

June 2009

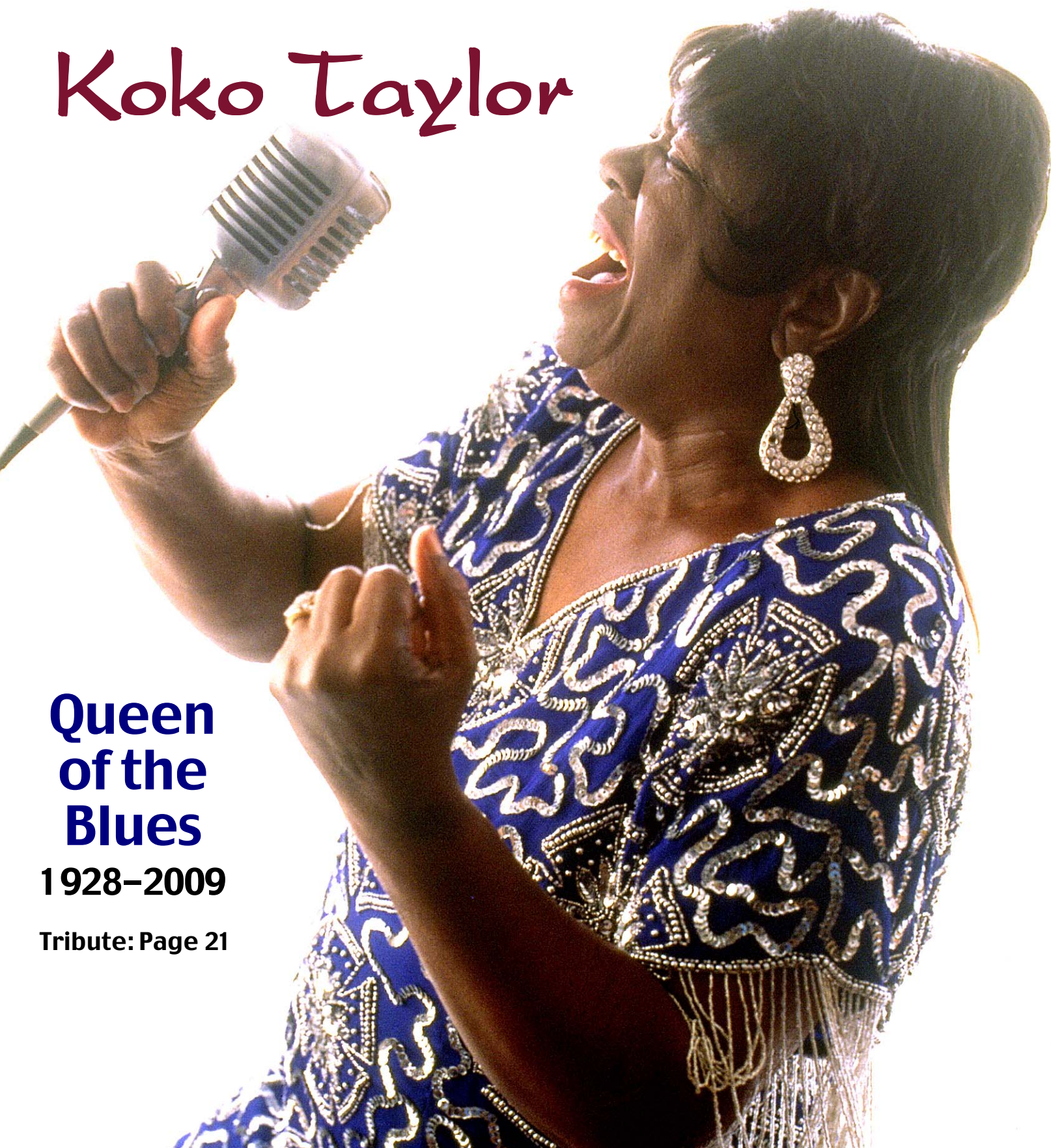
Issue 317

now in our 35th year

jazz
& **blues** report

www.jazz-blues.com

Koko Taylor



**Queen
of the
Blues**

1928–2009

Tribute: Page 21

jazz & blues report

Editor & Founder Bill Wahl

Layout & Design Bill Wahl

Operations Jim Martin
Pilar Martin

Contributors

Michael Braxton, Mark Cole, Kelly Ferjutz, Nancy Ann Lee, Peanuts, Matt Simpson, Wanda Simpson, Mark Smith, Dave Sunde, Duane Verh, Emily Wahl and Ron Weinstock.

Check out our constantly updated website. Now you can search for CD Reviews by artists, titles, record labels, keyword or JBR Writers. 15 years of reviews are up and we'll be going all the way back to 1974.

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

Copyright © 2009 Jazz & Blues Report

No portion of this publication may be reproduced without written permission from the publisher. All rights Reserved.

Founded in Buffalo New York in March of 1974; began in Cleveland edition in April of 1978. Now this global e-zine edition is posted online monthly at www.jazz-blues.com

On The Cover

Koko Taylor passed away on June 3.
See the tribute on page 21



Photo: Alligator Records

CD Reviews Begin on Page 12

Back in New Orleans

By Ron Weinstock

Ponderosa Stomp & New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival Reviewed



Drummers with the African Dancers

New Orleans always provides a number of reasons for vacation, but for me the annual New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival is always a welcome treat. This year, I flew down for the second weekend of the Festival arriving on Tuesday, April 28 in time for the Ponderosa Stomp.

Ponderosa Stomp

Like last year, the Ponderosa Stomp also had a music conference at the Cabildo, Louisiana State Museum on Jackson Square. I did not attend any of the panels at this year's conference, which included such speakers as Peter Guralnick, Classie Ballou, Robert Gordon, John Broven, Dave Bartholomew, Joe Bihari, Lady Bo, Wanda Jackson, Cosimo Matassa and Otis Clay, nor did I see the films they added to the program. From my attendance last year, I have no doubts that this was a marvelous event. There was also an accompanying exhibit of rock'n'roll artifacts, "Unsung Heroes: The Secret History Of Louisiana Rock N' Roll Museum Exhibit," that will be at the Cabildo through (I believe) April 2010, which would seem to be another reason for persons to make a pilgrimage to New Orleans.

After settling into my hotel I walked over to the House of Blues box office to buy my Stomp Tickets. After getting my tickets I headed across the street to the Louisiana Music Factory where the trio of Joe Krown, Walter 'Wolfman' Washington and Russell Batiste were doing an in-store performance to support their CD, "Live at the Maple Leaf." After dinner, I headed to the House of Blues for the 1st night of the 8th Annual Ponderosa Stomp. For those that are unaware, The Ponderosa stomp bills itself as "an American roots music festival dedicated to recognizing the architects of rock-n-roll, blues, jazz, country, swamp pop, and soul." Furthermore, it "exists to celebrate, pay tribute to, and teach the cultural signifi-

cance of the unsung heroes and heroines of rock-n-roll, rhythm & blues and other forms of American roots music while they are still alive.” This year’s event lived up to its billing.

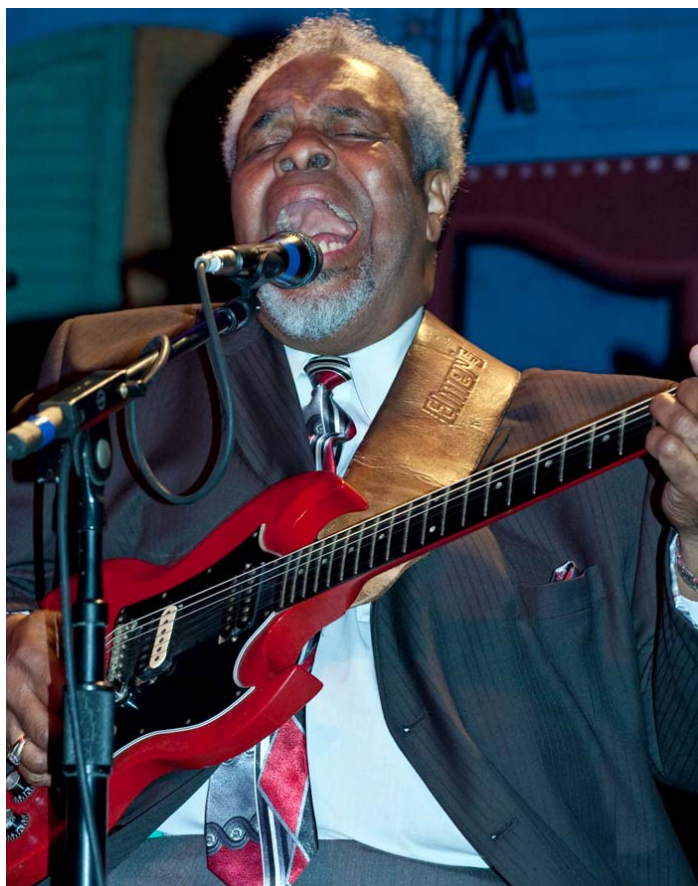
With music on the House of Blues’ two stages, the Ponderosa Stomp offers more than enough music for fans of various genres. The opening act on the main stage was Little Willie Littlefield, the Texas born boogie and jump blues pianist and vocalist, who made a number of great recordings for Modern and Federal Records (His “K.C. Loving” was a hit for him and a bigger smash when Wilbert Harrison redid it as “Kansas City”). He has been living in Europe for a couple decades and rarely performs anywhere so to hear his forceful playing and vibrant singing as he handled a wide range of material including covers of lesser-known songs associated with his contemporaries Charles Brown and Amos Milburn was a delight. Up next on the main stage was the veteran swamp blues guitarist Classie Ballou, the veteran guitarist whose band backed Boozoo Chavis on the pioneering zydeco record “Paper in My Shoe.” Ballou himself recorded for Excello and Goldband with perhaps “Congo Mambo” being his most famous recording and is one of the songs he performed at the stomp along with renditions of choice vintage R&B slammers. He was followed on the main stage by the Hi Rhythm Section that was also going to back the great Otis Clay. This legendary band, centered around the Hodges Brothers and drummer Howard Grimes, was on so many great classics by Clay, Al Green, O.V. Wright, Ann Peebles, Syl Johnson and others, opened with a few



Lil Greenwood

numbers before calling up a vocalist, I believe Percy Wiggins, who handled some classic Hi Records numbers. I was disappointed they did not bring Otis Clay to sing before I headed from the Big Room stage to the Parish Stage.

The Parish Stage, upstairs is a smaller venue which, while I had been watching Littlefield, Ballou and the Hi Rhythm Section, had been presenting some classic rockabilly and early rock’n’roll by the likes of Johnny Powers, Carl Mann and Cowboy Bill Clement, backed by Deke Dickerson and the Eccofonics. While I appreciate rockabilly, my focus was more on catching the blues and R&B acts. On the Parish stage after the



Classie Ballou



Herb Hardesty



Little Joe Washington

rockabilly was frenzied Houston guitarist and vocalist, Little Joe Washington who shouted his lyrics in a hoarse, frenzied style as he played his wild, unpredictable Texas blues guitar, evoking Albert Collins on psychedelics as he played the guitar over his head, with his teeth and feet. His music at times sounds like it will fall apart but the exhilarating wildness of it had its definite appeal. Familiar with him from his recordings, it was what I expected. Lack of polish perhaps, but the spirit of the music was compelling.

