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"Buffalonious"

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

Photo Credits:

Cover photo of Shemekia Copeland and photo to the right of Lil' Ed and Kenny Neal by Ron Weinstock

Pennsylvania Blues Festival Celebrates 20 Years of Blues in the Poconos



It was a shock when the word came out that the Big Boulder Ski Resort would no longer be holding the annual Pocono Blues Festival after 19 years. The Pocono Blues Festival had established itself as the signature blues festival in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic with a commitment to bring the finest real deal blues, mixing in major names like Luther Allison, Shemekia Copeland, Mavis Staples, Ruth Brown, Taj Mahal with legends who rarely toured like Jimmy McCracklin, Jimmy Johnson and Jody Williams. A change in policy at the resort ended what was an annual tradition that attracted blues fans from all over the United States and countries around the world.

Michael Cloeren, and the others involved in the Pocono Blues Festival have found a new location to carry out the tradition of bringing the best blues to the Poconos with the **1st Pennsylvania Blues Festival** at the Blue Mountain Ski Area in Palmerton, Pennsylvania, not far from Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton, Pennsylvania. The Festival is Saturday and Sunday, July 30 and 31 and the line-up is as strong as any blues

festival anywhere on an outdoor stage and a tent stage. This first Pennsylvania Blues Festival Celebrates 20 Years of Blues in the Poconos.

Performers that have been announced for the festival include Shemekia Copeland, Magic Slim and the Teardrops, Lil' Ed and the Blues Imperials, Bettye Lavette, Kenny Neal, Cyril Neville, Shakura S'Alda, John Nemeth, The Lee Boys, Big Daddy Charles Stallings, Samuel James, Otis Clay, Linsey Alexander and Steve Guyger & Billy Flynn. It's quite a line-up of some of the best-known blues performers and some lesser known ones. There is a mix from traditional Chicago styled blues of Magic Slim, Lil' Ed and Steve Guyger & Billy Flynn, the deep soul of Bettye Lavette & Otis Clay, the sacred steel of The Lee Boys, the swamp blues of Kenny Neal, and the personal blues interpretations of Samuel James and Charles Neville. Shemekia Copeland is always a favorite but this writer is looking forward to seeing Shakura S'Alda, another formidable female blues talent, who like Cyril Neville brings a world

view to the music. Then a chance to see at another festival Baltimore's Bog Daddy Stallings get exposure leading a jam after hours on Saturday night as well as two sets on Sunday with his down home back porch blues that is mixed with Louis Jordan, Albert King and James Brown.

For more information on the festival, check out the Festival website, <http://www.skiblue.com/SkiBlue/activities/pa-blues-fest.aspx>, for the line-up and more information including directions. I have my hotel reservations already and I know folks from as far away as San Francisco and the Pacific Northwest that have their plans for this as well. Incidentally, Mike has produced the Vermont Blues Festival at Mount Snow, usually in later August, but apparently this will now be the Vermont Blues and Roots Festival and will take place on July 22-24, the weekend before the Pennsylvania Blues Festival. I will have more on this festival when more information is available.

The Jazz Cruise unveils lineup of straight ahead stars for 2012

The eleventh edition is already sixty-percent booked

St. Louis, MO – After celebrating its tenth anniversary earlier this year with another sold-out sailing, The Jazz Cruise, the first and only full ship charter dedicated to straight ahead jazz, has assembled a stellar lineup of musicians for the eleventh edition taking place January 29-February 5, 2012. With already sixty-percent of the ship sold, returning and new guests are booking cabins at a record pace for the Caribbean cruise from Fort Lauderdale, Florida to Aruba, Curacao, and the private island of Half Moon Cay aboard Holland America's m/s Westerdam.

Striving to live up to its motto "The Greatest Jazz Festival at Sea," the talent slated to perform aboard The Jazz Cruise 2012 showcases a dynamic mix of venerable legends, Grammy winning headliners and rapidly rising stars. Making their cruise debut are John Pizzarelli, Carmen Bradford, Kurt Elling, Kirk Whalum, Scott Hamilton, Joe LaBarbera, Heath Brothers and Benny Golson. Regulars scheduled to perform are Randy Brecker, Renee Rosnes, Houston Person, Clayton Brothers, Freddy Cole, Jeff Hamilton, Jay Leonhart, Ken Peplowski, Shelly Berg, Tom Kennedy, Ernie Adams, Wycliffe Gordon, Bill Charlap, John Allred, Ann Hampton-Callaway, Ted Rosenthal, Bucky Pizzarelli, Terell Stafford, and Rickey Woodard along with sophomore performers Tommy Igoe and Anat Cohen. John Fedchock will lead The Jazz Cruise Big Band, which also adds Dick Oatts, Bobby Shew, Jerry Dodgion, Rodney Whitaker, Andy Martin, George Rabbai and Pete Christlieb to an already formidable ensemble consisting of Gary Smulyan, Bob Millikan, Butch Miles, Terell Stafford, and Jennifer Wharton.

"Every year, we aim to make The Jazz Cruise lineup reflect the most active and proficient musicians who perform standards-based, straight ahead jazz. The lineup for The Jazz Cruise 2012 may very well be our very best effort towards achieving that goal," said Michael Lazaroff,

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executive director of Entertainment Cruise Productions, LLC (Jazz Cruises), producer of The Jazz Cruise. "We provided guests a glimpse of the 2012 lineup on this year's cruise and we're excited about the enthusiastic reaction reflected in the early bookings. Like our 2011 sailing, The Jazz Cruise 2012 will sell-out."

In addition to providing guests with the best musical experience possible by showcasing jazz's finest musicians presented with top notch sound and production qualities, The Jazz Cruise, which sailed upon its maiden voyage in 2001, is an experiential vacation that offers passengers a wealth of opportunities to meet and interact with their favorite artists off-stage in an out-of-the-ordinary setting. While sailing in luxury to picturesque ports of call in the Caribbean, guests enjoy nightly headline concerts with unique artist pairings in a large showroom theatre as well as in more intimate lounges that foster spontaneous collaborations. Day-time activities while aboard the ship include cocktail parties hosted by the musicians, autograph and question & answer sessions, informative panels, historic film screenings, and fun contests. Reservations can be made from the U.S. and Canada by calling toll-free 888.8JAZZ.US (888.852.9987) and internationally by placing a toll-free call to 800-8JAZZ.USA (800.852.99872). Additional information is available at www.thejazzcruise.com.

Monterey Jazz Festival's Next Generation Jazz Festival Celebrates 40th Anniversary

Monterey, CA; The Monterey Jazz Festival, a nonprofit leader in jazz education since its inception in 1958 and JazzTimes Readers' Poll multi-year winner for Best Jazz Festival, is proud to announce its annual Next Generation Jazz Festival, April 1 - 3, 2011 in downtown Monterey. The weekend-long event, devoted to the future of jazz, includes the Next Generation Jazz Festival Jazz Competition with Big Bands, Combos, Vocal Ensembles, and individual musicians vying for a spot on the stages of the 54th Annual Monterey Jazz Festival. The event will be open to the public, free of charge.

With over 1200 students participating in the Next Generation Jazz Festival, Monterey Peninsula residents are in a unique position to enjoy the largest gathering of young jazz talent in the region, outside of the Monterey Jazz Festival itself. Sixty-four groups from ten states will participate in the 2011 event, which marks the Festival's 40th anniversary of the birth of its Annual Jazz Competition.

Introduced in 1971 as the California High School Jazz Band Competition by Monterey Jazz Festival Founder Jimmy Lyons, the competition was conceived as a way of as a way of bringing talented student musicians and groups to Monterey, and cultivating musicians for the future. Notable participants of the Jazz Competition and Next Generation Jazz Orchestra members (formally the California High School All-Star Band) include saxophonists Joshua Redman, Dave Koz and Dave Ellis, pianists Benny Green and Patrice Rushen, multi-instrumentalist Peter Apfelbaum, bass-

ist Larry Grenadier, and many more. 2011 Next Generation Jazz Festival judges trombonist Andy Martin, saxophonists Mary Fettig and Joshua Redman, and trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire are alumni of the Festival's education programs, coming through the California High School All-Star Band in the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

California, one of the strongholds of music education, has schools from 15 counties represented in the 2011 festival – including Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Los Angeles, Marin, Riverside, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Yolo Counties.

In addition, the Next Generation Jazz Festival will present special guest groups from Alaska, California, Oklahoma, Oregon, Nebraska, New York, Pennsylvania, and Japan throughout the weekend.

"Despite all the news being trumpeted about music programs being cut in the public schools, jazz is alive and well at the Next Generation Jazz Festival," said Dr. Rob Klevan, Education Director of the Monterey Jazz Festival. "Sixty-four of the 'Best of the Best' from around America descend upon Monterey April 1 - 3 to share in the joy of performing this great music. The Next Generation Jazz Festival will have a bit of an international flavor as well, with the Tomisato High School Jazz Band from Tomisato, Japan joining us for the festivities. It is going to be another exceptional jazz education event."

The Next Generation Jazz Festival officially starts with the annual Opening Night Concert at 8 p.m. on Friday, April 1, at the Monterey Conference Center. The opening night's activities will feature the Festival's annual Salute to Jazz Education hosted by local radio personality, Barry Brown of KWAV-FM, along with performances by the internationally-renowned competition judges, including pianist Alan Pasqua, drummer Peter Erskine, saxophonists Antonio Hart, Paul Contos, Mary Fettig, and Aaron Lington; trumpeters Ambrose Akinmusire and Sal Cracchiolo; bassist Ray Drummond, and vocalists Jennifer Barnes and Michele Weir. Also featured during the evening concert will be the 2011 Monterey Jazz Festival Artist-In-Residence, two-time Grammy nominee, saxophonist Joshua Redman.

