.

This is not a campy revival of such vintage tunes like Brian Seltzer's Louis Prima pastiches. Instead it is a compelling modern take on such material that will certainly end up on a number of Best of 2008 lists.

Ron Weinstock

HANS THEESSINK

Slow Train

BLUE GROOVE

Traveling the same rootsy highway as J.J. Cale, Ry Cooder and Steve James, Dutch bluesman Hans Theessink has crafted a large body of work that is mostly unknown to American blues fans.

Avoiding the boogies, shuffles and standard 12 bar blues laid down by most bands Theessink instead focuses on intricate acoustic tunes with a low key vibe that are just as powerful in their intricacy as the amped up blues competition. Theessink also focuses on a broader range of topics than the standard blues canon of bad luck, bad women and bad whisky.

Driving the point home all the more is the decided gospel slant of this disc. The title track and *Love you baby* could have fallen off a Blind Boys of Alabama disc with the rich back up vocals adding heat to the fire. Theessink also joins the long line of those who can't understand spouting God's word of peace and harmony all the while bombing the snot out of each other, *God Created the World*.

Elsewhere, Theessink takes a run at traditional spirituals with his bitter take on how the poor got screwed again, this time at the hands of *Katrina*. A bit of World Beat enters the equation with *Thula Mama (Oh mother don't you weep)*, which could have fallen from a Ladysmith Black Mambazo disc (who clearly inspired the sound of this track as acknowledged by Theessink's reference to the Graceland Tour as a point of reference in the lyrics).

On *Let Go* and *Run on for a Long time* Theessink not only travels the J. J. Cale highway but with his simple, yet burning, guitar lines and dead pan delivery channels Cale so closely that you'll be checking the liner notes to see if he's sitting in on the session.

A slow trip but worthwhile nevertheless.

Mark Smith



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GRUPO LOS SANTOS

Lo Que Somos Lo Que Sea
DEEP TONE RECORDS

On their second CD, this New York City-based band formed in 1998 delivers a session of 10 original compositions, performed by tenor saxophonist Paul Carlon, guitarist Pete Smith, bassist Dave Ambrosio and drummer William "Beaver" Bausch. Rumbatap pioneer Max Pollack joins the band on two tunes. Translated, the title means "What We Are What Will Be."

Playing an array of Latin roots music, melded to jazz, funk, and more, this novel quartet serves up a satisfying mix of tunes, with each musician getting his moment in the spotlight. Solos are superb; teamwork is solid and no musician tries to outdo the others. Their equitable group effect, without all the expected instrumentation of Latin bands, is a softening of approach but not energy, tempo or creativity. The music, written by Bausch (six tunes) and Carlon (four tunes) is intricate, lively, well-arranged and melodious. Each tune is a small ear-candy masterpiece differing from all that comes before and after it. Carlon has a nice tone and a silky style and blends harmoniously with Smith on many of the tunes. Bausch, a true artist on drums and percussion, is the driving force on each tune. Ambrosio provides excellent support and proves himself in solos.

This is one of those discs that urges you to seek out the band to catch a live performance. Hopefully, these young musicians will do some touring in the near future to gain wider notice, because this is the kind of innovative music that makes you want to stick around for a second or third set

Nancy Ann Lee

THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA

Down In New Orleans
TIME-LIFE

This new release by The Blind Boys of Alabama has the legendary gospel singers in the Crescent City where they are backed by a terrific trio of David Torkanowsky on piano, Roland Guerin on bass and Shannon Powell on drums along with guest appearances by the Hot 8 Brass Band, Allen Toussaint and The Preservation Hall Jazz Band.

Mixing in gospel classics like *Free at Last, You Got to Move*, and *I'll Fly Away* with secular positive message songs like the late Earl King's *Make a Better World*, the group continues to move the heart with the sheer conviction with awe-inspiring vocals of Clarence Fountain, Jimmy Carter and the others.

Certainly even if their voices have some raspiness from age, it is not rust and in delivering *How I Got Over*, the vocals send chills through the listener. The Preservation Hall Jazz Band can be heard backing them on *Across the Bridge, Uncloudy Day* and *Down By the Riverside*, on which Allen Toussaint adds some gospel funk piano.

Toussaint also is heard on the fine *If I Could Help Somebody*, while the Hot 8 enliven *Make a Better World* as well as the exhilarating rendition of *I'll Fly Away*, that closes this CD that is another marvelous addition to the Blind Boys extensive discography.

Ron Weinstock

HOLLY COLE

Holly Cole
KOCH RECORDS

Canadian vocalist Holly Cole serves up a seductive set of 11 tunes in settings from a piano-voice duet to a 10-musician ensemble.

Cole assembled a group of mostly New York-based instrumentalists including Marty Erlich (alto sax), Lenny Pickett (tenor sax), Scott Robinson (bass sax), John Allred (trombone), Robert DeBellis (bass clarinet, baritone sax), Vincent Chancey and Mark Taylor (French horn), Matt Munisteri (guitar), Gil Goldstein (piano), Greg Cohen (bass) and Steven Wolf (drums). Aaron Davis (piano), David Piltch (bass) and Kevin Breit (guitar) also contribute. Most arrangements are by Gil Goldstein, with additional arranging by Cole.

Highlights include a subtle, velvety rendition of the Gimbel/Legrand tune, "I Will Wait For You," a sultry take on the Haren/Bjorn "Alley Cat Song" with nonet backing, and a racing version of Cole Porter's "It's Alright With Me" with the nonet and Goldstein on accordion.