After him came Lil Greenwood, a one-time vocalist for Duke Ellington, who made a number of choice recordings in the fifties that have been collected by Ace Records. What a terrific singer she remains and the big little band with a full horn section, really added a shine to her performance. The band stayed in place to back the terrific Houston singer-guitarist Texas Johnny Brown. Brown composer of the classic "Two Steps From the Blues," is a fleet, jazz-tinged guitarist and a strong mellow blues singer in the vein of a Fenton Robinson perhaps. Last summer I saw him at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, and he was as good this evening with the bigger band behind him. After several numbers, I headed back downstairs where I caught a few numbers by the legendary Louisiana rock'n'roller, Dale Hawkins (of "Suzie Q" fame), with guitarist James Burton backing him (as he did on Hawkins' classic recordings before he joined Ricky Nelson's Band and then did studio work with Merle Haggard before playing with Elvis). My feet were killing me and I was still on my weekday East Coast time, so I left with several hours more music still left. Among the other performers I did not see that night were James 'Blood' Ulmer, Howard Tate, The Remains, The Legendary Stardust Cowboy, Ray Sharpe, and Lady Bo.

Returning the next night, Wednesday, April 29, harmonica wizard Jerry McCain opened up on the main stage backed by Lil Buck Senegal & the Buckaroos. His set was centered on the wilder rock'n'roll oriented sides he recorded for Excello such as "Geronimo Rock'n'Roll." During McCain's set, I ventured up to the Parish Stage where they opened with a small revue,



Jerry McCain

"The Haunted Hearts Gulf Coast Review. The Revue focused on the Gulf Coast musical legacy where strains of country swing meets Fats Domino, Aldus Roger and Percy Sledge. Led by Michael Hurtt, the Haunted Hearts backed Jivin' Gene (Bourgeois), who had a swamp pop classic that broke through nationally, "Breaking Up is Hard to Do;" Warren Storm, legendary Louisiana drummer who recorded with a who's who of blues and pop acts as well as was a distinguished vocalist in his own right; and Cajun rockabilly artist, Jay Chevalier. This aspect of Louisiana music is often neglected by the Jazz & Heritage Festival, and the tear in the throat vocals of Jivin' Gene and Storm were quite affecting tonight. I left before Chevalier came up to return to the main stage where the tail end of McCain's set was followed by Lazy Lester backed by the Buckaroos and guitarist James Burton adding a bit of spice to renditions of Lester's classics such as "Pondarosa Stomp," from which the Stomp takes its name and "Sugar Coated Love." Warren Storm joined Lester and Burton on stage for a number during this set. After Lester's set, the music was interrupted on the main stage for a wedding as Dr. Ike Padnos officiated with two of the backstage forces behind the Stomp tied the knot with Stanley "Buckwheat Zydeco" Dural played the organ. This was followed on the main stage by a New Orleans Review of such performers as Robert Parker, Jean Knight, Al 'Carnival Time' Johnson, Ernie Vincent, Tony Owens, Rockie Charles, David Batiste and others backed by Lil Buck (Senegal) and the Top Cats with Buckwheat Zydeco on organ and Herb Hardesty featured on tenor sax. Parker got the place rocking with his hit "Bare Footin'," while Jean Knight reprised her smash "Mr. Big Stuff," and Al Johnson did his classic Mardi Gras number "Carnival Time." There was a short salute to the late Eddie Bo with a fine rendition of "Check Mr. Popeye," followed by the blue-eyed solo and piano of Skip Easterling, deep

southern soul from Tony Owens and the bluesy Memphis inflected music of Rockie Charles with the revue finished by a piece of funk by New Orleans funk pioneer David Batiste of one the city's premiere musical families. For me it was the end of another terrific night of music. I did miss Long John Hunter and Guitar Lightnin' Lee, as well as GG Shinn, Dan Penn and Bobby Emmons, Wanda Jackson, Roy Loney and Cyril Jordan of the Flaming Groovies, Wiley and the Checkmates and Question Mark and the Mysterians. Quite a mix of music for folks with eclectic tastes.

Ponderosa Stomp Coming to Lincoln Center

The Ponderosa Stomp @ Lincoln Center will be part of this summer's Lincoln Center Festival in the Big Apple. Thursday, July 16, soul blues pioneer William Bell, Harvey Scales and the Bobbettes ("Mr Lee") will be backed by the Memphis soul sound of the Bo-Keys while Friday, July 17, a rockabilly celebration with The Collins Kids, Carl Mann and Joe Clay will be backed by Deke Dickerson & the Eccofonics. These shows will be in Damrosch Park The biggest show will be Sunday, July 19, with a tribute to Wardell Quetzergue at Alice Tully Hall with a line-up that includes Dr. John, The Dixie Cups, Jean Knight, Robert Parker, Zigaboo Modeliste, Dorothy Moore, Tammy Lynn, Tony Owens and Michael Hurtt who will pay tribute to this legendary producer and arranger who was responsible for such hit records as "Mr. Big Stuff," "Iko Iko" and "Chapel of Love," along with Dr. John's Grammy Award winning album "Going Back to New Orleans." For information on tickets and special discounts check out LincolnCenter.org/Stomp or call 212-721-6500.

JazzFest

JazzFest itself presents a mix of music, with the core being centered around the music of New Orleans and Louisiana, although they also bring in big name headliners this year that this year included Bon Jovi, Neil Young and Tony Bennett. The crowds this year were the largest since pre-9/11, and having nice weather did not hurt things. Still it can get very crowded and difficult to negotiate, which makes the smaller stages and venues very enticing.

Making it into the Fairgrounds where JazzFest is held, I first got myself a bit to eat. The Spicy Sausage poor boy is a staple of my time in New Orleans, just like the beignets at the Cafe de Monde, but the variety of food is enough reason to make it to the festival. The first music I caught was a couple of numbers from the group led by trumpeter Chris Clifton in the Economy Hall Tent, which I then left to hear some zydeco by Corey Ledet at the Fais Do Do stage. Clifton's crisp traditional jazz was nice, and Ledet was an exceptional zydeco talent, working the accordion hard and singing strongly. On the way to other stages I caught a bit of an African Dance Group on the Congo Square before catching The Red Hawk Mardi Gras Indians on the Jazz & Heritage Stage. After listening to their chants and watching them dancing in their colorful dress, I made it to the Blues Tent where the popular Jumping Johnny



Red Hawk Mardi Gras Indians

Sansone was delivering his solid blues. More traditional jazz was heard from The Last Straws in Economy Hall Tent before I went back to the Jazz & Heritage Stage where the Paulin Brothers Brass Band kept the tradition started by their late father, Doc Paulin, going strong with a bit more traditionally oriented set of brass band music than some of the younger bands. Back to the Blues Tent, Little Freddie King was laying down a bit more of his down home blues. Sharon Martin is a marvelous jazz chanteuse that was featured in the WWOZ Jazz Tent while clarinetist Louis Ford and His Dixieland Flairs presented a nice set of New Orleans and swing standards.



Delfeayo and Jason Marsalis

A walk to the Fais Do Do for a fantastic, bluesy set of zydeco of which a terrific rendition of Little Bob's "I Got Loaded" was one of many highlights. Then walking back across the fairgrounds, I went back to the Jazz Tent to catch the excellent band led by trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis that included brother Jason on drums and Marlon Jordan on trumpet. After some stunning numbers, I headed to Congo Square to see the celebrated Rebirth Brass Band that was reunited at the festival with original member Kermit Ruffins, after which I caught the marvelous Cajun artist, Steve Riley and



Randy Brecker, Jimmy Cobb and Anat Cohen

the Mamou Playboys for a spirited set that showcased Clifton Chenier's granddaughter on the frottoir. Some sweet sounds were heard and it was nice to watch the dancers getting into the spirit. One of the highpoints for these ears was back in the Jazz tent as Festival founder and pianist George Wein led an all star band that included Randy Brecker on trumpet, Anat Cohen on saxophone and clarinet, guitarist Howard Alden, bassist Esperanza Spalding and drummer Jimmy Cobb for a set of strong bebop with a break for a duet between Cohen on clarinet and guitarist Alden. Kirk Joseph's tuba was a major presence at the genesis of today modern New Orleans Brass Band sound (he was an original member of the Dirty Dozen), later lending his voice to the Tréme Brass band and other groups as well as playing in other contexts (such as with blues-roots rocker Anders Osborne). More recently he formed



Esperanza Spalding



Soloman Burke

Kirk Joseph's Backyard Groove with a musical genesis perhaps in the Brass Bands, but providing its own direction for a mix of funk, soul and jazz. A vocal by Joseph's wife was deservedly received with enthusiasm. Then I made it to Congo Square for a chance to see one of the true musical legends and a gentleman who I had the privilege to once interview but never had the opportunity to see perform, Solomon Burke. The King of Rock'n'Soul may have put on a few pounds over the years and sings sitting down, but he still has it as he went into so many of his classics including "Everybody Needs Somebody to Love," "Down in the Valley" and "Cry to me." It doesn't get much better than this. Last up for my day was a taste of trumpeter Nicholas Payton and his group in the Jazz Tent. After a few numbers I headed back to my hotel satiated with the wonderful weather food and music.

Friday May 1, one could see somewhat larger crowds when I arrived. Ori Culture Danse Cub of Benin performed African Dance while the Jambalaya Cajun Band performed a strong set of traditional style blues while local favorite Freddy Omar had a spicy Latin-jazz mix. Popular Baton Rouge harmonica player and vocalist J'Monique'D sang his deep rooted blues while in the Jazz Tent was a marvelous Clarinet Woodshed with Evan Christopher, Gregory Agid and Tim Laughlin. Christopher is one of this writer's favorite clarinet players whose repertoire ranges from Jelly Roll Morton to Ornette Coleman, while Laughlin is a well-respected traditionally oriented player. Beausoleil was on the Acura, the Biggest of the Festival's stages, mixing in the unique blend of Cajun music with Michael Doucet's marvelous fiddle and singing as well as a willingness to explore non-traditional sources for material. From there I went across the Fairgrounds to the other main stage, the Gentilly Stage, where Frankie Ford was holding forth. On the way I caught a bit of the Forgotten Souls Brass Band and some more excellent zydeco from accordion Keith Frank. With hits like "Sea Cruise," and "Roberta," Ford was a rock and roll heart throb a half century ago, but today he has become a marvelous entertainer with a repertoire from his rock'n'roll days along with that of a veteran of the lounge circuit. He still can pound the ivories as well as connects with the audience, many of whom have been seeing him for



Kermit Ruffins

decades.

A bit of traditional New Orleans jazz by bassist Walter Payton and Gumbo Filé in Economy Hall was followed by The Dirty Dozen Brass Band and the Glass House Reunion at Congo Square, which honor their roots in the 9th Circuit bar. One of zydeco's brightest talents, Geno Delafosse was keeping the dancers happy at the Fais Do Do Stage. Vocalist John Boutté comes from quite a musical family, and being a fan of his recordings for several years I was pleased to finally watch him perform a mix of tunes with a band that included his frequent collaborator Paul Sanchez and trumpeter Leroy Jones. Howard Alden & Anat Cohen with George Wein on piano delighted Economy Hall with their exploration of traditional jazz material with a rendition of a Jelly Roll Morton composition being special. The always entertaining Kermit Ruffins & the Barbecue Swingers were their ebullient selves on Congo Square while Walter "Wolfman" Washington was his usual funky self in the Blues Tent. A bit of traditional jazz by Tim Laughlin with the excellent pianist Tom McDermott and cornetist Connie Jones in his band was followed by being part of the masses who came to see Tony Bennett and the legend did not disappoint.

