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Issue 356

jazz  
& blues report

.....  
57TH ANNUAL  
Monterey  
Jazz Festival  
Sept 19-21, 2014  
.....



# jazz & blues report

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

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"Buffaloni"

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



Charles Lloyd (photo: Cole Thompson)

## Arena and Grounds Tickets Still Available for the 57th Annual Monterey Jazz Festival, September 19-21

Single-Day Arena Tickets Start at \$71,  
Single-Day Grounds Tickets Start at \$45

**Headliners Include Herbie Hancock, The Roots, Gary Clark Jr., Michael Feinstein, Christian McBride, Cecile McLorin Salvant, Charles Lloyd, Jason Moran, Robert Glasper Experiment, Lisa Fischer, Marcus Miller, Booker T. Jones, Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band, Davina & The Vagabonds, Billy Childs, and Many More**

Monterey, Calif, June 25, 2014; Single-Day Arena and Single-Day Grounds Tickets for the 57th Annual Monterey Jazz Festival, September 19–21 went on sale on June 26. Tickets can be purchased online at [monterey-jazzfestival.org](http://monterey-jazzfestival.org) or by calling 888.248.6499.

The Festival features 500 artists, and more than 100 performances from iconic and emerging jazz artists on eight stages, spanning two days and three nights, accompanied by exhibits, presentations, educational events, and an array of international cuisine and shopping on the oak-studded 20 acres of the Monterey County Fair & Event Center.

Single-Day Arena Tickets include one reserved seat in the Arena for the day purchased and access to the other seven Grounds general admission stages. Single-Day Arena Tickets are \$71 for Friday and \$142 for Saturday or Sunday.

Single-Day Grounds Tickets include one Grounds ticket for the day purchased. This ticket includes access to seven general admission stages.



Single Day Grounds Tickets are \$45 for Friday and \$55 for Saturday or Sunday. Youth and Military discounts are available.

Also on sale are Single-Day Premier Club Tickets starting at \$65 for Friday, and \$100 for Saturday or Sunday. The Premier Club has become the hospitality center for the Annual Monterey Jazz Festival. Guests enjoy a central Festival location to comfortably relax featuring complimentary catering by AQUA TERRA Culinary and non-alcoholic beverages, a no-host "top-shelf" bar, closed-circuit Arena simulcasts, and private restrooms. Arena or Grounds Ticket purchase is required. Full Weekend Premier Club hospitality passes are priced at \$265.

Lineup for the 57th Annual Monterey Jazz Festival, September 19-21, 2014

Artist-In-Residence: Eric Harland

Showcase Artist: Charles Lloyd

Commission Artist: Aaron Diehl

### **ARENA ARTISTS – Friday, September 19**

Herbie Hancock, Robert Glasper Experiment with special guest Jason Moran, Cecile McLorin Salvant

### **GROUND'S ARTISTS – Friday, September 19**

Dizzy's Den: Sangam with Charles Lloyd, Zakir Husain and Eric Harland; Red Baraat

Night Club: Cecile McLorin Salvant, Christian McBride Trio; Claudia Villela & Harvey Wainapel

Garden Stage Presented by Alaska Airlines: Sarah McKenzie Quartet, Melissa Aldana Crash Trio, SambaDa

Coffee House: Harold Mabern Trio (3 sets)

### **ARENA ARTISTS – Saturday, September 20**

The Roots, Billy Childs with special guests Shawn Colvin, Lisa Fischer and Becca Stevens; Aaron Diehl Quartet; Gary Clark Jr., Booker T. Jones; Davina & The Vagabonds

### **GROUND'S ARTISTS – Saturday, September 20**

Dizzy's Den: Billy Childs Quartet; Charles Lloyd-Gerald Clayton Duo; The Philadelphia Experiment with Christian McBride, Questlove, Uri Caine and special guest Booker T. Jones; Blue Note Records 75th Anniversary Band with Ambrose Akinmusire, Kendrick Scott, Robert Glasper, Derrick Hodge & Lionel Loueke; Becca Stevens, John Hanrahan Quartet, DownBeat Blindfold Test with Lionel Loueke

Night Club: Aaron Diehl Quartet, Eric Harland Voyager, Habaneros, USAF Commanders Jazz Ensemble, CSU Long Beach "Pacific Standard Time"; SFJAZZ High School All-Stars Orchestra

Garden Stage Presented by Alaska Airlines: Pete Escovedo Orchestra with Peter Michael & Juan Escovedo; Jason Moran, Ana Popovic, Davina & The Vagabonds, Red Baraat

Coffee House: Donald Brown Trio (3 sets); Sarah McKenzie Quartet; Panel Discussion: Blue Note Records at 75: The Most Enduring Jazz Brand of All Time with Robert Glasper, Jason Moran, Bobby Hutcherson, and

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Herbie Hancock (photo: Douglas Kirkland)

Don Was, hosted by Ashley Kahn; Panel Discussion: Remembering Two Piano Masters: Mulgrew Miller & James Williams with Donald Brown, Geoffrey Keezer and Harold Mabern, hosted by Ashley Kahn

West Lawn: Sourmash Hug Band (2 sets)

### **ARENA ARTISTS – Sunday, September 21**

Michael Feinstein with special guests Russell Malone & Harry Allen and the Next Generation Jazz Orchestra; Charles Lloyd Quartet with Jason Moran, Rueben Rogers, & Eric Harland; Marcus Miller; Jon Batiste & Stay Human; Next Generation Jazz Orchestra

### **GROUND'S ARTISTS – Sunday, September 21**

Dizzy's Den: Eric Harland Voyager, Tony Monaco, Pamela Rose & Wayne De La Cruz; Daniel Rosenboom Quintet; Discussion: Celebrating the Great American Songbook with Michael Feinstein, moderated by Ashley Kahn

Night Club: Delfeayo & Ellis Marsalis; Ambrose Akinmusire Quintet; Folsom High School Combo; Folsom High School Jazz Choir I; Valencia High School Vikings "Two N' Four"; Westlake High School Jazz Ensemble I; Buchanan High School Big Band; Monterey County High School All-Star Band; Monterey County High School Honor Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Garden Stage Presented by Alaska Airlines: Harold Lopez-Nussa, Ben Flocks & Battle Mountain; Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band; Youn Sun Nah & Ulf Wakenius; University of Miami Frost Concert Jazz Band; Northgate High School Big Band

Coffee House: Geoffrey Keezer Trio (2 sets); Bari Koral; Tucson Jazz Institute "Concord" Combo; USC Thornton School of Music Honors Combo

West Lawn: Minor Thirds Trio (2 sets)

### **ALL WEEKEND**

Jazz on Film: Legends of the Tenor Saxophone: Charles Lloyd: Arrows Into Infinity; Jeremy Siskind & Friends on the Yamaha AvantGrand on the Courtyard Stage; Arena Simulcasts in The Jazz Theater; Coffee House Gallery Exhibits: Blue Note Records: 75 Years of Excellence; Earl Newman: 50 Years of Monterey Jazz Festival Posters



## Telluride Blues & Brews Festival, Sept. 12-14, 2014

Telluride, CO - Single Day and Late Night Tickets for the 21st Annual Telluride Blues & Brews Festival went on sale in June. (MDT). Tickets can be purchased online at [TellurideBlues.com](http://TellurideBlues.com), by phone at 866.515.6166, or locally at Telluride Music and at Wizard Entertainment.

Telluride Blues & Brews Festival is proud to announce the Violent Femmes, George Clinton and Parliament Funkadelic, and Peter Dinklage to headline the event this summer. Additional artists include The Meter Men, Buddy Guy, Dumpstaphunk, Lee Fields & the Expressions, Charles Bradley and His Extraordinaires, The Slide Brothers, Zach Deputy, Roosevelt Collier & The Bayou Gypsies, Bombino, Amy Helm and the Handsome Strangers, MoHead, Patrick Sweany, Shakey Graves, Roosevelt Collier "Artist at Large", The Record Company, Markus James, Chris Dracup, and Kipori Woods. Returning festival favorites Anders Osborne, the Robert Cray Band, The Lee Boys, Black Joe Lewis, and Ryan McGarvey will also join us for the 21st annual festival.

For the first time ever, 2014's Blues & Brews lineup will feature comedian sets on the newly added "Blues Stage", a state of the art second stage located in the Hanley Pavilion. Expect appearances from the endlessly funny Troy Walker, Elliot Woolsey, and Ben Roy. Colorado-based artist 'Scramble' Campbell will also return to Town Park with his beautiful performance painting.

"We are excited to announce a bigger lineup than in previous years, with the addition of comedians during the festival weekend," said Steve Gumble, Festival Director. "This year's festival has many new features including a second stage, campground sessions, and a diverse mix of music and entertainment."

This year's festival weekend kicks with our opening night show at the Sheridan Opera House with Amy Helm and the Handsome Strangers for our Bal de Maison on Thursday September, 11th at 9:00 p.m. Limited Tickets are \$20 for the show. When the lights go down after

each festival evening, the party continues at our four late night Juke Joint venues. Bombino and Dumpstaphunk claim our newly added second stage. A revamped Fly Me To The Moon Saloon sees Patrick Sweany and Zach Deputy. The intimate Elks Lodge houses The Record Company and The Slide Brothers. The historic Sheridan Opera House hosts The Lee Boys and Black Joe Lewis with opening act Kipori Woods, Anders Osborne and Friends will end the weekend with the Fais do-do closing celebration. Limited tickets for the Fais do-do are \$25 per person.

Three-day passes are available for \$185 each, Friday and Sunday Single Day passes are \$65 each, and Saturday passes \$70 each. Juke Joint passes are \$25 per night, and feature late night shows at various intimate venues throughout the town of Telluride. Festival 4-day camping passes are \$40 per person, with camping located adjacent to the Festival grounds starting Thursday, September 11th.

For a full schedule of events or to purchase tickets, visit us online at [TellurideBlues.com](http://TellurideBlues.com). To purchase tickets by phone, call toll-free at (866) 515-6166.