Cole, born and raised in the Maritimes, grew up amidst music. Her parents are classical musicians, her brother is a composer/jazz artist, her uncle was a Broadway performer and her grandfather played country/western music on the accordion. Cole has received numerous awards in Canada for her recordings.

Cole's recognizable voice is the attraction but Goldstein's arranging is superb and this disc that Koch is calling a "classic noir valentine," is truly a listening treat—smoky, mysterious and reminiscent of the 1940s.

Nancy Ann Lee

ANDREW BROWN

Big Brown's Blues
BLACK MAGIC RECORDS

There have been so many examples of blues artists who produced a small number of recordings whose recordings were highly prized by those who heard them but never reach the more general acclaim that their music deserves. It's been over twenty years since singer-guitarist Andrew Brown passed away after recording some excellent 45s, several tracks for Alligator's Living Chicago Blues series and two superb albums for Dutch Labels that I do not believe have been issued on CD. The Dutch Black Magic label has made almost all of Brown's recordings available (the issued Alligator tracks excluded) on a wonderful limited edition reissue titled Big Brown Blues.

Packed in a book sized package, the contents of the two discs include his issued 45s for the U.S.A, 4 Brothers and Brave labels and a pair of unissued titles from Brave; two unissued songs from the sessions used for the Living Chicago Blues selections; the contents of his Black Magic and Double Trouble CDs and three demos recorded at Andrew's basement. The booklet contains a bio from Bill Dahl and producer Dick Shurman's recollections of Andrew and his music. As Shurman observes, "Musically, Andrew was accomplished, powerful, soulful and versatile."

Influences on Brown include B.B. King, Lowell Fulson and T-Bone Walker, but in listening to these his music

struck me as very similar to that of the late Little Milton, which is evident in the wonderful treatment of Milton's *Losing Hand* that is the first track on the second disc. It is more a matter of similarities in the voices and common influences. Like Milton, Brown was not only a fleet guitarist, but also a wonderful songwriter. Magic Sam covered Brown's USA 45, *You Better Stop*, but there are any number of strong modern urban blues with sophisticated lyrics, sung with so much heart with his guitar playing embellishing, not overwhelming, his vocals. He moves from a rocking shuffle like *No More Talking* to the blues ballad *Your Love is Important to Me*, then taking up a funk groove on *Mary Jane*. Dick Shurman had him cover some songs on the two albums with Tin Pan Alley, including his terrific take on James 'Thunderbird' Davis' Blue Monday, Joe Tex's *I Want to Do (Everything For You)*, and a Bobby Bland classic *Lead Me On*. A few numbers are a bit more directed towards the straight soul market, but are delivered here so well.

Having Brown's two albums and even a 4 Brothers 45, I am delighted to have this wonderful reissue available by a person who should be much better known among a broader range of blues fans. His 'mellow' blues styling is akin to such other neglected past blues masters Mighty Joe Young and Fenton Robinson and is better than a lot of what is purported to be blues today. This is a limited edition and I recommend checking the better mail order specialists like BlueBeat Music (www.bluebeatmusic.com from which I purchased this) to get this gem while you can. It is also available directly from Black Magic for \$35 postpaid (<http://home.tiscali.nl/blackmagicrecords.nl/>).

Ron Weinstock

JOHN STEIN

Green Street

WHALING CITY SOUND

A blurb from Michael Cuscuna on the back of John Stein's *Green Street* a reissue of a late nineties recording, notes that it acts as an homage to Grant Green, as well as the classic sixties' organ jazz combo and the Rudy Van Gelder sound. While Stein's album shares its title with one of Grant Green's Blue Note discs, the title track is derived from the location of the 1359 Jazz Club that was home for Stein's organ trio at the time. And, while Grant Green was an influence and inspiration on Stein, this disc is comprised mostly of Stein's funky and bluesy originals backed by organist Ken Clark and drummer Dave Hurst with David 'Fathead' Newman adding sax and flute to five of the twelve tracks.

The mood is set with the opening *Booga Lou*, with Newman's tenor the frosting on the danceable groove, while *Hotcakes*, has a bit of a movie soundtrack flavor with Newman's flute alluding to *Theme From the Pink Panther* as Green comps behind him. *Jack's Back* is a jaunty blues which appears built on a riff from the Louis Jordan classic *Choo Choo Ch'Boogie*, and features some crisp playing from Stein. Newman returns on tenor for the ballad *Our Love is Here to Stay*, with his warm vibrato adding to the feeling and followed by some splendid playing from Stein. *Sultry* features the trio again with a somewhat exotic, Middle Eastern flavor, before Newman returns for the

title track, which sounds like a spinoff of Jimmy Smith's *Chicken Shack*, with the tempo slowed down slightly.

Newman is on alto sax for the Ellington classic *Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me*, with Stein's guitar responding to Newman's statement of the theme, then taking a short chorus before Newman launches into his solo and later soloing some more. The last two tracks, *Be Ooo Ba* and *You Stepped Out Of A Dream*, featuring the trio, were from a live radio broadcast and further showcase Stein's fleet, swinging and thoughtful playing along with that of his trio.

Stein has added his own thoughts along with Ed Hazell's original liner notes to this marvelous release that is certain to delight fans of organ jazz trios and jazz guitar.