My Festival travelogue continues, Saturday May 2 with J. D. Hill's harmonica blues and the superb Cajun music of the Berard Family band. Trumpeter Leroy Jones and his Finnish wife, trombonist Katja Toivola led the marvelous collaboration between New Orleans and Finnish musicians, the New Orleans Helsinki Connection which also benefited from the vocals of Teedy Boutté. Cedric Watson has been one of the Creole musical innovators, at one moment handling a traditional la la song and interpreting a Clifton Chenier classic before mixing in African elements and his band was as lively as they were fresh sounding. Then a bit of Buckwheat Zydeco who was celebrating his 30th Anniversary focusing on the organ while joined by fellow accordionist Nathan Williams and Rockin' Dopsie Jr. on the rubboard for the celebration. Then off to see Deacon John (Moore), a veteran of the legendary studio band and a versatile singer and guitarist who spans the whole span of post-war rhythm'n'blues from jump



Nathan Williams and Buckwheat Zydeco

blues of Ray Charles and Roy Brown to the New Orleans rockers of Smiley Lewis and The Spiders to more modern soul. He is also a superb modern bluesman whose renditions of songs associated with B.B. King, Elmore James and J.B. Lenoir are passionately performed while avoiding being slavish copies. His set did not disappoint and insofar as he rarely leaves New Orleans, his Festival sets are must see for this writer.

My feet were starting to fail me so rather than try to capture a variety of sets I headed to the Jazz Tent for the rest of the day, missing such acts as Bon Jovi (who I would have skipped in any event), Dr. John, C.J. Chenier, The O'Jays, and John Mayall. When I got to the Jazz Tent, Ensemble Fetien led by Seguenon Kone and featuring clarinetist Michael White and Jason Marsalis on vibes, this was the most memorable set of the weekend as Kone's ensemble mixes African drums with jazz strains, led by Kone's lively balafone. The music was exhilarating with Sunpie Barnes adding ac-



Seguenon Kone

cordion and some steel guitar added to the mesmerizing and exhilarating sounds produced. It was followed by Irwin Mayfield & the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra. This superb big band is led by another of the young lions, with too many terrific soloists to identify all, but tenor saxophonist Ed Pederson and clarinetist Evan Christopher each merit mention on numbers that featured their superb playing. While not imitative of the Ellington band, Mayfield's writing and arrangements evoked the Ellington band in the overall sound of the band and Mayfield's writing of several numbers to put the spotlight on members of the band. It is a terrific aggregation and they have an excellent recording of many of the numbers they performed this day. Finally, concluding the day in the Jazz Tent was Jimmy Cobb's So What Band, celebrating 50 years of Miles Davis' "Kind of Blue," with a band that included Larry Willis on piano, Buster Williams on bass, Wallace Roney on trumpet, Vincent Herring on alto sax and Javon Jackson on tenor saxophone. It was a treat to hear how fresh this music remains and how contemporary it sounds performed today.

For JazzFest's final day I started off with the sweet trumpet of 96-year-old Lionel Ferbos and the Palm Court Jazz Band and his lovely rendition of the classic ballad "Try a Little Tenderness" still lings in my mind. From there I caught Jonathan Batiste of that musical family on piano leading his band through a mix of funk, classic New Orleans and jazz. Batiste is an astonishing young keyboard whiz who has made some dazzling jazz recordings and has worked with Trombone Shorty's Band. After his set it was time to catch the start of Kenny Neal's also strong blues set; trumpeter Shamarr Allen whose music leans to swinging and traditional sounds; and then the soulful blues of Brother Tyrone who was on the Congo Square Stage and proved to be as convincing a singer as he displayed on his recent album. The Cajun Hank Williams, D.L. Menard still sings those country tinged Cajun waltzes that tug at the heart. Some nice music by Allen Toussaint was followed by Cedric Burnside and Lightning Malcolm. I understand their appeal (and they recently won a Blues Music Award) but I find their music somewhat limited rhythmically and an unfortunate simplification of the tradition that lacks the nuances of Cedric's father's music as well as that of



Indians on Parade

Mississippi Fred McDowell.

Then came my sprint hour. Neil Young was on the Acura Stage and there were strict rules on the photographers and only shooting for the first two songs. Well, hey hey ho ho, I managed to get about 100 images before I made my way around the fair Grounds track to catch the God-Father of Go Go, Chuck Brown before a packed Congo Square audience as his band got that funky groove and he and his aggregation sang and rapped their spell over the crowd. From there to the Gentilly Stage for Los Lobos, more great rock and roll and then a short visit to Economy hall where Bob French's Original Tuxedo Jazz Band was holding forth. Then off to the Blues Tent for Luther Kent doing a tribute to Bobby Bland with Wardell Querzergue conducting his augmented horn section. With the threat of thunder, I opted to skip the various closing acts including The Neville Brothers and the Radiators, as well as Buddy Guy, a Sidney Bechet tribute and Maze featuring Frankie Beverly. It was an astonishing amount of terrific music, most of it from New Orleans and Louisiana, and as stated earlier, this was the best-attended JazzFest since before September 11. The 40th straight Festival was one that produced so many memories and undoubtedly brings cores back for the 41st.



Jonathan Batiste



Zulu Craftman

The 30th Edition of the Festival International de Jazz de Montréal

Montréal, Canada - The 30th Edition of the Festival International de Jazz de Montréal marks a genuine turning point in an already remarkable history. The *world's #1 jazz event*, presented by General Motors in collaboration with Rio Tinto Alcan, the Festival offers a program of incredible diversity for this grand event, as Montréal is set to host 3,000 musicians & entertainers from 30 countries, more than 650 concerts, 400 accredited journalists and a total of 2.5 million attendees.† The sheer amount of live music includes in excess of 450 free shows on 10 outdoor stages, plus more than 150 indoor concerts at 10 different concert halls, showcasing jazz and music in all its forms, inspired by every style including pop, rock n' roll, '80s gypsy music, Afrobeat and other genres from around the world.

From jazz legends and rock stars to the most buzzed about indie acts, more than 150 indoor concerts will light up Montréal's marquees from

June 30 to July 12. This year, it's harder than ever to pick out individual gems, but just a few of them include: Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Jeff Beck, hip hop heavyweight Mos Def, electronica pioneers The Orb, eclectic indie rockers Beirut and The Dears, classic reggae artists Burning Spear and Toots & The Maytals, genre busting collective Pink Martini, jazz rock hipsters The Bad Plus, and many more.

The Festival marks its anniversary by paying tribute to legendary record label Blue Note, which made global stars of Miles Davis, Al Green, John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk as well as newcomers including Norah Jones. Many artists from the label's peerless catalogue will illuminate the program. The festival will also mark the 55th anniversary of the Newport Jazz Festival, represented by founder and "father" of all subsequent jazzfests George Wein, who brings in his Newport All Stars. Finally, a pair of 50th anniversaries of landmark albums will be celebrated in two Festival concerts: *Time Out* by Dave Brubeck, the first jazz album to have sold over one million copies, and *Kind of Blue* by Miles Davis, the biggest-selling jazz album in history.

The opening concert of the Festival turns the spotlight on fabulous trumpeter Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, featuring flamenco piano sensation Chano Dominguez and his quartet. In the closing concert, Montréal Variations celebrates our city itself with its greatest pianists Oliver Jones, François Bourassa, James Gelfand, Alain Lefevre, Guy Dubuc, Luc Beaugrand, Guy St-Onge and Lorraine Desmarais performing compositions created specifically with the metropolis as muse.

For more information on the festival, visit www.montrealjazzfest.com.

jazz-blues.com


71st Annual National Folk Festival Returns to Butte, Montana in July

**FREE, THREE-DAY EVENT CELEBRATES THE ROOTS,
RICHNESS AND VARIETY OF AMERICAN CULTURE**

Butte, Montana – One of the country's largest and most prestigious celebrations of the arts, the National Folk Festival, is returning to Butte, Montana for its second year, July 10-12, 2009. First presented in 1934, it is the oldest multicultural festival in the nation. This "moveable feast of deeply traditional folk arts" celebrates American culture through music, dance, traditional craft, storytelling, food and more. As a bonus in these economically tight times, the entire event is FREE to the public.

Perched in the northern Rocky Mountains, between Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks, uptown Butte offers a classic western backdrop for the Festival. With seven stages offering continuous performances throughout the long weekend, "The National" features a broad array of music and dance performances as well as hands-on workshops, children's activities, regional and ethnic foods, parades, craft exhibits and more. The National brings together a diverse array of offerings appealing to audiences of all ages.

Over 250 musicians, dancers and craftspeople will demonstrate, exhibit and perform: blues, rockabilly, jazz, cowboy, bluegrass, western swing, zydeco, polka, old time and gospel are just a sampling of musical styles



an ALLIGATOR RECORDS presentation

**RICK ESTRIN
AND THE NIGHTCATS**

IN
Twisted

starring RICK ESTRIN, J. HANSEN, LORENZO FARRELL and introducing KID ANDERSEN

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"AN AMAZING BLUES HARMONICA PLAYER, SOULFUL VOCALIST
AND BRILLIANT, ORIGINAL SONGWRITER." —San Francisco Chronicle

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The new release on Alligator Records available now at finer record stores
everywhere, by phone at 1.800.344.5609 or online at WWW.ALLIGATOR.COM

that will be emanating from the open-air amphitheatres. Magic Slim and the Teardrops blues band, the bluegrass pickin' of Sierra Hull and Highway 111, and the Massive Monkeys break-dance group out of Seattle are just a few of the artists performing at this year's festival.

Historic Uptown was chosen as the site for the 70th, 71st and 72nd National Folk Festivals (2008, 2009, 2010). This three-year, Montana run marks the first time the National Folk Festival has been held west of the Mississippi River in over 40 years.

To learn more about the upcoming National Folk Festival visit: www.nationalfolkfestival.com. This event is produced by the National Council for Traditional Arts, www.ncta.net.

For information and details on visiting Montana check out: www.visitmt.com

Annual Summer Concert Series at Rodney Strong Vineyards During Winery's 50-year Anniversary

Healdsburg, California – Celebrating their 50-year anniversary of making wine, Rodney Strong Vineyards is proud to announce a stellar musical line-up for its 19th Annual Summer Concert Series at Rodney Strong Vineyards, presented by KJZY and Good Neighbor Pharmacy. This year's schedule is highlighted by a special engagement featuring an Up Close and Personal concert from Daryl Hall and John Oates, the top selling duo in the history of music, whose "rock and soul" sound garnered #1 hits such as "Rich Girl", "Sara Smile" and "Maneater."

The concerts are as follows:

Saturday, June 27 - Peter White and Mindi Abair
Doors 4 p.m. - Showtime 5 p.m.

Tickets: VIP \$70 – GA \$45

Saturday, July 11 - The Rippingtons and Craig Chaquico

Doors 4 p.m. - Showtime 5 p.m.

