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Doheny Blues Festival

Guitar Shorty

jazz & blues report

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"Buffalicious"

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

Doheny Blues Festival

The 15th Annual Doheny Blues Festival May 19 & 20 at Doheny State Beach



Dana Point, CA – Celebrating the 15th year of Blues On The Beach in Southern California, Omega Events is proud to announce that Greg Allman and The Steve Miller Band will headline the Doheny Blues Festival on May 19 & 20. The festival takes place at Doheny State Beach, 25300 Dana Point Harbor Drive, Dana Point, CA. Hours are 10:30 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. daily

As founding member & vocalist for pioneering Southern rockers The Allman Brothers Band, Greg Allman's soulful voice is one of the defining sounds in American music history. Long considered an interpreter of blues music, Allman released Low Country Blues this year, his seventh solo recording and first in more than 13 years, earning a GRAMMY Nomination in the category of Best Blues Album. In addition, The Recording Academy will be honoring The Allman Brothers Band with its Lifetime Achievement Award during the GRAMMY Awards on February 12.

One of rock music's all-time greats, The Steve Miller Band have sold more than 30 million records in a career spanning 40 years. Miller's trademark blues-rock sound has made him a staple of classic rock radio, but it was his first band - the Goldberg Miller Blues Band - where he fostered his love for Blues music, learning alongside Muddy Waters and Paul Butterfield, amongst others. And Miller shows no signs of slowing down; following the 2010 release of the #1 Blues album, Bingo!, Miller sold out London's Royal Albert Hall, his first concert in England in 25 years, and released Bingo's companion

album, Let Your Hair Down, a set of blues covers featuring the last recordings of harmonica virtuoso Norton Buffalo, his "partner in harmony" for 33 years.

"Year 15 is a proud milestone for the festival, so we wanted to deliver a legendary, eclectic lineup for the Doheny fans," says promoter Rich Sherman. "Gregg Allman rarely performs on the West Coast, and Steve Miller's influence on blues-rock music cannot be understated. Plus, both Allman and Miller have recorded blues albums this year... so the timing is perfect. This is our way of saying thanks to the loyal supporters of our independent festival."

Joining Gregg Allman and The Steve Miller Band are Chicago Blues Legend Buddy Guy, Texican rockers Los Lonely Boys, Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue from NOLA, roots artist and conservationist Tab Benoit, Texas Blues guitarist Johnny Winter and Irish-born vocalist Imelda May. Many more artists will be announced in the coming weeks.

Various attractions are located throughout the festival grounds including: The Kidz EcoFest, International Food Court; eclectic Vendor Village; Bike Valet and Blackstone Wine Lounge. The Backporch, a third stage of music, is a tree-lined setting where fans can enjoy intimate sets of music and microbrewed beers.

New for 2012, the Doheny Blues Festival will utilize The EventBand System, a smart wristband that serves as both your festival ticket and electronic wallet. As in previous years, Doheny at-

tendees are required to wear a wristband during the event, but ticket buyers can now have their EventBand shipped to them in advance, which means no waiting in the morning lines. In addition, the EventBand will be used as an electronic wallet for the purchase of all food & drinks inside the event; attendees can load value onto their EventBand at the time they purchase their tickets.

"We're proud to be one of the first music festivals in North America to utilize RFID wristband technology for both admissions and concessions," notes Rich Sherman. "This technology advance is an added benefit for fans... just order your tickets on-line and leave your wallet at home."



Buddy Guy

Weekend Passes are available for purchase, while supplies last. Single-Day tickets will go on-sale in mid-March, and General Admission tickets will be available at local ticket outlets beginning in April.

For tickets and additional info, visit www.omegaevents.com or call (949) 360-7800.

About Doheny Blues Festival: Recognized as one of the top blues music festivals in the nation, The Doheny Blues Festival features 24 sets of music on three alternating stages, plus tasty food, microbrew sampling, eclectic vendors and family fun. The festival is held at Doheny State Beach, a 62-acre California State Park, with sandy beaches, overnight camping and a spacious, waterfront grass park. Two main stages are placed at opposite ends of the grass field, with a third stage, The Backporch, in its own tree-lined bowl, which offers intimate sets of music during the weekend.

For the last seventeen years, Omega Events has been a leader in live entertainment, bringing world-class musicians and their fans together at a variety of music festivals, winery concerts and special events. Omega Events' team specializes in every aspect of event production, including talent buying, sponsorship, marketing, beverage sales, vendor relations, cash-management and concert production.

Anthony Braxton's Tri-Centric Foundation Launches its Website Version 2.0

New York, NY – Anthony Braxton's Tri-Centric Foundation has launched the new and improved version of the organization's website.

Active since March 2011, www.tricentricfoundation.org has been recognized as one of the most comprehensive websites for any living American composer. New Braxton House Records, the online record label of the Tri-Centric Foundation, has released 24 new album-length downloads in addition to offering a free career sampler of Braxton's music, free historic bootleg recordings, and its one physical product, the epic 4-CD box set Trillium E (the first studio recording of one of Braxton's operas). In its first year, the site has had roughly 30,000 visits from over 90 countries, with nearly 8,000 albums and bootlegs downloaded.

The new version of the website increases the user-friendliness and functionality of the operation. Visitors can still download free materials, purchase albums on an ala-carte basis, or choose to become TCF members for 7.99 a month; membership benefits include one free album-length download every month, discounts on all back catalog items, and other surprise bonuses.

In celebration of the new site, TCF is offering its second batch of free historic bootlegs, 13 rare concert recordings between 1975 and 1989 ranging from solo to orchestra. This month's New Braxton House release is the first volume documenting Braxton's 2007 four-night run at New York's Iridium; the follow-up engagement to the concerts that produced the critically acclaimed 10-disc box set 9 Compositions (Iridium) 2006. Upcoming releases include the first studio recordings of Braxton's Falling River and Echo Echo Mirror House Musics, the rediscovered tapes of the 1997 Lennie Tristano project (with Braxton on piano), and selections from the Tri-Centric Foundation's 4-day festival at Roulette in 2010. Within the next year, New Braxton House will also be delivering its second limited edition physical release, a DVD concert video of Braxton's 2010 duo performance with Taylor Ho Bynum in Amherst, MA.

The Tri-Centric Foundation is a not-for-profit organization that supports the ongoing work and legacy of Anthony Braxton, while also cultivating and inspiring the next generation of creative artists to pursue their own visions with the kind of idealism and integrity Braxton has demonstrated throughout his career. For more information, visit www.tricentricfoundation.org.

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Alan Lomax Archive

The Alan Lomax Archive and the Association for Cultural Equity (ACE) is pleased to announce the launch of the ACE Online Archive — the fulfillment of over a decade of the restoration, digitization, and cataloging of Alan

Lomax's life's work. Considered America's foremost folklorist, Lomax devoted seven decades to documentation, research, and advocating for cause of cultural equity, which he defined as "the right of every culture to express and develop its distinctive heritage." The ACE Online Archive includes nearly 17,000 full-streaming audio field-recordings, totaling over eight hundred hours, collected by Lomax between 1946 and 1991; scans of 5,000 photographic prints and negatives; sixteen hours of vintage radio transcriptions; and ninety hours of interviews, discussions, and lectures by Alan Lomax and his colleagues. Each media collection can be browsed as well as searched, and is accompanied by detailed descriptions.

Materials from the sound, photograph and video collections have been used in film, television, and print; Martin Scorsese and the Coen brothers are among the filmmakers who have utilized them. Alan Lomax's field recordings have been used as samples in many modern compositions, including Moby's "Natural Blues," from the album *Play*, and in the new Bruce Springsteen album *Wrecking Ball*, which features samples from Lomax's archive on two of the songs, "Death to My Hometown" and "Rocky Ground."

Additional sessions will be added to the ACE Online

Archive when restoration and cataloging is complete. These will include Lomax's 1954–55 Italian and 1985 Louisiana expeditions and several of his collections made under the auspices of the Library of Congress; among them his 1937 Haiti and Eastern Kentucky collections.

ACE Online Archive homepage:

<http://research.culturalequity.org/>

Sound Collection Guide:

<http://research.culturalequity.org/audio-guide.jsp>

Photograph Collection Guide:

<http://research.culturalequity.org/photo-guide.jsp>

Alan Lomax Archive and the Association for Cultural Equity

<http://www.culturalequity.org/>

LA Music Academy Announces Two More Open House Dates

Live Auditions, Campus Tours; Opportunity to Meet Faculty

Pasadena, CA – January 19, 2012 – Los Angeles Music Academy College of Music (www.lamusicacademy.edu) opens its doors to prospective students with two open houses on April 28 and October 13, 2012; each at 2:00pm. LA Music Academy, accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), offers AA degrees in music performance (drums, bass, guitar and vocals) and music production. Celebrating its 15th year anniversary, LA Music Academy has graduated 1,500 domestic and international students since opening its doors.