## Jazz on the High Seas ...

### Enjoy Your Favorite Music With Entertainment Cruise Productions & Help the Monterey Jazz Festival Jazz Education Programs

St. Louis - Many exciting jazz performances these days are performed on charter cruises, and Entertainment Cruise Productions is the world leader in producing these amazing cruises.

Having produced more than 50 full-ship charters, ECP has been showcasing jazz for more than a decade with 14 sailings of *The Jazz Cruise*, 20 sailings of *The Smooth Jazz Cruise* (and related cruises), and specialty jazz cruises, such as the *Playboy Jazz Cruise* and *North Sea Jazz Cruise*.

By combining high-end cruising heralded and talented jazz performers, ECP provides its Guests with the ultimate jazz cruise experience. Having entertained in excess of 50,000 people throughout the years and boasting a 60 percent rebooking rate, ECP has developed fans all over the country - and the world.

You are invited to consider joining in for one of the three distinctly different jazz programs

#### The Signature Jazz Cruise (Sept. 30 to Oct. 10, 2014)

By combining a Seabourn cruise, the most amazing Mediterranean itinerary, and the most heralded jazz vocalist in the world, Diana Krall, *The Signature Jazz Cruise* is the most luxurious and the most exclusive jazz cruise vacation ever offered. As ECP says, it is "Beyond Perfect." (For each suite reservation completed under this program, ECP will make a \$1,000 contribution to Monterey Jazz Festival jazz education programs.)

#### The Jazz Cruise (Jan. 25 - Feb. 1, 2015)

*The Jazz Cruise* is the first and only full-ship charter



in the world featuring “straight ahead” jazz. With more than 90 internationally renowned musicians and vocalists, TJC presents the music festival-style, with as many as five performances at the same time. This cruise is a jazz lover’s paradise. (For each cabin reservation completed under this program, ECP will make a \$300 contribution to Monterey Jazz Festival jazz education programs.)

### **The Smooth Jazz Cruise (March 1-8, 2015)**

Known as *The Greatest Party at Sea*, this cruise presents smooth jazz, R&B, funk instrumental and vocal music in settings geared to having fun and creating a shared experience for all Guests. There is an earlier sailing of this cruise (Jan. 11-18, 2015), but that has already sold out. (For each cabin reservation completed under this program, ECP will make a \$250 contribution to Monterey Jazz Festival jazz education programs.)

The professionals at Entertainment Cruise Productions are ready to assist you with your reservations and with any additional arrangements that you may need to complete your vacation experience. You can reach ECP at 888.852.9987. Visit online at [www.ecpcruises.com](http://www.ecpcruises.com).

Mention Monterey Jazz Festival when you call or include promo code **MONTEREY** when you book online to ensure a contribution is made to Monterey Jazz Festival jazz education programs.



## **Daytona Blues Festival October 10-12**

The Daytona Blues Festival returns to Jackie Robinson Ballpark in Downtown Daytona Beach October 10, 11 & 12. The festival features 3 Days and nights of blues, featuring Bobby Rush, Jimmy Thackery, John Nemeth, Davina and the Vagabonds, Lili Ed & The Blues Imperials and many more. Tickets are \$30 for one day, and \$75 for a 3-day pass.

Bahama Breeze will open this year’s Festival when it hosts the welcome party, Thursday October 9, at 8 pm, with featured guest the Jeff Jensen Band. Admission is free. Bahama Breeze will also host the 3 after parties on October 10, 11 and 12. Admission is free with your daily ticket or 3-day pass. You can find the parties at 1786 W. International Speedway Blvd, across from the Daytona International Speedway.

Gates open at daily noon, and the blues begins at 1 pm.

And while you’re shopping for tickets, check out our guitar raffle!

The Daytona Blues Festival, Inc., was incorporated in 2009 with the purpose of developing an annual blues

music weekend that would generate proceeds for health initiatives for women and children in Volusia County.

The Daytona Blues Festival is a 3-day festival held on Columbus Day weekend.

The festival is held at the historic Jackie Robinson Ballpark in Daytona Beach.

The festival features nationally known artists, up and up & coming blues artists, and draws blues lovers from all over the US, Canada, and Europe.

The Daytona Blues Festival is run by volunteers; no salaries are drawn from any monies generated by the festival, and all proceeds fund women’s and children’s health services. In 2013, the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit expansion at Halifax Health and Project WARM, Women Assisting Recovering Mothers, received all festival proceeds.

2014 is the Fifth Year of the Festival. The inaugural festival was held October 2010. The Festival is now in its fifth year. Both national and international fans were in attendance, as well as dignitaries from the blues community.

Vendors, local businessmen, hoteliers and eateries support and benefit from this event. Daytona Blues Foundation is a 501(C)3 Not-For-Profit.

For tickets and more information, including the daily schedule, visit [www.DaytonaBluesFestival.com](http://www.DaytonaBluesFestival.com)

## **Tucson Jazz Festival to Begin 13-Day Stand January 16, 2015**

TUCSON, Ariz. – The HSL Properties Tucson Jazz Festival has launched its official website ([www.tucsonjazzfestival.org](http://www.tucsonjazzfestival.org)) and artist lineup for the 13-day celebration of jazz music starting on Jan. 16, 2015.

The Festival artist lineup includes: Jimmy Cobb, Joey DeFrancesco, Robert Glasper Experiment, Armen Donelian, JD Souther with special guest Billy Childs, the Tucson Jazz Institute Ellington Band with alumni, Allan Harris, Dave Bennett and Burt Bacharach.

The Guest of Honor for the festival is drummer Jimmy Cobb. He will turn 86 during the festival and is the only living member of the Miles Davis band that recorded “Kind of Blue,” regarded by most critics and listeners alike to be the most popular jazz album in history.

“We’ve lined up some of the very best jazz artists from around the United States and locally,” said Yvonne Ervin, Executive Director of the HSL Properties Tucson Jazz Festival. “There will be a little bit of something for everyone and January in Tucson is the perfect time of year to enjoy and celebrate jazz music!”

The 2015 HSL Properties Tucson Jazz Festival includes a free outdoor event on Martin Luther King Day, Jan. 19, 2015 in downtown Tucson. Proceeds of the festival will support the Tucson Jazz Society and its educational activities.

For more information, including a complete list of artists and venues, plus tickets, visit them online at [www.tucsonjazzfestival.org](http://www.tucsonjazzfestival.org).



## JIMI: All Is By My Side Coming To US Theatres September 26

*Cleveland, Ohio* – The Musical Roots of Hendrix: “JIMI: All is By My Side” Tackles the Nuance of His Musical London Debut

Right-Handed André Benjamin Re-Creates Left-Handed Jimi Hendrix Performance of Sgt. Pepper with the Support of Legendary Guitarist Waddy Wachtel and Film Music Impresario Danny Bramson

When filmgoers watch JIMI: All is By My Side, which opens on September 26 in 16 American cities, they will explore musical and narrative nuances rarely discussed in conversations about Jimi Hendrix’s career.

The film, which stars André Benjamin (Outkast) and Imogen Poots (28 Weeks Later), was written by Oscar-winner John Ridley (12 Years a Slave). Ridley tapped Grammy-award-winning music producer Danny Bramson (Almost Famous, Lord of the Rings) as producer and music designer and the two of them fastidiously interpreted the soundscape of the era in a way that will tickle music buffs of the period.

“The film takes place in that lost or underserved year in Jimi’s life,” explains Bramson. “We were well aware of the Hendrix Estate’s long standing reluctance to allow any of Jimi’s original songs for an unauthorized Hendrix themed film. Thus, we never sought out Jimi’s hits that came once he departed Heathrow for the Monterey Pop Festival. The musically fertile environment of John Ridley’s story allowed me to interpret Jimi’s development from playing second lead guitar with Curtis Knight in New York then forming his first group and gigging afternoon performances at the Café Wha?, onto his arrival in London at the height of it’s musical enthrallment with the indigenous American Blues. With the Hendrix standard songs out of the equation, we chose a musical design as an interpretation of Jimi’s development as a guitarist principally, and the English musical and cultural

zeitgeist that informed, inspired, and propelled him. The creative challenge was staggering, underscored with the incessant personal responsibility to get it right.”

For most, Hendrix’s name conjures up songs like “Purple Haze” or “Foxy Lady,” or possibly scenes of Jimi’s breakthrough at 1967’s Monterey International Pop Festival evocatively humping the amps and lighting his guitar on fire. But JIMI: All is By My Side sets the stage for all of that and the film wraps up before the Summer of Love even starts. In the end, Ridley and Bramson constructed never-before-seen glances, pivotal moments in Hendrix’s early career giving insights into where he came from before his musical identity was sealed, before stereotypes were reified in the global consciousness.

When Linda Keith, Keith Richards’ girlfriend played by Imogen Poots, scoops up Hendrix, who was scraping by as the second guitarist in Curtis Knight and the Squires in Greenwich Village, he thumbs through her vinyl collection, and the film sheds a gentle light on the influence of pivotal musicians of the time. “This is where we went with an inspired psychedelic run, from Bob Dylan’s ‘Leopard Skin Pillbox Hat,’ to the American blues of Buddy Guy, injected with shades of Mozart and T-Bone Walker,” says Bramson, who was already well-known for being at the forefront of the film and music world.

He’s collaborated with the likes of Dylan, McCartney, and for being the first to license for film rock stars like Neil Young and Radiohead, while working with directors Cameron Crowe, Paul Thomas Anderson, and Peter Jackson. “There was no need to zero in on the hits and their iconography,” continues Bramson. “We wanted nuanced music to complement these nuanced moments that John Ridley’s directing captured so elegantly and seductively.”

Similarly, in one of Bramson’s favorite scenes, the Small Faces’ song “Itchycoo Park” accompanies Hendrix and his girlfriend Kathy Etchingham, played by Hayley Atwell, as they strolled through the boutiques of Carnaby Street, a 1960’s hub for Swinging London, and a place where the Beatles, Small Faces, the Rolling Stones, Cream, and The Who gathered. “I find the poetry in these stolen moments to exemplify the very best of the film,” says Bramson. “Whether it’s a simple exchange of glances, a smile, or a young Jimi Hendrix sitting on the edge of a bed working out a guitar line.”