Tickets: VIP \$70 – GA \$45

Saturday, August 8 - Guitars & Saxes 2009 featuring Euge Groove, Jeff Golub, Jeff Lorber and Jessy J

Doors 4 p.m. - Showtime 5 p.m.

Tickets: VIP \$70 – GA \$45

Saturday, August 22 - The KRUSH Presents: Susan Tedeschi and JJ Grey & Mofro

Doors 4 p.m. - Showtime 5 p.m.

Tickets: VIP \$70 – GA \$45

Monday, September 7 - Daryl Hall & John Oates – Up Close and Personal Tour

Doors 3 p.m. - Showtime 4 p.m.

Tickets: VIP \$110 – GA \$75

Surrounded by acres of beautiful vineyards, guests will be treated to some of the top performers in contemporary music while picnicking at the winery's intimate concert venue, The Green.

Season passes are available at www.omegaevents.com/rodneystrong or by calling (707) 869-1595. Individual concert tickets can be purchased in person at the Rodney Strong Vineyards Tasting Room.

The 2009 Season Pass includes four shows (Au-

gust 22 excluded), and offers exclusive benefits such as the same reserved seat for all concerts, commemorative gifts and early announcements on future engagements.

Bring a picnic meal to enjoy with friends on The Green or purchase an assortment of prepared foods from local purveyors who will be onsite. You may also purchase any of Rodney Strong Vineyards' wines as well as choose from an array of non-alcoholic beverages. White wines include Sauvignon Blanc and several Chardonnays; red wines include Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignons and Zinfandel.

Rodney Strong Vineyards Wine Club members enjoy an exclusive reception before the shows and at intermission as well as \$5 discount on each ticket price. Wine Club tickets must be purchased through Rodney Strong Vineyards by calling (866) 779-4637.

No outside alcoholic beverages will be allowed into the venue. Low-back chairs or blankets are recommended for all lawn seating. No high back chairs or umbrellas. Parking is complimentary and attendants will point the way. The famous Russian River fog usually arrives in the early evening, so attendees are advised to bring jackets and sweaters, or guests can purchase specially logo'd t-shirts and sweatshirts at the show.

Rodney Strong Vineyards is located at 11455 Old Redwood Highway, off Highway 101 just south of the town of Healdsburg in Sonoma County. The winery is just one hour north of the Golden Gate Bridge. Healdsburg is a perfect location for a romantic weekend. Visitors to Sonoma County's wine country will also find a number of charming inns and restaurants as well as an array of specialty shops.

Sony unveils the X-series Walkman

San Diego, California – Sony took the wraps off its top-of-the-line Walkman Video MP3 player – the X-series Walkman. A premium portable entertainment device, the X-series (NWZ-X1000 models) is Wi-Fi enabled and features an Organic Light Emitting Diode (OLED) touch screen, Sony's Digital Clear Audio Technologies, as well as embedded content provided by Slacker Radio and YouTube.

"The new X-series leverages Sony's engineering heritage and integrates the latest advances in OLED and other innovative technologies," said Andrew Sivori, director of the audio products business at Sony Electronics. "We focused on enhancing audio and video playback to develop a device that allows consumers a deeper, more interactive way to enjoy content, as well as discover new content, for a truly unique entertainment experience."

Featuring a 3-inch OLED touch screen, the player delivers outstanding video with exceptional color reproduction, extremely high contrast and a rapid response rate.

The X-series Walkman video MP3 player is available now for pre-sales on sonystyle.com. The device will come in black in two different storage capacities, the NWZ- X1051 with 16GB of internal storage and the NWZ- X1061 with 32GB, and cost \$299 and \$399 respectively. Both models can be found in Sony Style stores and select retailers nationwide mid-June.

Why Some People Think Duke Ellington Is a Member of the Royal Family.

KIDS DON'T GET ENOUGH

ART THESE DAYS. So you can see why some of them might accidentally confuse a jazz legend named Duke with royalty named duke. But it's finally time to set the record straight.

Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington didn't rule over a small English estate. Instead he reigned supreme over jazz institutions like The Cotton Club. He riffed

powerfully on the piano, but it was the full orchestra that he considered his most compelling instrument. He introduced improvisation to his compositions — a process unheard of using a 15-piece orchestra. The result was a different approach to jazz that sparked a revolution and an evolution. His music spread across the world with songs like "Sophisticated Lady," "In a



A piano player. A composer. An orchestra leader.
Duke Ellington reigned over a land called Jazz.

Sentimental Mood," and "Take the 'A' Train." His historical concert in 1953 at the Newport Jazz Festival has entered the lexicon of legendary live performances. There is no doubt about it, Ellington's brand of jazz has contributed significantly to the American songbook and to the lives of anyone who has ever tapped their foot to a beat.

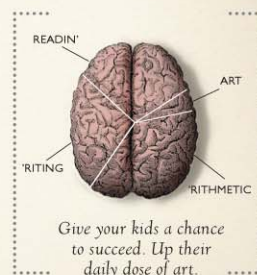
Jazz is art, you dig? Art can

really transform lives.

In fact, the more art kids get, the smarter they become in subjects like math and science. And the more likely they'll become well-rounded, cool members of society. For *Ten Simple Ways* to get more art in kids' lives, visit AmericansForTheArts.org.



Royal dukes are squaresville.
They have no rhythm.
And they wear crowns.



Art. Ask for More.

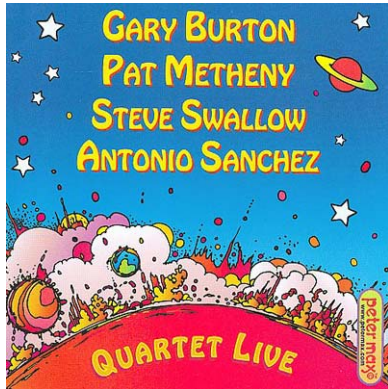
AMERICANSFORTHEARTS.ORG



NAMM
Foundation



We only bring you
the Cream of the Crop!



**GARY BURTON
PAT METHENY
STEVE SWALLOW
ANTONIO SANCHEZ**
Quartet Live
CONCORD JAZZ

When this all star quartet toured in mid 2007, they hit very few cities in the U.S. Oakland, CA was one of them, where this new CD was recorded over two nights in June at Yoshi's jazz club. Another was Buffalo, N.Y., where they were the first concert to be held at singer Ani DeFranco's renovated stone church. I was lucky enough to be at that concert.

Since I had heard the show I knew exactly what to expect. Having liked both Burton and Metheny for decades, hearing the two back together along with bassist Steve Swallow and Metheny's drummer Antonio Sanchez was my biggest musical treat of that year. Yes, there were goosebumps, and those goosebumps were revisited when I put this CD in and cranked it up on a 90-minute trip that seemed like fewer than 15. Sanchez, who was a baby when the other three were playing together, was a good choice... for whatever the reason.

Kicking off with Chick Corea's "Sea Journey," from Burton's "Passengers" album on ECM the band takes you on an 11-song trip you'll find yourself repeating again and again. The level of musicianship, camaraderie, communication and high spirits combined with the bright melodies, gorgeous ballads and well-chosen repertoire makes this a journey to remember.

Some of the other songs are Carla Bley's "Ohlos de Gato" and "Syndrome;" Keith Jarrett's "Coral," Duke Ellington's "Fleurette Africaine (Little African Flower)," plus three from Metheny and two from Swallow. Burton contributes a single song, "Walter L." You can check out the full song list and sample some tunes at Amazon and other sites. I do believe you'll like what you hear.

I had no idea a CD would be coming from that 2007 tour. This one is on my list for best of 2009.

Bill Wahl



MAC ARNOLD
Backbones & Gristle
PLANTATION #1 MUSIC

A short stint on bass with Muddy Waters several decades ago along with other gigs including John Lee Hooker marked Mac Arnold's musical resume until a few years back when he debuted to some critical acclaim. His second CD with the Plate Full'O Blues Band, "Backbones & Gristle" is the follow-up. Arnold certainly has an appealing baritone with a natural heartfelt delivery, and he gets solid support although sometimes the backing rocks out a bit as on the long blues-rock guitar jam on the opening "Love and Relations." The follow-up, "U Dawg Gone Right," has a nice delivery and a stinging solo by Arnold on his Gas Can guitar, constructed by his older brother.

The title track has some downhome flavor as he recalls growing up and his daddy's advice for him growing up, and when Mac did wrong his dad told him he had a hard head and his backbone was nothing but gristle, with some nice guitar from Austin Brashier. Max Hightower, who is on piano for much of this, takes the harp on as Mac plays bass for a high octane, supersonic harp ripper "Blow Until You Blow," with Steve Kester adding some piano to the mix. The late night blues "I Refuse" follows as Mac recalls the time he refused to listen to his good friend telling him about his woman with another man and ignored the warning sign until his woman, crying, tells him she will always will love him as she runs away.

On "Gas Can Story" Mac recalls how his brother made a gas can guitar and won a contest at school, and growing up, and then accompanying himself on the Gas Can Guitar sings "Going to Move to the Outskirts of Town." Another high point of this disc is "Things I Don't Need," with its doomy bass riff and stinging guitar as he sings about having a one room shotgun shack in the middle of a cotton field and not needing a grocery store, having a three-acre garden and not having to spend his life chasing the wind, but Mac is satisfied with his family and friends. Blues meets Doobie Brothers perhaps on the uplifting message "I Can Do Anything," with a church choir joining him as he tells about getting his education; it worked for Mac and can work for you.

Mac unplugs again for "The Garden Song," as all he needs is his tractor and some sun and rain, with some nice harp from Hightower. "Where I've Been" is a semi-autobiographical song as he sings about where he has been around the world singing the blues with all of his friends. It's the final studio track with two live tracks originating from the 1st Annual Mac Arnold Cornbread & Collard Greens Blues Festival.

On "Mean to Me," from Mac 1st CD, Bob Margolin plays slide guitar and Willie Smith handles the drum chair on a really nice slow blues with Brashier adding some nice guitar fills before Margolin takes a lengthy Muddy Waters-styled slide solo.

The live version of "I Can Do Anything" features a school choir and marching band helping him on his message for a really uplifting song that provides a fitting conclusion to this generally strong effort, which may have a few bum moments, but is full of intriguing originals (mostly by Arnold), heartfelt singing and songs, and solid musicianship. Arnold's website is www.macarnold.com and this disc is available from iTunes, Amazon and cdbaby.

Ron Weinstock



TIEMPO LIBRE
Bach In Havana
SONY CLASSICAL

Based in Miami, the Cuban Tiempo Libre brings their Afro-Cuban style to the timeless compositions of Bach for this stunning recording on Sony Classical. Its a lively romp taking some of the most celebrated musical themes and totally reworking them for an exhilarating ride that will have the listener having an almost impossible time sitting still. It opens with the Carnival romp, "Tu Conga Bach," derived from "Fugue In C Minor, The Well Tempered Clavier, Book 1," which states the theme at the beginning before the layers of percussion and instruments turn up the heat."