New for 2011 is the opportunity to purchase optional VIP Gold Circle tickets for the Opening Night Concert, on Friday, April 1, for \$50. VIP tickets assures seating in the front rows as well as an invitation to the post-concert "meet and greet" wine and cheese reception with the judges and Artist-In-Residence, Joshua Redman.

The Festival will conduct clinics, workshops, jam sessions, and auditions in the heart of historic Monterey, with music to be performed at the Monterey Conference Center, the host Portola Plaza Hotel, Gilbert's Restaurant on Fisherman's Wharf, and the Monterey History and Maritime Museum. The Next Generation Jazz Festival is also continuing its College Fair, allowing students an opportunity to visit with several colleges offering jazz and other music programs.

All Next Generation Jazz Festival competition events -- from the exuberant and electric Big Band, Vocal Ensemble and Combo Competition on Saturday, April 2 and the College Big Band Vocal Jazz Ensemble competition on Sunday, April 3 -- are open to the public, free of charge.

For a complete schedule of activities and competition times, visit www.montereyjazzfestival.org.

The Next Generation Jazz Festival Jazz Competition begins at 9 a.m. on Saturday, April 2 in the Conference Center. Throughout the day, the high school groups will perform, with several educational clinics featuring the 2011 Monterey Jazz Festival Artist-In-Residence, Joshua Redman and the Alan Benzie Quartet from the Berklee College of Music.

The top Vocal, Combo, and Big Band divisions will be announced at 6:15 p.m. Saturday evening from the Serra Ballroom stage. At 8:30 p.m., the top finalists will perform a Showcase Concert -- a preview of the groups performing at 54th Annual Monterey Jazz Festival. The final rankings will be announced at the end of the evening.

The Next Generation Jazz Festival continues through Sunday, April 3 with Middle School, College, Conglomerate Big Band, Open Combo, and College Vocal Ensemble Divisions performing in the Serra Ballroom and Steinbeck Forum. The top college big band, college vocal ensemble, and conglomerate big band (to be announced during the day) will also earn a performance slot at the 54th Monterey Jazz Festival. Auditions will also be held for the Next Generation Jazz Orchestra, the Festival's national all-star high school band.


A one-year grant from the AT&T Foundation supports the Next Generation Jazz Festival and the Next Generation Jazz Orchestra performance tours. AT&T invests significant resources to advance education, strengthen communities

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Next Generation Jazz Festival partners and supporters include longtime Monterey Jazz Festival partner Yamaha, providing instruments for Next Generation Jazz Festival stages. Additional support for the Next Generation Jazz Festival comes from generous individuals and organizations such as AT&T Foundation, the Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation, the Joseph Drown Foundation, Evans Drumheads, Remo Drumheads, Zildjian Cymbals, Planet Waves Accessories, and Rico Reeds.

For more information visit the Monterey Jazz Festival Web site, www.montereyjazzfestival.org.


BLUES WATCH

BY MARK SMITH


New Release blues.... Ah, spring is in the air. Here's some new discs to play with the windows partially open: **Various Artists-** *Alligator Records 40th Anniversary Collection*; **Big Head Blues Club-** *100 Years of Robert Johnson*; **Steve Miller Band-** *Let Your Hair Down*; **Shemekia Copeland-** *Deluxe Edition*; **Doug Macleod-** *Brand New Eyes*; **Fog Hat-** *Last Train Home*; **Bernard Allison-** *Live At the Jazzhaus*; **Kelley Hunt-** *Gravity Loves You*; **Marcia Ball-** *Roadside Attractions*;

Mississippi Fred McDowell- *Downhome Blues 1959*; **Tracy Nelson-** *Victim Of the Blues*; **King Biscuit Boy with the Ronnie Hawkins Band-** *Mouth of Steel*; **Mike Morgan & the Crawl-** *Blues Jam Live Audio*; **J.D. Short & Son House-** *Blues from the Mississippi Delta*; **John Mayall-** *Howling at the Moon*; **Red Prysock-** *Swingsation*; **Rory Block-** *Shake 'Em On Down: A Tribute to Mississippi Fred McDowell*; **Mark Hummel-** *Unplugged-Back Porch Music*; **Albert King-** *Definitive Albert King*; **Trampled Under Foot-** *Wrong Side of the Blues*; **Kevin Selfe and the Tornadoes-** *Playing the Game*; **Bluestrain-** *A Loud Band*; **Oli Brown-** *Open Road*; **The Ray Gelato Giants-** *The Full Flavour*; **Robert Bradley's Blackwater Surprise-** *Blackwater Surprise*; **Terry Frank-** *Devil By Her Side*; **Jimmy Yancey-** *Hey! Piano Man: Selected Boogie Woogie Sides Remastered*; **Marion James-** *Essence*; **Johnny Rawls-** *Memphis Still Got Soul*; **John Sinclair & His International Blues Scholars-** *Let's Go Get 'Em*; **Henry Gray-** *Lucky Man*; **Yank Rachell-** *Blues Mandolin Man....* **Best of the Beat-** The New Orleans entertainment magazine *Offbeat* handed out its **Best of the Beat Awards** on January 28th. Of interest to blues fans are the following winners: **Dr. John-** *Best Blues Artist, Songwriter of the Year, Best Blues Album- Tribal*; **Anders Osborne-** *Best Roots Rock Album- American Patchwork*; **Irma Thomas-** *Best Female Vocalist*; **John Boutte-** *Best Male Vocalist*; **Trombone Shorty-** *Artist of the Year, Album of the Year- Backatown, Best R & B/Funk Artist, Best R&B Funk Album* and **Rebirth Brass Band-** *Best Brass Band. That's it for this month. See ya! Mark Smith*

ELLIS ISLAND. WHERE THE WORLD CAME TOGETHER AND AMERICAN STYLE BEGAN



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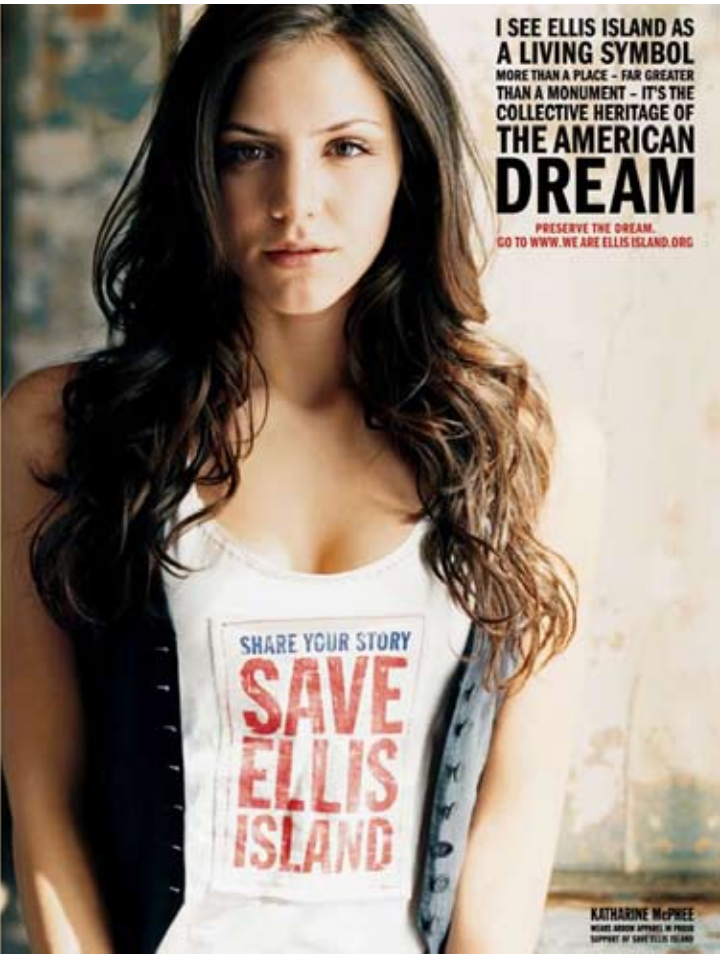


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Why Some People Think Duke Ellington Is a Member of the Royal Family.

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



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



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

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

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.



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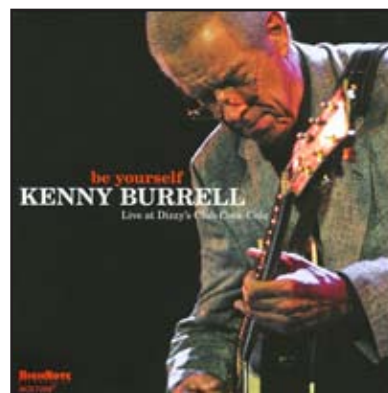
ALLIGATOR RECORDS 40th Anniversary Collection ALLIGATOR

Alligator Records is celebrating its 40th Anniversary this year and, as it has in past years, has compiled "40th Anniversary Collection," a two-CD compilation of 38 recordings from the label since it released "Genuine Houserockin' Music" by Hound Dog Taylor, which label founder Bruce Iglauer says is the mantra that still governs the label, although he notes the label no longer just records blues, although its artists are deeply rooted in the blues tradition.

Given the diversity of contents and the purpose of the CD, it is not my intent to review the contents here. I suspect folks will find selections they don't like and others they think are timeless. Besides celebrating Alligator Records, this compilation will hopefully introduce some of the artists and recordings that some may be unfamiliar with whether it is vintage Koko Taylor and Albert Collins, or more contemporary acts like Michael Burks, Tommy Castro and Anders Osborne. There is a selection from the Grammy Award winning collaboration between Albert Collins, Johnny Copeland and Robert Cray as well as William Clarke's reworking of Jimmy Witherspoon's "Daddy Pinocchio" along with selections from current recordings by Roomful of Blues and Marcia Ball.