"Our students are willing to do what it takes for a successful career as professional musicians, songwriters, performers, producers and engineers," says Tom Aylesbury, president of LA Music Academy. "We have assembled an internationally known faculty ready to teach students who are willing to meet the demands of our comprehensive curriculum. We encourage all interested music students to drop by for a tour and live audition."

A typical open house begins with school orientation and student performances. After an overview of LA Music Academy by Dean, Dave Pozzi, "students are escorted on a tour of the campus followed by orientation geared towards their music major of interest. The open house concludes with live auditions and an opportunity to discuss financial aid and scholarship opportunities with our staff," says Aylesbury. Students must schedule an appointment for a live audition. For more information, contact admissions at 626-568-8850 or email admissions@lamusicacademy.edu.

LA Music Academy (www.lamusicacademy.edu) is located at 370 S. Fair Oaks Ave., Pasadena, CA 91105. Facebook: www.facebook.com/LAMusicAcademy. Follow the school on Twitter: @LAMusicAcademy. LA Music Academy is on YouTube: www.YouTube.com/LAMusicAcademy.

LIKE JAZZ & BLUES PHOTOS?



This photo of Gary Bartz captured by Ron Weinstock at the 2008 Duke Ellington Jazz Festival is just one of hundreds of Ron's photos you can view online at www.flickr.com/photos/novaron

jazz-blues.com

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.

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Foundation

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We only bring you
the Cream of the Crop!



ETTA JAMES

Heart & Soul: A Retrospective HIP-O-SELECT 4-CD SET

I never had the pleasure of seeing Etta James perform. Several times I attended events she was supposed to perform at, but each time she withdrew shortly before the performance. I can only remember her by her body of recordings as well as television appearances she made. I remember the memorable episode of the original PBS "Soundstage" program where she sang a duet with Dr. John on "I'd Rather Go Blind."

The first albums of Etta James I purchased included the double-CD compilation of her Essential Chess Recordings and one of her albums on Island, which included a stormy rendition of "Standin' On Shaky Ground," and the classic Otis Redding number "I've Got Dreams To Remember." What was striking about her was her husky earthiness, yet the ability to caress a ballad so that her signature song was a song written in the forties, "At Last." She could be a force of nature and yet caress a ballad. Few could handle the range of material she did with the same conviction and authority. There was the church rooted style of "Something Got a Hold on Me" or "I'd Rather Go Blind" and the romanticism of "At Last" as well as her latter day recordings of standards.

While influenced by the recordings she listened to by Billie Holiday and Dinah Washington, one of the most important influences on her singing was her dear friend, Johnny 'Guitar' Watson. Some, who were not aware, may have called Watson, "the female Etta James" but if she was asked she would correct them and state she was the female John Watson. This might be evident if one mixed some of Watson's slow recordings like "Cuttin' In" or "Embraceable You," with James' ballads or her Billie Holiday Tribute, "Mystery Lady." Her impact can be seen in the number of record-

ings of her songs by others, with "At Last" becoming a wedding standard.

Prior to her death, Universal released on its Hip-O-Select label, the four-CD "Heart & Soul: A Retrospective," that in its four CDs surveys her recordings from her debut as The Wallflower doing "Roll With Me Henry" for Modern Records to the previously unissued 2007 recording of Rodney Crowell's "Ashes By Now." The first disc opens with 9 recordings from Modern including "Roll With Me Henry," and her jump blues "Good Rocking Daddy." The bulk of this compilation derive from her stay at Chess starting from "All I Could Do Is Cry," her duet with Harvey Fuqua of Willie Dixon's "Spoonful," the standards "At Last" and "Sunday King of Love," duets with Sugar Pie DeSanto and her visits to Muscle Shoals which produced "Tell Mama," "I'd Rather Go Blind," and Otis Redding's "Security." Before she left Chess they experimented with other producers turning in renditions of "St. Louis Blues," Tracy Nelson's "Down So Low," and Randy Newman's "Sail Away."

After her tenure at Chess she produced a moving version of Alice Cooper's "Only Women Bleed" for Warner Brothers (although I prefer the rare Ike and Tina Turner rendition) and was caught live with Eddie 'Cleanhead' Vinson for Fantasy represented here on Percy Mayfield's "Please Send Me Someone To Love." She joined Island and produced a stirring "Damn Your Eyes," that today perhaps only a Bettye LaVette could do equal justice to. Not everything is top level. Her duet with B.B. King on Big Jay McNeely's "There Is Something on Your Mind" is a nice track but not as powerful as the original with Little Sonny Warner on the vocal or Bobby Marchand's two-part reworking which is the source for the King-James interpretation here. Blues remained a core of her music whether on "The Blues Is My Business" or the acoustic blues rendition of Elmore James' "The Sky Is Crying."

The four-discs of this compilation of her work are housed in a hardback book with a superb, lengthy overview by Bill Dahl that outlines her life as well as the music included. It is lavishly illustrated and includes full discographical information. Hip-O-Select releases are generally limited releases so I might suggest that you get a hold of this while you can. She is simply one of the greatest blues and rhythm singers of the past six decades and this reissue showcases her musical legacy with some of the finest music of those years.

Ron Weinstock

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JANIVA MAGNESS

Stronger For It ALLIGATOR RECORDS

One of the finest new voices to emerge in blues over the past several years, Janiva Magness has a new Alligator album “Stronger For It.” Produced by David Darling, this release is described in press materials as “Janiva’s declaration of independence. Having recently come through an intensely difficult period in her life, Magness has found new strength in her music. On these performances, she lays her soul bare, singing of loss and recovery, pain and redemption, hurt and healing, looking back and moving forward.” On the booklet she herself states that “This CD is dedicated to some of my deepest losses and earlier crossroads ... teaching me lessons I never wanted to learn. Which it turns out — begat some of the greatest gifts of my life ... Yeah, go figure.”

In addition to producer Darling, musicians on this recording include drummer Matt Teco, guitarist Zach Zunis, bassist Gary Davenport, keyboardist Jim Alfredson, and Keyboardist Arlan Oscar. There are three songs that Janiva co-wrote with Darling, along with songs from Tom Waits, Shelby Lynne, Ike Turner, Matthew Sweet and others – songs that Janiva Magness turns her considerable interpretative skills to.

It may a rather unusual mix of songs with very contrasting moods from the stark opening “There It Is,” ferociously singing about having enough of this man as any woman could stand, she is tired of his excuses and while she never thought she’d ever want to hurt a man, eyes wide open, I’d shove that knife right in.” The backing is crisp and edgy. The mood shifts on “I Won’t Cry,” with more restraint in her vocal and the backing as she sings that she might cut, she might bleed but won’t cry. There is a solid solo here that adds to the tone of this performance and her moving vocal.

Her vocals certainly leave their stamp on the material, whether the emphatic rendition of Tom Waits’ “Make It Rain”; the soulful yearning about not being able to get over a relationship in “Whistlin’ In The Dark”; the reflectiveness of Grace Potter’s “Ragged Company”; trying and striving to remain faithful on “I Don’t Want to Do Wrong,” from the Gladys Knight and The Pips songbook; and the jubilant Ray Wylie Hubbard gospel tune “Whoop and Holler.” She is able to caress a lyric as naturally as she shouts her strength, and overcoming

her pain. Darling’s production provides focuses support that leaves space for her vocals to thrive.

It is easy listening to Janiva Magness on “Stronger For It,” to understand why she has been so highly regarded and honored by her peers and fans. This is a stunning recording.

Ron Weinstock



EVAN CHRISTOPHER

Remembering Song ARBORS RECORDS

One of two new albums, clarinetist Evan Christopher had issued in 2010, “Remembering Song” (Arbors) is another exploration in following the clarinet road he has been embarking on the last two decades or so. A 2011 jazz Journalist finalist for clarinet, and a favorite of Nat Hentoff and the late Ahmet Ertegun, Christopher is joined by a fine quartet with legendary Bucky Pizzarelli on acoustic guitar, James Chirillo on electric guitar and bassist Greg Cohen. As quoted in Larry Blumenfeld’s notes, Christopher observes, “By not using drums, the texture is more introspective, more subtle.”

After a brief introduction of “The Remembering Song,” the group launches into Christopher’s original “The Wrath of Grapes,” inspired by a wine shop-cum-performance space in the Bywater area which has embedded within a quote from Louis Prima’s “Sing Sing Sing.” It’s a lively performance with Christopher’s warm, fluid swooping tone complemented by the band and Chirillo takes a nice horn like solo. “Way Down in New Orleans” starts at a languid, dreamy tempo with the interplay between Christopher’s warm woody tone accented by Chirillo’s single note responses, before the performance to a tango section in the original sheet music before transitioning back to the dreamy mood for the lovely close. Christopher’s “The River By the Road” is inspired by a quote from Sidney Bechet’s autobiography with bassist Cohen taking a solo on a performance that conjures up a picnic on a delightful spring day.