To assist with securing the plethora of musical choices, Bramson tapped music supervisor Chris Mollere. “I knew I made the big time after some forty odd films when I had the luxury of my very own music supervisor, and such a good and proficient one in Chris!” exclaims Bramson. But those subtle musical selections are the tip of the iceberg for the film’s music design. At a recent festival showing of the film, excited moviegoers walked Bramson back to his hotel, exclaiming how brilliant André Benjamin’s guitar performances were. “That was the greatest complement we could’ve received and I giggled with delight and a bit of relief,” says Bramson.

Though Benjamin was already a good right-handed

guitar player, Bramson hand-picked instructor Andrew Rollins, who established a daily regimen of six hour rehearsals for months leading into and during the film's entire production to make him look effortless and fluid as a lefty. "André's relentless dedication to get it right didn't let up until we wrapped," says Bramson.

Technical authenticity was critical in all of the performance moments in the film. This attention to detail allows the audience to lose themselves, and take the ride. "We weren't going to use a crowded room or a reversed camera to camouflage André's fingers," says Bramson. "With that dare, asking André to try to approximate Hendrix would have been daunting even if he had been an exceptional left-handed guitar player. But André readily accepted the challenge and diligently worked with Rollins in capturing the fingering of what we fed him.

John and I broke down our songs and performances and had them focus on specific sections, six bars here, twenty seconds there, and after months of relentless and repetitive rehearsals, André gave us breathtaking and thoroughly convincing takes on camera and his dedication and embrace of his guitar is as heartfelt a performance as I've ever witnessed from an actor and artist."

For the film's original music, Bramson brought in long-time friend and collaborator, Waddy Wachtel, legendary, in-demand session guitarist, who plays for Linda Ronstadt, Stevie Nicks, and Keith Richards, among others, and most recently was seen as musical director leading the revolving "house-band" on the 2014 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction special on HBO. Ironically, Wachtel's early childhood guitar teacher started him playing right-handed even though he was naturally left-handed. "From the moment I read the script, I had my eye on Waddy," says Bramson.

"I knew I didn't want to cast a star-driven guitarist, because I needed not only talent and dexterity, but someone who could sublimate their ego and signature licks. Waddy brought the all-important X factor of malleability and patience, working and flushing out the material sitting there, knee-to-knee, as we did for months on end until we found what we were going for. I was merely the obsessive spark and amateur musicologist, with Waddy's talent and hands providing the genius behind every note of the material and performances. My joke since then has been 'Music by Wachtel, Lyrics by Bramson,' but they're all instrumentals!" laughs Bramson.

To replicate the Hendrix trio, Wachtel was joined by Kenny Aronoff on drums and session legend Lee Sklar on bass. Legendary engineer Niko Bolas (Neil Young) was given the task of reproducing the analog ambience of the era's music.

The combination of the expect-the-unexpected approach with Wachtel's and Bramson's era-evocative delivery culminates to re-create an under-celebrated moment in Hendrix's career. On June 4, 1967, right before Jimi Hendrix and the Experience were set to get on stage at London's Saville Theater, a mere two

weeks before Monterey, Hendrix dashes into the dressing room with a record released only three days earlier: The Beatles' Sgt. Pepper Lonely Heart's Club Band. The trio quickly rehearses the title song, knowing that Paul McCartney and George Harrison are there in the audience. As another shining example of the films' credibility and its attention to detail, the film climaxes with this performance by Hendrix and the Experience.

The Beatles allowed the song to be licensed for use in the film (an extremely rare occurrence), thanks to Bramson, who has a longstanding history of working McCartney compositions into film (Jerry Maguire, Vanilla Sky). And for the first time ever, music fans not in that room in 1967 see what it would be like to hear Jimi Hendrix play that song in that pivotal moment, where Hendrix came into his own, as a visitor among the British Invasion, before returning to America and plunging into the Jimi Hendrix everyone now knows and loves.

The extreme dedication of Benjamin to become Hendrix, the sultry and irresistible deliveries from Imogen Poots and Hayley Atwell, the depth and subtleties of Ridley's writing and direction, and the scrupulous integrity of Bramson and Wachtel to get the music right, leave their mark with a musical biopic created for everyone from cursory music fans to dedicated Hendrix aficionados looking to experience the magical cultural period and musical atmosphere.

Music "purists" will appreciate that the filmmakers took the care to properly curate the licensed tracks for the period, but will be truly blown-away by the quality and energy of the newly recorded score and tracks in the film.

## **Russian River Jazz & Blues Festival in Sonoma County California September 20 & 21**

The 38th annual Russian River Jazz & Blues Festival will take place on Sept 20 & 21 at Johnson's Beach in Guerneville, CA. Music fans can purchase Single Day & Weekend Passes to the festival and enjoy 2 stages of jazz, blues and roots music over 2 days at Johnson's Beach - a beautiful venue surrounded by California Redwoods.

For the last 38 years, music festivals have been a vital part of the Russian River community. Johnson's Beach in Guerneville offers a picturesque venue that rests along the beach of the Russian River, only a few miles from over 100 wineries.

Headlining the festival this year will be performers Gary Clark Jr., Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue, Boney James & Larry Graham & Graham Central Station along with Goapele, Boney James, Jon Batiste & Stay Human, Ana Popovic, Roy Rogers & The Delta Rhythm Kings, Beso Negro, Davina & The Vagabonds, Mitch Woods and Nicolas Bearde.

For more information, visit [www.russianriverfestivals.com](http://www.russianriverfestivals.com).



# BLUES WATCH

BY MARK SMITH

**New Release Blues....** Here are the releases that will take you from summer through the Labor Day weekend: **Jimmy Thackery-** *Wide Open*; **Paul Butterfield-** *Live at the Winterland Ballroom*; **Keb Mo-** *Bluesamericana*; **Eric Johnson-** *Europe Live*; **Walter Trout-** *The Blues Came Callin'*; **Ronnie Earl-** *Good News*; **Royal Southern Brotherhood-** *Heartbloodsoul*; **Roy Buchanan-** *Shredding the Blues: Live*; **Selwyn Birchwood-** *Don't Call No Ambulance*; **Rick Estrin & the Nightcats-** *You Asked For It...Live!*; **Coco Montoya-** *Songs from the Road*; **Rod Piazza & the Mighty Flyers-** *Emergency Situation*; **Too Slim and the Taildraggers-** *Anthology*; **Elvin Bishop-** *Can't Even Do Wrong Right*; **John Primer-** *You Can Make It If You Try*; **Deanna Bogart-** *Just a Wish Away*; **Preston Shannon-** *Dust My Broom*; **Glen David Andrews-** *Redemption*; **Kelley Hunt-** *The Beautiful Bones*; **Ruthie Foster-** *Promise of a Brand New Day*; **Sugar Ray & The Bluetones-** *Living Tear to Tear*; **Vaneese Thomas-** *Blues For My Father*; **Andy T. - Nick Nixon Band-** *Livin' It Up*; **Robben Ford-** *Live at Rockpalast*; **Gary Moore-** *Ballads & Blues 1982-1994*;

**David Vest-** *Roadhouse Revelation*; **Mike Mattison-** *You Can't Fight Love*; **Lucky Peterson-** *I'm Back Again*; **The Mannish Boys-** *Wrapped Up and Ready*; **Janiva Magness-** *Original*; **Various Artists-** *A Blues Tribute to Creedence Clearwater Revival*; **Lucky Peterson-** *The Son of a Bluesman*; **The Nighthawks-** *444*; **Murali Coryell-** *Restless Mind*; **John Mayall-** *A Special Life*; **Rockin' Jason D. Williams-** *Hillbillies and Holy Rollers*; **Albert Castiglia-** *Solid Ground* and **Mike Zito and the Wheel-** *Songs from the Road: Live in Texas*. **RIP blues....**

While writing this edition of Blues Watch, I learned that bluesman **Johnny Winter** passed away at the age of 70 in Zurich, Switzerland where he was staying during a tour of Europe. As reported by CNN: "Winter first gained national attention when Rolling Stone magazine featured the Texas music scene in a December 1968 cover story. It captioned his photo: "Johnny Winter, Albino Bluesman." The article said guitarist Mike Bloomfield considered the young Winter the "best white blues guitarist he had ever heard." Rolling Stone now ranks Winter 63rd on its list of 100 greatest guitarists. Johnny Winter passed on July 16. Rest in peace, Johnny....

That's it for this month. See ya!

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Photo © Robyn Churchill



# 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](http://AmericansForTheArts.org).



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



**Art. Ask for More.**

[AMERICANSFORTHEARTS.ORG](http://AMERICANSFORTHEARTS.ORG)

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**Promise of a Brand New Day**  
BLUE CORN MUSIC

Ruthie Foster is one of the most thrilling singers in American vernacular music today. A singer and songwriter with roots in gospel and classic R&B, she has also been embraced by roots and blues audiences for her stirring performances. For her most recent recording “Promise of a Brand New Day” (Blue Corn Music), she recruited Meshell Ndegeocello to produce it (as well as contribute bass). Ndegeocello observed that she “wanted this album to highlight Ruthie’s voice and also communicate her vibe, give a fuller picture of her artistry and ability. She really trusted me with the music and I think we’ve made something that complements and holds its own alongside the power of her voice.”

Ndegeocello played bass and enlisted her regular guitarist, Chris Bruce (Sheryl Crow), and keyboardist Jebin Bruni (Aimee Mann), plus drummer Ivan Edwards and backing vocalist Nayanna Holley. Foster did request two special guests: guitarist Doyle Bramhall II and singer Toshi Reagon. “Promise of a Brand New Day” includes seven songs written or co-written by Foster, most of them “songs with messages—because that’s important to what I do,” she explains. “Maybe that’s from growing up with people like Mavis [Staples] and a lot of strong women who have come before me, who are great singers but also have a message.” Furthermore the other songs themselves are also very strong in this same manner.

“Singing the Blues” is a strong R&B performance about fine a new home and song and to get through it she keeps singing the blues which never gets old, while “Let Me Know” which features Doyle Bramhall II’s guitar, has a gospel-inflected vocal set against a

steady rocking groove which contrasts with the country soul feel of “My Kinda Lover.”