For each selection, Bruce includes comments on the artist and the particular recording, and at the booklet's end he notes some of those performers he could not include which is a mini Blues Who'se Who in itself. I remember Bruce driving out to Buffalo in the mid-seventies trying to promote this young guitarist and singer by the name of Son Seals, and while he now has employees, he still is heavily involved at Alligator. The "40th Anniversary Collection" is a vibrant celebration of the impressive (and still growing) body of Alligator Records and Bruce Iglauer.

Ron Weinstock



KENNY BURRELL

Be Yourself: Live at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola HIGHNOTE

"Be Yourself: Live at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola" (HighNote) is the latest recording by the great guitarist Kenny Burrell. It comes from a live performance at the Jazz at Lincoln Center venue with a group that includes Tivon Pennicott on tenor sax and flute; Benny Green on piano, Peter Washington on bass, and Clayton Cameron on drums. This is a strong, what might have once been called mainstream session, matching Burrell's fleet and fluent lyricism with a strong rhythm section and Pennicott's robust playing on a program of mostly jazz standards.

Pennicott's sax and flute provide an energizing bite that can be reflected in Burrell's playing on the solid rendition of Billy Strayhorn's "Raincheck," with a nice Latin groove and Benny Green's piano also sounding dynamic. Opening was a nice "Tin Tin Deo" from the Dizzy Gillespie repertoire with Burrell sounding quite lyrical. Pennicott's impressive flute playing is impressively featured on Burrell's ballad, "Listen to the Dawn," followed by the leader with some precious playing. This is followed by a lively rendition of Kenny Dorham's classic "Blue Bossa," with Pennicott and Burrell standing out and Cameron is outstanding pushing the groove and his use of dynamics especially in his use of brushes during his solo. "Be Yourself" is a solo guitar feature for the leader, while "Bass Face," with a prancing melodic hook was originally written by Burrell for Ray Brown and spotlights Washington here.

Pennicott is featured on Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood," and responds with some wonderful playing. Will Davis, a Detroit pianist, wrote "Mark I," in the mid-fifties, and Burrell is scintillating on this. Burrell and the group close this with the classic Milt Jackson blues, "Bag's Groove." A solid hour plus of swinging bop-inflected jazz that is beautifully recorded. "Be Yourself" is a solid addition to Kenny Burrell's formidable body of recordings.

Ron Weinstock

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TAB BENOIT

Medicine
TELARC

Having not checked in with this Louisiana guitarist since his 2005 release, *FEVER FOR THE BAYOU*, I can see, via his discography, that Benoit has been a busy guy since I last put the ears on his music. *MEDICINE* is the latest project that mixes his Louisiana roots with the blues and a couple other ingredients that aren't too hard to swallow either. Co-pilot for *MEDICINE* is Anders Osbourne, a noted Nashville songwriter best known for the #1 country hit "Watch The Wind Blow By," helping pen seven of the tunes here.

The title track is as subtle as a ball peen hammer to the face while, with Ivan Neville on B-3 organ, "A Whole Lotta Soul" gives a presentation displaying Benoit's funky roots. Guest fiddle legend Michael Doucet's strings channel the heart's ache that eases us into the slow and sad mood of "Long Lonely Bayou," which, in turn, sets up the melancholy "Nothing Takes The Place Of You."

Doucet pops up a couple times during *MEDICINE*, including the dance floor favorite, "Can't You See," that fits easily into the mood of the grand finale "Mudboat Melissa." "Next To Me" is a combo plate of blues and Louisiana roots rock, although the best of the deck here may be the rocker "Come And Get It."

Louisiana survived Hurricane Katrina and zydeco/blues fans have sustained a three year lag without any new Tab Benoit tunes. *MEDICINE* is being sent in by life flight helicopter in April, as we speak.

Set for release April 26, 2011.

Peanuts

NOAH HOWARD

Schizophrenic Blues
ONLINE DOWNLOAD

The late alto saxophonist, Noah Howard passed away in early September leaving behind a considerable musical legacy. Born in New Orleans, he emerged in the 1960s among the first wave of 'free jazz' artists. He recorded a couple albums for ESP and then recorded "The Black Ark," but finding the reception for free jazz cool at best in the United States, he relocated to Paris and spent much of the ensuing years of his life abroad, living in Brussels at the time of his death.

Growing up in New Orleans where he played first in church, his first instrument was the trumpet, which he played in the military and it wasn't until later that he started playing the alto saxophone. His recordings for ESP were among the 28 or so albums he recorded over the years. Recently, Destination Out (<http://destination-out.com/>), a web site devoted to free jazz, has started issuing downloads from out-of-print FMP vinyl albums that have never been made available on compact disc. Among the recent albums they have made available is a couple by Howard from the seventies.

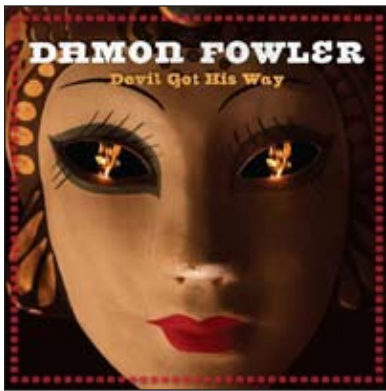
"Schizophrenic Blues" reissues a live 1977 performance from the Quartier Latin in Berlin where Howard is joined by Itaru Ok on trumpet; Jean-Jacques Avenel on double bass and Oliver Johnson on drums. The title track is a blues that displays his bluesy tone as he and Ok play variations on the blues theme. is tone has a bit of vibrato, but not overdone, and would indicate that both Ornette Coleman and Albert Ayler were influences on a composition would not be out of place on a Coleman disc. Ok's trumpet riffs provides a vinegary contrast to Howard, and the rhythm ably anchor the performance. "Birds of Beauty" is a slow ballad with trumpet more prominent at the lyrical opening and the two complement and interact off the other. Ok takes the first solo with a nice tone starting lyrically then getting a bit more fuzzier in sound before Howard enters with his characteristic vibrato with some lyrical development.

"Fire March," a tribute to Albert Ayler, opens with Johnson taking a drum solo before the tempo changes to a march like groove as Howard enters in an Ayler-esque mode as Ok evokes Donald Ayler's trumpet with his playing while Howard exploits the upper registers of his alto and overblows producing shrieks and cries. Ok's trumpet sounds like a swarm of very unhappy bees here. Bassist Avenel opens up "Creole Girl," the lengthiest performance of this album, with a lengthy solo, and after Johnson sets the tempo, Howard and Ok join in to state the theme and take solid solos that do not seem to these ears as being very out.

"Solo Sax," is a slice of saxophone exploration (but not a solo saxophone performance) with Howard employing a bit more vibrato here, as Avenel is playing some buzz saw arco bass, Johnson is laying an atemporal groove with brushes and Ok's trumpet buzzes around the sax. The album concludes with a reading of "Lift Every Voice and Sing," with Howard and Ok embellishing the melody in an Ayler-esque fashion.

The performances on "Schizophrenic Blues" hold up over thirty years later. Certainly anyone familiar with the music of Ornette Coleman, Don Cherry, and Old Dreams and New Dreams should find this quite accessible and even at its most Ayler-esque moments "Fire March," there is a lyricism as well as a blues foundation that makes this release so engaging. Recommended and again this can be downloaded at <http://destination-out.com>. Just go to the store tab and look for this release. There is a companion download of another album with different personnel (including piano), "Berlin Concert," that you may want to consider if you enjoy this.

Ron Weinstock



DAMON FOWLER

Devil Got His Way

BLIND PIG

If JJ Grey had a kid brother much less prone to angst, that dude might sound a whole lot like fellow Floridian, guitarist/vocalist Damon Fowler. The same Deep South roots bath from whence Grey's songs emerge scents the tracks of Fowler's set, energized further by his upbeat, youthful-sounding persona.

A respectable run-through of Leon Russell's hit "Tight Rope" is probably more effective in his live set than here but the youngster's real calling card is his lap steel work, highlighted on *Devil's* leadoff tune, "We've Got A Good Thing" and "28 Degrees".

Duane Verh



GRACE KELLY AND PHIL WOODS

Man With the Hat

PAZZ PRODUCTIONS

On her second "alto summit" meeting, saxophonist Grace Kelly, age 18 at the time of this recording, met up with one of her main inspirators—saxophonist Phil Woods. Three years ago, Kelly recorded her debut as leader with saxophonist Lee Konitz.

Joining the pair on this seven-tune set are bassist Evan Gregor, drummer Bill Goodwin, and pianist Monty Alexander. The title tune written by Kelly draws from an onstage moment with Woods, when he was moved to remove his trademark leather cap and place atop Kelly's head, as if to crown her the new alto sax star. Worthy of that honor, Kelly shines on this album, both at playing and sweetly singing on the Benny Carter ballad, "People Time," performed for the first time with lyrics (by Carter's friend

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Deborah Pearl). Kelly also sings on her Latinate original, "Gone," which adds percussionist Jordan Perlson to the team. One of the more unique tracks is Kelly's remake of Cole Porter's "Every Time We Say Goodbye," performed as a poignant duet with Gregor.

Kelly, Woods and crew also perform the Billy Strayhorn gem, "Ballad for Very Tired and Very Sad Lotus-Eaters." Woods contributes "Love Song from Brazilian Suite," a lovely bossa that features both saxophonists harmonizing and interweaving lines.

Kelly holds her own with the legendary Woods, demonstrating that she is undeniably a rising star destined to leave her mark on the jazz world.