Ron Weinstock

THE DYNAMITES

FEATURING CHARLES WALKER

Kaboom

OUTTA SIGHT RECORDS

This nine piece, horn based, funk and R & B band travels the same path as Tower of Power, James Brown and Sly and the Family Stone. About half of the 10 cuts found on this release feature a frantic pace and lots of horn breaks while the balance work real hard at jumping into a low down, bass heavy groove.

Charles Walker is a soulful singer who rides above the hard grooves with an ease that reflects his earlier stints fronting bands at New York's storied Apollo Theatre. Stand

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out tracks include the sinewy *Slinky*, the big Otis Redding style ballad, *Dig Deeper*, and the rip-roaring *Own Thing*. If you dig old school funk there is something here for you.

Mark Smith

MIKE MARSHALL & DAROL ANGER

Mike Marshall & Darol Anger with Vasen
ADVENTURE MUSIC

Collaborating with three like-minded musicians from Sweden, “new-traditionalists” Mike Marshall (mandolin) and Darol Anger (violin, baritone violin) deliver 10 tunes that they claim reflect the changing face of folk music.

Long admirers of the music of Vasen—Mikael Marin (5-string violino grande), Olov Johansson (nyckelharpa), Roger Tallroth (12-string guitar)—the duo met and performed with them at the Lotus World Music Festival in Bloomington, Indiana in 2004. By then, Marshall and Anger had already incorporated some of Vasen’s tunes in their repertoire. This recording demonstrates how seamlessly the two acoustic groups mesh as they perform original and traditional tunes. Marshall contributes three originals; Johansson and Marin, one each and Tallroth, two. The remaining tunes include an American traditional, a Swedish traditional and the finale, a Brazilian choro. Highlights abound.

Multi-instrumental layering, varied tempos, impressive individual solos and well-blended teamwork make this CD a pleasant listen that adds nicely to the existing Marshall-Anger discography on Adventure Music.

Nancy Ann Lee

BIG DADDY STALLINGS

Blues Evolution
TAI JERIA MUSIC

B-Town (Baltimore) bluesman, Charles ‘Big Daddy’ Stallings, has just issued this follow-up to his praised debut *One Night Lover*. Stallings is a highly likable performer who brings a bit of downhome flavor to his performances.

The strength of the performances are the vocals and the solid accompaniments behind him. The mix of horns and fine down home harp (mostly contributed by Nighthawk Mark Wenner, but Steve Levine is also present on a track or two) is nicely done and saxophonist EFlat, responsible for the arrangements, merits mention. Stallings is at his best on a nice Jimmy Reed groove like on *Going Down South*, *Hard Times - Good Times* and the fantastical *2999*.

Hobbsville #2 is a slow downhome talking blues that is a

follow-up of the talking blues on the first track as he talks about growing up, family and Friday Night Fish Fries with some telling harp from Mark Wenner, although the tempo slowly accelerates during this performance tossing in a bit of Jimmy Reed’s *Upside Your Head*.

Elsewhere there are plenty of good-time grooves and songs like *Blues Line Dance* and *Blues Cowboy* certainly will get the dance floor full. The only significant weaknesses are the lyrics that don’t cohere and some (like *2999*) are fantastical.

There are plenty of overlooked songs that do merit revival that Stallings performs during his live performances and he should consider adding some in to the mix on his next recording project. Still his band provides very danceable grooves (swing dancers will love this) and Big Daddy Stallings delivers the songs with feeling and humor that the music’s good-time sensibility wins listeners over.

This is available from cdbaby.com and downloadable on iTunes.

Ron Weisntock

HOPE WAITS

Hope Waits
RADAR PROOF RECORDS

Singer Hope Waits does to the blues and jazz what the Cowboy Junkies do to rock. Like that band, Waits spends a good deal of her time evoking the essence of a sound without playing any of the obvious notes.

Joined by a host of “A” list players including Peter Malick on guitars, Butch Norton on drums, Jeff Turmes and Marty Ballou on bass and Phil Parlapiano on keyboards and accordion, Waits covers a wide swath of musical styles on this, her debut release. *I’ll be Satisfied* kicks things off with a sideways jazz twist that suggests Rickie Lee Jones without the drama.

She doesn’t stay in that groove very long before she takes on the barbed wire guitar groove of *You Crossed the Line* and then morphs her way into Billie Holiday’s *Yesterdays* which features horns that could fit neatly into a Woody Allen period piece. Tom Waits’ *Get Behind the Mule* is a slinky little gem while the two Ray Charles covers, *Drown in My own Tears* and *Come Rain or Come Shine*, are played under the late night torch when the lights are low, the drinks are running out and everyone is weighing their options.

Waits’ own *The Ballad of Judith Anne* is a heartfelt ballad about discovering a secret side to her mother who was murdered. *Cigarettes and Coffee* gives Waits a chance to stretch her vocal chords a bit as she pours plenty of emotion into the tale of contentment at the simple pleasure of sharing late night cigarettes and coffee with her lover. Seeming almost out of place is the Don Robey penned straight blues number, *Mother in Law Blues* which is well done despite feeling like an uninvited guest amongst the cooler jazz cats who inhabit most of the rest of the cuts.

Throughout, Waits’ voice draws you deep into the material with her compelling ability to be bold but languid at the same time. Lesser singers would simply overpower the material by pushing too hard.

Overall, a disc of subtle, sexy charm that reveals itself over repeated listens.

Mark Smith

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DAVID BENNETT COHEN

Cookin' With Cohen CORE RECORDS

Some of you may remember the psychedelic group, Country Joe and the Fish. One its members, David Bennett Cohen, has been part of the blues and roots circuit (This writer saw him at the Western Maryland Blues Festival several years back), and has released a new CD, *Cookin' With Cohen*.