“The Ghetto” was originally recorded by The Staples Singers with its evocative lyrics that bring inner city life alive while the late Willie King’s “Second Coming” is a folk-blues protest song noting that they could kill Ruthie’s body but not kill her mind, like they could kill John Brown but not his mind. With the simple acoustic guitar backing and spare organ accompaniment it is a powerful performance.

Other remarkable songs include a collaboration with Stax legend William Bell, “It Might Not Be Right,” about gay love where she notes that it might not be right for some folk, but it is all right for this girl. Other songs include the ballad “Learning to Fly,” with its memorable line “Everybody knows that a seed must die so a flower must grow,” sung with the warmth and genuineness that marks Foster’s singing throughout. After the moving a cappella “Brand New Day” comes “Complicated Love,” a bittersweet song of dealing with difficult times in a relationship.

It has been said that some singers could make reciting the phone book sound good. Ruthie Foster makes one want to recite it with her. “Promise of a Brand New Day” is simply the latest marvelous chapter in her body of recordings.

**Ron Weinstock**



## THE COOKERS

**Time and Time Again**  
MOTEMA MUSIC

Of course it is simplistic to describe The Cookers as a band of Hard Bop All Stars, but certainly the music here has its roots in the over 250 years of aggregate experience its members have. With one exception, Donald Harrison replacing Craig Handy on alto sax, the group’s line-up remains the same with Billy Harper on tenor sax, Dr. Eddie Henderson and David Weiss on trumpet; George Cables on piano, Cecil McBee on bass and Billy Hart on drums.

The members of The Cookers have experienced playing with some of the greatest jazz artists of the past half century, including Art Pepper, Dexter Gordon, Lee Morgan, Herbie Hancock, Charles Lloyd, Max Roach, and Art Blakey.

Additionally, every member is a leader of their own right as well as being notable composers and



players.

Motema Music has issued their fourth CD, "Time and Time Again," and the album brings forth some vintage compositions such as Billy Harper's "Sir Galahad," which was from his 1973 debut album "Capra Black," while Cecil McBee contributes two new compositions. Others are from the pens of Cables, Weiss and Hart for a program of music whose vitality is convincing proof that the band's name is deserved on the basis of the nine performances heard here

The tone is set with the opening "Sir Galahad," which opens with some very robust playing from Hart, followed by Weiss, Harrison and Cables. McBee's original blues "Slippin' and Slidin'" provides a chance for the members to show the continual relevance of the blues with Harper, Weiss and McBee showcased with fine work.

Cables' "Double Or Nothing" is another burner with Harrison and Weiss shining before Hart explodes in his solo. It is followed by Cables' tribute to the late Mulgrew Miller, "Farewell Mulgrew" with Weiss' providing the horns arrangement whose ensemble playing sets the atmosphere for Cables' playing being stately and moving. Harper again displays just how riveting a tenor saxophonist he is on Weiss' "Three Fall," followed by the composer's hot trumpet and terrific support from the rhythm section.

The title track, a Harper original, is built upon a bass ostinato from McBee and includes more stirring playing from Harper, Henderson and Cables along with the superb rhythm section.

The mix of strong compositions, solid ensemble playing and the superb rhythm section, along with the mix of technical mastery, passion, imagination and inventiveness make "Time and Time Again" another outstanding recording by The Cookers. The release date is September 16, 2014.

*Ron Weinstock*



## MUD MORGANFIELD & KIM WILSON

**For Pops | A Tribute to Muddy Waters**  
SEVERN RECORDS

Closing your eyes while listening to "For Pops | A Tribute to Muddy Waters," the new Severn Records release by Mud Morganfield & Kim Wilson, you might think you are listening to Muddy Waters himself. The idea for the album came from folks suggesting to

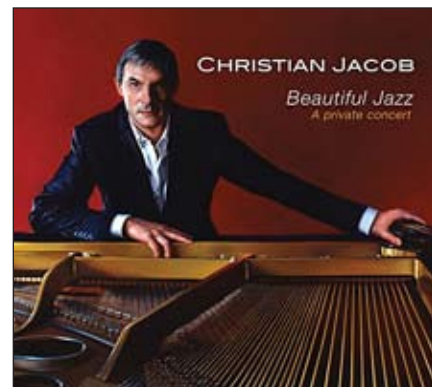
Severn that after they released albums by Mud Morganfield and The Fabulous Thunderbirds, Severn had to get Mud and Kim together. So they were asked and agreed.

In putting an album together, they assembled a band of Billy Flynn and Rusty Zynn on guitars, Barrelhouse Chuck on piano, Steve Gomes on bass and Robb Stupka on drums to support Mud's vocals and Kim's harmonica. Then it was decided to do an album of Muddy's songs and they selected a mix of both well-known and lesser-known songs associated with Muddy Waters. The recording was done live with everyone in the same room.

Included are 14 renditions of such Muddy Waters recordings as "Gone To Main Street," "Just To Be With You," "Still a Fool," "She's Got It," "I Love the Life I Live, I Live The Life I Love," "Blow Wind Blow," "Nineteen Years Old" and "Trouble No More." This is a marvelous backing band with Kim Wilson at the top of his game, and Mud (Muddy's oldest son) sounding so much like his father throughout these solid re-creations of the originals.

As noted, listening to this is almost like listening to a Muddy Waters recording, and folks have been copying Muddy's style from Junior Brooks and Louisiana Red over 6 decades ago to this present album. At the same time, no matter how enjoyable it is to listen to this, they cannot replace the original recordings. While no one has more right to perpetuate his father's legacy than Mud Morganfield, one wishes that they had taken some interpretative liberties with Muddy Waters' music.

*Ron Weinstock*



## CHRISTIAN JACOB

**Beautiful Jazz: A Private Concert**  
WILDERJAZZ

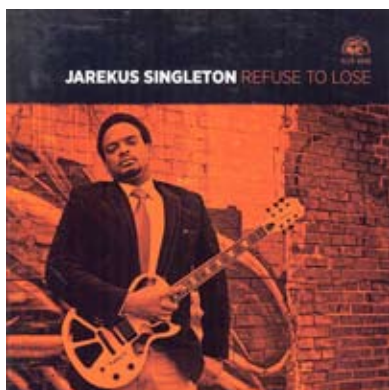
Raised as a classical pianist, exposure to Dave Brubeck's "Take Five" at the age of 9 turned Christian Jacob on to jazz. The pianist continued studying classical piano (he studied at the Paris Conservatory,) but after finishing these studies he attended Berklee where he studied and played with Herb Pomeroy, Phil Wilson, Hal Crook and Gary Burton among others. He is perhaps best known for being co-leader, arranger and pianist with the Tierney Sutton Band. He has also

performed with Maynard Ferguson (who produced his first albums), Flora Purim and Airtio Moreira, Randy Brecker, Miroslav Vitous, Benny Golson and Bill Holman plus others. Now he has produced his first solo piano recording, "Beautiful Jazz: A Private Concert," (Wilder Jazz) with his renditions of thirteen timeless standards.

This was recorded in Los Angeles at the Zipper Concert Hall on a Hamburg Steinway Model D Grand, although without a live audience, and the sound is wonderful, although one may need to listen on headphones, or turn up the volume, to hear all the nuances of Christian Jacob's playing.

It goes without saying that he brings considerable technique to his interpretations of such well known songs as "How Long Has This Been Going On," "That's All," "It Might As Well Be Spring," "Tea For Two," "One Note Samba," "Body and Soul" and "Giant Steps," along with Stravinsky's "Etude No. 4 F# Major." This latter number might be the single best example of his piano technique, while his other performances display his lyricism and thoughtful improvisations with the performances of "That's All," "My Romance," "Tea For Two," "One Note Samba," and "Giant Steps" standing out along with remarkable interpretations of "Body and Soul" and "September Song."

"Beautiful Jazz" is an appropriate title as this is an album full of fresh, thoughtful, and lovely interpretations of the standards heard here. **Ron Weinstock**



## JAREKUS SINGLETON

**Refuse To Lose**  
**ALLIGATOR RECORDS**

Highly heralded before he signed with Alligator, Jarekus Singleton certainly impresses on his debut for the label titled "Refuse to Lose." The Clinton, Mississippi native turned heads with his self-produced "Heartfelt," and this new album certainly will wake up many listeners with the freshness of both his sound and songs. He is backed by his band of James Salone on Organ, Ben Sterling on Bass and John "Junior" Blackmon on Drums and Percussion. On one song he is backed by Brandon Santini on Harmonica, Ben Sterling on Bass and Robert "Nighthawk" Tooms on Piano.

While his guitar playing is a bit hard rocking to my taste, there is no question of his abilities or his musi-

cal imagination. His blending of blues-rock, traditional blues and soul, funk and hip hop results in a very distinctive sound. His songs are fresh and bring the various elements together in such a manner so that the music comes across as multi-faceted, not contrived. One can not praise his band enough as they handle transitions from hard rocking to more restrained sections seamlessly. The rhythm section of Sterling and Blackmon is excellent, and organist Salone stands out with both his supportive playing and his solos. But the leader's insistent playing is at the fore, and even on a shuffle type number he adds unusual, interesting twists in his playing.

Singleton is also an extremely gifted, soulful singer. His voice suggests Robert Cray (an observation that came listening to "Gonna Let Go"), although his delivery has more of an edge. Singleton brings so much personality to these performances, which often have unusual lyrical themes. On the title track, he sings about the adversity he has overcome, underlying the drive he has to "Refuse to Lose." This and "Keep Pushin'" are the most personal of the songs here. On the latter number he sings about a basketball career cut short by injuries (he starred at Southern Mississippi in college), how his uncle took him to a blues club where he was bitten by the blues bug, and that has now become the life he is pursuing with his music.