Nancy Ann Lee



RORY BLOCK

Shake 'Em On Down:

A Tribute to Mississippi Fred McDowell

STONY PLAIN

Rory Block was fortunate to learn her music from some of the masters of the blues idiom from such then surviving masters as Reverend Gary Davis, Son House, Mississippi John Hurt, Bukka White and Mississippi Fred McDowell. After her album devoted to Robert Johnson's music, she has continued with a disc of the music of Son House and now Mississippi Fred McDowell as part of a series of recordings where she salutes those who mentored her. Her Robert Johnson tribute was modeled closely on Johnson's originals whereas on her Son House tribute she mixed some performances with others that took more liberties. On her newest CD, "Shake 'Em On Down: A Tribute to Mississippi Fred McDowell" (Stony Plain) she has written originals as well as given her own interpretation to McDowell's songs.

The fact that her interpretations of songs associated with McDowell are personal interpretations, along with her originals which incorporate elements of McDowell's percussive, slide style without being a pastiche of such style makes this a very different, and in my mind, the most successful of her tribute recordings. It should be noted that it certainly sounds as if there is overdubbing of guitar parts and vocals, but it sounds wonderfully recorded, so kudos to Rob Davis for the excellent engineering job.

This tribute opens with two of Ms Block's originals. "Steady Freddy" has a forceful accompaniment as she has penned lyrics re-creating McDowell's autobiography, although the dialect is that of Ms Block and not Fred McDowell. It is followed by the remarkable "Mississippi

Man,” a fully realized performance in part this song is Rory’s own story as a fifteen year old and her meeting the “Mississippi Man.” These lead in to her interpretations of McDowell’s songs that evoke the master while having her place her own stamp on them. She captures the near hypnotic flavor on “Kokomo Blues,” and that Eleven Light City. “Good Morning Little School Girl” is a bit more reflective and less rhythmically insistent than McDowell’s renditions, as she recasts the lyrics from the standpoint of the schoolgirl who wants to go back home with the schoolboy. What’s the Matter Now” impressively builds on McDowell’s driving guitar style while vocally she lengthens the lyrics for her impassioned vocals.

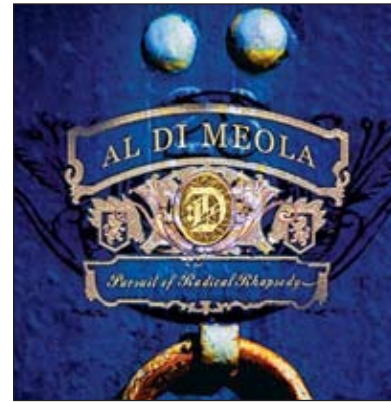
“Shake ‘Em Down” illustrates her natural distillation of McDowell’s driving, droning guitar style while she overdubs vocals which she convincingly delivers, and employs a pronounced rhythmic emphasis, while “Worried Mind” is a nice rendition of McDowell’s performance that might have come from John Estes’ “Someday Baby,” or perhaps Big Maceo’s “Worried Life Blues.” Whatever, Block makes this her own just like Muddy Waters, Fred McDowell, Big Maceo and others had done. “The Man That I’m Lovin’” is likewise another song associated with Sleepy John Estes that McDowell translated into his style which again proves potent inspiration for Ms. Block who reinvents it yet anew.

“Ancestral Home” is another Rory original that incorporates elements of African musical traditions with her lyrics about the slave trade mixed with her overdubbing some African dialect in the vocal. Another original, the powerful “The Breadline” was originally an instrumental medley built from McDowell riffs to which she added lyrics about losing one’s home and can’t pay her lawyer, and the rich folks on vacation “they don’t give a damn” with the line “hard times are here again” so contemporary and relevant. The album concludes with “Woke Up This Morning,” one of McDowell’s moving gospel songs with Rory’s moving multi-tracked vocals, followed by her strong re-imaging of another of McDowell’s signature songs, “Write Me a Few of Your Lines.”

Rory Block deserves kudos for this marvelous tribute with its ambitious and imaginative look at McDowell’s work that is inspired by the spirit of McDowell’s music, but has her imprint on all the performances. Of the eight songs associated with Fred McDowell, she has included a few of his signature songs, but also included lesser known parts of his repertoire, and that added to her own originals makes for a superb recording.

Ron Weinstock

jazz-blues.com



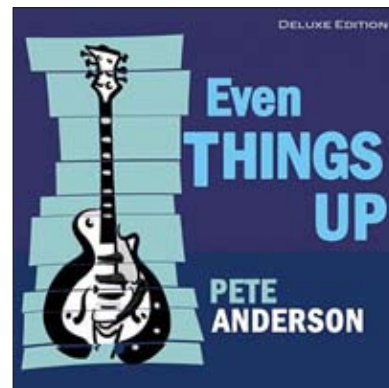
AL DI MEOLA Pursuit of Radical Rhapsody TELARC

Both DiMeola’s stunning technical prowess and his undeniable romanticism show vividly here on a set heavily dosed with tango and flamenco stylings. When not engaging in graceful dialogue with accordionist Fausto Beccalossi, Di Meola dazzles with multiple guitar voicings, acoustic and electric; never sacrificing a delicate sense of melody and mood while his jaw-dropping chops are on display.

The early tracks are the most tango-flavored and function much like mini-suites. The extremely earthy rhythm section is present to set up breakdowns for smoldering guitar/accordion duets. A smoking collective groove emerges on the fifth track “Gumbiero”, as pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba steps into the spotlight and complete combustion follows on “Brave New World”.

Highly stylized takes on “Strawberry Fields” and “Over The Rainbow” finish out a most impressive set. Worth the money.

Duane Verh



PETE ANDERSON Even Things Up VIZZTONE

Best known as guitarist/producer with country giant Dwight Yoakam, Pete Anderson actually has roots in blues growing up in Detroit and while he has flourished producing and playing with other roots artists, he has finally done a blues-centered album, “Even Things Up,” which was originally a limited edition and recently reissued with four new recordings as a deluxe Edition

(Little Dog Records/VizzTone). Playing harmonica and drums on one track in addition to some vocals, he is joined by Michael Murphy on keyboards and accordion and others including Bekka Bramlett on one vocal.

This writer is not familiar with the prior release, but this opens up with a rocker, "Honky Tonk Girl," that one could easily see done as a country rocker, but he does provide a bluesier spin along with some energetic twisting twangy guitar that captures the spotlight along with his enthusiastic vocal. The appealing chicken-scratching instrumental "Booker Twine" has a funky groove might be a tribute to the classic Booker T and the MGs Stax recordings, while "That's How Trouble Starts" is a driving number with credible singing, and some stunning guitar (sounds like he is playing lap steel guitar). Kudos to Herman Matthews' lively guitar here.

Anderson adds some nice harmonica to the musical stew on the title track before showcasing his imaginative and spicy fretwork. "Wes' Side Blues" is a lively instrumental with an enticing Latin flavor and punchy horns, while "Dogbone Shuffle" (named after the Burbank, CA studio this was recorded at), is another intriguing instrumental. Two takes of "Still in Love" are included with a low-key vocal by Anderson and a Bekka Bramlett vocal that takes one to church. On "110 in the Shade, Anderson eschews a band and provides nice country-blues styled guitar and accompaniment to his vocal. This new edition of the release also includes two live performances.

Anderson is an effective vocalist but his vocals are not his strength. Those who have heard his work with Yoakam and others will not be surprised by his tone, chops and musical imagination on what is a most entertaining disc.

Ron Weinstock



RYAN COHAN

Another Look
MOTEMA MUSIC

Chicago pianist and composer Ryan Cohan has played in a number of musical contexts as well as with his quartet of bassist Lorin Cohen, saxophonist Geof Bradfield and drummer Kobie Watkins. The recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship for Composition has augmented this quartet with vibraphonist Joe Locke and percussionist Steve Kroon for his new Motema Music release "Another Look." With the exceptions of

Victor Feldman's "Joshua" and the Ellington classic, "Caravan", Cohan contributed the compositions for this varied recording. One thing that is clear when listening to this is that Cohan's working band is terrific.

The opening of "Monk'N Around" caught my ears, with Cohan contributing some Monk-ish piano runs before Locke takes the first solo with a skittering attack while Cohan chords under him, before taking his own propulsive solo that makes allusions to Monk's style. "Joshua" opens with hot piano setting up the groove with Bradfield taking a muscular tenor sax solo followed by hot piano as Watkins' simmers on the cymbals. Locke returns on a lovely ballad "You & Me," with his vibes sounding marvelous while Cohan's own solo and Bradfield's soft tenor accompaniment lend this performance a precious quality. "This or That" is more spirited with Bradfield's thoughtful playing (with little if any vibrato) complementing the leader's piano as the rhythm section (including Locke) swings hard. Bradfield and Locke sit out the stunning Latin jazz rendition of "Caravan," a performance that benefits from Kroon's rhythmic accents.

"Gentle Souls" opens with Bradfield's solo tenor sax before switching to soprano with the full ensemble and then stating the theme as Locke adds coloring followed by the leader's solo and Bradfield's serpentine soprano sax with Locke takes the lead in the coda. Locke is featured with a vigorous and entrancing solo developing the lovely melody of "Another Look. Cohan's "Song For My Grandfather" finds him in a pensive mode in the introductory portion of a lovely jazz waltz by Cohan, Lorin Cohen and Kobie Watkins. I was especially impressed by Watkins' playing throughout this recording, whether his use of cymbals or his lively Latin groove. The closing "Stepping Out" evokes classic bebop tunes of Bird and Dizzy with Cohan spectacular and Locke in a spirited mode.

"Another Look" is a thoroughly entertaining with excellent original compositions, superb ensemble playing and thoughtful, spirited solos that is strongly recommended.