Tommy Ladnier is somewhat forgotten figure these days but he had a close association with Sidney Bechet, and his “Mojo Blues” is a lovely minor key tune with a bluesy mood and wonderful solos from all four. Bechet is inspiration for “You Gotta Treat it Gentle” another

lovely melody that Christopher develops and caresses. The quartet take what Blumenfeld describes as a deliberate tempo on the rarely performed Jelly Roll Morton ruminative composition, "My Home Is a Southern Town" followed by the delightfully lazy "Serenade." "The Remembering Song" heard in a full rendition, is an original that sounds so familiar yet new and the performance particularly sings.

Evan Christopher is a thoughtful person who continues to mine what some would consider traditional byways of jazz, yet brings a contemporary approach along with substantial lyricism and soulfulness to his music. "Remembering Song" is simply amongst the latest recordings of his sublime playing and music.

Ron Weinstock



SMITHSONIAN/FOLKWAYS CLASSIC PIANO BLUES SMITHSONIAN/FOLKWAYS

Smithsonian Institution's acquisition of the legendary Folkways catalog served music lovers well by preserving and keeping available the rich trove of music that label had recorded. It also has served as a vehicle for the Smithsonian to issue new recordings of diverse musical traditions from around the world, including live performances recorded at Smithsonian Folklife Festivals and programs. Included is the production of compilations drawn from the thousands of recordings in their catalog and in their archive. One such compilation is "Classic Piano Blues" that brings together recordings by Memphis Slim, Speckled Red, Victoria Spivey, Meade Lux Lewis, Roosevelt Sykes, Little Brother Montgomery, Lead Belly and James P. Johnson from Folkways albums with efforts by Booker T. Laury from the 1990s "Folk Masters" series of concerts and radio broadcasts and a 1976 Folklife Festival performance of "Dices, Dices" by Big 'Chief' Ellis (with John Cephas and Phil Wiggins accompanying him).

Jeff Place has compiled an interesting mix of material that is a credible introduction to the piano blues tradition, although some might suggest that there are some curious choices of material. The opening Memphis Slim "Tribute to Pete Johnson" is a rousing boogie woogie as is Meade Lux Lewis' "Medium Blues," a strong medium tempo variation on "Yancey Special," with a strong left hand bass. Booker T. Laury was heavily influenced by

Roosevelt Sykes as evident on his vigorous rendition of "Early in the Morning," that some might be more familiar with from Junior Wells' recordings of this Walter Roland number. I am surprised that a rendition of "The Dirty Dozens" by Speckled Red was not included, but this barrelhouse player is heard on a solid "How Long" attributed by Red to St. Louis pianist Walter Davis. Red's rendition of "Pinetop's Boogie Woogie" follows the more ragtime-tinged rendition by Little Brother Montgomery, and the contrasts in style is fascinating. Little Brother is good here and on his own "No Special Rider Blues," but this listener has heard stronger recordings by him.

Champion Jack Dupree's "Black Wolf Blues" is a European small group recording of Texas guitarist-vocalist, J.T. 'Funny Paper' Smith's "Howling Wolf." Big Chief Ellis (he was part Black Creek Indian) originally recorded "Dices Blues" for a small New York label, and reprised it here displaying the influence of the afore-mentioned Walter Davis in his bittersweet approach. Lead Belly's "Big Fat Woman" is more interesting for his mix of traditional lyrics as for his unusual piano style. Sam Price's "Parlour Blues" is another performance from the Folk Masters series and captures the famed pianist and talent scout in one of his last performances. While the booklet credits this to a performance at the Barns of Wolf Trap, I wonder if this was from the first season of Folk masters which I believe was at Carnegie Hall.

"Little Drops of Water" bring together the Deep Morgan St. Louis piano of Henry Brown with vocalist Edith Johnson, both of whom recorded in the heyday of blues recordings in the twenties. Another St. Louis pianist is Henry Townsend who does a sober rendition of Roosevelt Sykes' "All My Money Gone," in an approach that suggest Walter Davis' influence (Townsend played guitar on many of Davis' recordings). Sykes is represented by a solo version of "Sweet Old Chicago" which he had recorded in New Orleans for Imperial. This is a variant of "Sweet Home Chicago," but in any case Robert Johnson's recording itself is derived from "Kokomo Blues" and Sykes includes a verse not in Johnson's recording. Sykes takes a boogie solo here, unlike his Imperial recording that featured a hot guitar solo. Stride pianist James P. Johnson is heard with a small group for "Hesitation Blues" as well as backing Katherine Handy Lewis on her father's "Yellow Dog Blues," where she wonders where her "easy rider has gone." These are fine performances, although I am not sure they are classic piano blues.

As indicated, this serves as an introduction of the piano blues to be heard on Smithsonian Folkways. There is some marvelous music here and even what I might consider curious selections are entertaining. It comes with a booklet that includes Jeff Place's overview on piano blues and a discussion of the tracks as well as a biography and a list of pertinent Smithsonian piano blues releases. You can access the Smithsonian/Folkways catalog through the Smithsonian's website, www.si.edu. The Folkways link is <http://www.folkways.si.edu/index.aspx>, and you can order or purchase as downloads there.

Ron Weinstock



TIM BERNÉ
Snakeoil
 ECM

Compelling chamber jazz, marked by extended themes, decidedly angular harmonics and frequent ensemble subdivisions, is the fare on *Snakeoil*. Alto saxophonist Berne's "heads" are bold, occasionally frenetic affairs, consistently of a length that seems to take them around corners, tracing convoluted pathways. These routes typically lead to solo or duo breakdowns, contrasting with the melodies by their contemplative character.

The ensemble is not short on personality- Berne's tonal brashness is balanced by bass clarinetist/clarinetist Oscar Noriega's warm, woody presence. Absent a bass partner, percussionist Ches Smith contributes much of the music's "spatial" sense, with pianist Matt Mitchell ultimately sketching out its parameters. A most engaging set.

Duane Verh



SUZANNE & THE BLUES CHURCH
The Cost of Love
 GORGEOUS TONE MUSIC

A debut album by Suzanne (Thomas) & the Blues Church, "The Cost of Love" (Gorgeous Tone Music) is a mix of promise and experience. A Korean Amerasian, she was raised by an African-American couple and had rich musical experience growing up including being tutored by Jimmy Smith on organ at the age of six and recently playing bass and guitar with "A Taste of Honey." Despite a varied body of musical experiences, blues has become her musical home and her musical

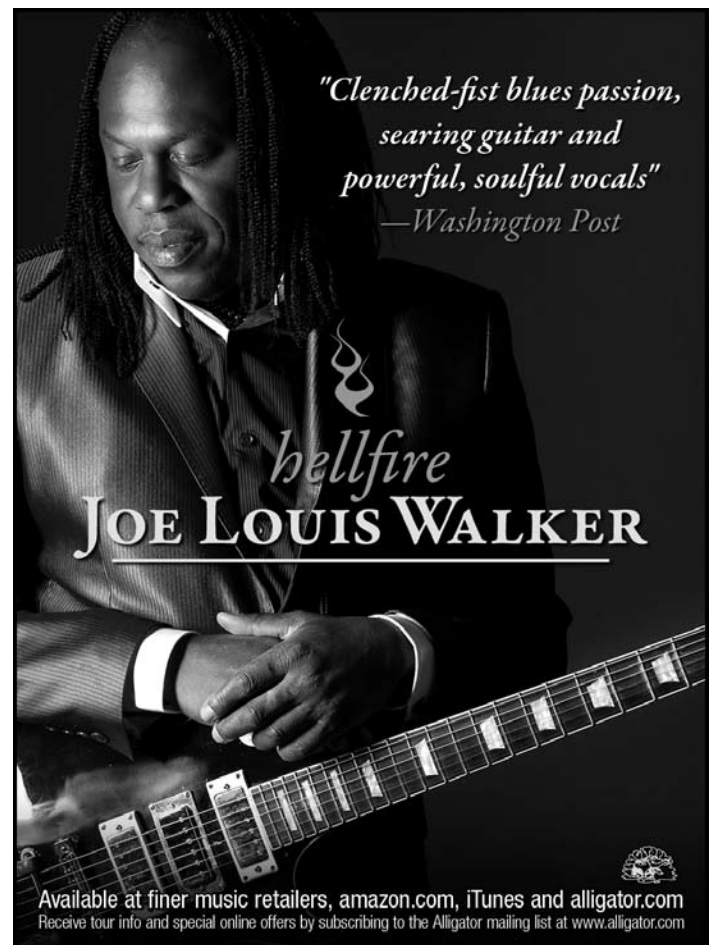
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growth has led to this release.