Cohen is heard mostly on piano (he plays acoustic guitar also) and is backed by a small group of guitar, bass, drums and percussion on a selection of blues and blues-oriented material that displays his solid blues keyboard style and musical versatility.

The title track is a nice boogie woogie with a guitar solo from Chris Carter. Carter adds a blues-rock guitar tone on *The Ballad of Ruby and Jasper*, before Cohen takes his solo on this medium walking tempo instrumental. Cohen's two-handed attack is well paced and doesn't need the distraction of the buzzy guitar tone here.

Bobby Day adds the vocal on the gospel-tinged *We All Want Peace in Our Time*, which features more rollicking piano by Cohen along with a somewhat jazzier solo here, but it's Cohen's playing that still is at the core. *Like Stars After Sunrise* has a Latin groove, while *Booze* is a morning after blues with Day singing rather colorlessly and the percussion heavy *Crawfish Royale* has a New Orleans second line groove. *Portuguese Moon* features vocalist Elizabeth Lohninger on a Latin-tinged pop number, while Cohen adapts K.C. Douglas' *Mercury Blues* into an easy rocking piano boogie blues with one of the better vocals from Bobby Day and also some of guitarist Carter's best playing.

Cohen also brings a distinctive touch to *When the Saints Go Marching In*, which opens as a dirge before the group kicks off a second line rhythm and new lyrics about New Orleans being restored. However, the vocal is curiously bland. The closing *Blues For a Summer's Dream* is a nice, moody solo instrumental that thankfully eschews the full band.

Cohen is a wonderful pianist with a nice touch and paces his performances well, but the backing group makes some of these pieces sound rather generic.

Ron Weinstock

OREGON

1,000 Kilometers CAM JAZZ

On their second Cam Jazz release, Oregon dedicates their music to their friend and agent of 30 years, Thomas Stowsend, who died on October 5, 2006. Their eclectic jazz-based mix of straight-ahead jazz, swing, folk, Latin and Middle Eastern motifs dates back to 1970 when reedsman Paul McCandless, bassist Glenn Moore, guitarist/keyboardist Ralph Towner and percussionist Colin Walcott (who died in 1984 in a car crash) founded this band after performing in Paul Winter Consort. Trilok Gurtu (1985-mid 1990s) replaced Walcott and upon Gurtu's departure, the band performed as a trio until 1996, when Mark Walker joined to form the quartet again.

Band members composed all of the music and their

11 palatable originals maintain the recognizable sound Oregon established over more than 30 years of performing. This is a fair-minded group with each member getting ample time in the spotlight. The sonorous title tune by Ralph Towner (so-named for the times they had to drive that far to reach the next concert venue) lasts for 10:28 minutes and features a repeating piano riff and McCandless's soprano sax solos. It's reprised in the 2:03 minute finale, track 12, but performed as a piano solo by Towner. Four tunes last from one to slightly over three minutes and while diverse and catchy, they are so short as to seem like undeveloped ideas.

Over the years, Oregon has recorded on various labels, including Vanguard, Elektra, ECM, and Intuition. This enjoyable recording on the independent Italian label is reminiscent of their earlier quartet recordings and proves the band is as strong as ever in their quest to take modern music to new places. An attractive 16-page liner booklet with two-page photo spreads on each musician caps off the package.

Nancy Ann Lee

STACY MITCHHART

Gotta Get The Feeling Back Again DR. SAM RECORDS

With eight prior recordings to his name guitarist/singer, Stacy Mitchhart has covered lots of territory and has won countless awards including the coveted "Albert King Award" for guitar from the Blues Foundation. On this release he mixes a number of blues and soul originals with rockers by the likes of Led Zeppelin and the

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This photo of Dietra Farr captured by Ron Weinstock at the 2007 Pocono Blues Festival is just one of hundreds of Ron's photos you can view online at www.flickr.com/photos/novaron

Allman Brothers.

Kicking things off is *Gotta Get the Feeling Back Again* which examines the trajectory of relationships over a soul baked groove compliments of a host of female back up singers. On *I Can't Get Enough of Your Lovin'* Mitchhart gets even more soulful with a chorus that sounds like it started life on Stevie Wonder's *Living for the City*. After the soul intro, Mitchhart takes a turn in a different direction with his version of Zeppelin's *Black Dog/Whole Lotta Love* which he delivers as a low down dirty delta blues.

Elsewhere, as on *Better Off Without You*, he lays down a deep funky groove with stinging horn accents worthy of a Tower of Power disc. *Blow On 'Em Baby* is a rollicking instrumental while *Givin' Me Reasons* is a broken heart soul ballad that could have fallen from a Delbert McClinton disc. *Doghhouse Blues*, with its wild amalgamation of strings, jugs and stomps, ought to be the blues national anthem for anyone who has stretched their mate's patience through last call drinks and nocturnal misadventures.

Rounding things out are Mitchhart's restrained take on Albert King's *I'll Play the Blues for You*, his slow, slinky acoustic take on the Allman Brother's *Whipping Post* and a live version of *Blue Monday* which spotlights his fleet fingered guitar work. This diverse collection has something to like for almost everyone.