Ron Weinstock

MARGIE BAKER

Live at Rasselas
Self Produced

After a career in education (she has a Doctorate), Margie Baker has had a new career as a jazz and blues vocalist. Mentored by Dizzy Gillespie, one night she was coaxed out of the audience by a guitarist friend at Henri's Room at the San Francisco Hilton to sing a song, and she immediately got a job from Conrad and Barron Hilton. Part of her repertoire stems from the music she heard growing up in the Fillmore District of San Francisco, and with five of her musician friends (and educators themselves), she regularly performed at Rasselas in the Fillmore District. Margie's friends here include Fred Berry on trumpet; Omar Clay on drums; Duncan James on guitar; John MacKay on the

Hammond B3; and Don Ramsey on saxophone and flute. They bring a depth of jazz and blues experience here.

Her newest CD, Margie Baker and Friends **"Live at Rasselas"** is subtitled: **"A Musical History of the San Francisco Fabulous Fillmore District of the Forties."** As she explains in the accompanying booklet: "I gave the musicians one ultimatum: the three hour gig must consist of the music that nurtured me... African-American music of the 1930's and 1940's (sometimes referred to as race music). And the music includes a number of familiar songs associated with Louis Jordan, Faye Adams, Duke Ellington, Joe Liggins, Percy Mayfield, Earl 'Fatha' Hines, Billy Eckstine, Roy Milton, Nat Cole, James Moody, Buddy Johnson and Billie Holiday, with performances that are rooted in the swing and jump blues era but given a seventies organ lounge flavor.

Margie Baker is a wonderful singer who puts plenty of feeling into her singing while maintaining a relaxed quality to her delivery. This is notable on the fine rendition of "Shake a Hand," where saxophonist Ramsey and guitarist James make their presence felt. On "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," Berry takes a nice muted solo with MacKay laying the foundation on the B3 while Clay keeps the groove in the pocket. Another Ellington ballad "I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good," shows Baker in a subdued mood along with some nice chording from guitarist James and muted trumpet accompaniment from Berry.

Next up are a pair of tunes from the Louis Jordan starting with "Early in the Morning," with Clay setting forth the groove before Don Ramsey rips off a tough tenor sax solo raising the temperature of the performance. "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying" is among my favorite of the ballad performances by Jordan with Berry's trumpet responding to Baker singing about "Mama got salty, you made her so sore." She really caresses the lyric here and one also appreciates how the band does not feel the need to fill in every space around the vocal. MacKay gets to take his B3 down in the alley on this. Joe Liggins' "I Got a Right to Cry" is taken at a moderate tempo with Ramsey taking another tenor sax solo with the organ and guitar comping under him. James tastefulness as an accompanist to Baker's strong singing is perhaps best shown on his playing on "Please Send Me Someone To Love." "Fine Brown Frame" brings a more playful vocal (in the vein of a Nellie Lutcher) along with bouncy backing with Berry playing wide open.

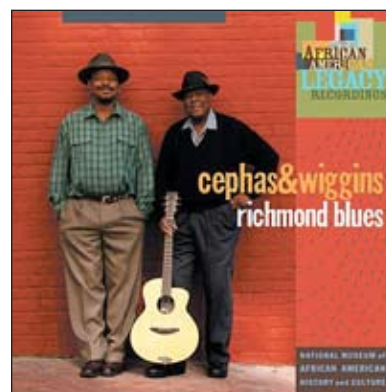
Billy Eckstine sang the ballad "I'm Falling For You" with Earl Hines Orchestra, although not as familiar as the blues "Jelly Jelly," which Baker also gives her interpretation to. On the latter tune Ramsey sets the tone with some potent tenor during the opening choruses before she delivers this uptown blues classic. Her vocals on these sandwich a punchy rendition of Roy Milton's "R.M. Blues," with a booting sax solo. The rendition of the Charlie Parker blues, "Parker's Mood,"

is with the lyrics King Pleasure added for his classic vocalese rendition.

The King Cole Trio's "Straighten Up and Fly Right," with a nice jazzy guitar break, is followed by Baker's terrific rendition of the Buddy Johnson ballad "Since I Feel For You." She really delivers the goods on this ballad and she is equally home on another Buddy Johnson lament "I Wonder Where Our Love Is Gone." Another highpoint is her rendition of Billie Holiday's "God Bless The Child," that opens with a verse from Herbie Nichols' "Lady Sings the Blues."

Margie Baker is a wonderful singer, who with her wonderful group celebrated the music of the 1940s and 1950s with plenty of feeling and enthusiasm on that 2003 evening at Rasselas, and we are thankful that over an hour of this joyous performance is available for listeners.

Ron Weinstock



CEPHAS & WIGGINS

Richmond Blues
SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS

Living in the Washington DC area, I have had the pleasure of knowing the late John Cephas and Phil Wiggins. Phil Wiggins met Cephas at a Smithsonian Folklife Festival where Wiggins sat in with pianist Big Chief Ellis and Cephas, later joining the Barrelhouse Rockers, beginning a partnership that would last until Cephas passed away in March 2009. It was one that would be marked by tours around the world, and a number of recordings for a number of labels. The last album the duo recorded, "Richmond Blues" was for Smithsonian Folkways, part of the label's African-American Legacy Series and issued in 2008 prior to Cephas' passing.

It is an album that sounds is oriented more to the duo's Piedmont blues roots than some of their other relatively recent recordings that included Cephas' distinctive interpretations of Skip James and Phil Wiggins' original songs. The ghost of Blind Boy Fuller hovers over much of this disc as a number of songs the pair perform here are associated with Fuller, including "Mamie," "Pigmeat Crave," "Prison Bound Blues" (not the Leroy song of the same title and also known as "County Jail Blues"), and "Step It Up and Go." Fuller's guitar style is also heard throughout on

Cephas' finger style guitar picking throughout this on performances of Julius Daniel's "Richmond Blues," Big Bill Broonzy's "Keep Your Hands Off My Baby," the sprite "Crow Jane" and "Key to the Highway."

Cephas was such a solid guitarist, perhaps not quite as spectacular as his friend John Jackson, but his fluid playing was complemented by one of the richest voices in acoustic blues that this writer felt had some of the same warmth and expressiveness as Big Bill Broonzy. Wiggins grew into one of the blues most accomplished harmonica players, which he continues to display in performances with Corey Harris, DC area acoustic bluesman Rick Franklin and others. On this, his expressive, vocalized harp work embellishes Cephas' vocals as well as soars on his own solos.

And while the pair has recorded a good number of these songs before, it certainly is worthy that they chose to revisit some of these, especially the traditional "Reno Factory," about the factory that burned down. Cephas learned this from Marvin Foddrell of the Foddrell family of Virginia, themselves quite accomplished although making few recordings. This was one of the earliest recordings by John Cephas and Phil Wiggins I heard and it still affects me to hear this song so soulfully and wonderfully played. The final recording by two of the blues most significant and accomplished performers, "Richmond Blues" provides a strong finale to their musical legacy. For more information you might visit the Smithsonian Folkways website, <http://www.folkways.si.edu/index.aspx>. For "Richmond Blues" follow this link: <http://www.folkways.si.edu/albumdetails.aspx?itemid=3216>.

Ron Weinstock



JANE IRA BLOOM

**Wingwalker
OUTLINE**

Pioneering soprano saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom has experimented with and excelled on soprano sax for more than 30 years, often using live electronics to stylishly enhance her original creations.

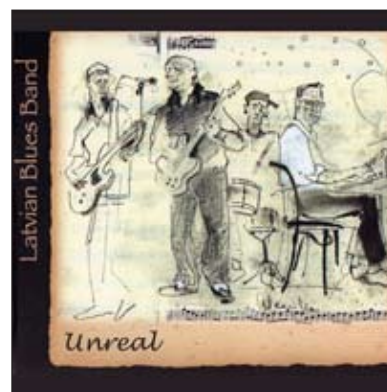
On her 14th album as leader (her fourth for Outline,) Bloom performs with long-time colleagues Dawn Clement (piano, Fender Rhodes), Mark Helias (bass) and Bobby Previte (drums). Although Bloom is always stretching the form, she doesn't stray too far outside on the 11 originals and a solo sax rendition of the standard

"This Nearly Was Mine" by Rodgers & Hammerstein. Yet, Bloom continues to demonstrate the remarkable talents and inventiveness that have gained her a solid fan following in the modern jazz realm.

Everyone has moments to shine on this project. One of the album highlights is the catchy "Life on Cloud 8," with its riffing rhythm team groove under Bloom's inventions. The title tune ascends and floats on a lovely melody, enhanced by Previte's artistry on cymbals. Bloom performs the melodious, haunting ballad "Ending Red Songs," as a trio with Clement and Helias. The catchy beat and melody of "Freud's Convertible" match the playfulness of the title.

There's isn't a boring tune in the bunch. Recorded in the Avatar Studio B in New York City in June 2010, this project is one of Bloom's most accessible, an engaging listen from start to finish.

Nancy Ann Lee



LATVIAN BLUES BAND

Unreal

BLUE SKUNK RECORDS

When one thinks of blues, one does not think of the Baltic Republic of Latvia, yet Duke Robillard came across the Latvian Blues Band and thought enough of them to produce a CD by them. They have been together performing largely in Latvia, but also throughout Europe and visits to Canada and the United States. They were even part of the 2010 International Blues Challenge in 2010. The band consists of Janis Bukovskis on vocals and guitar; Rolands Saulietis on drums; Reinis Ozolins on bass; and Richards Berzins on piano and organ with Janis Kalnins adding guitar on most of the selections. Several tracks have horns and Duke adds solos to a couple of the selections. The Chicago-based Blue Skunk has issued "Unreal," their first album.