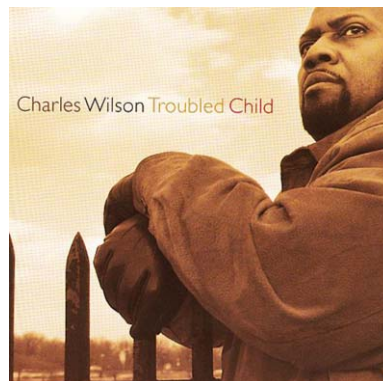
Jorge Gomez, the groups keyboard player recalls his own childhood going to the Russian run Conservatory in Havana where the Afro-Cuban music was forbidden, and then playing their native music at night while going to sleep listening to Bach. "Fuga" perhaps stays close to its roots in "Sonata in D Minor," with Gomez's classical training evident in a performance, which is enlivened by the spring like rhythms. This is followed by "Air on G String," with Paquito D'Rivera featured on alto saxophone and the performance is like a conversation between he and Gomez. D'Rivera, this time on clarinet, is also heard on "Gavotte (Son)," based on "French Suite No. 5 in G Major," with some stunning trumpet from Chistobal Ferrer Garcia.

Gomez observes that the opening in "I Orisha (6/8 Bala)," calls on the Yoruba tradition with a solo on the shekeré by Yosvany Terry, before some lovely piano from Gomez is punctuated by soaring brass lines. By the time the last tones on "Kyrie" based on "Mass in B Minor" linger in the ear, one has been through a musical journey mixing stunning musicianship, breathtaking grooves and a musical imagination and intelligence that is likely to be recognized as one of the pre-

miere recordings, irrespective of genre, of 2009.

The group's website is www.tiempolibremusic.com, but this should be relatively easy to find. Incidentally there is a promotion with Java Cabana Coffee in connection with this disc. Go to www.javacabana.com for a variety of coffees including the commemorative can of Cafe Bustelo Espresso Coffee created to celebrate the release of "Bach in Havana," as well as a chance to listen to four tracks and download one tune.

Ron Weinstock



CHARLES WILSON
Troubled Child
SEVERN

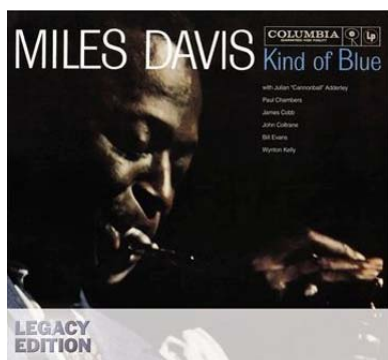
A Nephew of the late Little Milton, vocalist Charles Wilson has an extensive discography for a variety of labels including Ichiban, Ecko, his own Wilson label, Delmark, and CDS with Severn just having issued his latest entry, "Troubled Child." It's a surprising disc coming from Severn. One might have thought this might have more of a blues feel to it, but its a stone-cold soul disc that has a feel of a session from thirty years ago with a full horn section and strings and no sign of synthesizers.

It doesn't hurt to have a studio band of Mike Welch on guitar, Benjie Porecki on keyboards, Steve Gomes on bass and Robb Stupka on drums, or having Willie Henderson handling the horn and string arrangements. There is an interesting mix of songs here from the Don Robey tune "Where My Baby Went" to Ronnie Earl's "I Want to Shout about." The blues makes its most visible appearance on a strong version of Denise LaSalle's "Somebody's Tears," done as a tribute to his uncle that is wonderfully sung and has some fine guitar from Welch. The Sam Dees tune that gives the album its title is marvelously reworked with its lyric of a child growing up in the mean world of the ghetto, brought to life by Wilson's impassioned vocal who recognizes some of himself in the troubled child. On Bob Marley's "Is This Love," Wilson clearly sings yes about sharing his home and life with his women. Also nice is the remake of the George Jackson song, "I Don't Want to Take a Chance," about getting back with the woman who broke his heart before. I have not heard Wee Willie Walker's original Goldwax recording that has been reissued by the English Kent label. Steve Gomes contributed the closing "Put Something In It," a solid mid-tempo soul burner.

This is a handsomely produced disc (one cites the cliché that no expense was spared to produce it) that shows how good a singer Wilson is and certainly fans of soul, southern or otherwise will find much to enjoy here.

Ron Weinstock

LEGACY EDITIONS



MILES DAVIS

Kind Of Blue: 50th Anniversary Deluxe Set COLUMBIA / LEGACY EDITION 2-CD SET

Columbia/Legacy reissued the classic Miles Davis album “Kind of Blue” late last year just in time for the holidays, in a box collectors set which included 2 CDs, a DVD and an LP. It listed for just over a hundred dollars, but Legacy has recently released a Legacy Edition version with the two CDs, but not the DVD or LP for a list price of 19.98. One of the finest jazz recordings of all time, “Kind of Blue” was originally released in 1959, and has been issued several times since CDs appeared on the market in the mid 1980s. While the original CD incarnation sounded quite awful, as most albums transferred to CD did back then, each subsequent release offered improved sound as technology advanced. This new release offers the best of today’s sound technologies, plus a host of extra tracks.

Disc One contains the original five album selections – “So What,” “Freddie Freeloader,” “Blue In Green,” “All Blues” and “Flamenco Sketches” followed by an alternate take of “Flamenco Sketches,” which was previously issued on the first Columbia Miles Davis box set in 1988, “Miles Davis: The Columbia Years 1955-1985.” Then there are what is known as ‘studio sequences’ for each of the five titles, and one ‘false start.’ These range from anywhere between 11 seconds to close to two minutes and give an insight into the way in which Miles and the musicians related in the studio as these songs were being recorded. Now these were not just ordinary musicians by any means. Anyone familiar with this album knows this was an all-star cast of musicians who remain legends of jazz today. Miles was joined by Cannonball Adderley on alto sax, John Coltrane on tenor sax, Bill Evans on piano, Paul Chambers on bass and Jimmy Cobb on drums. Wynton Kelly replaces Evans on piano for “Freddie Freeloader” only.”

Disc two contains six additional tracks with the same musicians. The first five are from a May 1958 studio session which were scattered over various albums, but were issued together on the Legacy box set “Miles Davis & John Coltrane: The Complete Columbia Recordings 1955-1961” back in 2000. While Bill Evans and Cannonball were on those tracks, the final piece, track 6, has Cannonball out and Wynton Kelly replaces Evans on piano. This is an over 17-minute performance of “So What” performed live at the Kurhaus, Den Haag, Holland from April of 1960, and it is quite a blowout, with Coltrane really taking off. This

is the first authorized release of this track, and it is quite the finish to this gem of a set of CDs.

This Legacy Edition also comes with 24-page booklet with song information, lineups, essays, black and white and color photos, Bill Evans’ liner notes from the original 1959 LP release and more.

In short, this is a must-have album for every jazz fan, and the Legacy Edition will give you the most bang for the buck by far.

Bill Wahl



TITO PUENTE AND HIS ORCHESTRA

Dance Mania

RCA / DISCOS / LEGACY EDITION 2-CD SET

By the time bandleader/percussionist/composer Tito Puente recorded and released for RCA the original Latin-jazz albums, (*Dance Mania* and *Dance Mania Vol. 2*) he had recorded numerous singles for Tico Records. A series of albums for RCA Victor gained him wider appeal during the mid-1950s when there was a resurgence of Latin music in the USA and the release of a number of commercial Latin tunes by pop artists such as Perry Como (“Papa Loves Mambo”), Rosemary Clooney (“Mambo Italiano”), Perez Prado (“Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White”).

Puente’s group played Manhattan’s Paladium in multi-band dance marathons before he released what he once referred to as “just another album.” The dance album was a big hit. Presented on this two-disc reissue are 24 digitally re-mastered mambos, cha-chas, and rumbas recorded between 1956—1960. The attractively packaged set includes 21 bonus tracks and a 24-page booklet with historical photos, original album art, tune listings with personnel, and extensive notes by Charles L. Granata and Joe Conzo.

The superb fare fittingly celebrates Puente’s vibrant band, providing danceable music enhanced by Spanish vocals, brassy section work, and top-notch instrumental soloists.

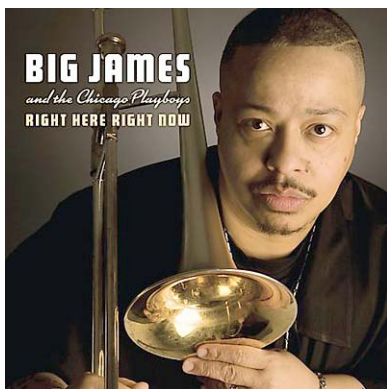
Nancy Ann Lee

LIVE BLUES ON THE HIGH SEAS

Read The Review
www.jazz-blues.com

click the Notable' button





BIG JAMES & THE CHICAGO PLAYBOYS

Right Here Right Now

BLIND PIG

Big James Montgomery has been part of the Chicago Playboys since back when the late vocalist Johnny Christian led the aggregation. After Christian's untimely death in 1993, the band kept together with the stocky trombonist assuming the leadership and making this blues/ R&B/ funk aggregation unique by being fronted by a trombone playing singer. The band that also includes Charlie Kimble on saxophone, Kenny Anderson on trumpet, Joe Blocker on keyboards, Mike Wheeler on guitar, Larry Williams on bass and Cleo Cole on drums has become a tight, hard driving ensemble that has been building a solid following in performances at clubs and festivals. This writer recalls his first exposure to them at the Pocono Blues Festival a few years back and was knocked out by their tough sound and Big James' passionate singing on mostly original material as they celebrated the blues and Chicago. They got their soulful groove on and the audience was floored with many purchasing one of their self-produced CDs.

Blind Pig has just issued Big James' latest CD (and first the band did not self-produce and release) and it's another solid effort in the fashion of their prior recordings with plenty of hard-hitting rhythms, punchy brass and Big James' heartfelt singing. Most of this is originals, although they pay a nod to the O'Jays, Bobby Bland and George Clinton on their covers. Big James is street smart and savvy, and his lyrics, like his singing, is direct and a matter of fact and not very metaphorical.

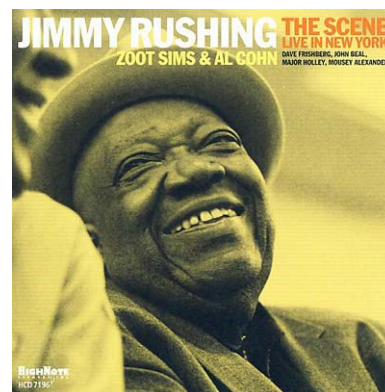
The title song opens this set and is a message song cataloging some of the problems in everyday life and choices we have to make to make things better or we have no one else to blame. "A Mama Like Mine" is a love song for his mother with a punchy brassy opening as he recalls never hearing her ever complain about anything, that she was not very tall but she gave so much of herself and I love her so, and James wishes everyone had a mama like his. No flowery language but a simple and moving expression of love punctuated by his trombone solo. "I Love 'Em," is a rocking shuffle celebrating the blues noting that the blues "ain't prejudiced it don't care who we choose," and how he's paid these dues with a sharp guitar break from Wheeler, before James sings about playing the blues until he can't play anymore, then taking the tune out on his trombone.

While James is not gifted a singer as Bobby Bland, his rendition of Bland's recording "Love to See You Smile"

benefits from his straight-forward, honest delivery. The emptiness of not having a relationship is conveyed in "Help (Somebody Please)," while the blues is front and center on the closing "Worry," an original which is inspired by a song from the B.B. King and Buddy Guy songbook, and which closes this disc on a strong note.