Mark Smith

McCOY TYNER

Mosaic Select 25

MOSAIC SELECT 3 CD SET

Both McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones, former members of the legendary John Coltrane Quartet, recorded many albums for both Impulse and Blue Note after leaving Trane to go on their own in the mid '60s. Some of Jones' most memorable work was on his later Blue Note sides, and the same is true of Tyner. Oddly enough, those CDs did not get the push, or perhaps exposure, they deserved when released, and, in fact, took a long time to be issued on the CD format after it took hold around 1987. It was not until Mosaic released the Elvin Jones boxed set in 2000 that many of the Elvin cuts I speak of saw the light of day on CD at all, such as the fine album *Genesis*.

For McCoy it was albums such as *Expansions*, *Expressions*, *Asante* and *Cosmos*, all of which are represented in this Mosaic Select set. His Blue Note debut, *The Real McCoy*, remains one of the all time great jazz CDs, and one that should be in every jazz collection. But, the ones on Blue Note that followed, while very fine, did not reflect the matured Tyner style heard on the later albums in this set, and those that followed on Milestone in the ensuing years. And the Blue Note albums prior to these were released on CD in 1990, while these did not come out on CD until 96-98. In fact, *Cosmos* never came out on CD to my knowledge, although I believe three songs were included in the CD release of *Asante*.

So, this Mosaic Select set is quite a treasure for McCoy Tyner's many fans. Out of a total of 21 songs here, 20 are Tyner originals. *Expansions*, recorded in 1968, features Tyner with Woody Shaw/trumpet, Gary Bartz/alto sax, Wayne Shorter/tenor sax and clarinet, Ron Carter/cello, Herbie Lewis/bass and Freddie Waits/drums. *Ex-*

tensions was recorded in 1970 with Bartz/alto sax, Shorter/tenor sax, Alice Coltrane/harp, Ron Carter/bass and Elvin Jones/drums. *Asante* was recorded a few months later in 1970 with Andrew White/alto sax, Ted Dunbar/guitar, Buster Williams/bass, Billy Hart/drums, African percussion, Mtume/Congas, percussion and Songai Sandra Smith/vocals. *Cosmos* was actually recorded over four sessions from 1968 through 1970. The first two were trio sessions with McCoy joined by Herbie Lewis and Freddie Waits. The other two featured larger bands with such players as Andrew White, Hubert Laws, Gary Bartz, Al Gibbons, Harold Vick and others.

I remember playing several of these songs, such as "Message From The Nile," "The Wanderer" and "Survival Blues" on my Sunday radio show back in Buffalo in the '70s and the phone would light up with people who couldn't wait until my announcement at the end of the set to find out what record was playing. While my personal favorite is *Extensions* with Tyner joined by his Coltrane bandmate, the late, great drummer Elvin Jones, and Coltrane's wife Alice weaving her tapestries on the harp, it does not in any way diminish the fact that there is without question a lot of powerful music throughout all three of these three CDs.

This set is most highly recommended. You can get more information and purchase a copy at www.mosaicrecords.com. And, by all means check out the many, many other sets they have to offer. I can easily recommend the Elvin Jones box as well for one.

Bill Wahl

MIKEY JR.

Look Inside My Pocket

SELF-PRODUCED

Trenton, New Jersey's Mikey Jr has established himself as one of the most impressive new voices on the Mid-Atlantic blues circuit. He has become one of the hottest blues harmonica players around, having won several battles of the blues conducted by regional blues societies and developing a following with his impressive live performances.

He has recorded a wonderful self-produced CD that was recorded at David Earl's Severn Studios. For this session Mikey Jr put together an excellent band including Matt Daniels and Tommy Trovas on guitar, Jimmy Pritchard on bass and Adam Strandburg on drums with veteran blues-jazz keyboard master Bill Heid on a number of tracks. An earlier CD of his I have is more covers based, but this 4th album shows how much he has grown as a performer and songwriter.

There are plenty of aural treats like the rocking shuffle *All About You*; the rockabilly flavored *Cheapskate*, with nice playing by guitarist Daniels followed by wailing harp; and the atmospheric *Happy Anniversary*, where he notes his woman is not around, with Bill Heid's understated organ laying out the atmosphere with a nice chromatic harp solo marked by his fat tone and very imaginative and well crafted solos and some nice guitar from Trovas. *I'm Broke* opens on a funky groove with some screaming guitar by Daniels before Mikey notes how he is short on the green stuff and wishes he could change but not know-

ing where to start.

I Ain't Your Baby Now is a nice original that evokes the classic Chicago blues sound of 40 years ago, and the tempo gets to high stepping on the title track where he complains about his woman staying out all night while he works hard making money so she can spend it all. It might have been even more potent if the tempo was a little bit slower, but still there is some great playing here. *Summertime* provides a change to show off his wonderful harp as does the closing rocker, *Down at the Juke Joint*, with some more funk feel.

He is getting to be a more confident sounding vocalist as well as a monster on the harp and this disc certainly will help him gather more fans.

A real nice slap of Chicago styled blues harmonica with good songs and a tight band. Recommended and available from www.mikeyjunior.com **Ron Weinstock**

cool gear

iKARAOKE

GRIFFIN TECHNOLOGY

The ikaraoke from Griffin is a new accessory that turns your iPod into a karaoke machine.

A solitary microphone, it connects to any iPod (excluding the Shuffle) via the port on the bottom. Easy to operate, one can sing along to their favorite songs almost seconds after breaking the mic out of the package. For the serious karaoke fan, perhaps someone that will go as far as entering song lyrics into their ipod, an additional cable can be purchased to connect to your home stereo. For the less serious, the wireless interface works like a charm. The ikaraoke can sync your iPod to your stereo by way of any unused FM frequency which makes the whole experience 100% mobile; whether or not one would want to take it on a road trip with the kids would depend on the patience of the parents and/or the talent of the kids.