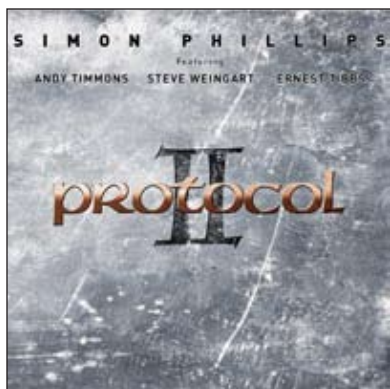
Other songs perhaps have more standard themes about being mistreated such as "Crime Scene," which is where his lady broke his heart, or "Sorry," where he sings about being soft-hearted and almost feeling sorry a little bit, but when he recalls the pain she caused, he isn't sorry a bit. This song illustrates his clever way with a phrase singing that if lying was a sport she would have a number one draft pick and a number one seed, as well as imagining what she might do for a Klondike bar.

Some of my fellow blues traditionalists may find this to be too rocked out. After all, my initial reaction to "Refuse to Lose" was mixed. However, listening to this over several weeks, I appreciate Jarekus Singleton and how stirring his music is. **Ron Weinstock**

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**SIMON PHILLIPS**  
**Protocol II**  
**PHANTOM RECORDINGS**

The well-traveled session drummer (Jeff Beck, Peter Gabriel and others by the dozens) here serves up a set of classic fusion very reminiscent in nature of that created by the late pioneer of the genre, Tony Williams.

Those familiar with Williams' Lifetime lineups, particularly the second, "new" mid-70's edition, should find fast familiarity with Phillips' group's sound and feel. It's a sound that fully embraces the energy and drive of fusion without sacrificing a very jazz-centric sense of groove and openness.

Guitarist Andy Timmons and keyboardist Steve Weingart are engaging solo voices, bassist Ernest Tibbs, provides solid support and there's much to be heard from Phillips' very expansive drum kit.

*Duane Verh*



**STEVE FREUND- GLORIA HARDIMAN**  
**Set Me Free**  
**DELMARK RECORDS**

Delmark has reissued a thirty-year-old album by guitarist Steve Freund and vocalist Gloria Hardiman "Set Me Free." The recording was originally issued on Razor Records

and is augmented by additional tracks. The two were joined by Bob Stroger on bass, Ken Saydak on keyboards, Eddie Turner on drums and Sam Burkhardt on saxophone with Sunnyland Slim guesting on three selections on which Fred Grady replaces Turner. Harlan Terson is also present on bass on several selec-

tions, Bob Levis's guitar is on one and Ron Sorin's harmonica is on two. I believe Freund and Burkhardt were members of Sunnyland Slim's Band at the time, which may account for that piano legend being present on three tracks.

I likely had (or have) the original album as the performances sounded familiar. The playing is first-rate with Freund displaying quite a bit of bite in his playing. My reservations lie with Gloria Hardiman's vocals, some of which have not worn well over time. She is a big-voiced church rooted singer who was obviously under Aretha Franklin's spell as event on her cover of "Dr. Feelgood." Her vocals strike me at some points as strident, such as on her rendition "That's All Right." She really could (and I assume still can) belt out her vocals but a bit more nuance in her delivery, which would have had these performances age better.

Freund capably handles the vocal on a rendition of "The Things I Used to Do" with Sunnyland Slim on piano. Slim is also on Burkhardt and Freund's jumping instrumental "Jammin' With Sam." There is a nice choice of material here including the soul classic "Let Me Down Easy" and Guitar Slim's "Done Got Over It," and "New Orleans Hop Scop Blues" by George Thomas (Sippie Wallace's brother).

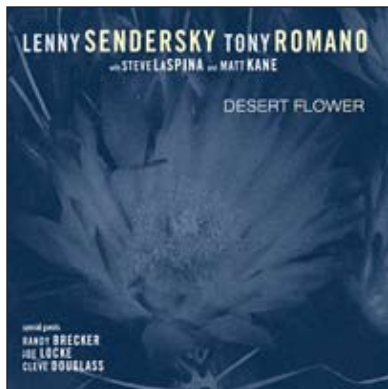
A previously unissued rendition of Otis Rush's "Homework" has one of Hardiman's better vocals on this and she capably sings Brook Benton's "Kiddio"



which both have harmonica on them.

Also included in this is a single that was issued under Saydak including the humorous “Shoppin’ and Shackin’” with an appealing vocal and a tough sax solo from Burkhardt and some striking guitar from Bob Levis. Saydak’s solo rendition of “Swanee River Boogie” closes this reissue with a spirited romp based on the classic Albert Ammons recording.

“Set Me Free” is the most prominent item of Gloria Hardiman’s discography. She recorded with Roy Buchanan for Alligator and appeared on an Alligator anthology, but has not recorded in over two decades. This is a recording that impressed me more when it was initially issued, but my mixed feelings about this augmented reissue are stated above. **Ron Weinstock**



## LENNY SENDERSKY AND TONY ROMANO

Desert Flower  
DESERT RECORDS

“Desert Flower” (Desert Records) is a collaboration between Russian born, Israeli-based, saxophonist Lenny Sendersky and New York guitarist Tony Romano. After the two met and played together at a jam session at the Christiania Jazz Club in Copenhagen, Denmark in June of 2010, they partnered up and began touring together in Russia.

This recording documents some of the music they were playing in Russia along with newer compositions. They are backed on this 2013 recording by Steve LaSpina on bass and Matt Kane on drums, with appearances from Joe Locke on vibes, Randy Brecker on trumpet and Cleve Douglass on vocals.

There is plenty to enjoy, and a definite Brazilian accent to much of this starting with Romano’s “Chet,” a samba with Sendersky on soprano with Romano comping before taking a nice single solo. Locke contributes a lovely vibes solo on this bright, breezy performance. Sendersky switches to alto on another Brazilian tinged original, “Sitting Under the Tree,” one of three performances with just the quartet. In addition to Sendersky’s fluid alto and Romano’s deft guitar, there is marvelous backing by LaSpina (who takes a brief solo) and Kane with a light touch. The taste and restraint is also present on the title track, a lovely tone poem.

Randy Brecker’s trumpet is added on Romano’s “Horizons,” with some blistering playing followed by Romano’s driving acoustic playing, and then Sendersky with some nice phrasing. Locke’s shimmering vibes lend to the mood of Romano’s lovely ballad “Promise” with Sendersky on soprano, while “Fruit Tree” is a brisk, lively samba with Locke’s lively playing here complementing some hot alto sax. Cleve Douglas sings on Duke Ellington’s “My Father’s Island” from Ellington’s opera “Queenie Pie.” Not previously familiar with Douglass, I was impressed by his mix of scatting, rap and vocal here as well as an evocative rendition of the classic “Nature Boy.” In both cases, the quartet provides tastefully restrained, marvelous accompaniment.

The disc closes with Romano’s “Tango,” a slower performance with a tad bit dramatic flair in Sendersky’s sax. This is a terrific group with strong soloing and ensemble playing using Brazilian roots in its approach. “Desert Flower” is a marvelous recording with so many delightful tracks to enjoy. **Ron Weinstock**



## SLEEPY JOHN ESTES Live In Japan With Hammie Nixon DELMARK

It was a surprise to hear that Delmark was going to release recordings made of Sleepy John Estes during Japanese tours from the mid-1970s for the first time in the United States. The performances have finally been released on “Live In Japan With Hammie Nixon,” which brings together 19 songs from four performances by the pair. A Japanese quartet, Yu Ka Dan, joins them for four songs.

Estes was a marvelous storyteller and songwriter with a crying, expressive voice and a rudimentary guitar style with which Nixon would supply supporting vocals (with a few lead vocals as well) along with his deep harmonica style, kazoo and jug. The two mix in songs that were staples of Estes’ repertoire, including “Broke and Hungry,” “You Shouldn’t Say That” (with Nixon sharing lead vocals), “Stop That Thing,” “The Girl I Love, She Got Long Curly Hair,” “Divin’ Duck Blues,” “Rats in My Kitchen” and “Brownsville Blues,” along with standards “Corrina Corrina,” and “I’ll Be Glad When You’re Dead, You Rascal You,” and spirituals “Holy Spirit, Don’t You Leave Me” (sung by Hammie)

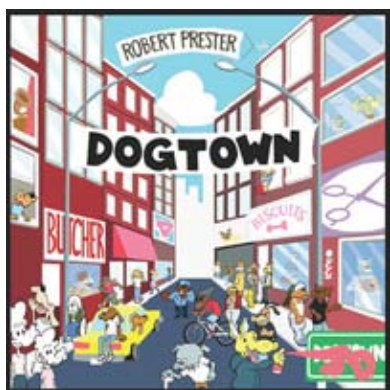


and “Jesus Is On the Mainline.” The performances are done simply and directly with Estes’ crying vocals at the forefront with Nixon accompaniments providing much of the musical interest, whether his responsive harmonica, or buzzing kazoo and jug (as heard on “Corrina, Corrina”).

This is wonderfully recorded and one can hear the appreciation shown by the Japanese audience, including the response when they start “The Girl I Love, She Got Long Curly Hair,” indicating more than passing familiarity with Estes’ recordings. Yu Ka Dan does a nice job adding their accompaniment on several tracks including a lovely “Love Grows In Your Heat,” Estes’ rendition of “Careless Love.”

Steve Tomashefsky accompanied the pair on their Japanese tours and wrote the liner notes, recapping the time they spent over there and I presume is the voice introducing them on track 12. Nixon did most of the song introductions and storytelling on stage. These are among the last recordings the two recorded together and is heartfelt blues from two giants of early blues. As wonderful as the music is, some may enjoy this better by listening to it in parts rather than straight through.

*Ron Weinstock*



## ROBERT PRESTER

### Dogtown

#### COMMONWEALTH AVE. PRODUCTIONS

Robert Prester showcases his fluency and lively Latin and bop styling on his Commonwealth Ave. Productions CD titled “Dogtown.” The Southern Florida pianist is joined by bassist Nicky Orta, drummer Etienne Francis, percussionist Dave Schanzer, vocalist Terezinha Valois and trumpeter Jonathan Sigel all playing on several selections. Jack Ciano replaces Francis on one track.