She's supported by a number of musicians including Jerry Jones-Haskins on drums, Bruce Evans, Tyree, Rev Charles Jones and Deacon Jones on organ, Jimmy Z on harmonica, and Ray Bailey. What is impressive is her husky vocals and her direct guitar playing that starts up on "Cheatin' On Me," and followed by the title track. There are a few covers, one being Otis Rush's "All Your Love (I Miss Loving)," where her playing has a fuzzy sound. "Pay Day Loan" is an intriguing topical song about waiting in a long line and the lady behind the counter giving her a hard time with a chugging rhythm and some thoughtful, yet biting, guitar.

On the rendition of Ray Bailey's "Musts Been Gone 2 Long," it sounds like Suzanne's vocal is recorded over a scratchy recording. It ends up sounding like a curious experiment. Ray Bailey provides the acoustic guitar intro on her fascinating talking blues, "Dusty 6 String Box," with BR Millon's guitar accompanying her as she weaves her tale about her mom telling her about her father who comes out of the fields like he owned the dirt he worked on, not knowing whether he was man or angel or soldier of the devil himself. "Poor Man's Dream" is a solid funky blues, while "Set Me Free" is a down-in-the alley slow blues with overdubbed and contrasting guitar leads and vocal parts.

The closing "Mr. Bailey's Blues," has lyrical references to the crossroads and Robert Johnson and



wanting to play like Ray Bailey. With slashing guitar, it closes this recording with Suzanne singing against a choppy shuffle groove. "The Cost of Love" is a solid blues album. Except for the over-the-top guitar on Buddy Guy's "Damn Right (I Got the Blues)," her playing is solid, idiomatic modern blues guitar and she comes across as a straightforward, heartfelt vocalist. She is an emerging talent to keep an eye on.

Ron Weinstock



ALAN LEATHERMAN

Detour Ahead
AJL MUSIC

Vocalist Alan Leatherman delivers 11 tunes by Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn, Cole Porter, and other composers, with backing from Rick Germanson (piano), Gerald Cannon (bass) and Steve Williams (drums).

Houston native Leatherman shows smooth elegance in his vocals that could cause one to label him a "crooner" in the style of Sinatra, Bennett, Harry Connick, Jr. and similar singers. The best tracks come near the end of the studio set with Leatherman and crew delivering bluesy expressive renditions of the Charlie Parker/King Pleasure standard "Parker's Mood" and Ellington's "I Ain't Got Nothin' But the Blues."

His sidemen contribute greatly to the album's success: Cannon has worked with McCoy Tyner; Williams was Shirley Horn's long-time drummer and the ultra-talented Germanson is a mainstay on the New York City scene.

Inspired as a youngster by recorded music of The Spinners, Stevie Wonder and Nancy Wilson and, later, Hip Hop and Neo Soul, Leatherman began performing in local venues as a high school student and continued throughout college during which he was awarded by the National Foundation for Advancement in Arts. Ignoring his natural talent, Leatherman studied Economics and Political Science at Syracuse University, after which he briefly entered the corporate world before returning to music and studying at Juilliard's evening division and New York University as a Masters candidate in Vocal Performance. Leatherman met Germanson soon after and established an ongoing working collaboration.

Leatherman has a pleasant voice and remains true to the lyrics. Yet, he seems to lack the swinging verve and dramatic feeling of famous jazz crooners until he

injects the blues. I'm hoping he'll discover what really excites him. I'm not sure that it is just purely jazz.

Nancy Ann Lee



JOE LOUIS WALKER

Hellfire
ALLIGATOR

Joe Louis Walker recently joined Alligator's roster of artists and his first album for that label, "Hellfire," has just been released. It is produced by Tom Hambridge, who produced Buddy Guy's recent recordings. Hambridge also plays drums and contributes songs to this release. Of the supporting personnel, the only names I recognize are pianist and organist Reese Wynans as well The Jordanares, who contribute backing vocals on a couple of tracks. Hambridge had a hand in the first five tracks here, while Walker himself added five new songs as well. Having been listening to Walker since his first release in 1986, "Cold Is The Night," he has produced a number of the best blues albums of the last quarter century. He certainly is passionate here, a term Bruce Iglauer uses in his liner notes, and there is much to enjoy, although not everything is perfect.

The album starts with the title track, a gospel-laced song with an impassioned, gritty vocal about avoiding the Devil's lure. He plays a blues-rock guitar solo with a nasty distorted tone that is unpleasant to listen to and undermines the appeal of the impassioned performance. The second track, "I Won't Do That," is a nice original with Walker singing about being faithful and that he won't cheat or let his woman down. Walker adds a searing solo here. "Ride All Night" sounds like a Rolling Stones inspired rocker on which Walker convincingly sings and plays.

Walker picks up the harmonica for a rocking shuffle, "I'm On To You." The lyric is about knowing about the bad things his woman is doing. In addition to doubling on the harmonica here, he plays a crisp guitar solo. "What's It Worth" has a nice lyric although it would have benefited from toning down the hard rock edges heard during the song's choruses.

"Soldier For Jesus" is the first of Walker's originals, and has a fervent vocal with the Jordanares providing support. Walker brings a soulful edge to "I Know Why" a lovely blues-ballad. "Too Drunk to Drive" is an amusing and delightful excursion into "rock and roll," with

rollicking piano and driving guitar. The lively “Don’t Cry” is another performance with a spiritual message on which he sings that instead of saving his money he is now saving his soul. The disc closes with a cover of Hank Snow’s country classic, “I’m Movin’ On,” played with a boogie groove that Walker places his personal stamp on.

Walker has more of a presence on this recording than on some of his other recent ones. Hambridge’s production must be credited, although as noted at a few places the playing gets a little over-the-top. Even if uneven, “Hellfire” is still a significant addition to Walker’s body of recordings.

Ron Weinstock



RODRIGO Y GABRIELA AND C.U.B.A.

Area 52
ATO RECORDS

Until listening to “Area 52” by Rodrigo Y Gabriela and C.U.B.A. (ATO Records) I was not familiar with the acoustic guitar duo Rodrigo Y Gabriela. Listening to this disc I discovered that they initially were playing in a thrash metal band in their native Mexico. Going to Europe, they busked as an acoustic guitar duo, rooted in flamenco style and playing a wide range of material that included covers of metal and Led Zepelin, although I must admit I have not heard their prior recordings.

This album, produced by Peter Asher, has them with by jazz pianist Alan Wilson who had a decade ago given them a jazz salsa recording with Latin rhythms. Along with Wilson, they engaged some Cuban musicians to lend their rhythmic feel to this project. These musicians are the Cuba Universal Band Association from which C.U.B.A. derives. Prominent among these musicians Feliciano Arango Noa on bass and the percussion of Otto Santana Selis.

The intent was to redo songs from their two prior recordings. However, after recording in Cuba, they felt they could add more guitars and also added some rock flavor to get away from a strictly traditional Cuban, and Latin sound. They also brought in some guest collaborators for this purpose as well which had pre-production and production in several countries.

It is this fabulous mix of material, artists and performances that immediately captured my attention and led to my enthusiasm about the many pleasures to be heard here.

Cuban rhythms greet the duos opening guitar figures for “San Domingo,” with Wilson’s piano helping establish the mood as the horns and strings add to the heat and Gabriela experiments with a wah wah pedal. Samuel Formell Alfonso, of the great band Los Van Van, is guest drummer on this exhilarating ride.

“Hanuman” was a composition inspired by Carlos Santana and on this reworking Rodrigo added some electric guitar to his flamenco playing on a number that certainly evokes the great guitarist set against some horns and violin in the arrangement with some interesting flute from Jorge Lilibre Sorzano. The drumming of John Tempesta (of White Zombie fame) adds to the rock flavor over the hot afro-Cuban grooves.

An undeniable factor to the duo’s success is their unique mix of various traditions and style. On “Ixtapa,” after Wilson’s sedate opening is followed by the acoustic guitar lead to state the theme, there is a brief segment featuring percussion before a new movement brings in Anoushka Shankar on sitar who takes an extended, intensive solo followed by the vibrant flamenco styled guitars of the leaders on a mesmerizing performance.

Carles Benavent guests on bass (with Noa on second bass) and Carlota Teresa Polledo Noriega guests on vocal for “11:11,” with its mercurial tempo and more exquisite playing from the two (including a solo by Rodrigo on a Fender lap steel guitar) driven along by the brilliant rhythm section.

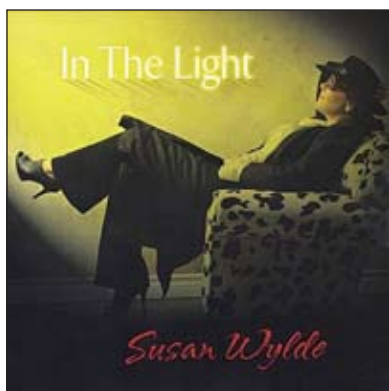
Noriega takes her vocal during the closing moments with C.U.B.A. chanting in chorus as the performance fades. Other highlights include “Master Maqui,” on which the Le Trio Joubran add ouds to the mix of percussion and horn, and “Diablo Rojo, with the fiery rhythms and stunning flamenco accents of the guitars of Rodrigo & Gabriela as the horns add their brassy counterpoint.