All-in-all, iKaraoke is a fun toy for the iPod generation, the ease of use and mobility would make it a great gift for any aspiring or recreational singer or for that next party that needs an extra pick me up. **Matt Simpson**

DVDs

LITTLE ARTHUR DUNCAN

Live At Rosa's Blues Lounge

DELMARK

Mississippi native Arthur Duncan has been up in Chicago since the 1950s when he came north with Earl Hooker. Mentored by the legendary Little Walter, he has been part of the blues scene for most of the intervening five decades as a performer and as a club owner while working as a construction worker. Delmark previously issued his disc, *Singing With the Sun*, and now has a live performance on CD as well as on DVD (with a couple of extra songs included), **Live at Rosa's Blues Lounge**.

Its an unpretentious set of somewhat raw, downhome flavored Chicago harp blues as Duncan mixes some originals with interesting covers. Duncan's enthusiasm for performing is evident as he opens with an original

Leaving Mississippi, before reworking Eugene Church's *Pretty Girls Everywhere*, employing Slim Harpo's *Scratch My Back* groove (and he also is seen/heard on that tune here). Jimmy Reed, Little Walter, Slim Harpo and Howling Wolf covers are mixed in with Duncan's *Bad Reputation* and *Blues I Got to Leave You*.

As entertaining as Duncan comes off, his harp playing is not on the level of a Little Walter or Carey Bell, and his earnest vocals perhaps lack the charisma of his influences but still the performances are engaging, aided by the solid backing of guitarists Rick Kreher and Illinois Slim, bassist Michael Azzi and drummer Twist Turner, who provide steady backing behind Duncan. Guest Little Al Thomas handles the vocal on Dr. Clayton's *I Got to Find My Baby*.

The video on the DVD is really well done, keeping its focus on Duncan and his band as he sits and belts out his vocals and lays down his harp, as well as captures his forays into the audience, encouraging the dancers and leading everybody on what was clearly a good time. Delmark continues to build its impressive catalog of live DVDs with this entertaining disc. **Ron Weinstock**

KENNY DREW TRIO

At The Brewhouse

STORYVILLE FILMS DVD

With Neils-Henning Orsted Pedersen on bass and Alvin Queen on drums, pianist Kenny Drew leads a scintillating set of seven tunes, enhanced by excellent camera work that frequently captures Kenny's hands on the keys and close-up shots of Pedersen and Queen.

Drew (b. 1928 In New York City) demonstrates an elegant, swinging and consistent technique polished over his years as a bop-based sideman and leader. Pedersen and Queen get plenty of spotlight time as they work with Drew to extend attractive standards that had been in their repertoire awhile. Tunes include lovely renderings of Harold Arlen's "My Shining Hour" and the Don Raye/Gene Paul gem "You Don't Know What Love Is." They give

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Sonny Rollins' "Oleo" and Milt Jackson's "Bluesology" fresh readings. Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way" is given an bubbly reading that highlights Pedersen's talents as well as Drew's lyricism and Queen's brush work. The longest tune at nearly 12 minutes, Miles Davis' "All Blues," is thoroughly worked out with swinging panache. Oscar Peterson's "Blues In the Closet" closes the set.

Recorded in England on July 22, 1992, this buoyant concert performance represents the last time Pedersen performed with Drew, who died in Copenhagen, Denmark on August 4, 1993. As of the date of this gig, Pedersen had been performing with Drew since the mid-1960s and Queen had joined the trio in 1989. Drew had left the American jazz scene in the early 1960s for Europe, where he remained the rest of his life, which resulted in his being somewhat underrated in the USA.

Total running time is about 52 minutes. The Menu set-up allows you to play all or select individual tracks by title, in either 5.1 or Original sound. There are also four biography slides about Drew. Sound reproduction is top-notch and the use of a few knowledgeable camera operators adds variety for visual enjoyment. This DVD from the Storyville series captures the talents of top-ranked jazz musicians and an exciting live concert that should be long treasured.

Nancy Ann Lee

caught live

Monterey Jazz Festival 50th Anniversary Band California Center for the Arts, Escondido, California

The Monterey Jazz Festival put together a band gathering what they call leaders of the past, present and future and set them off on a whirlwind 22-state, 54 city tour which began on January 8 in Bellingham, WA and ends March 16 in Grand Rapids MI. I was able to catch them January 24 at the California Center for the Arts on January 24 in Escondido. The tour, which was on the cover of our December issue, features a top-notch band with James Moody/tenor sax and flute, Terence Blanchard/trumpet, Benny Green/piano, Derick Hodge/bass and Kendrick Scott/drums. And to add quite a bit of sugar to all of this, special guest Nnenna Freelon was featured on vocals for several songs.

Moody at 82 is the elder statesman of the band and obviously represents the early days. He seems to be doing quite well and was obviously enjoying himself this night, such as on his vocal reworking of "Pennies From Heaven" which he turned into "Bennie's From Heaven," aimed at the still boyish looking in his mid-40s, Benny Green. He was in great form on tenor sax; often honking like often was heard from the tenor titans of the good old days. Many of the songs were connected in one way or another with Monterey, such as "Monterey Mist," a very pretty and colorful ballad by Milt Jackson, who often performed at the festival. Then there was a section from Gerald Wilson's

suite "Theme For Monterey" to which Freelon wrote words and titled "Romance (Winter Love)." She also shined on a sweet ballad "If I Had You" and then kept on shining on a wonderful version of "Time After Time," done in a Latin-funk style backed by the full band to close the first half.