One thing that is evident quickly is how well they have absorbed the blues musical language and their playing sounds as natural as some of the best US Bands. Bukovskis may display a very slight accent in his vocals, but his phrasing flows naturally. There are some adaptations of some classic blues and R&B but most of this are their originals and these are strong, idiomatic performances. There are so many delights here starting with the opening rendition of "Evil." There

interpretation is a strutting, horn based rendition that sounds like more like Stax than Howlin' Wolf's original recording or versions based on that. A great vocal with the rhythm section laying down a strong groove and Robillard taking a crisp solo. "Baby Let Me Hold Your Hand" sports a nice pleading vocal from Bukovskis as well as dobro playing from him on a nice interpretation of a Professor Longhair recording.

An original like "Confused" is a terrific shuffle with biting guitar from Bukovskis, whereas on "Feel Like Cryin'," they take the tempo and the volume down providing some jazzier flavor on a bit more sober lyric about "a part of me tight is dying." They add a reggae groove to "Wake Up" on which Kalnins takes the guitar solo. On "Let the Door Hit You," which I believe was by the late King Biscuit Boy, is a delightful rocking performance with Kalnins soloing again. There is a folky quality on "5 Minutes Too Late," a trio performance with Bukovskis on bass as well as vocal, Kalnins on guitar (and taking a really nice solo) and Saulietis on drums. Further indication of the variety on this recording is the excellent rendition of Rosco Gordon's "No More Doggin'" with nice interplay between Bukovskis slide guitar and Kalnins guitar and a rhythmic flavor suggestive of the North Mississippi Hill Country.

There is a wonderful, natural sounding pace about these performances. When playing an uptempo number, the Latvian Blues Band never sound frenzied or rushed and similarly there is an appealing relaxed feel to their slower

numbers. Their music is rooted strongly in the blues and they eschew the pyrotechnics of more blues-rock performers to produce this stunning recording. Having no idea what to expect from them, this writer was floored by the quality of the music here. This was an unexpected delight and I suspect others will be similarly impressed by this terrific recording.

Ron Weinstock



DAVE STERNER QUINTET

Sidetacked

SPEAK JAZZ RECORDS

Cleveland-based saxophonist Dave Sterner leads a talented team of musicians on his second release, a follow up to his self-produced 2006 debut album as leader, *What's What*. Joining Sterner on interpretations of 10 straight-ahead originals are pianist Roger Friedman, bassist Glenn Holmes, drummer Paul Samuels and tenor saxophonist Chris Burge. Sterner composed nine of the tunes and Friedman an Afro-Cuban swing number ("Not Quite Yet").

No matter what the tempo, this inventive crew plays tight and tidy. From bop to blues/funk, to ballads and more, these musicians strut their stuff. One of my favorites is the blues/funk tune, "Rotten Eggs," with a riffing piano theme underneath and good soloing all around. The lone ballad, "Waiting," features Friedman stating the pretty melody and Sterner improvising slowly and melodically on soprano sax before the tune dynamically time shifts and returns to the original refrain. Blending front line harmonies by Sterner and Burge provide some pleasant listening moments. The swing/shuffle tune, "What'd He Say? I Don't Know," is a catchy number that begins with a bass head, soft soloing, and creeps along swinging, a little reminiscent of the Johnny Griffin tune, "The Cat."

Sterner graduated from Mentor High School and Indiana University with a degree in Jazz Saxophone Performance. He's polished his chops performing with an array of national artists and local groups, and has recorded with Ernie Krivda's Fat Tuesday Big Band.

Sterner has polished his chops since I last heard him. He proves himself as first-rate leader, performer and composer. This is a tasteful straight-ahead album that showcases the best of Sterner and his sidekicks, who seem to respect each other enough not to upstage. For the toe-tapping material, top musicianship and pure moments of creative supremacy, *Sidetacked* is a listening pleasure that warrants replay.

Nancy Ann Lee





ANDREA MARR
Little Sister Got Soul
 BLUE SKUNK MUSIC

Described in her publicity as “The Pint Sized Powerhouse of the Blues,” Australian Andrea Marr, who apparently is among the most popular acts in her home country, has her first US release on Chicago’s Blue Skunk label “Little Sister Got Soul.” There is plenty to be impressed about her, even if she occasionally gets bombastic. It serves her well to have an excellent studio band behind her on this with a strong rhythm section, first-rate keyboards from Cam Scott and some solid horns as part of the musical mix.

This opens with a cover of Dinah Washington’s “Soulville,” not the most covered of the Washington’s songs, and provides a solid performance. She wants to “Steam Up The Windows” with her man. The performance has an insistent guitar riff, a strong booting tenor sax solo from Sean Vagg and a sultry vocal. The mix between blues and R&B continues on her strong rendition of Etta James’ “I Prefer You,” with guitarist Greg Dodd adding some fills. “Don’t Touch What You Can’t Afford” is an uptempo original with a strutting groove, punchy horns, and clever lyrics as suggested by the title.

“Superwoman,” with a funky James Brown groove has Marr testifying that it will take a Superman to love a Superwoman like her. The rocking “Taught Me To Love” has excellent piano from Cam Scott and is followed by a gospel number “If I Leave This World Tomorrow,” that opens with nice piano before Dodd’s guitar lends this more of a blues feel. However, Marr’s vocal sounds a bit overwrought at times on this. Soulfully celebrating her “Real Good Man,” she follows with a shuffle, “What’s Wrong With You,” where the horns let the good times roll and Scott wails on his Hammond organ. Marr effectively incorporates moans in her strong vocal telling us how her “Baby Got Me Crazy,” turning her on, and rocking her soul, so she can’t leave him alone.

With a powerful voice, Marr certainly leaves a strong impression even if at times she comes off too strong. Also, her vocals occasionally sound odd, perhaps reflecting her Aussie accent. Still, she brings plenty of authority to her vocals, her backing band is strong and there is good material here. There may be flaws, but there is plenty of heart on this set.

Ron Weinstock



KETIL BJORNSTAD
SVANTE HENRYSON
Night Song
 ECM

When last heard from, on 2010’s excellent *Remembrance*, pianist Bjornstad’s trio (including tenor sax and drums) danced gracefully and sparingly atop delicate themes, creating an improvisational atmosphere more “melodic” than most chamber jazz but just as substantial.

Bjornstad’s grace and touch are equally evident in tandem here with cellist Henryson, as is his flair for understatement. What’s different on *Night Song* is the prevalent mood. The duo masterfully traverses terrain that is consistently and compellingly dark but never dreary; melancholy but never maudlin. Bjornstad meanwhile challenges the presumptive “classical” posture of the piano/cello combination with frequent flashes of undeniable jazz flair.

As the title suggests, this may not be an appropriate set for all hours of the day. But in its proper context, *Night Song* is a quietly captivating set. **Duane Verh**



JOHNNY RAWLS
Memphis Still Got Soul
 CATFOOD RECORDS

Johnny Rawls initially emerged as part of Rawls & Luckett, who first had an album over a quarter-century ago for Rooster blues. A Mississippi native, Rawls previously had been O.V. Wight’s band director and the band backed other soul and blues acts like Little Johnny Taylor after the legendary Wright passed away. Subsequently Rawls emerged as a solo act with several albums on JSP (as well as produced several albums for

that label) before hooking up with Catfood Records.

Rawls has a new release on Catfood, "Memphis Still Got Soul," that should continue to embellish his reputation as a strong soul and blues performer. Included are eleven songs, ten of which are originals from Rawls and/or co-producer Bob Trenchard and are from two sessions. One session is from Texas and the other from Montana (on which Johnny plays guitar), but both with live musicians. Trenchard and Rawls contributed the title track with its echoes of Elvis leaving the building, but Beale Street is still happening even if we lost some of the great ones and Memphis still has soul. The band captures the right groove, Andy Roman takes a strong tenor sax solo and Rawls nails the vocal.

The title track is followed up by a cover of the O.V. Wright classic "Blind, Crippled and Crazy" whose lyric Rawls tears into with solid backing on a solid cover. "Get What You Need" is a groover that should get folks on the dance floor while "Take You For a Ride" is a driving piece of stone southern soul as Johnny tells his lady they will dance slow in the dark. "Stop the Rain" is a soulful lament as he pleads to stop the rain that is falling from his eyes, while Johnny McGhee's guitar helps propel the funky "Burning Bridges" about a gentleman one can't trust and "Mr. Guitar" where Johnny talks about not being a big superstar who has never won a Handy or a Grammy but all he needs is his guitar, with which he adds the fills here and takes the track out with a fade. "Blues Woman" is a medium tempo rock-steady song where Johnny strongly sings about wanting a woman he can relate to, not one into fancy champagne.

Those familiar with Rawls will not be disappointed. There are strong soulful songs that are terrifically played. The emphasis is on Rawls vocals and those expecting lots of lengthy solos may be disappointed, but this is a solid follow-up to his other recent recordings and I would expect it to be as warmly received on the Southern soul and soul-blues circuits as well as blues fans who enjoy strong contemporary soul recordings.

Ron Weinstock



JOYCE COBB

Joyce Cobb with the Michael Jefry Stevens Trio
ARCHER RECORDS

Memphis based vocalist Joyce Cobb has been a part of that city's scene for decades, first signing with Stax, later having a hit for Cream Records (later Hi Records) and shared stages with numerous musical legends. Her rhythm

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'n' blues stylings decades ago were always imbued with jazzy elements, and in more recent years her focus has been more on the jazz side. She has a fascinating new release on Archer Records, "Joyce Cobb with the Michael Jefry Stevens Trio." Pianist Michael Jefry Stevens is a New Yorker who moved to Memphis and his trio consists of Jonathan Wires and drummer Renardo Ward.