In addition to the nine performances on the CD, this comes with a DVD containing a fascinating documentary discussing the recording of this album. This recording has been a revelation and this writer has already ordered one of their earlier recordings being impressed by this release.

Also, Rodrigo Y Gabriela will be touring North America this spring (<http://www.rodgab.com/tour-dates.html>) including dates at Massey Hall in Toronto, Radio City Music Hall in NYC, Warner Theatre in Washington DC and the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. If I was going to be at JazzFest this year, they would be my must see act no matter what act might be on at the same time.

Ron Weinstock

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SUSAN WYLDE

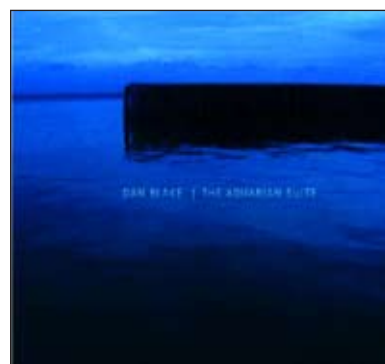
In The Light
SUN, MOON AND STARS

While many blues fans keep their geographic gaze fixed on Chicago and points south, top notch blues have always sprung from points well north of there with countless acts from Canada such as Jeff Healey, the Downchild Blues Band and King Biscuit Boy contributing mightily to the genre.

Canadian singer/keyboard player Susan Wylde stakes her claim to a blues legacy on this disc. Joined by Jack deKeyser on guitar and a large band including sax, trumpet, harmonica and keys, this diverse collection includes everything from her nod to Healey's late career side-trips into Dixieland style jazz, *Lovely Push-Up Bra* and the Bessie Smith staple, *Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out*, to the jazz/blues showstopper made famous by Etta James, *At Last*, to jump blues, *That's What You Do To Me* and straight blues on the self-penned *One Real Man*, B.B. King's *The Thrill Is Gone* and on Johnny Guitar Watson's classic, *Three Hours Past Midnight*. While most of the material moves at a mid to up-tempo pace allowing Wylde to power through the material in the comfortable upper register of her voice, the real nuances in her wondrous voice are revealed on the slower tunes such as the Hoagy Carmichael standard, *Georgia on My Mind* and the heartfelt homage to the crescent city, *I Can't Tell New Orleans Goodbye*.

Even though most of the covers are played pretty straight and don't reinvent the originals in a way to make them her own, Wylde's self-penned originals and expansive vocals as well as the crack band's solid charts make this an enjoyable listen. **Mark Smith**

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DAN BLAKE

The Aquarian Suite
BJU RECORDS

Saxophonist and composer Dan Blake has a new release on BJU (Brooklyn Jazz Underground) Records, "The Aquarian Suite," where he leads a piano-less quartet with Jason Palmer on trumpet, Jorge Roeder on bass and Richie Barshay on drums. Blake has quite a background having performed with such artists as Esperanza Spalding, Anthony Braxton, Kenny Werner, Danilo Perez, and Ricardo Gallo.

Listening to Blake's compositions and the performances here, one musical point of reference is the classic Ornette Coleman Quartet and bands such as Old Dreams and New Dreams. While perhaps having a bit less overt blues-flavor, Blake and his quartet play marvelously. The horns display quite a bite along with their very expressive soloing, at times floating over the foundation provided by Roeder and Barshay.

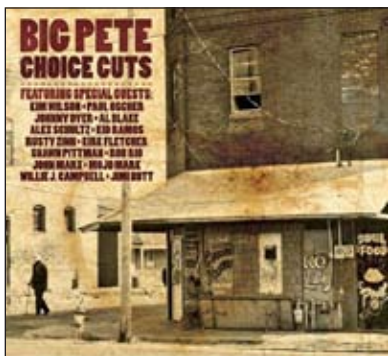
But this duo enlivens the tempo for the horns who engage in an intriguing dialogue on "Mister Who," fluidly negotiating mood and tempo changes. The mood changes on the lament, "The Best of Intentions," with the two horns interweaving their lines. "How's It Done" starts with the rhythm section, especially Roeder, setting the mood before Blake takes a torrid tenor sax solo followed by Palmer who starts in a relaxed vein but builds heat as his solo goes on. Barshay also takes a crisp drum break here.

The press release accompanying for "The Aquarian Suite" notes that many of the performances here reference masters of the bebop era so that "Mister Who" takes cues from Monk's "Skippy," while "How's It Done" was an effort to evoke the classic Clifford Brown and Max Roach Quintet. The composition "Aquarian" is dedicated to Anthony Braxton whom Blake refers to as an icon of creative music. While it might have been helpful if Blake's comments on his music had been included, the performances more than stand without explanation.

The mix of Blake's stimulating writing with the high level of the performances, both in terms of the intelligent and spirited solo, and high level of the ensemble playing result in this excellent release.

It is available from Amazon, Brooklyn Jazz Underground Records (<http://www.bjurecords.com/>), Dan Blake (<http://danielblake.net/index.htm>), cdbaby.com and other retailers.

Ron Weinstock



BIG PETE Choice Cuts

DELTA GROOVE PRODUCTIONS

Pieter 'Big Pete' van der Pluijm is from the Netherlands and was musically inspired by the mix of classic Chicago style blues and punk attitude that the late Lester Butler displayed before immersing himself in a whole range of blues. This singer and harmonica player was heard by Randy Chortkorff who signed him to Delta Groove, which has released "Choice Cuts," a strong release that might be described as "West Coast Blues" in the vein of Williams Clarke, Junior Watson and the like.

On "Choice Cuts," Big Pete is backed by a splendid band including Alex Schultz on guitar, Willie J. Campbell on bass and Jimi Bott on drums with guest appearances by, among others, Johnny Dyer, Al Blake, Kim Wilson, Paul Oscher, Kirk Fletcher, Shawn Pittman, Kid Ramos, and Rob Rio. He comes across as an engaging singer (and one would be hard-pressed to detect that he was not a native English speaker) and harmonica player throughout this collection.

The songs are 'covers,' but are not overly familiar and Big Pete turns in driving, engaging performances. The tone is established with the tough rendition of Lester Butler's "Driftin'" and followed by a lesser known Albert King number "Can't You See What You're Doing To Me." Kim Wilson plays harmonica for the solid rendition of Jimmy Rogers' "Act Like You Love Me," while Kirk Fletcher provides some striking guitar to the covers of a Muddy Waters' classic "Just To Be With You," and "Hey Lawdy Mama." Alex Schultz gets a nice spot on Slim Harpo's "Don't Start Me Crying Now."

The rendition of the Billy Boy Arnold Vee-Jay recording "I Was Fooled" is taken at a bit slower tempo than the original, with the band pushing the groove along. Kid Ramos channels Willie Johnson on his lead guitar on the rendition of Howlin' Wolf "Rockin' Daddy," with Rob Rio laying down some boogie-woogie piano. Johnny Dyer takes the vocal on Jimmy Rogers' "You Left Me With A Broken Heart," with fine harp from Big Pete and some great piano from Rob Rio. Big Pete's fat harmonica tone is displayed on Little Walter's "Just Your Fool," while William Clarke's "Chromatic Crumbs" showcases Pete's swinging facility on that type of harmonica.

This is a fine collection of spirited blues perfor-

mances that may not break any new ground, but certainly introduces us to a spirited and impressive performer who will delight fans of contemporary West Coast and harmonica blues.

Ron Weinstock



CHLOE BRISSON Blame It On My Youth CHLOEBRISSEON.COM

Choosing "Blame It On My Youth" for the title is the ideal sort of tongue-in-cheekery with which to cast the spotlight on one of the youngest faces in the increasingly youthful (think Esperanza) and near-exclusively woman's (think the past decade) world that is jazz vocals in this young century.

This disc, the 17-year old Ms. Brisson's sophomore effort, finds her backed by a veteran cast, including trumpeter Marvin Stamm and guest co-vocalist Shelia Jordan. Her presence in such company sounds unforced and confident. And if her youthful pipes provide the delicate timbre to her readings of works by Gershwin, Sammy Cahn, Cole Porter or Antonio Carlos Jobim, the listener is left to speculate where her remarkably mature sense of phrasing comes from. The future of vocal jazz looks bright indeed.

Duane Verh



HERITAGE BLUES ORCHESTRA And Still I Rise RAISIN' MUSIC

At the last Pocono Blues Festival, one of the acts was Bill Sims Jr. and his daughter Chaney doing a variety of material rooted in deep acoustic blues, spirituals and field hollers. Sims was a fantastic guitarist and vocalist and his daughter sang marvelously as

well. It was to my delight that a new recording by a new group, Heritage Blues Orchestra, "And Still I Rise (Raisin' Music)" featured them along with Junior Mack in a collection of blues, hollers and spirituals that bring a sophistication to them while preserving the rawness of the source material.