While bebop, ballads and straight ahead acoustic mainstream were on the menu for the first half, the second half offered that and a taste of some other shades of jazz. Starting off with a Benny Green original, "Central Park South" the set included a ballad by drummer Kendrick Scott titled (I believe) "Journey," done ultra-slow and featuring some very memorable interplay between Freelon and Blanchard. Then it was Bossa Nova time with Claire Fischer's "Pensativa," with just piano, bass and drums. It featured some very notable work from Scott playing drums with his hands. Blanchard came back out for some tracks from his latest Blue Note CD,

A Tale of God's Will (A Requiem for Katrina), as they did "Levees" and Funeral Dirge." These moving and passionate pieces were brilliantly done, and no doubt partly because Hodge and Scott were on the album as part of the Terence Blanchard Quintet. Nnenna came back out for a sassy version of Duke Ellington's playful "Just Squeeze Me (But Please Don't Tease Me) and got into a scating duel with Moody, further demonstrating the all out fun these musicians were having.

The band came back for an encore after a standing ovation and featured Freelon on a very unique and expressive version of "Misty" which stands out as one of the two most memorable versions of a song, which, in the wrong hands, can sound downright loungey. The other was Richard "Groove" Holmes 1965 version, which was taken at a fast clip. Ms Freelon stated when they came back out that "we are on a 54 city tour and Escondido is only number 14 but you are number one in our book." And not in any way to take anything away from the rest of the band, she was number one in much of the audience's books that night as well.

It was my first visit to the California Center for the Arts and it is a fine venue. It was easy to find, had plenty of parking and the theatre had great acoustics. It was also easy to exit, as the theatre had many exit doors rather than having to walk all the way back up the isles and exit through the lobby as in so many venues. The parking lot had several exits too and we were back on the highway in no time. They do a variety of events, such as music, theatre and dance. You can check out coming events at www.artcenter.org.

Bill Wahl

The remaining dates on the tour are:

- Feb. 3 - Mississippi State University, Meridian, MS
- Feb. 4 - Thomasville Cultural Center, Thomasville, GA
- Feb. 5 - Gaillard Municipal Auditorium, Charleston, SC
- Feb. 6 - East Carolina University, Greenville, NC
- Feb. 7 - Appalachian State University, Boone, NC
- Feb. 8 - Atlanta Symphony Hall, Atlanta, GA
- Feb. 10 - Riverside Theatre, Vero Beach, FL
- Feb. 11 - Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, Sarasota, FL
- Feb. 12 - Kravis Center for the Perf. Arts,
W. Palm Beach, FL
- Feb. 14 - Phillips Center, Univ. of Florida,
Gainesville, FL

Feb. 16 - Ferguson Center, Newport News, VA
 Feb. 17 - University of Richmond, Richmond, VA
 Feb. 19 - The Music Center at Strathmore,
 N. Bethesda, MD
 Feb. 20 - Grand Opera House, Wilmington, DE
 Feb. 21 - Community Theatre, Morristown, NJ
 Feb. 22 - McCarter Theater Center, Princeton, NJ
 Feb. 23 - The Mainstage at Proctor's, Schenectady, NY
 Feb. 24 - Baker Hall, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA
 Feb. 26 - Mechanics Hall, Worcester, MA
 Feb. 27 - Colonial Theatre, Pittsfield, MA
 Feb. 28 - The Music Hall, Portsmouth, NH
 Feb. 29 - Jorgensen Auditorium, Storrs, CT
 Mar. 1 - Jorgensen Auditorium, Storrs, CT
 Mar. 2 - Zeiterion Theatre, New Bedford, MA
 Mar. 4 - Fine Arts Center, Amherst, MA
 Mar. 5 - Colonial Theatre, Keene, NH
 Mar. 6 - Purchase College, Purchase, NY
 Mar. 7 - North Fork Hall, Brookfield, NY
 Mar. 8 - Hershey Theater, Hershey, PA
 Mar. 9 - Mason University, Fairfax, VA
 Mar. 11 - NYS Univ. at Buffalo Center for the Arts,
 Buffalo, NY
 Mar. 13 - Madame Walker Theatre, Indianapolis, IN
 Mar. 14 - Music Hall Center for Perf. Arts, Detroit, MI
 Mar. 15 - Music Hall Center for Perf. Arts, Detroit, MI
 Mar. 16 - Forest Hills Fine Arts Center,
 Grand Rapids, MI

For additional information, or to purchase tickets online please, visit www.montereyjazzfestival.org/MJF50-band/.

Legendary Rhythm & Blues Revue State Theatre, Falls Church Virginia

One might be hard-pressed to describe any of the performers on the Legendary Rhythm & Blues Revue tour as "legendary." However, if not legendary, the package of Tommy Castro, Deanna Bogart, Magic Dick and Ronnie Baker Brooks definitely bring a full evening of blues and related grooves that has certainly developed a very receptive audience. This is reflected by the tour being in at least its third swing around as I type this.

The tour takes its name from the popular Legendary Rhythm & Blues Cruise on which its members have all performed on and features four or five song sets from each of the featured performers followed by a jam where they jam along with a blues celebrity from the area they are playing at.