There may be some who may find Ms. Cobb's vocals, described in the publicity materials as "honey sweet," an acquired taste with her sometimes less than precise diction. Her vocals here suggest Jimmy Scott, and if the performances may not quite pull at the heart strings as much as Scott, they still struck these ears in a most positive fashion. It helped that the Stevens Trio provides excellent support and Stevens takes any number of fine solos in addition to his harmonious accompaniments.

She sings classic standards mixed with vocalese adaptations of jazz classics including Bobby Timmons' "Moanin'," Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz," Hoagy Carmichael and Johnny Mercer's "Skylark," the juxtaposition of "I'm in the Mood For Love with Moody's Mood For Love," the Ellington-Strayhorn ballad "Daydream" and "My Heart Belongs to Daddy." Cobb contributes some atmospheric bluesy harmonica before launching into "Moanin'," delivering the Jon Hendricks lyrics with her overdubbing a backing vocal chorus that perhaps lends a sense that her vocal should have been a bit looser. "Jitterbug Waltz" is a delightful performance with Stevens accenting her horn like delivery of the lyrics with Wires taking a solo. "Skylark" opens with several choruses from Stevens in a reflective, lyrical mode before Cobb wistfully sings about her yearning for her lover. Like a horn, she chants Jon Hendricks' lyric for Thelonious Monk's "Well That Was a Dream," capturing the angular aspects of Monk's tune.

A bit more mainstream vocally is her rendition of "My Heart Belongs to Daddy," with the trio's delicious tango accompaniment. There is a delightful extending of the lyrics of "I'm in the Mood For Love" which deftly transitions into "Moody's Mood For Love," with a more staccato, trumpet-like vocal delivery. Another delightful medley is "Blue Skies" and "In Walked Bud," with a peppy delivery of Blue Skies with bass and piano solos followed by the concise rendition of "In Walked Bud." "If You Know Love," is a marvelously delivered lament, followed by a wistful "If You Never Come to Me," from the pen of Antonio Carlos Jobim and others. The rendition of "I Thought About You" opens pensively before the tempo and vocal heat up. She delivers a hauntingly beautiful vocal on the Ellington-Strayhorn "Daydream" before closing with another playful nod to Thelonious Monk, "It's Over Now (Well You Needn't)."

It is an ambitious and diverse group of songs/tunes that Joyce Cobb has selected here for a strong vocal jazz compilation on which she reveals how comfortable she is with a ballad as with a Jon Hendricks lyrical adaptation to a classic Thelonious Monk number. Joyce Cobb has a myspace page, <http://www.myspace.com/joycecobb> and the label has a website <http://archer-records.com> from which this may be purchased as well as from Amazon and cdbaby.

Ron Weinstock

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jazz
& blues



GRANA LOUISE
Gettin' Kinda Rough!
 DELMARK

I have heard Grana Louise as part of a collection of Chicago blues women, but her new Delmark CD, "Gettin' Kinda Rough!" is one to certainly bring her to the attention of more folk. The Columbus Ohio native has been building up her reputation in the Windy City for more than a decade and was the Windy City Blues Society's representative at the International Blues Challenge June 2009.

Not living in Chicago, I have not had the opportunity to see her perform at Blues Chicago or Buddy Guy's Legends, but a really good guitarist, Tom Holland keeps his Facebook friends informed as to when and where he is playing with her. Holland is the guitarist on the entire disc, which includes seven studio performances and 5 live performances. Bill Hargrave plays the bass on this while Clarence 'Curfew' Scott is on drums. Bill Syniar plays all the instruments on one track, "Gonna Get 'Cha," while Carlos Showers joins Holland on guitar on the five live tracks that were recorded at Blue Chicago.

The disc opens up with studio tracks including an unusual choice to interpret "Staggerlee." Ms. Louise delivers a solid performance based on Lloyd Price's hit and Holland shines on guitar here taking a nice solo. She observes that she is a "Lead Foot Mama" but doesn't mean to be, but it's just is how she is. She has a strong, but relaxed delivery and once again Holland shows why he is so highly regarded. Her rendition of Denise LaSalle's "Learning How To Cheat On You" is a standout with a lyric using the "Someone is Stepping Out"/"Down Home Blues" melody.

"Big Dick M'isipi" is a number about being out in the country where she knows where to get some of what she wants, with her amusing double entendre of deep rooted southern trees that grow tall, and unlike pretty northern trees don't break easily. This performance is definitely not radio friendly. "Bang Bang Ba-Bang Bang Bang Bang" has a nice funk groove and a spirited Holland solo as she knows her man may be out with Grana's best friend, but when he holds her tight and they start making love, the fireworks begin. Bill Syniar's multi-tracked keys, guitar and drum track works well

on the shuffle "Gonna Get 'Cha."

Her personality is even more evident on the live performances here. "Wet Match" is a Denise LaSalle styled song directed against men unable to deliver the goods when needed and have as much lovemaking skills as a wet match can light a fire. "Queen Bee," from the late Koko Taylor's repertoire, is delivered in a fiery performance as she is looking for her young and able king. "Back Door Blues" is a lengthy slow blues performance that she warns at the beginning, "We got some folks in here who embarrass easily. You better leave now," before launching into a traditionally rooted lyric of taking the front door in but taking the back door out. She really tears into the song and it's a first rate vocal performance that she really belts out with the guitarists shining here as well. The disc closes with an unusual choice for a cover, "Hey Joe," and is an interesting performance.

Grana Louise is a singer that many will take note of from her impressive performances here. She certainly has a powerful voice but she has a delivery and a way of relating to her audience that is evident listening to this.

Ron Weinstock



MAGGIE HERRON
In the Wings
 SELF-PRODUCED

Hawaii-based vocalist-pianist Maggie Herron makes her national recording debut, delivering an array of musical styles on nine originals and one pop standard with Paul Lindbergh (tenor and soprano saxophones, flute), Dean Taba (acoustic, electric bass), Noel Okimoto (drums), Edred Ahlo (trumpet, flugelhorn) and Kevin Herasa (guitar).

Even though she sings in French on a couple of tunes and soars in soprano on a couple of others, Herron has the raspy mid-range voice for and seems most comfortable in blues grooves such as "I'm the Answer" (which features a fine solo from Lindbergh) or waltzing romancers such as "Don't Ask Me To Stop" and the gospel-inspired "Powerful Dreams." The briskly paced instrumental, "Stepping Out," is most enjoyable for Lindbergh's facile inventions and rhythm team expertise. Herron's piano style is mostly chordal when accompanying her vocals and somewhat heavy-handed on instrumentals. Ahlo gets his best spotlighted moment on track 7, "Up Early," a brisk and bouncy instrumental number that also features

Lindbergh on flute.

Herron was raised in Muskegon, Michigan and received classical piano and voice training at an early age under the tutelage of her mother and older sister. She has been playing and singing popular music for more than 30 years.

Herron's talents are broad-based but she should narrow her focus to what she does best (cut the soprano voicings) and definitely include Lindbergh on any future recordings because his playing clinches the session.

Nancy Ann Lee



SUGARAY
Blind Alley
SELF PRODUCED

Texas born Caron "Sugaray" Rayford began singing in the church, and while he has roots in gospel and soul. In San Diego, he began fronting a funk/R&B band, the Urban Gypsies, but while dabbling in the blues he realized his heart and soul were in this idiom. He started fronting Aunt Kizzy's Boyz, with whom he made some recordings and competed in the International Blues Challenge. Moving a couple years ago to Los Angeles, Sugar Ray hosted up a jam in Sherman Oaks and then hooked up with guitarist Chuck Kavooras whose CK All Stars became the house band for the jam. The house band is a rotating group of musicians who have played with numerous legends, and famous folk like Al Kooper, Slash, Steve Lukather (Toto) and Mike Finnigan have sit in. Sugaray recently issued "Blind Alley" (self-produced) recorded at Kavooras' Slideaway Studio with a variety of musicians joining them as well as contributing material.

Sugaray is a big man and has an equally powerful voice. The church roots are clearly evident when he sings on a nice varied mix of material. He comes roaring on "Nuthin' I Wouldn't Do (For A Woman Like You)," one of two songs Al Kooper contributed with wailing harp, some blues-rocking guitar and a somewhat busy accompaniment that doesn't smother his personality. With Kavooras' stark slide and use of tremolo guitar, Sugar renders a field holler moan on the Blind Willie Johnson recording "Dark Was The Night, Cold Was The Ground," a performance dedicated to his mother. Sugaray's strong singing does justice to Son House's "Death Letter," which opens with simple hand clapping

and tambourine behind Kavooras stark delta groove before the band kicks in and the guitarist rocks out a bit on his solo.

The title track, which Sugaray co-wrote, takes us from updated country blues to an uptown soul-blues with a funky groove, riffing horns, and a vocal that evokes the late Little Milton and Artie 'Blues Boy' White. Phil Parlapiano's piano break adds to this track's strong appeal. Some nice Albert King styled guitar opens the slow drag groove reworking of B.B. King's "You Upset Me baby," that again showcases his ability as a singer as he provides a convincing low-key reading of the lyrics.

Al Kooper's soulful ballad, "I Let Love Slip Thru My Fingers," provides an opportunity for him to show another side of his style with some nice saxophone from Jimmy Z. His rendition of a terrific Arthur Adams song, "You Can't Win For Losing," is another strong soul-blues performance that evokes classic Little Milton. A short gospel performance with just organ and vocal chorus, "I Got to Move," is followed by the strong "I Sing The Blues," about him being raised in the country and his whole life has been a struggle," set against a moody horn arrangement as he really reaches deep in the gut for his vocal here. "Overnight Sensation" has a jazzy flavor with some nice clarinet from Geoff Nudell while Kavooras is taking a more low-key approach here.