This album by "H.B.O." is produced by Larry Skoller and also includes the harmonica of Vincent Bucher (Matthew Skoller on one track), the drums and percussion of Kenny 'Beedy Eyes' Smith, and a horn section led by Bruno Wilhelm, which provide fresh settings for some of these songs.

With Smith emphatically laying down the rhythm, Bucher wails on harmonica, and Mack and Sims offering a delta-flavored guitar accompaniment, Mack delivers a strong vocal on Son House's "Clarksdale Moan," with horns added during the performance. Chaney takes a vocal on "C-Line Woman" with Mack and Sims providing a response as Kenny Smith provides the second-line rhythms and Clark Gayton offers a bass line on his sousaphone/tuba. I believe it is Mack that handles the vocal on "Big Legged Woman," with the horn section adding musical coloring.

The horns are more prominent as is Bucher's energetic harmonica on a hot shuffle rendition of "Catfish Blues," with Bill Sims strongly delivering the lyrics with some interesting interplay between harmonica and the horns. The interplay between the vocals and horns marks Leadbelly's "Go Down Hannah," with a lovely vocal on this dirge by Chaney Sims. I believe it is Junior Mack that plays the driving slide guitar behind the three-part harmonies on the spiritual "Get Right Church," as Smith emphatically lays down the groove.

The remainder of this release is equally stirring and moving. The playing by Sims, Mack, Bucher and Smith is terrific throughout. Smith's ability to play in very contrasting and different rhythmic styles is noteworthy. The horns certainly are interesting, adding rhythmic punch to these recordings even if not always seamlessly integrated into the performances. The horns do stand out during "In the Morning" and the closing "Hard Times."

The latter traditional blues is transformed into a three-movement performance, opening with a stirring vocal by Chaney that hints at Skip James, followed by a mournful horn interlude and concluding with Junior Mack taking a vocal chorus to kick off a brief funky jam that fades out during Wilhelm's fervent tenor sax solo.

Still, the foundation of the Heritage Blues Orchestra are the voices of Junior Mack, Bill Sims, Jr., and Chaney Sims who bring such an impressive range of moods and emotions in the marvelous vocals here.

This trio could do a recording without instrumental accompaniment and be as compelling as they are here. "And I Shall Rise" is a compelling, contemporary exploration of African-American musical roots.

Ron Weinstock



JC STYLLES
Exhilaration & Other States
 MOTÉMA MUSIC

Winning a contest on one of the jazz websites, my prize was the Motéma CD by Australian guitarist JC Styllles, "Exhilaration and Other States." I was completely unfamiliar with Styllles prior to this contest, but this organ trio album with organist Pat Bianchi and drummer Lawrence Leathers has quickly become a personal favorite.

Exhilarating is the feeling from the album as the band comes out smoking on Eddie Marshall's "Knucklebean," a feverish blues that illustrates the empathy between the three. Stevie Wonder's "I Can't Help" has a slightly slower tempo, but Styllles continues with his fleet, driving attack. The temperature drops for the lovely Billy Eckstine ballad "I Want To Talk About You," with Styllles cleanly articulating each note and employing judicious use of sustain for a lovely performance. Styllles confesses a love for ballads that is also reflected in a moody and haunting rendition of Billie Holiday's "Don't Explain."

Cole Porter's "Love For Sale" is handled energetically as Styllles again dazzles with his deft and imaginative playing set against his terrific bandmates. Other numbers in the eclectic group of songs include Wayne Shorter's "Pinocchio," with its unusual structure that the trio readily handles, and R. Kelly's "It Seems Your Ready," which provides a nice late feel contrasting with the fire of the Shorter number.

Styllles original, "Samba Steps," is based on the chord progression of Coltrane's "Giant Steps," but handled with a Samba feel, and provides a rousing finish to one of the best organ-guitar recordings of recent times. Styllles, Bioanchi and Leathers certainly caught my ear with this recording, and I look forward to more from these three.

Ron Weinstock

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MUD MORGANFIELD
Son of the Seventh Son
 SEVERN RECORDS

The eldest son of the legendary Muddy Waters, Mud Morganfield was originally given a drum set by his father when he was 7, and began singing in the early 1980s, but it was not until 2005 when Mary Lane coaxed him on stage that he started to treat music as his profession in a serious fashion. Appearing at the 2007 Chicago Blues Festival led to interest in him similar to that of his younger brother Big Bill Broonzy. He has had some earlier recordings, but now he has a new recording, "Son of the Seventh Son," produced by Bob Corritore on Severn Records that should help take his recognition and career to the next level.

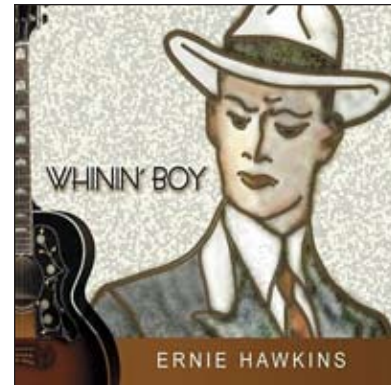
Backing Morganfield's vocals are guitarists Rick F and Billy Flynn, pianist Barrelhouse Chuck (Goering); bassist E.G. McDaniel with Kenny 'Beedy Eyes' Smith on drums. Producer Corritore and Harmonica Hinds share the harmonica duties for these February 2011 recordings. With the exception of a couple covers of Muddy Waters recordings and originals by Studebaker John Grimaldi and Billy Flynn, Mud Morganfield contributed originals and the performances are pretty much in his father's style.

From the opening notes of the reworking of J.T. Brown's "Short Dress Woman" to his own "Blues In My Shoes," celebrating his father's legacy, Mud Morganfield evokes his legendary father. The backing band does a solid job of evoking the Muddy Waters Band sound of the mid-sixties through the end of Waters' celebrated career. This is a solid band that sounds so at home playing in the style of Waters.

Mud may not quite match his father's style, but he comes close. The level of the performances are solid throughout although several stand out including the opening reworking of his father's recording of "Short Dress Woman," Studebaker John's "Son of the Seventh Son," the amusing "Catfishing," (where he goes all the way to the bottom because that's where all the fat cats go) on which Barrelhouse Chuck is on organ and Harmonica Hinds is on harp, and "Health" for which Corritore shines in his harp accompaniment as Mud strongly sings about having money and fame don't mean anything if one does not have good health. I am not sure who takes the guitar solo on "Loco Motor," but the guitarist does a good job of evoking Jimmy 'Fast

Finger' Dawkins in his guitar solo.

As suggested, Mud does a strong job of conjuring up his late father's blues and the backing band certainly contributes to the overall feel. Certainly if there can "Blues Brothers" tribute bands, the eldest son of one of the greatest blues artists can do his part in keeping his father's sound alive, especially when he contributes a number of strong originals that he ably performs in his father's style, and is supported by an excellent band for a release sure to interest fans of classic Chicago blues. Release date is March 20, 2012. *Ron Weinstock*



ERNIE HAWKINS
Whinin' Boy
 CORONA

This new album by represents a change in pace for fingerstyle guitarist Ernie Hawkins. Hawkins, a disciple of the legendary Reverend Gary Davis, has distinguished himself as a masterful guitarist in the blues and ragtime vein pioneered by Davis, as well as a teacher of that and other acoustic blues styles. The present album has him playing material in the vein of early classic jazz and pop in small group settings with the contributions of Paul Consentino on clarinet, Joe Dallas on trombone and James Moore on trumpet worth mentioning.

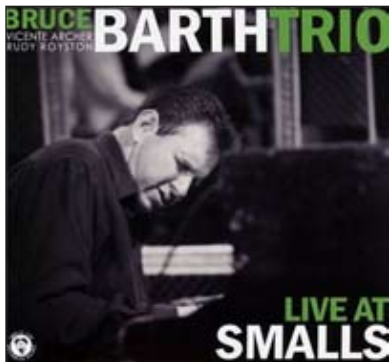
The album has him in a variety of settings including the skittle jazz band format with clarinet, trumpet, trombone, tuba and washboard backing for Jelly Roll Morton's title track that opens the album with his understated vocal and simple rhythmic guitar. Clarinet is spotlighted on a reworking of "Song (of the Islands)," associated with Bix Beiderbecke as Hawkins' comps in a pianistic vein. Dallas quotes "The Wedding March" to open the rendition of "Makin' Whoopee," with its wry opening lyric about weddings and that it's not so bad being the groom. Hawkins offers a simply delivered vocal. "The Southbound Sneak" is a slow original Hawkins rag-flavored original with tuba and trombone followed by a rendition of the venerable "Basin Street Blues," with a fuller band.