Those who have any of Big James and the Chicago Playboys will not be surprised by the music here while others will get to discover the unique, funky soul and blues sound that they put down.

Ron Weinstock



JIMMY RUSHING

The Scene: Live in New York

HIGH NOTE

Jimmy Rushing is best known for his association with the classic Count Basie Orchestra for which he was the principal male vocalist for a period of over 15 years. His acquaintance with Basie began much earlier as he was a member of the legendary Blue Devils, and after that band disbanded, they both were part of Benny Moten's well-regarded band.

The blues shouter, known as Mr. 5 by 5 reflecting his stocky build, was an important part of the Basie band with his blues and ballad singing. After leaving Basie, he made a number of excellent albums for such labels as Vanguard and Columbia, but thanks to High Note, we can add to Rushing's discography the marvelous, previously unissued 1965 performances with a small combo that included tenor saxophonists Al Cohn and Zoot Sims, "The Scene: Live in New York."

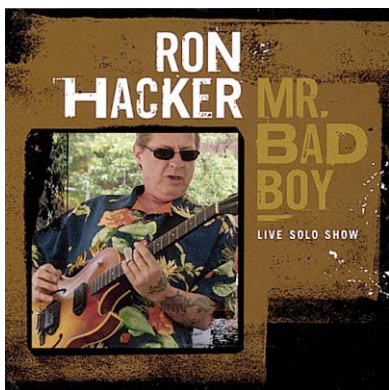
Included on this are eight vocals by Rushing with such staples of his time with Basie as "Deed I Do," "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You?," "I Want a Little Girl," "Goin' to Chicago," "I Cried For You," and "Good Morning Blues," with Cohn and Sims adding their voice with a rhythm section usually comprised of Dave Frishberg, either Major Holley or James Beal on bass and Mousey Alexander on drums. The remastering of the tapes by Jon Rosenberg is first-rate as Rushing's voice has quite a presence here. The band really swings behind him and there are a number of excellent solos.

In fact, it should not be surprising as both Cohn and Sims are among those indebted to Lester Young, whose tenor enlivened so many of Rushing's classic recordings with Basie. Sims' solos on "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You?" and "I Cried For You" are especially marvelous with the almost feathery tone. Cohn is heard to best effect on "I

Want a Little Girl,” with his somewhat harder tone, but no less swinging style.

Two hot instrumentals with unidentified rhythm sections provide Cohn and Sims with the spotlight and complement the superb Rushing vocals here, which make this such a pleasant surprise that fans of Jimmy Rushing and swinging jazz will want.

Ron Weinstock



RON HACKER
Mr. Bad Boy: Live Solo Show
MAXIMUMFOLK.COM

Indianapolis born Ron Hacker, learned blues from Yank Rachell and has become a significant presence on the San Francisco area's blues scene. With his trio the Hacksaws he has several albums, but more recently he recorded "Mr. Bad Boy: Live Solo Show" (MaximumFolk.com), a set of delta boogie inflected performances by a performer Tom Waits has labeled as San Francisco's White Trash Blues Icon.

Recorded at Famous Dave's in Minneapolis, it features Hacker's gravelly singing, which has some of the 'having drank too much whiskey' flavor as Mr. Waits' vocals.

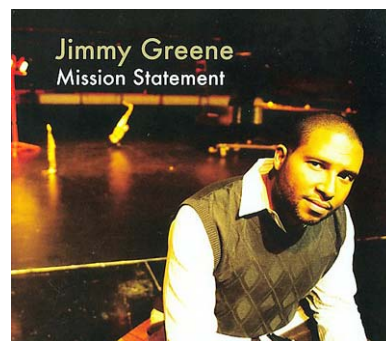
Hacker's Delta-Chicago blues slide guitar styling owes a bit to Muddy Waters and Elmore James (the latter most evident on his original "Let Me Sing Like Elmore James," but also present on the title track with its mix of slide guitar and John Lee Hooker boogie groove). Another original, "Big Brown Eyes," has more driving slide and while he has clearly listened to Elmore and others, he brings plenty of his own personality to his playing here.

Other songs come from Yank Rachell "Broke and Hungry," and Jimmy Rogers "Goin' Away Baby," and the backing is bit simple if effective. He transforms "Trouble in Mind" into a delta blues. On John Estes' "Kid Man Blues," titled "Ax Sweet Man," he sounds a bit forced on his vocal while his accompaniment sounds derived from Son House, before he closes with Robert Johnson's "Come On In My Kitchen," again with more excellent playing.

Hacker is quite a blues guitarist although vocally he is not consistently convincing. But even here, his vocals are full of heart and detracts little from this noteworthy set.

"Mr. Bad Boy" is available at Amazon, cdbaby.com and Ron Hacker's website is <http://web.me.com/ronalhacker/ronhacker.com/Welcom.html>.

Ron Weinstock



JIMMY GREENE
Mission Statement
RAZDAZ RECORDS

Right off the bat, the opening moments of the title track on Jimmy Greene's new CD signal that the road ahead will be a good one with the very fine unison work of Green's tenor sax and Lage Lund's guitar. This song is one of nine Greene originals here, along with Harry Smith's "Give Thanks."

Greene has been around for some time, with some discs on the highly respected Dutch Criss Cross label before moving over to bassist Avishai Cohen's Razdaz Records. His band is first class, with Xavier Davis on acoustic piano and Fender Rhodes, Reuben Rogers on bass, drummer Eric Harland and guitarist Lund. Stefon Harris joins in for one song, "Revelation," on vibes. Greene certainly sounds like a disciple of such greats as Dexter Gordon, Coltrane and Rollins as he assimilates their influence into his own rich sound, especially shining on tenor. His songs, both modal pieces and ballads, sound like he writes for the audience rather than himself; a joy to hear in this day of the self-produced CDs all over the place with *ego* written all over them.

A very nice set fro Jimmy Greene and friends.

Bill Wahl

OTIS TAYLOR
Pentatonic Wars and Love Songs
TELARC

It's been four years since I checked up on Otis Taylor and his latest project has him getting away from featuring the banjo, which has been his trademark on his last handful of releases. This effort Taylor has dubbed his sonnet of love, but to say it is the blues is to say Miles Davis just played jazz. A lot of Taylor's songs fall more into the WTF category of music.

Armed with strange instruments for an alleged blues release, "Looking For Some Heat" contains cornet and two Gbanloko drums, yet Jason Moran's piano is what lead the way on this tune. Bassist/daughter Cassie Taylor gets a couple lead vocal opportunities via "Sunday Morning," with help from Gary Moore's flamenco guitar stylings, and "Maybe Yeah," which could be tagged as surreal Dixieland jazz.

Jason Moran's piano takes command again on "I'm Not Mysterious," a lyrical kissing cousin of "Good Morning Little School Girl" from a much younger angle. "Young Girl Down The Street" has some fluid lead guitar by Jonn Richardson with a subtle undertone, thanks to Brian

Juan's work on organ. The release's extended number is "Walk On Water," that comes in two movements and should keep you guessing. Scat? Jazz? R&B? Might be d) – all of the above.

The thing about Otis Taylor is he's hard to pin down when it comes to style. This isn't what one would call straight-laced Delta blues by a long shot, but Taylor's method is his own. The blues purists might not like it, but, if you have an open mind, Pentatonic Wars and Love Songs just might be an early Valentine's Day gift to yourself.

Peanuts

STANLEY CLARKE TRIO

Jazz In The Garden

HEADS UP

With longtime section partner Lenny White and piano phenom Hiromi as bandmates the pioneer fusion bass virtuoso here offers up his first set in this standard jazz setting. Tasteful, atmospheric and frequently swinging fare are the results. Convention places the piano in front in this format and the leader gives Hiromi all the required room to fill that role splendidly.

She glides elegantly above Clarke's ostinato patterns on the leadoff "Paradigm Shift" and her own "Sicilian Blue" and shakes her own *avant* image with some solid swinging on "Wrong Notes".

Clarke and White make for a solid supportive pair and the bass man strives for understatement when out in front. Nice work.

Duane Verh

PHIL WOODS

The Children's Suite

JAZZ MEDIA

Saxophonist-composer Phil Woods has been nurturing this baby for nearly 50 years. In 1961, inspired by his children's A. A. Milne books, Woods composed music to the poems from "Now We Are Six." Denied permission from the Milne estate and Disney to perform the pieces with an orchestra, a narrator and singers, Woods kept the compositions in his family and added arrangements in 1967 for what would become *The Children's Suite*.

Four decades after he wrote the music, Woods ran into his actor friend Peter Dennis, a jazz fan and the only person licensed by the Pooh trustees and Disney to publicly perform Milne's works. Dennis (who serves as narrator on the tracks "Sneezles," "Waiting at the Window," "The Friend," "Wind on the Hill," and "In the Dark") eventually made it possible for Woods to record *The Children's Suite* as a CD in August 2007.

This is an ambitious, creative, fun-filled jazz project that features Woods (who conducts and plays alto sax with note-bending fluidity), vocalist/keyboardist Bob Dorough, vocalist Vicki Doney, and 14 other talented musicians, including a string quartet and Woods' long-time collaborators bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin. Doney's sweet voice and Dorough's playfulness enhance the fare that holds listening appeal for kids as well as adults.

Well-crafted straight-ahead charts, appealing melodies and fine solos from Woods and others make the music

pulse with excitement. Woods has long been one of my favorite players and I was pleasantly surprised by his originality (in coming up with the idea), as well as his composition skills and capable conducting.

Nancy Ann Lee

CHICAGO BLUES A LIVING HISTORY

RAISIN' MUSIC

This new double CD is a delightful surprise. It is an attempt to portray a sketch of the evolution of Chicago Blues over the past seven decades as performed by two generations of the idiom's greatest traditionalists. Featured on this recording are Billy Boy Arnold, John Primer, Lurrie Bell and Billy Branch, backed by a stellar band of guitarist Billy Flynn; keyboard whiz, Johnny Iguana, bassist Felton Crews and drummer Kenny Smith with Matthew Skoller adding his harp on a few tracks. Also present are special guests Carlos Johnson and Mike Avery who add additional spice to this rich blues stew.

Included are renditions of classic blues recordings by the likes of both Sonny Boy Williamson, Muddy Waters, Little Walter, Howlin' Wolf, Elmore James, Memphis Slim, Otis Rush, Buddy Guy, Earl Hooker and Magic Sam. The music here is traditionally oriented and remains true to the originals without being slavish copies. Let me point out that the 'legendary' John Mayall Bluesbreakers album with Clapton is comprised of mostly covers, and the music here is simply better. I don't care whether or not

Clapton is a guitar god, the truth is that The Living History Band is a much stronger band than Mayall's band and the musicians here invigorate the tradition from which their careers are rooted.