Prester’s “Vincenzo’s Blues” is a spirited original that displays his ability to craft catchy themes that the trio bring to life in a lively performance. More of the same is heard on “Beneath Wind’s Shadow” with Sigel’s bright trumpet complemented by Prester’s fluid piano as Schanzer adds percussive accents. The title track changes the mood and is a tight trio performance is built around an intriguing descending line that Prester and Orta improvise over. Valois’ vocals adds an additional horn voice to “Toy Soldiers” as well the

flamenco inspired “Noches de Sevilla,” (percussionist Schanzer is excellent here) that will evoke Sketches of Spain for some,

Prester composed everything but the brief rendition of Coltrane’s Giant Steps (titled Bite Size Steps) that closes this recording. “Noches de Sevilla” may be the standout performance here, but “Dogtown” is a marvelously engaging recording throughout.

*Ron Weinstock*



## TWEED FUNK

### First Name Lucky

#### TWEED TONE RECORDS

I have become aware of the Milwaukee based blues and soul band Tweed Funk from some very positive remarks on social media. They have a new recording; “First Name Lucky” on Tweed Tone Records that I understand is their third CD. Tweed Funk is fronted by a powerful vocalist, Joseph ‘Smokey’ Holman. The quintet backing him includes guitarist JD Optekar, bassist Eric Madunic, drummer Nick Lang, saxophonist Jon Lovas, and trumpeter Kevin Klemme. One selection also includes Brian Lucas’ harmonica. Seven of the 11 songs were written by Optekar. He is an able guitarist and the horns add punch, and both are fine soloists while the rhythm section keeps the groove going.

The party feel is exhibited on the funky “Time to Burn.” They really do little to make their cover of “Let the Good Times Roll” notable. It is interesting they cover Black Joe Louis’ “Sugarfoot,” but Smokey’s vocal comes off as strained. In contrast, they provide a nice cover of Lil Bob and the Lollipop’s “I Got Loaded” (familiar to some from Los Lobos’ cover. It is incorrectly credited to Peppermint Harris, whose “I Got Loaded” is a different song), with Lovas contributing a nice tenor solo. The slow blues, “Sippin Misery,” stands out. It has a 3 O’Clock in the morning feel with Smokey’s low-key vocal, Optekar’s jazzy guitar here (and he might use this attack elsewhere) and marvelous playing by Lovas and Klemme (the latter making nice use of horns) for a magical performance and shows just how good they can get. In contrast to this wonderfully paced performance, the closing “Get It On” sounds frenzied. Slowing the tempo down a notch might have also allowed Smokey’s vocal to have more impact.

Tweed Funk’s “First Name Lucky” is a record perfect for parties with a mix of blues and soul. *Ron Weinstock*



## STEVE WILSON | LEWIS NASH DUO

**Duologue**  
**MCG JAZZ**

While the duet format frequently makes for intimate, introspective play, alto saxophonist Steve Wilson and drummer Lewis Nash explore this configuration's swing and groove potential.

Their dialogue is consistently appealing and fresh sounding as they navigate a varied and intriguing set list. Transiting from Monk to Ellington to Ornette, by way of Fats Waller and Eddie Harris, the energy and focus of the play and interplay is constant. Wilson's fit within this wide range of material never sounds uncomfortable or forced, maintaining his modern voice throughout.

The notion that "less is more" is irresistible as one listens through this set. A fresher-than-average release.

*Duane Verh*



## STEVE DAWSON

**Rattlesnake Cage**  
**BLACK HEN MUSIC**

Steve Dawson had a formidable career as a performer and producer in his native Canada (including 7 Juno Awards as an artist and producer), before relocating to Nashville, Tennessee. He has a new recording "Rattlesnake Cage" (Black Hen Music) that consists of solo recordings that are informed by the deep traditions of blues, ragtime, jazz and even Hawaiian music, but taking those influences in unexpected directions.

In a sense, his lovely melodies and marvelous finer picking as well as use of a slide hearken back to the

"American Primitive" sound that John Fahey and other artists such as Peter Lang and Leo Kottke recorded playing acoustic guitars on Fahey's iconic Takoma record label in the sixties.

The eleven tunes presented here display his, fluidity, facility and invention as he salutes Fahey on the opening "Blind Thomas at the Crime Scene," and he provides an indirect tribute to Mississippi John Hurt on the genial "The Medicine Show Comes to Avalon." He does a delightful evocation of Rev. Gary Davis on "The Altar at Center Raven," the strutting instrumental that closes this recording. The title track is a bluesy, lovely mix of slide and deft finger picking on which he almost has time stand still followed by the dreamy "Lighthouse Avenue," and the lively "Butterfly Stunt," on which I hear him distilling some Furry Lewis amongst other sounds.

Dawson's "Rattlesnake Cage" is a release sure to delight fans of Fahey, Land, Kottke, and similar artists, but certainly the music here should readily appeal to fans of blues, old-time country and other folk-related performances.

*Ron Weinstock*



## DANIEL SMITH

**Smokin' Hot Bassoon Blues**  
**SUMMIT RECORDS**

The bassoon is an instrument that is associated with classical music, and it is from the classical music world that Daniel Smith has emerged into the jazz world. I was not familiar with him until I received his new Summit Records' recording "Smokin' Hot Bassoon Blues" which is his 5th jazz recording (and 2nd apparently to focus on the blues).

He is backed on this by a solid rhythm section of Robert Bosscher-Piano/Arranger, Michael O'Brien-Bass, and Vincent Ector-Drums. There are also guest artists Ron Jackson-Guitar, Efrat Shapira-Violin, Neil Clarke-Latin Percussion, Greg 'Organ Monk' Lewis-Jazz Organ, and Frank Senior-Vocalist. They handle a program of blues (and blues-associated numbers that include Jimmy Forrest's "Night Train," Charles Mingus' "Better Get Hit In Your Soul," Jimmy Smith's "Back At The Chicken Shack," Ray Charles'

"What'd I Say," and "Hallelujah I Love Her So," Sonny Rollins' "Blue Seven," Horace Silver's "Senor



Blues,” Duke Ellington’s “C Jam Blues” and Bobby Timmons’ “Moanin’.”

I have no issue with Smith’s technical command of what is a somewhat cumbersome instrument to play, much less swing. The issue is that the bassoon has a sour sound to these ears, which may limit its audience. This is not to say that there is some very intriguing playing, including from those of Smith’s rhythm section as well as his guest artists.

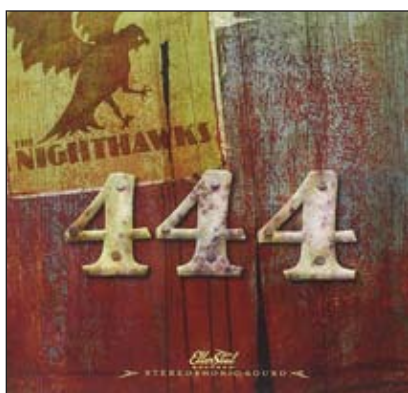
I find Shapira’s violin quite engaging and the unison parts of her and Smith provide more comfortable listening. She certainly makes distinctive contributions to “Night Train” and “Senor Blues” for example. On the latter number, pianist Bosscher has a nice break.

Senior adds some vocals to a couple of Ray Charles numbers with O’Brien taking a nice bowed solo on “Hallelujah I Love Her So,” while Lewis’ adds greasy Hammond B-3 to “Back to the Chicken Shack” and “C Jam Blues,” on which guitarist Jackson sparkles with his crisp, clean fretwork.

Smith is brave to handle the challenges of the Mingus and Rollins compositions and his playing on a lesser known Nat Adderley composition, “Hummin’,” is fascinating with some bluesy single note playing from Jackson, and the rendition of Bobby Timmons’ “Moanin’” is also is also engaging with significant contributions from Jackson and Shapira along with a tight solo from O’Brien.

The reservations about this recording lie in the bassoon’s sonority that makes listening to “Smokin’ Hot Bassoon Blues” a challenge, despite the high level of musicianship as the novelty of a jazz bassoon may wear off for some, for whom this might be best sampled a few tracks at a time.

**Ron Weinstock**



## THE NIGHTHAWKS

444  
ELLERSOUL

Entering their fifth decade as a band the Nighthawks continue their multi-decade journey as a blues and roots rock institution.

While the band has undergone numerous personnel changes over its many years it continues to feature original member Mark Wenner on vocals and harmonica along with long time members Paul Bell on guitars and

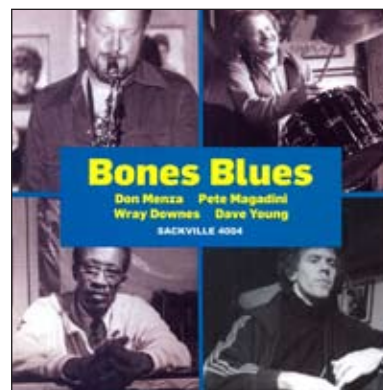
vocals, Johnny Castle on bass and vocals and Mark Stutso (late of another original Nighthawk, Jimmy Thackery’s band the Drivers) on drums and vocals. With top notch instrumental chops and four first rate vocalists on hand, the band can take on literally almost any type of material.

On this set they get deep in the blues on Castle’s original, 444 A.M., which features heaping doses of Wenner’s greasy harmonica chops, on Tracy Nelson’s Livin’ the Blues and on the Muddy Waters classic Louisiana Blues which gets a slow slinky acoustic treatment that makes it stand out from the countless hard electric covers it has received. Speaking of covers, a couple of Elvis classics, Got A Lot of Livin’ and Crawfish make an appearance here with the former channeling the rockabilly groove of the original and the later the low down grease that found its way into his appearance in King Creole.

The Everly Brothers also get a visit on a hard rocking but still faithful reworking of their bad relationship primer, Price of Love. Drummer Mark Stutso lays down soulful vocals on You’re Gone and on the straight out blues of Nothin’ But the Blues. Wenner steps back into the vocal spotlight on mid-tempo rocker Honky Tonk Queen and on the tough, gritty, No Secrets where he shares writing credits with the original ‘Hawks line-up. Castle’s prowess as a songwriter shines brightly on not only the title cut and the heartbreaking rumination about the deaths represented by each little Roadside Cross but also on the swampy High Snakes where Bell’s guitar and Wenner’s harmonica trade lonesome, plaintive whines behind Castle’s haunting lyrics and vocals about the agony that sometime accompanies love.