The amusing "My Poodle Has Fleas" has Hawkins adept ukulele backed by tuba and washboard. It is followed by a rendition of Little Brother Montgomery's "Vicksburg Blues," with nice harmonica from Marc Reisman. It is interesting to listen to this piano blues

transposed to guitar. “I’m Coming Virginia,” associated with Bix Beiderbecke and Frankie Trumbauer, is reworked into a pensive guitar feature for Hawkins. Louis Armstrong’s “Weather Bird (Rag)” is reworked to showcase Hawkins’ adept finger picking and clarinet from Consentino. Bill Bill Broonzy’s “Shuffle Rag” has nice harmonica while Hawkins evokes Broonzy’s early 1930’s guitar style. The skiffle-jazz band treatment of Rev. Gary Davis’ “There Is A Table In Heaven” with trombone and clarinet (and brass bass) provides a fresh take on this performance.

This is an entertaining recording although Hawkins’ guitar is not as prominent here as on other recordings.

Ron Weinstock



BRUCE BARTH TRIO

Live at Smalls
SMALLSLIVE

Among newer releases on SmallsLive in its “Live at Smalls” series is one by the Bruce Barth Trio. Pianist Barth is accompanied by the bass of Vincente Archer and drummer Rudy Royston on location recordings from the Greenwich Village club that captured a late September 2010 performance. I am most familiar with Barth from his work on Terrell Stafford’s excellent celebration of the music of Billy Strayhorn, “This Side of Strayhorn,” (MaxJazz), but this is the first album under his name I have heard. He has a pretty extensive resume including a stint with Terence Blanchard and a number of prior recordings as a leader.

With the exception of a rendition of “Good Morning Heartache,” the trio performs Barth’s original compositions. The opening “Oh Yes I Will” is not typical of several performances in that it opens in a pensive, impressionistic manner before Barth’s playing builds heat with Royston pushing things along and Archer provides a steady anchor. “Sunday” opens somewhat in a similar fashion as it develops in a similar fashion before the arpeggios are contrasted with block chords before it closes more pensively. There is a sweet ballad “Yama,” and the lovely version of “Good Morning Heartache,” finding Barth playing with great restraint and in a spare fashion while Royston provides understated percussive support.

This listener’s favorite track might be “Almost Blues.” This is a terrific, spirited hard bop blues with a Monkish tinge with some driving playing with Roy-

ston’s rhythmic accents pushing it along before he solos and then trades fours with Barth. Archer gets to solo on “Peaceful Place” and the spirited “Wilsonian Alto” which has a bit of Latin spice in the performance. “Afternoon in LLeida,” is a lovely performance mixing in Barth’s manner of setting a mood while providing contrast with some bluesy passages.

As usual with SmallsLive recordings, this is handsomely produced and the sound is quite fine. Barth’s crisp, yet feathery touch is complemented by his sidemen for a thoughtful and lively recording. I will be checking out some of his past catalog. It’s available from Amazon and other vendors.

Ron Weinstock



GREG NAGY

Feel Toward None
VIZZTONE

This writer first was introduced to singer-guitarist Greg Nagy when he was guitarist with the excellent blues and soul band Root Doctor at the Pocono Blues Festival a few years ago. Shortly afterwards, he left that fine band and embarked on his own career as a leader. I missed his debut album “Walk That Fine Line,” which was highly praised, but have been enjoying his latest recording, “Fell Toward None” (Vizztone/Big O Records) that displays his mix of classic and modern blues with a strong soul-R&B tinge with some rock accents.

It’s an album that features Nagy and a band that includes Jim Shaneberger on bass, Kevin DePree on drums and percussion, Jim Alfredson on keyboards with Glenn Brown adding percussion on one track and the Motor City horns on three selections. With the exception of the opening “Pack it Up,” the songs are originals by Nagy and his band members. The strong modern urban soul-blues base of the music is evident from the brassy opening track with tight band work, strong singing by Nagy and fluid stinging guitar. As a vocalist he comes across as an equal to say Tad Robinson, Darrell Nulisch or Delbert McClinton (in his bluesier side) to mention a couple of similar strong blues-eyed singers in the vein.

When he kicks off the rocking shuffle “Wishing Well,” with some guitar effects, his nuanced use of such effects distinguishes this from the average heavy-

handed blues-rock rendition of such material. And those rockers likely could not convincingly deliver a soulful tune like “Be With You,” which is enhanced by the Motor City Horns’ punchy brass. A similar mood follows on “I’ll Know I’m Ready,” a bluesy lament with a warm, relaxed vocal and an effective understated accompaniment creating the mood on a delightful performance.

The rest of the album exhibits variety in material and accompaniments that showcase Nagy’s considerable vocal and guitar capabilities along with that of his strong band. There is exciting guitar work on “Can’t Take It No More,” the tight funk of “Let It Roll,” the country-soul feel of “Still Means The World to Me,” the atmospheric title track, and the witty lyrics inspired by today’s social media, “Facebook Mama,” (which is set to a Texas shuffle groove with his guitar sounding like he is playing through a Leslie speaker such as Buddy Guy played through on the Junior Wells’ Delmark recording of “Hoodoo Man Blues”).

“Fell Toward None” is an intelligently produced and performed recording that is full of soulful vocals, superior fretwork and focused accompaniments. Greg Nagy and band certainly are growing their reputation with this outstanding recording. Greg’s website is www.gregnagy.com and Big O Records is www.big-O-records.com.

Ron Weinstock



PHAROAH SANDERS

Village of the Pharaohs / Wisdom Through Music
IMPULSE RECORDS

Among the recent reissues of classic Impulse releases as part of the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Impulse, there is a CD containing two of his albums, “Village of the Pharaohs/ Wisdom Through Music.” These albums date from the early 1970s after his path making earlier Impulse recordings that made use of rhythmic trance-inducing vamps and a raw, blues-rooted tenor sax style that on these albums may have some rough edges, but also less of the high crying overblowing of some of his earlier recordings including those he made working with John Coltrane.

He also made use of vocals including wordless chanting. “Wisdom Through Music” has a smaller group including pianist Joe Bonner, bassist Cecil McBee, drummer Norman Connors and percussionist Lawrence

Killian, all of whom are part of the larger group on “Village of the Pharaohs” which also includes bassists Stanley Clarke and Calvin Hill, drummer Jimmy Hopps and vocalist and percussionist Sedatrius Brown.

The title track of “Village of the Pharaohs” is in three parts with Sanders on soprano sax sounding like a cross between a snake charmer and a rhythm and blues wailer, and in the third part has an exchange in vocalizing and chants with Brown. “Mansion Worlds” is another number, which evokes “The Creator Has a Master Plan,” with Bonner setting forth the theme with a driving vamp and percussion with Sanders adding his soprano. “Went Like It Came” comes off as a rhythm’n’blues gospel infected blues with Sanders on tenor sax and Sedatrius Brown featured on the bluesy vocal. I had the pleasure of seeing this multi-talented woman (a terrific organist as well as singer) over a decade ago in Washington DC, but I understand she has devoted herself to gospel music.

In many respects, Sanders music was world jazz before that term or ‘world music’ was coined and heard on “Wisdom Through Music.” African grooves are most evident on “High Life,” with Sanders leading the rough house vocalizing of the Afro-Beat grooves before taking a robust tenor sax solo with some honks and squeals, followed by “Love Is Everywhere,” where he chants (mainly the title phrase) with the band echoing his chant. The title track finds Sanders playing soprano



with a bagpipes quality with an intriguing backing.

These are perhaps not the best known of Sanders' Impulse albums, but they certainly should be of interest to those who have followed his music (and may have overlooked these when they came out like I did) as well as those interested in the important output of the Impulse label.

Ron Weinstock



KILBORN ALLEY

4

BLUE BELLA RECORDS

The Chicago based Kilborn Alley returns with a new recording for the Blue Bella label, "4." This quartet is comprised of Andrew Duncanson on vocals and guitar, Josh Stimmel on guitar, Chris Breen on bass and Ed O'Hara on drums. On this album they are joined by Gary Hundt on harmonica, Vince Salerno on saxophone and Travis Reed on piano on several tracks. Reviewing their release, "Tear Chicago Down," I wrote in 2008 that Kilborn Alley plays "inspired and are far removed from those that slavishly copy the old masters as well as the one-dimensional guitar-rockers." Much can be said of the new recording, the band's fourth (hence the title).

Produced by Nick Moss, "4" is comprised solely of originals that the band members wrote. The material is solid and the performances blend the classic Chicago blues sound that is at the group's root with some funk and soul. The opening "Rents House Boogies" opens things with an Eddie Taylor-styled boogie blues with Hundt's harmonica adding embellishments to the strong groove the band lays down. The shuffle "Wandering" also features Hundt's harmonica behind the easy rocking groove and some stinging, and rocking guitar fills. On both songs, Duncanson distinguishes himself as a vocalist imparting a yearning quality to the performance.