Billy Boy Arnold opens with songs from John Lee 'Sonny Boy' Williamson, Tampa Red and Big Bill Broonzy with Billy Flynn conjuring up Tampa Red's distinctive slide sound before pianist Iguana does a solo rendition of Big Maceo's "Chicago Breakdown." Things get a bit more modern as John Primer does Muddy's "Feel Like Going home," followed by Lurrie Bell's exuberant vocal on Elmore James' "I Believe," with Flynn adding slide and Billy taking his usual sharp solo. Primer puts an emphatic stamp Wolf's "Moanin' at Midnight," with Skoller adding harp. While B.B. King's music is not Chicago Blues, his influence is all-pervasive and the rendition of "Three O'Clock Blues" introduces us to vocalist Mike Avery, a cousin of Magic Sam, a riveting singer that Lurrie Bell's guitar complements so well. Billy Boy handles "Memphis Slim USA," a bit subdued compared with Slim's recording that had Matt Murphy's slashing guitar on it, but the energy picks up when Billy Branch lights into Little Walter's "Hate to See You Go."

The second disc opens with Primer in a Muddy Waters bag again on "Sugar Sweet," with Branch adding fine harp and then Jimmy Reed's "Can't Stand to See You Go," as the band aces the lazy boogie Jimmy Reed groove and Skoller adds some Reed-sounding harp. Its followed by Billy Boy reworking his own "I Wish You Would," before Primer takes the lead on Rice Miller's "Your Imagination," with Skoller displaying his virtuosity as he emulates the second Sonny Boy's style. Lurrie Bell handles the Otis Rush classic "My Love Will Never Die," followed by Billy Branch's interpretation of Junior Wells' "Hoodoo Man Blues," which is derived from the Delmark recording, not Wells' original. Billy Flynn takes the spotlight on Earl Hooker's "Hooking It," displaying not only his chops but his musical good taste followed by Avery handling his cousin's "Out of Bad Luck." Branch returns for a strong treatment of James Cotton's "One More Mile" before the one ringer track as Carlos Johnson handles the vocal and guitar on John Lee Hooker's "The Healer." No question Hooker had in impact on Chicago, but it's odd that they represent Hooker with this as opposed to the great recordings like "Boom Boom," on which Chicago musicians had played. Johnson does an able Carlos Santana impression. Johnson is lead guitarist behind Bell on Buddy Guy's "Damn Right I Got the Blues," which is included to represent the continuing development of Chicago blues, although I would have preferred a reworking of one of Guy's earlier recordings.

As I stated this is a sketch of the Chicago Blues as it evolved. One can think of a variety of artists who were skipped like Floyd Jones, J.B. Hutto, Jimmy Rogers, Big Walter, Carey Bell, Sunnyland Slim, John Brim, Otis Spann and many others. But this album does the job of lovingly bringing to life some terrific songs. And as stated, Mike Avery is a helluva singer.

This set is accompanied by a booklet with plenty of information on the original performers and the artists on the disc. For more information, visit www.raisinmusic.com or www.chicagobluesalivinghistory.com. **Ron Weinstock**

ETHNIC HERITAGE ENSEMBLE

Mama's House Live

KATALYST ENTERTAINMENT

The Ethnic Heritage Ensemble celebrates 35 years of history since its formation with this 2006 live performance recorded at Sangha in Takoma Park, Maryland. EHE has had many musician configurations since its founding. For this outing, Kahil El'Zabar has selected a trio formation with veteran EHE saxophonist Ernest Khabeer Dawkins and the younger member, trumpeter Corey Wilkes, who polished his chops filling the Art Ensemble of Chicago trumpet spot held by the late Lester Bowie.

The threesome performs five originals and one standard for a total time of 78-plus minutes. Their familiarity yields imaginative improvisations and, frequently, their sound is bigger than expected from just three musicians. They are able to slowly build dynamic energy in each tune. El'Zabar's riffing hand drumming and occasional chanting under the talented soloists creates a hypnotic sound, especially notable on the title tune. Wilkes excels on muted and open trumpet solos and Dawkins builds solos from bluesy roots as the EHE imprints Miles Davis's "All Blues," with fresh flavor. The 15-minute finale, "Ornette," initially recorded on EHE's *Dance With the Ancestors* (Chameleon, 1993) caps their exciting performance.

Spellbinding grooves and flawless musicianship make this venture a captivating listen that maintains their ancient-to-future African roots attitude. **Nancy Ann Lee**

SNOOKS EAGLIN

Baby You Can Get Your Gun

HEP CAP

Hep Cap, a subsidiary of Collectors Choice, has reissued Snooks Eaglin's 1987 album, "Baby You Can Get Your Gun." This was the first of five discs he recorded for Black Top that are the cornerstone of his recorded legacy.

Labeled the Human Jukebox because of his vast repertoire, the Black Top recordings captured his wide range of material along with his singular guitar style with his unpredictable twisting lines and an almost pianistic attack on the strings.

This disc had him backed by a stellar band that included Ron Levy on keyboards, Ronnie Earl on guitar, bassist Erving Charles and drummer Smokey Johnson from Fats Domino's band, and saxophonist David Lastie.

Things get going with a solid rendition of Guitar Slim's "You Give Me Nothing But the Blues," followed by a reflective take on Percy Mayfield's "Baby Please," with Lastie adding the tasty sax. More of a direct second flavor follows on "Oh Sweetness," while a jazz meets Ventures flavor marks the instrumental, "Profinia," with Snooks dazzling with what sound like off the cuff riffs.

Tommy Ridgely's blues ballad "Lavinia" receives a nice vocal followed by the vintage Earl King rocker that gives this disc its title. The hard funk number "Drop the Bomb" is followed by a reworking of his Imperial recording "That Certain Door." Another strong blues performance is "Nobody Knows," with its pleading vocal and more solid guitar followed by a rocking rendition of Eu-

gene Church's "Pretty Girl Everywhere," with more fine tenor from Lastie.

At the time, this was Snook's best album, and it holds up today as a very fine effort. Even better albums would follow it later (my particular favorite is "Out of Nowhere"), and we should be thankful that it has been made available once again.

Ron Weinstock

QUARTET SAN FRANCISCO

Latigo

VIOLINJAZZ RECORDINGS

A contemporary string quartet whose repertoire transcends the classic repertoire, Quartet San Francisco has received considerable acclaim for its wide-ranging crossover material. Quartet San Francisco is violinists Jeremy Cohen and Kayo Miki, violist Keith Lawrence and cellist Joel Cohen, although when they recorded "Latigo" Emily Onderdonk, not Lawrence, was on the viola.

"Latigo" was a Grammy nominee for Best Classical Crossover album of 2006 and is a fascinating program of rumbas and tangos played exuberantly and sensually. Jeremy Cohen has provided the arrangements for most of the performances, which come from the pens of such composers as Ruben Hernandez, Astor Piazzolla ("Libertango" and "Neuvo Tango"), Chick Corea ("Armando's Rumba"), and Leonard Bernstein, although the arrangement for Bernstein's "Cool" from "West Side Story" is by David Balakrishnan. Percussion is added to three selections to spice the rhythmic pulse of those performances.

Beautifully recorded, these performances certainly help one understand the high praise this recording has earned.

Ron Weinstock

RALPH LALAMA QUARTET

Energy Fields

MIGHTY QUINN RECORDS

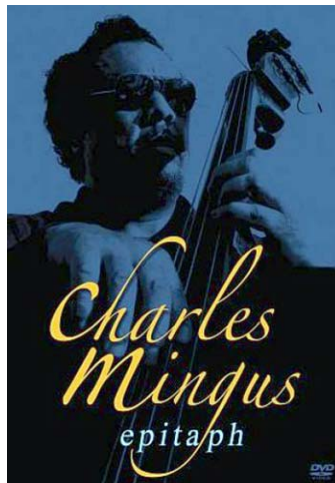
Veteran tenor saxophonist Ralph Lalama has been playing for decades, and probably is most noteworthy for his work with the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra on their long-standing Monday night gig at the fabled Village Vanguard, but has also been part of Joe Lovano's Nonet. He has recorded several albums for the Dutch Criss Cross label. His most recent album is "Energy Fields" (Mighty Quinn) with a strong quartet filled out by John Hart on guitar, Rick Petrone on bass and Joe Corsello on drums for an interesting collection of material that is handled with robust authority throughout.

The disc opens auspiciously with a vigorous rendition of Woody Shaw's "Moontrane," followed by a boppish rendition of Charlie Parker's "Buzzy," with Hart and Lalama taking the head in a fashion akin to Parker and Gillespie. Hart's fleet guitar with his single note runs punctuated by chords is a foil for Lalama's vigorous playing with a sound at times suggestive of Sonny Rollins and Dexter Gordon. Lalama's original "Nonchalant" showcases his ballad sense while Hart contributes a fresh arrangement to "Old Folks," one of the staples of Ben Webster's repertoire, but with Lalama's strong playing following Hart's initial solo, while his attack on "Like Someone in Love" is evocative of Rollins and Gordon in sound and approach.

Other selections also taken at this high level include Wayne Shorter's "United," the classic ballad "Indian Summer," and the swinging "Just in Time." Lalama is marvelous through as is the entire group producing an excellent set of strong, contemporary jazz. This can be obtained at www.mighty-quinn.net or from amazon.

Ron Weinstock

DVDs



CHARLES MINGUS

Epitaph

EAGLE EYE MEDIA

On June 3, 1989 in Alice Tully Hall in New York City's Lincoln Center, a 30-musician orchestra conducted by Gunther Schuller performed the world premiere of the Charles Mingus masterpiece, *Epitaph*. This DVD documents that exhilarating 18-movement, 130-minute sold-out concert performance and offers an opportunity to hear

this astounding work and to see the musicians who first brought it to life.

The concert was originally produced for television and aired in the U.K.. Camera work is excellent with well-timed close-up shots of the musicians and instruments. Musicians include: Trumpets: Randy Brecker, Wynton Marsalis, Lew Soloff, Jack Walrath, Joe Wilder, Snooky Young; Trombones: Eddie Bert, Sam Burtis, Paul Faulise, Urbie Green, David Taylor, Britt Woodman; Tuba: Don Butterfield; Alto Saxophones: John Handy, Jerome Richardson, Bobby Watson; Tenor Saxophones: George Adams, Phil Bodner; Baritone Saxophones: Gery Smulyan, Roger Rosenberg; Contrabass clarinet: Dale Kleps; Bassoon: Michael Rabinowitz; Piano: Sir Roland Hanna, John Hicks; Bass: Reggie Johnson, Edwin Schuller; Guitar: John Abercrombie; Vibraphone: Karl Berger; Drums: Victor Lewis; Percussion: Daniel Druckman.

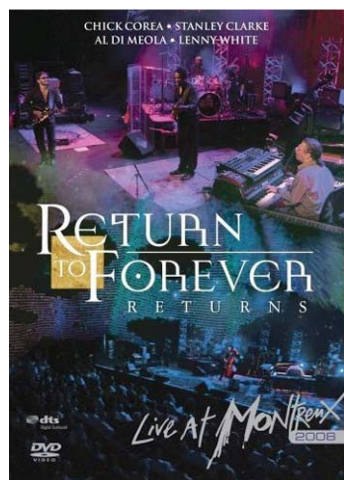
Schuller's conducting brings out the many moods of the treasured masterpiece. Some movements swing, others are somber in tone. There are densely layered portions and light, playful parts. Musicianship is excellent and soloists excel.