Sugaray Rayford impresses this listener more each time I play "Blind Alley." Not many singers can take us from the delta to the modern chitlin' circuit as easily as he does. A big man with a big voice and plenty of personality that makes "Blind Alley" a recording to savor. His website is <http://sugarayblues.com/> and this can be purchased at Amazon cdbaby.com. He impressed me enough that I am likely to check out the two discs by Aunt Kizzy's Boyz that he was vocalist on.

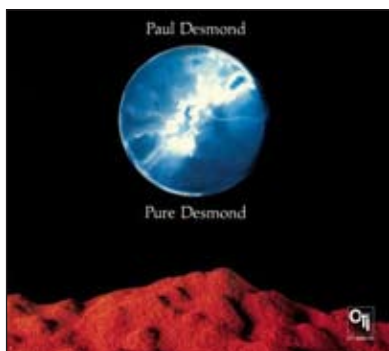
Ron Weinstock

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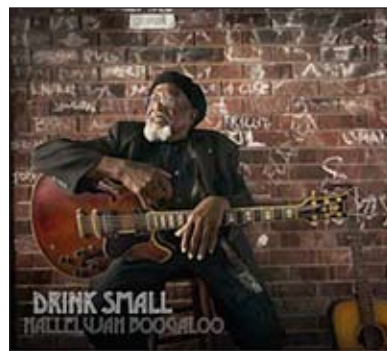
Pure Desmond
SONY MASTERWORKS

It's ironic that one of the two recordings Dave Brubeck is most known for, "Take Five," was not written by Brubeck, but by his alto saxophonist, Paul Desmond. As part of the celebration of the 40th Anniversary of CTI, Sony has issued a remastered edition of "Pure Desmond," a quartet date with guitarist Ed Bickert, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Connie Kay. Sony has had this remastered, although unlike the Japanese remasters of CTI material, they did have Creed Taylor and Rudy Van Gelder at whose legendary studio this was recorded, remaster these. It likely is that the Japanese remastering is superior to that on Sony, as Marc Myers blogged on his jazzwax.com back at the end of September, but I would assume most would not be willing to pay three times the cost of the Sony reissues for the Japanese. And this particular reissue sounds wonderful to my aging ears.

I love Gene Lee's description in the liner booklet of Desmond's alto sound as tart and lyrical, and Desmond himself said he wanted to sound as a dry martini. The Canadian guitarist Bickert was a recommendation of Jim Hall to Desmond and his playing has a lyricism of its own along with the precise eloquence of his picking and solos. Carter and Kay provide marvelous backing, as during Bickert's solo on Django Reinhardt's "Nuages" where it's almost a duet between Bickert and Carter with Kay light on the cymbals before Desmond comes back in with his playing that may be the true paradigm of the "cool sound." The overall feel is of a delightful preciousness of this quartet whether on Reinhardt's wistful classic or the playfulness of Ellington's "Just Squeeze Me" that opens this recording.

The program includes a couple of lesser known gems from Cole Porter ("Why Shouldn't I"), and Ellington ("Warm Valley"), along with "Mean to Me" from the pen of Roy Turk and Fred Ahlert and associated with Billie Holiday, the "Theme From M*A*S*H" and Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Wave." I really love the lovely rendition of "Warm Valley" which was a feature of Johnny Hodges with Ellington I believe. On this edition are three alternate takes, but I do not know if they have been previously reissued. In any event, there is nearly an hour of some of the loveliest jazz one is likely to hear and the marvelous recording and sound here adds to the listening enjoyment.

Ron Weinstock



DRINK SMALL

Hallelujah Boogaloo
MUSIC MAKER FOUNDATION

I have written about the Music Maker Relief Foundation several times and the activities they undertake on behalf of blues and other musicians in need. MMF has compiled a substantial body of recordings by its associated artists and among the latest CDs they have issued is "**Hallelujah Boogaloo**" by Drink Small, who is known as "The Blues Doctor." The Blues Doctor label drink uses is in part a reference to his ability to play a variety of styles. After all, he grew up in the church (first recording as part of a gospel group) as well as learning Blind Boy Fuller tunes. It also refers to his ability to make you feel good by his playing the blues.

Drink Small is among the Music Maker Foundation Artists that has a significant body of recordings, having recorded for a variety of labels including Ichiban and his own Bishopville label (referring to South Carolina hometown). The present CD was recorded by Tim Duffy between 1997 and 2005. It contains 11 songs and clocks in at just under 45 minutes. These are solo performances and cover a wide range of material, and while all the songs are credited to Drink Small, some are not such as Blind Boy Fuller's "So Sweet" and "Blues By the Drink" which is a revamped "Baby Please Don't Go."

There is a gregarious quality to Drink Small's performances that is evident throughout, whether on the opening "Widow Woman" with a folk-tinge, or his exquisite rendition of Fuller's "So Sweet," as well as his "Song With No Name" where he references Howlin' Wolf and howls and moans. His language can get raunchy at times, as on "Moanin'" which is definitely not radio friendly, or simply descriptive as on "Women Love a Man That Can Play The Slide." His guitar playing, whether in a Blind Boy Fuller mode as on "So Sweet," or playing slide, is thoughtful and crisply executed. The vigor of his performances and the varied material makes for quite an enjoyable recording.

I obtained this as part of my Givin' It Back Record Club membership which includes a quarterly CD release as a premium for my donation to MMF, but also can be acquired on its own from MMF at musicmaker.org.

Ron Weinstock

jazz-blues.com



CYRILLE AIMÉE & FRIENDS

Live at Smalls SMALLS LIVE

Watching the recent Thelonious Monk Institute Vocal Competition on a webcast, I was very intrigued by one of the finalists, a lady originally from France by the name of Cyrille Aimée. Shortly thereafter there was a **New York Times** story about her appearing at the Greenwich Village, NYC club, Smalls Jazz Club. The story focused on her duets with pianist Spike Wilner who I believe is responsible for programming music at Smalls. He is the main person behind the club's label, Smalls Live which has issued a number of live recordings from the club and amongst the latest releases is Cyrille Aimée & Friends "Live at Smalls."

Wilner is the producer of this disc which was recorded late September 26 and 30, 2010, and anchored the band that includes bassist Philip Kuehn, drummer Joseph Saylor, tenor saxophonist Joel Frahm, and trumpeter Roy Hargrove. There is a playful informality about the performances that add to its appeal. In the *New York Times* piece, Ben Ratliff described Ms. Aimée, "She's alert and thoroughly engaged in the logic of moving harmony when she improvises, one of those singers whom nonsinging musicians call "a musician."

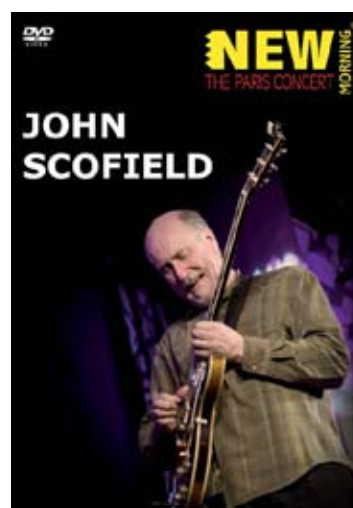
From the opening notes of "September In the Rain," she impresses despite (or perhaps because of) a somewhat limited vocal range (suggestive of Billie Holiday, but no way imitative of Lady Day) with horn like phrasing both in delivering the lyrics and scatting. And the band is terrific with Frahm shining on "September," while Hargrove embraces the melodic qualities of "Que Reste-t'il," which many of you will know from the English rendition, "I Wish You Love." It should be noted that, unlike Roberta Gambarini whose vocals usually display no trace of her native Italian, Aimée's French accent is evident, but adds delightful flavoring to her voice.

After the initial verse of a brisk "Yesterdays," she takes a scat solo followed by Frahm and then Wilner before she scats fours with drummer Saylor who sounds like he is using brushes. Ellington's "I Was Beginning to See the Light" starts as a duet with bassist Kuehn before Frahm enters on tenor for a solo followed by Kuehn's solo. When Aimée returns with her vocal coda, Frahm softly caresses her vocal. "Love For Sale" opens with a drum intro with Kuehn joining in to set a second-line styled groove, followed by

a brief call and response by Hargrove and Frahm. Almée enters at home with the lively groove "advertising her love" and her scatting set off by nice cymbal work by Saylor. Hargrove takes a nicely focused and short solo, followed by Frahm who is rocking and wailing. This is the longest track but seems to go so quickly. Other highlights include her rendition of Monk's "I Mean You" and the closing Stand By Me," where it sounds like she is joined by several other voices who are not identified.

Since first downloading this recording (I received the hard copy a few days later, along with several other Smalls Live CDs), I have found myself completely captivated by Cyril Aimée and this recording. There is a wonderful mix of material and a freshness to her treatment of the most familiar numbers. I trust you can sense my enthusiasm this recording, and look forward to the opportunity to see her in person (have to figure how to get to New York perhaps). This is available from the Smalls Live website, www.smallslive.com as either a download or hard copy (which includes the download).
Ron Weinstock

dvd



JOHN SCOFIELD

The Paris Concert NEW MORNING / INAKUSTIK DVD

For all of John Scofield's funk and fusion smarts, this "live" set from April 2010 genuinely hits the combustion point on the bop burners "Steeplechase" and "Relaxin' At Camarillo". The guitarist and group- pianist Michael Eckroth, bassist Ben Street and drummer Bill Stewart- shine further on old-school ballads "My Foolish Heart" and "I Want To Talk About You". Stewart is a natural on the bop fare and Eckroth stands out at ballad time. The leader himself is in fine form throughout.

A few innocuous cutaways suggest the director was feeling his way through at first but they're over with soon enough not to mar a most enjoyable set.

Duane Verh



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