"Couple of Days (Change My Ways)" has a melody and lyric suggestive of some of Tyrone Davis' recordings with the band ably handling the funky groove, while "Fast Heart Beat" sports a funky groove and stingy guitar suggestive of Buster Benton and Magic Slim. Reed's organ and Salerno's sax contribute to the mood on the soulful ballad "You Were My Woman," with an outstanding vocal. "Good Advice" is another soulful performance, while on the hard-hitting "Sitting On the

Bank" they get back to their deep Chicago roots with a melody derived from "Rolling and Tumbling." On "Dressed Up Messed Up" they kick up some rock and roll with Reed adding some rollicking piano.

In addition to the solid songs, there is an instrumental, "Argyles and a Do-Rag," allowing Duncanson and Stimmel to display their contrasting guitar styles. "Going Hard" is a lengthy late-night slow blues that builds with intensity over its ten plus minutes. It is the closing selection of these wonderfully performed and recorded fresh, blues performances.

Ron Weinstock



LYNNE ARRIALE

Convergence

MOTÉMA MUSIC

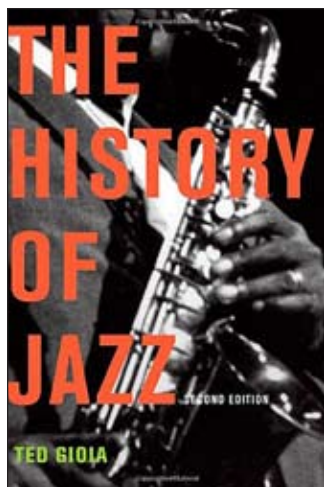
"Convergence" (Motéma Music), issued in 2011, is the 12th album as a leader by the remarkable pianist-composer Lynne Arriale. While many of her recordings are in the trio vein, this release, like its predecessor "Nuance," has her exploring the quartet format (although several selections are with just a trio). Her band is excellent, anchored by bassist Omer Avital and drummer Anthony Pinciotti with Bill McHenry on tenor sax. Six of the eleven recordings are Arriale compositions, while the five other songs come from such disparate sources as Sting, Deborah Harry and Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails.

There is some strong music here from the scorching opening "Elements," an original with Arriale displaying a dynamic sense with the terrific rhythm section and tough tenor sax. At the same time, she does a lovely rendition of The Beatles' "Here Comes The Sun," exhibiting her melodicism. Another reworking of a rock classic is her rearrangement of Deborah Harry's "Call me," slowing down the Blondie recording and McHenry is sparkling here. Bassist Avital is featured on Avital's flamenco inspired "Dance of the Rain," while the Stones' "Paint It Black," is also imaginatively reworked by Arriale and this stellar band.

In her liner notes, Arriale notes the multiple sources of musical influence and inspiration that include jazz, pop, world music and 'Americana,' and she observes, "It was such a joy to experience the 'convergence' of all the people and sounds that made up this recording." This joy can be heard in the music heard on this wonderful album.

Ron Weinstock

books



THE HISTORY OF JAZZ SECOND EDITION

Ted Gioia
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 2011

Ted Gioia has updated his "The History of Jazz," which is welcome for those looking for a concise overview of jazz's development. While the title might be more accurately titled, "Jazz: A Selective History" Or "A Concise History of Jazz," that

is a matter of semantics. Gioia does trace what is generally viewed as the music's growth from its origins out of ragtime through its world wide spread. Gioia has updated his earlier history to perhaps give more emphasis to the global developments of jazz.

I give him more leeway in selection of material in such a topics as jazz history than I gave his "Delta Blues," which was highly flawed and omitted seminal figures in his

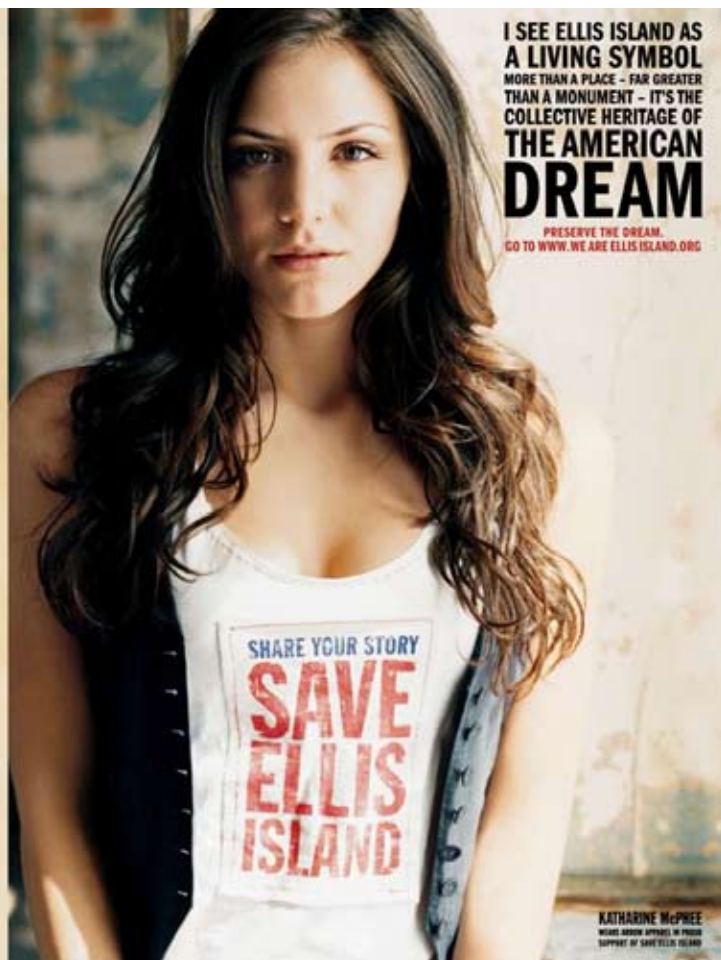
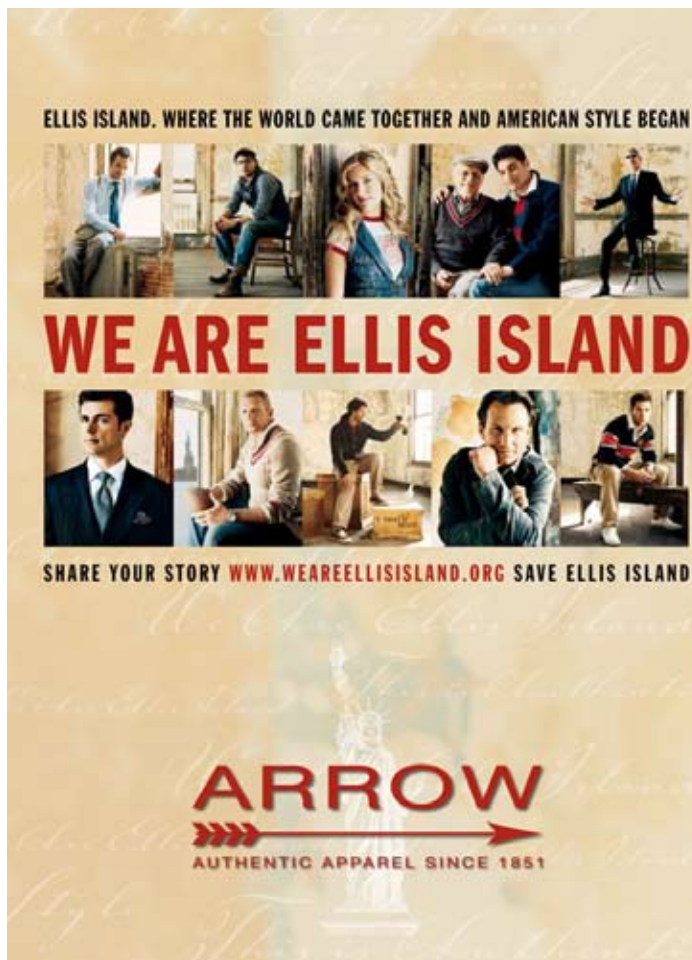
subject matter. While there are unquestionably trends and artists in jazz's development that he might have devoted some space to, it might have made this volume unwieldy. For example, he could have delved a bit more into some of the early women blues singers' recordings, other than Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith.

Gioia writes very clearly about the artists and does present what most would agree are the major figures in the music's history such as Armstrong, Morton, Hines, Ellington, Eldridge, Basie, Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, Parker, Gillespie, Coltrane, Monk, Powell, Miles Davis and many more. He concisely discusses their lives and music and innovations in a lively and informative way. I was particularly impressed by his discussion of Bill Evans and his importance and influence on contemporary jazz.

His discussion of the diversity of jazz around the world today is only an overview and overlooks some currents such as gypsy jazz. I do not know how exhaustive his suggestions for further reading was intended to be but there were some worthy books that were not included (such as recent bios of Lester Young). Gioia has included a list of performances for suggested listening as opposed to recommending albums. In this respect, I suggest it would have been useful to have presented these in a chronological manner as opposed to alphabetical by artist.

In summary, this is a thoughtful and erudite introduction to jazz history that will be of value to more people than simply jazz novices.

Ron Weinstock





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