The piece was discovered after bassist-composer Mingus' death in 1979. Andrew Homzy (director of the jazz program at Concordia University, Montreal) was in Sue Mingus' apartment cataloguing Mingus' manuscripts in 1985 and discovered about 20 pieces for a large jazz orchestra with the title (or subtitle) of "Epitaph" written on them. Mingus had written the movements 30 and 60 years prior to the 1989 performance. The measures on all the scores were successively numbered, which led them to believe that Mingus intended for them to work

together as an extended composition. Mingus believed it would never be performed in his lifetime and said that he "wrote it for my tombstone." The score required completion, extensive editing and reconstruction and, when finished, was 500 pages and 4,000 measures.

I attended the April 22, 1990 Tri-C JazzFest (Cleveland, Ohio) performance of *Epitaph* (with slightly different personnel) but am delighted to have this keepsake DVD of the New York premiere. A 12-page color booklet with historic photos accompanies the DVD. The final DVD is well-organized with on-screen titles and an interactive list of the movements so you can chronologically or randomly watch or just play your favorite movements over and over. Notes, originally by Gunther Schuller for the double-CD released in 1990 were edited for the DVD by Andy McIntyre and include a brief summary of each movement. The Columbia/Sony CD appears to be discontinued. That makes this well-produced DVD documenting the genius of Charles Mingus all that more valuable. —

Nancy Ann Lee



RETURN TO FOREVER

Returns

Live At Montreux 2008 EAGLE EYE MEDIA DVD

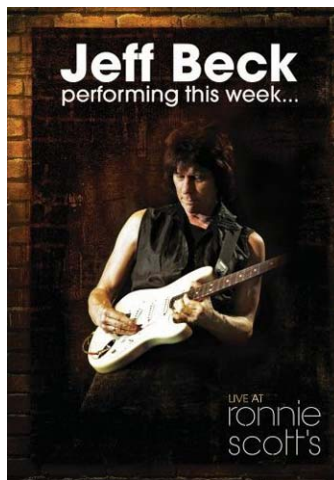
Following last month's excellent dual-disc release of this fusion supergroup's 2008 reunion is this Montreux Jazz Festival performance, a splendid set only briefly represented on the CD set. The here-and-now energy evident on the audio package, however, is

found in abundance here as well.

Opening in electric mode with RTF classics including "Hymn Of The Seventh Galaxy" and "Vulcan Worlds", the band sets a congenial but extremely businesslike on-stage tone that endures through the entire program. This four-some is here to make music, pure and simple. As strong as the electric moments are, the acoustic segment may be the more captivating half of this set. Each of the four in turn delivers engaging solo stretches in this section; Al Di Meola and Stanley Clarke are especially dazzling, Chick Corea and Lenny White particularly inventive. The video direction is more quickly paced than most in Eagle's Montreux series- not surprising given this is a much more recent performance than most in this collection- but the quick cuts don't distract and mostly follow where the music leads. This should rate with the very best video offerings of the year.

Duane Verh

jazz-blues.com



JEFF BECK

Performing This Week...

Live At Ronnie Scott's EAGLE EYE MEDIA DVD

In December we reviewed the CD version of this music. At last the DVD version has arrived with some notable extra-added surprises. Ronnie Scott's has long been a main venue in London's jazz scene, and Beck was recorded over a multiple night gig in 2007.

His band consists of the *extremely* talented young female Australian bassist Tal Wilkenfeld (who I first saw on the Crossroads DVD playing with Beck), drummer Vinnie Colaiuta and keyboard player Jason Rebello. I had been eagerly awaiting this DVD as Wilkenfeld has great energy and is loads of fun to watch. This 21-song DVD, like the CD, packs quite a punch, opening with "Beck's Bolero" and continuing on with jazz rockers, blues and ballads. One of many high points is the beautiful ballad "Cause We've Ended As Lovers," and the versions of Mingus' "Good Bye Pork Pie Hat" coupled with Beck's "Brush With The Blues" and the Beatles' "A Day In The Life" deserve special mention as well.

The DVD version adds five more songs to the CD's 16. With all the songs from the CD represented here, the DVD version extra tracks begin as British R&B/soul singer Joss Stone comes on stage midway through for a fantastic version of Curtis Mayfield's "People Get Ready," which makes me want to check into more from her. Another English singer, Imogen Heap, comes up later for an enjoyable version of her own song, "Blanket" and returns later for a *very unique* version of Rollin' and Tumblin' – in fact – you need to hear this to get my meaning of unique.

In between the two Heap performances, Eric Clapton comes up to join Beck's group for Muddy Waters' "Little Brown Bird" and Willie Dixon's "You Need Love." Clapton is always at his best when there is another guitar player on stage to spur him on, and he and Beck, the two Yardbirds alumni, really get into it. Very nice DVD extras.

Not only is this Beck DVD as good as I had anticipated, it is actually much, much better. This is one case where the DVD is a far better buy than the CD. It is extremely well shot, the sound is great, Wilkenfeld and Beck are visual treats, the three guest artists are well worth seeing and hearing, and at 14.98 list it only costs a dollar more. Well worth the bucks.

Bill Wahl

Issues, Special Issues, Back Issues and
Thousands of CD & DVD Reviews at
www.jazz-blues.com

Koko Taylor

“Queen of the Blues”

1928–2009

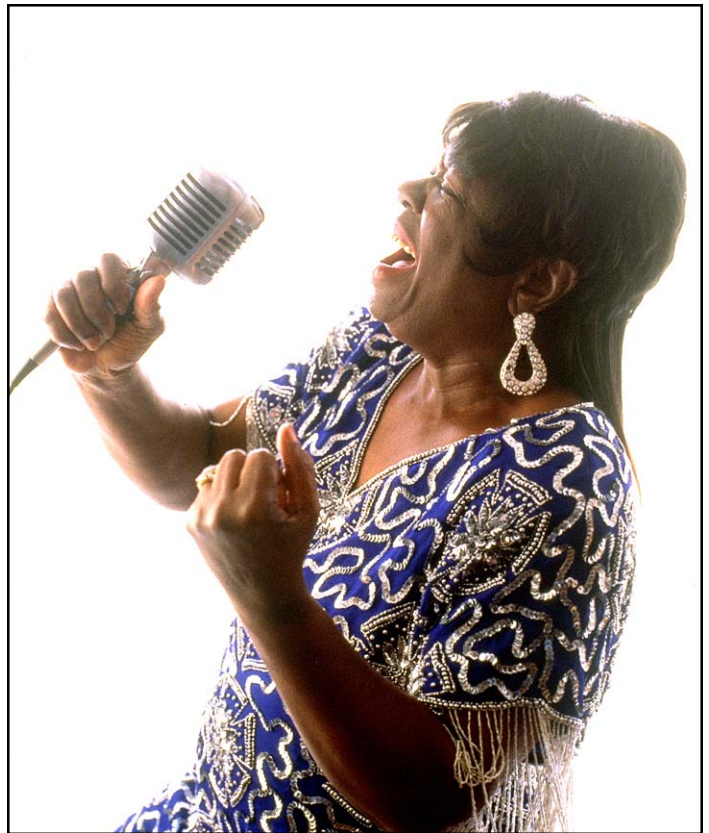
Just as we were ready to post this June issue, the news of the passing of Koko Taylor came through. In deep respect of an artist we have all loved for decades, it was necessary to hold things up to bring you this heartfelt tribute from our friends at Alligator Records:

Grammy Award-winning blues legend Koko Taylor, 80, died on June 3, 2009 in her hometown of Chicago, IL, as a result of complications following her May 19 surgery to correct a gastrointestinal bleed. On May 7, 2009, the critically acclaimed Taylor, known worldwide as the “Queen of the Blues,” won her 29th Blues Music Award (for Traditional Female Blues Artist Of The Year), making her the recipient of more Blues Music Awards than any other artist. In 2004 she received the NEA National Heritage Fellowship Award, which is among the highest honors given to an American artist. Her most recent CD, 2007’s *Old School*, was nominated for a Grammy (eight of her nine Alligator albums were Grammy-nominated). She won a Grammy in 1984 for her guest appearance on the compilation album *Blues Explosion* on Atlantic.

Born Cora Walton on a sharecropper’s farm just outside Memphis, TN, on September 28, 1928, Koko, nicknamed for her love of chocolate, fell in love with music at an early age. Inspired by gospel music and WDIA blues disc jockeys B.B. King and Rufus Thomas, Taylor began belting the blues with her five brothers and sisters, accompanying themselves on their homemade instruments. In 1952, Taylor and her soon-to-be-husband, the late Robert “Pops” Taylor, traveled to Chicago with nothing but, in Koko’s words, “thirty-five cents and a box of Ritz Crackers.”

In Chicago, “Pops” worked for a packing company, and Koko cleaned houses. Together they frequented the city’s blues clubs nightly. Encouraged by her husband, Koko began to sit in with the city’s top blues bands, and soon she was in demand as a guest artist. One evening in 1962 Koko was approached by arranger/composer Willie Dixon. Overwhelmed by Koko’s performance, Dixon landed Koko a Chess Records recording contract, where he produced her several singles, two albums and penned her million-selling 1965 hit “Wang Dang Doodle,” which would become Taylor’s signature song.

After Chess Records was sold, Taylor found a home with the Chicago’s Alligator Records in 1975 and released the Grammy-nominated *I Got What It Takes*. She recorded eight more albums for Alligator between 1978 and 2007, received seven more Grammy nominations and made numerous guest appearances on various albums and tribute recordings. Koko appeared in the films



Wild At Heart, *Mercury Rising* and *Blues Brothers* 2000. She performed on *Late Night With David Letterman*, *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*, CBS-TV’s *This Morning*, National Public Radio’s *All Things Considered*, CBS-TV’s *Early Edition*, and numerous regional television programs.

Over the course of her 40-plus-year career, Taylor received every award the blues world has to offer. On March 3, 1993, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley honored Taylor with a “Legend Of The Year” Award and declared “Koko Taylor Day” throughout Chicago. In 1997, she was inducted into the Blues Foundation’s Hall of Fame. A year later, Chicago Magazine named her “Chicagoan Of The Year” and, in 1999, Taylor received the Blues Foundation’s Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2009 Taylor performed in Washington, D.C. at The Kennedy Center Honors honoring Morgan Freeman.

Koko Taylor was one of very few women who found success in the male-dominated blues world. She took her music from the tiny clubs of Chicago’s South Side to concert halls and major festivals all over the world. She shared stages with every major blues star, including Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf, B.B. King, Junior Wells and Buddy Guy as well as rock icons Robert Plant and Jimmy Page.

Taylor’s final performance was on May 7, 2009 in Memphis at the Blues Music Awards, where she sang “Wang Dang Doodle” after receiving her award for Traditional Blues Female Artist Of The Year.

Survivors include Taylor’s husband Hays Harris, daughter Joyce Threatt, son-in-law Lee Threatt, grandchildren Lee, Jr. and Wendy, and three great-grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements will be announced.



**To a visitor, it's barren desert.
To our supporters, it's bustling with life.**

Even the most arid landscapes are home to Earth's amazing species. The Nature Conservancy is dedicated to protecting the variety of plant and animal life on Earth—even when found in the most unlikely places. The Nature Conservancy has protected 117 million acres in 28 countries. With your support, that number will keep growing. Visit nature.org or call 1-888-2 JOIN TNC.

San Rafael Desert, Utah © David Muench

This message is made possible by the generous support of this publication.