Saturday, January 26, the Revue made it to the State Theatre in Falls Church, Virginia and played to a packed house. Tommy Castro's Band included Keith Crossan on saxophone, Tom Poole on trumpet, Chris Sandoval on drums and, I believe, Scott Sutherland on bass and were joined by Deanna Bogart throughout the evening. Castro opened the show with a terrific shuffle, *A Good Fool Is Hard to Find*, with his soulful singing complemented by what was simply a terrific band. This was followed up by a few other numbers including *I'm Not Broken*, and the beach music groove of *Big Sister's Radio*. Saxophonists Crossan and Bogart especially were well featured here. After his featured spot, Castro

called up Crossan for a feature and Crossan's *Beat Nick Jungle*, the title track of his own CD, was a properly slow drag, belly rubbing, tenor feature full of some very greasy playing.

Deanna Bogart impresses me more each time I see her. At one point she seemed to be stuck in a boogie woogie rut, but over the last decade she has matured as a performer and become an outstanding singer. Opening with a spicy rendition of the old Brook Benton-Dinah Washington duet, *Baby, You got What It Takes*, she also picked up her sax and traded fours with Crossan before burning things up with *Won't be Long*, and then *Still the Girl in the Band*, where her soulful, jazzy vocals were matched by her impressive piano. Magic Dick, best known for his tenure with the J. Geils Band brought his harp to the fore and, sang capably, opening with *Pontiac Blues* on which Castro was particularly impressive both in backing Dick and when taking his solo. With Bogart's piano and Castro's guitar helping rock the groove, Dick then tore into an interpretation of Little Walter's *Got To Find My Baby* before reviving J. Geil's reggae flavored *Give It Up*, and closing his spot with a storming harp feature. Though perhaps the weakest singer of the night, his harp is certainly at the summit of harp players today. Then Ronnie Baker Brooks came on with a strong blues before going with a soulful ballad, *See You Don't Hurt No More*. The rocking shuffle *Take Me With Ya* had the dance floor full as he ripped out some scorching rocking guitar.

I had to leave after Brooks' set ended and there was a break so I missed the ensuing jam, which must have been a gas, especially given the terrific music that I had heard. The dance floor in front of the State's stage was packed and the crowd's well-deserved enthusiasm for the performers was hard and felt throughout. Certainly an act well worth catching by blues enthusiasts when they come near your town.

Ron Weinstock

The remaining dates for the tour are:

2/4/08 - Toledo, OH - Gatorz
 2/5/08 - Indianapolis, IN - Slippery Noodle
 2/6/08 - Berwyn, IL - Fitzgerald's
 2/7/08 - Bloomington, IL - Lafayette Club
 2/8/08 - Kansas City, MO - Knucklehead's
 2/9/08 - Waterloo, IA - Electric Ballroom



From the Editor:

Some of you have noticed that a number of the reviews from the past year are not in our searchable database. We were undergoing some problems, but have been in the process of replacing reviews that "disappeared". Indeed, it is taking some time, and will continue to do so. So please, bear with us!

-Bill Wahl

Sue Palmer's Sophisticated Ladies Dizzy's, San Diego California

When I heard that boogie woogie pianist Sue Palmer would be appearing at the just-moved Dizzy's in downtown San Diego January 19, I was glad to be able to make it down to see the show. Or part of it, at least. Dizzy's had recently moved from its 344 7th Ave location to 2nd Ave and J Street. When we got to the new spot, was no sign of it, or sign of any kind for that matter. The valet parking attendants in the building it seemed it should be in did not know where it was, though they said a lot of people had been asking. To make a long story short, after wandering around on wild goose chases we finally found it...on the other side of the building we started out at.

As a result, we missed most of the first part of the show, but we did get to hear enough to make the trek worthwhile. Palmer was fronting an all-female band known as the Sophisticated Ladies Revue which consisted of herself at the piano, April West on trombone, Evona Wascinski on bass and Sharon Shufelt on drums. Three singers were on the bill – Deeja Marie, Laura Jane and Toni Price. This was an amalgamation of some of San Diego's top female musicians, all of whom are quite well known in the area, with the exception of Price, who just recently moved here from Austin TX where she was, and is, very popular. In fact, she had been doing a Tuesday happy hour at the Continental for 15 years. But

she is becoming well known in San Diego very quickly. Singer/pianist/songwriter Janell Rock was originally supposed to be on hand too, but was sick. But the ladies did some fine versions of some of Janell's songs. The band was in good form throughout the night playing a variety of jazz styles, and really rocked out on Palmer's tribute to Jerry Lee Lewis. While her boogie woogie piano and West's trombone were particular standouts through the evening, we can't overlook the work of Wascinski and Shufelt. Evona, who moved here from Poland, did some nice solo work on a dissonant Palmer original. All the singers sounded good, though I'm afraid we missed most of Deeja Marie's set due to trying to find the club, but she sounded fantastic from the little we heard. I was certainly glad to finally hear Toni Price, who's new CD **Talk Memphis** (her seventh for Antone's Records) was reviewed in our October issue. She included the title track from that album in her impressive though brief set. After the show, I set up an interview meeting with her. It will be in a future issue.

Dizzy's is now located in the San Diego Wine and Culinary Center, and it is at 2nd Ave and J Street as it is listed on the club's website. But, as mentioned, you will be on the opposite side of the building and have to walk around. Hopefully they will soon have better signage.

Bill Wahl

jazz-blues.com