Still pushing themselves, the Nighthawks are just as fresh and enthusiastic as when they hit the scene all so many years ago.

**Mark Smith**



## PETE MAGADINI

Bone Blues  
SACKVILLE

“Bone Blues,” under the leadership of drummer Pete Magadini, is a strong mainstream Sackville Records session that is being rereleased by Delmark, who acquired the Sackville catalog not that long ago. Magadini anchored a piano trio that included one of Canada’s most gifted pianists, Wray Downes, on what

was his first recording session and bassist Dave Young would later play with Oscar Peterson. Added to this trio is tenor saxophonist Don Menza, who brings a relaxed, melodic quality here to go with his oft sinewy attack.

The straight-ahead date opens with a swinging rendition of “Old Devil Moon,” with Menza blasting off as the rhythm section pushes him along deftly before Downes exhibits why he was so highly regarded with his fluid, precise playing, followed by a short solo from the leader. Menza really gets going on Miles Davis’ “Freddie Freeloader” from the legendary “Kind of Blue” recording, and his fervent solo is followed by Downes’ fresh twist on the theme.

Menza’s marvelous way with a ballad is exhibited on a lovely “Poor Butterfly,” with the trio providing nice understated support. Young’s bass joins Menza to state the theme of Miles Davis’ “Solar” and his emphatic playing helps propel this swinging rendition. There are also lovely versions of Benny Golson’s “I Remember Clifford,” and Dave Young’s wistful “What a Time We Had,” which showcases Young’s strong playing. Menza contributed the title track, which is a solid medium tempo blues from Menza’s pen, which is followed by an alternate take of “Freddie Freeloader.”

Throughout “Bones Blues” Menza is robust and tender as appropriate, and the trio of Magadini, Downes and Young are terrific in both their backing and their own playing. It simply is a wonderful recording of swinging, straight-ahead jazz. **Ron Weinstock**



## COREY HARRIS

### Fulton Blues

BLUES BOULEVARD RECORDS

Corey Harris’ “Fulton Blues,” originally issued by Corey, has been reissued with a couple of bonus tracks added on Blues Boulevard Records. As noted on Corey’s website, “Fulton is a community in Richmond, VA that is older than the city itself.

From its docks on the James River, the first African captives were marched to the city’s slave market to be sold into bondage. This Black town on the east end of the city endured for more than 300 years until its land was seized and the families living there were forcibly evicted in the name of greed masquerading as progress.”

“Fulton Blues” presented some new and classic blues songs and “the fourteen songs on the album range from love, loss and longing to celebration, tragedy and triumph.” In addition to Corey Harris vocals, guitar and banjo, others on this recording include Chris ‘Peanut’ Whitley on keyboards; Gordon ‘Saxman’ Jones on saxophones and horn arrangements; Jason “Brother” Morgan on bass; Ken ‘Trini Jo’ Joseph on drums, Hook Herrera on harmonica and Joshua Achalam on percussion.

This is the first recording on which I have heard Harris in an urban blues setting, as on the opening “Crying Blues,” a lyric of lonesomeness with Saxman Jones providing simple horn riffs in support. It sounds like he may be playing two saxophones at the same time, which may account for the somewhat simple horn arrangements. The solo “Underground” sounds like a blues about the Underground Railroad with its allusions to the devil being out on in the broad daylight and how the devil broke up the family. With its simple backing that evokes the late Ali Farka Toure, Harris’ performance here is mesmerizing. A solo original, “Black Woman Blues” has a John Lee Hooker-North Mississippi Hills groove.

While Harris is known is best known for his adaptation of delta styled blues, the title track has a start lyric about the now gone community, set against an adept Piedmont finger style accompaniment with Herrera adding support. Herrera is also present on Harris’ moving rendition of Skip James’ classic “Devil Got My Woman.” Harris’ banjo feature, “Black Rag,” is a lively number with lyrics suggestive of Blind Willie McTell’s “Kill It Kid Rag,” and also sports a nice saxophone break. An insistent R&B styled rendition of “Catfish Blues” has strong sax playing.

It is followed by a delightful cover of Blind Blake’s “That Will Happen No More,” and then “Lynch Blues” with an accompaniment that evokes “Cherry Ball Blues,” but stark lyrics that open - “What do I see hangin’ beneath the tree ....” Harris’ deep singing, his repeated guitar riffs and Herrera’s harmonica make for a deeply moving performance.

The original release of “Fulton Blues” closed with the full band on an instrumental “Fat Duck’s Groove” that allowed Harris to display his electric guitar staying marked by his crisp and clean fretwork. A couple of live performances are bonus tracks here that were not included on the original release. Both “Better Way” and “Esta Loco” reflect Caribbean influences on Harris, including ska on the former and Latin on the latter.

“Fulton Blues” an impressive recording that further displays Corey Harris’ ability to revive and invigorate older blues songs and styles for a contemporary blues audience. **Ron Weinstock**

**jazz-blues.com**





## THE 442s

The 442s  
SELF-RELEASED

For those who find chamber music a staid and stuffy affair, this St. Louis-based group may be a real game changer.

Based around a string trio format, the 442s expand their sonic palette with additional acoustic instrumentation and vocals that create intriguing genre-crossing currents. The classical-meets-jazz-meets-world music atmosphere that results is the canvas for fresh and unique compositions courtesy of leader/multi-instrumentalist Adam Maness.

Those in search of “something different” to listen to should run this creative, delightful effort down.

*Duane Verh*



## JJ THAMES

Tell You What I Know  
DECHAMP RECORDS LLC

Born in Detroit, but resident in Jackson, Mississippi for some years, JJ Thames arrives on the blues recording scene with an impressive debut, “Tell You What I Know” on DeChamp Records.

Thames is a relatively young (30 years old) voice on the blues and soul scene on this new release for Grady Champion’s new label, which also issued the excellent Eddie Cotton CD. This is produced by keyboardist Sam Brady, who also contributed to several of the songs. Others playing on this include David Hyde (bass), Vince Barranco (drums), and Celeb Armstrong (guitar) with guest appearances from Grady Champion

(executive producer, harmonica), guitarists Eddie Cotton, Doug Frank and Danny Scallions, Richard Beverly (trumpet), Todd Bobo (tenor sax) and Mike Weidick (trombone). Ten of the eleven songs are originals and Thames herself wrote or co-wrote seven (with assist from Cotton, Brady and Champion).

Thames has a powerful voice and sings with plenty of enthusiasm. There are some rough edges that will be smoothed over as she continues performing and matures further. The material is often very striking, such as the opening “Souled Out” that sounds built up over an old field holler with her powerful singing set against her own backing vocal chorus. “Hey You,” one of several tracks with Champion’s down home harmonica to support Thames singing, about down home blues with a hypnotic hill country groove.

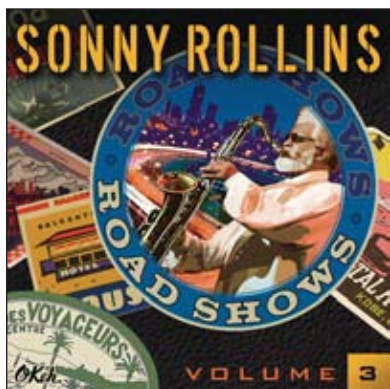
“I Got What You need” is a sultry funky soulful number as she tells her man that she knows he likes what he sees but JJ needs a real strong man to rock her all night long, with Champion taking a harp solo set against riffing horns. “My Kinda Man” is a southern soul ballad nicely played about a man who makes JJ tremble at his touch.

The soulful “No Turning Back” has her leaving and getting over a lover with Cotton taking a biting guitar solo, and this is followed by the moving soul ballad of “Can You Let Someone Else Be Strong.” The one cover is a solid rendition of Ray Charles’ “I Believe” that is modeled after Charles’ original with nice horn



backing and Brady is solid on keys. Another standout track is another sultry soul-funk performance, “Just Enough,” from the pens of Frederick Knight and Jon & Sally Tiven. The album closes with the title track, a marvelous soul-blues lament that she marvelously delivers as she sings about her experiences singing blue-collar blues in Detroit and singing for quarters in the NYC subway system.

JJ Thames impresses as a singer who certainly can belt out a vocal, but also displays a nuanced vocal approach and admirable vocal dynamics. With solid production and strong material, she has produced a recording that should appeal to soul-blues and southern soul lovers. With Eddie Cotton’s terrific recent album, and Thames’ “Tell You What I Know,” DeChamp Records is off to an auspicious start. **Ron Weinstock**



**SONNY ROLLINS**  
**Road Shows volume 3**  
**OKEH/SONY MASTERWORKS**

The legendary Okeh label, which released some of the early sides by Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington, has been recently revived by Sony Masterworks. Tenor sax titan Sonny Rollins, who just turned 84 on September 7, has worked out a deal with Okeh /Sony to issue his newest release for his company, Doxy Records. “Road Shows Volume 3” is the latest installment of live Sonny Rollins music, and a most welcome release it is.

This album features six songs, which were recorded over five concerts – one each in 2001, 2006, 2007 and 2009, and two from 2012. Four songs were recorded over three concerts in France, one in Japan, and one in St. Louis. In spite of the different venues and years, sound-wise the songs have been presented in such a way that they sound like they belong together, which is a good feat given the 11-year time span involved. Sonny has always disliked recording in a studio, and he and his cohorts are in fine form throughout this very live set as he delivers four originals and three standards.

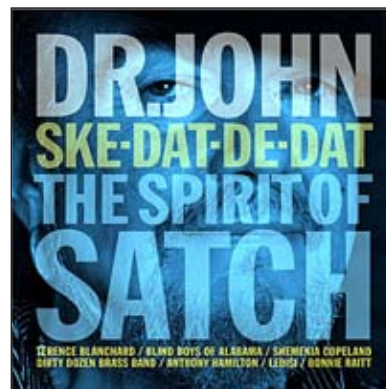
One of the standards, “Why Was I Born,” Runs almost 24-minutes, and one of his own famous calypsos, “Don’t Stop The Carnival,” has the French crowd so fired up they are clapping in time throughout. Check

out “Solo Sonny,” which is just Rollins and his tenor running through quotes of a slew of familiar songs before the band joins in for just the closing. These are just a couple of the highlights in store.

While there are some small variations in personnel over the program, the constants are Clifton Anderson/trombone and Bob Cranshaw/bass. Some of the others on various tracks are Stephen Scott/piano, Bobby Broom or Peter Bernstein/guitar and the drums are manned by either Kobie Watkins, Victor Lewis, Perry Wilson or Steve Jordan.

All Sonny Rollins fans should enjoy this set, and newer fans should as well. This is definitely an album to check out, and look into Volumes 1 & 2 while you are at it as well.

**Bill Wahl**



**DR. JOHN**  
**She-Dat-De-Dat: The Spirit of Satch**  
**CONCORD**

Purported to be a tribute to Louis Armstrong, Dr. John’s new Concord Records album even reflects that in its title, “She-Dat-De-Dat: The Spirit Of Satch.” I find it more satisfying listening to this as simply a Dr. John album with songs somehow associated with Louis Armstrong.

With arrangements primarily by his trombonist Sarah Morrow and the good Doctor, the music is more in the spirit of Dr. John, and for a tribute to a gentleman whose legacy might be summed up by a title he recorded, “Swing That Music,” there is little swing but plenty of funk. This is despite the presence of such marvelous guests as Nicholas Payton, Terence Blanchard, Wendell Brunious, James Andrews, the Five Blind Boys, Ledisi, The Blind Boys of Alabama, Bonnie Raitt, Shemekia Copeland, the Dirty Dozen and Arturo Sandoval along with Reginald Veal, Herlin Riley, Pancho Sanchez and Ed Petersen among those playing on these sessions.

Looking at the material, there are only a few numbers that have a strong connection with Armstrong and core to his performance, while several core songs of Armstrong’s music are not here, including “When It’s Sleepy Time Down South” (Armstrong’s theme song) and “When the Saints Go Marching In” (Armstrong’s recording with his big band popularized the number that has become overplayed perhaps). However, “That’s My Home” is a musical cousin to “..Sleepy Time Down South,” and one



can understand Dr. John being uncomfortable with Sleepy Time's lyrics. While "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" was performed by Armstrong, and is a nice vehicle for singer Anthony Hamilton, there is nothing about this song or performance that makes one think of Armstrong. The same can be said with "Sweet Hunk O'Trash," that Armstrong performed with Billie Holiday in a movie and was chosen here as a vehicle for a duet with Copeland. Armstrong played on the original "Trouble in Mind," and one wonders if it would have been a more inspired vehicle for Copeland to include here with simply Dr. John and just Nicholas Payton on trumpet.

There is a lovely rendition of "What a Wonderful World" (although hardly a core part of Armstrong's repertoire when he was still alive) with the Five Blind Boys to open this album and there is a fresh, funk and hip-hop rendition of "Mack the Knife" with Mike Ladd adding a rap. Also "Tight Like That," with Arturo Sandoval's trumpet, is totally reworked into a Latin number.

The duet with Bonnie Raitt on "I've Got the World on a String" is nice, but the only thing Dr. John's "Gut Bucket Blues" has in common with Armstrong's Hot Five recording is its title. The performance bears little resemblance to Armstrong's original, although Payton is brilliant here and it is a nice blues vocal and performance. Despite some bombast in the arrangement, "Dippermouth Blues" is also far removed from King Oliver's original or the various renditions and becomes rollicking New Orleans funk with James Andrews (Trombone Shorty's brother) playing hot trumpet while Doctor John sings some scat phrases he wrote (including the title of this album).

"That's My Home" is one of the songs here that most evokes Armstrong's music, as does "Memories of You," with some outstanding playing from trumpeter Sandoval. The closing "When You're Smiling," with the Dirty Dozen, has a lively Afro-Cuban groove and a solid vocal from the good Doctor.

In closing, there is certainly nothing to fault Dr. John's performances here. The only problem this writer has here is with the subtitle of the album, "The Spirit of Satch." If you simply called this "Ske-Dat-De-Dat," I suspect few would make a connection with Louis Armstrong from listening to it other than to perhaps observe several songs were associated with Armstrong.

At the same time, when simply viewed as a Dr. John release it certainly will appeal to his many fans, and on that basis I have no problem with recommending this album.

**Ron Weinstock**



## HIROMI

Alive

TELARC / CONCORD

Pianist Hiromi (Hiromi Uehara) is certainly among the musical treasures to come from Japan over the years. She has just released her ninth album for the Telarc division of Concord Records, and it is another edition with her Trio Project featuring electric bassist Anthony Jackson and drummer Simon Phillips.

This one, titled "Alive" features nine original Hiromi compositions, and was recorded "live" in the studio. This trio has been together for quite a while, and it shows throughout.

A bit of a child prodigy, she was already starting to play classical piano at five or six and had quite a musical journey before releasing her first Telarc album in 2003. She has received accolades from Chick Corea, Ahmad Jamal, Oscar Peterson and many others along the way, as well as much deserved critical and popular acclaim. In 2009 she and Chick Corea recorded his wonderful 2-CD set for Concord titled "Duet."

Hiromi is technically brilliant, can be lightning fast, and is extremely proficient at Straight ahead acoustic jazz, jazz-rock fusion, wonderful balladry, classical music, ventures to the outside and more – and she can be very intense at times. Unlike most of her previous work, on this new effort you can sample every side she has to offer, sometimes switching gears in mid-song.

I will admit that Hiromi's music is not for everyone, as it is for many an acquired taste. While I enjoyed her music since her first release, I really became sold when I saw her playing live in the Stanley Clarke trio along with Lenny White. Yes, that got me, and one of the things I remember about that concert is that all eyes were on Hiromi – as she is also a very exciting performer to watch, with her constant movement and expressions.

This is a fine release for her catalog of recordings. If not yet a fan, you can sample some songs from this and her other releases on Amazon. And be sure to check out her video clips on YouTube. You can also check out her website at [www.hiromimusic.com](http://www.hiromimusic.com).

For those who are already her fans, you will want "Alive" – although you probably already have it by now.

**Bill Wahl**

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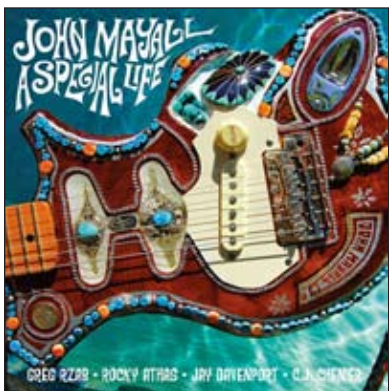
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**JOHN MAYALL**  
**A Special Life**  
 FORTY BELOW RECORDS

John Mayall returns with his first album in 5 years, "A Special Life" (Forty Below Records) with Rocky Athas on guitar; Greg Rzab on bass and Jay Davenport on drums plus C.J. Chenier singing on two tracks and playing accordion on one.

There are three new Mayall originals along with one of his older compositions and one by Rzab, along with covers of songs from Clifton Chenier, Jimmy Rogers, Eddie Taylor, Sonny Landreth, Albert King, and Jimmy McCracklin.

While one might be hard-pressed to call myself a Mayall follower, I found this recording enjoyable with several real fine performances here. The CD opens with C.J. joining Mayall on a solid rendition of Clifton Chenier's blues "Where Did You Go Last Night," as C.J. adds his piano accordion along with Mayall's piano played at such a nice tempo.

The rendition of Sonny Landreth's "Speak of the Devil" is more in the vein of blues-rock in its execution and Athas' guitar playing is crisply played. Mayall's cover of Jimmy Rogers classic "That's All Right" is taken a bit faster than normal (although not rushed or frantic) with Mayall on harmonica and Athas' guitar accompaniment effective in its simplicity and restraint. "World Gone Crazy" is an original about the madness we experience throughout the world as we feel "guilty living in our crazy times."

Mayall is on lead guitar (as well as contributing the organ backing) on a cover of Albert King's "Floodin' In California," and takes a nice solo, if a somewhat generic sounding one. He picks up the harmonica as well to lay down some rollicking piano on a reworking of Eddie Taylor's recording of "Big Town Playboy" (Little Johnny Jones had recorded it first) that is one of the best selections here with its peppy (not frenzied) shuffle groove.

The title track is a reflective look back at the good fortune he has enjoyed with a refreshingly understated backing. C.J. Chenier joins to help on the vocal for McCracklin's "I Want To Know." "Like a Fool" by Athas and Rzab is a nice slow original with Mayall singing that it ain't right his woman toys with his affections and left

him feeling like a fool.

The closing "Just a Memory" is a wistful Mayall original reflecting about a past love and closes this release on an enjoyable note. John Mayall's music might not make my best of 2014 list, but there are enough pleasures to this that have merited my return to listen to "A Special Life."

*Ron Weinstock*

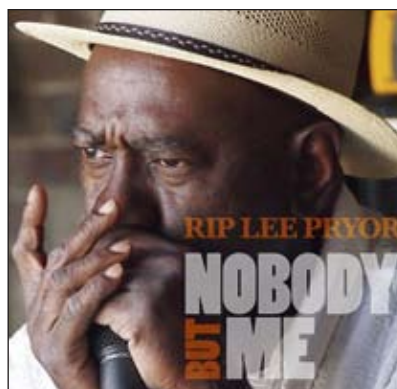


**TAL GUR**  
**Under Contractions**  
 SELF-RELEASED

For a player working in a "free" mode, Israeli alto and soprano saxophonist Tal Gur's approach is conspicuously focused and measured. It provides his group sound with abundant character to complement its fluid nature on a set of originals blissfully biased towards ballads.

His frontline partner, guitarist Eyal Maoz, provides an engaging counter-voice, empathic on ballads and challenging during high-energy moments, assailing Gur's deliberate treks with wildly angular sonic sweeps, dropping the occasional bluesy reference as well. Bassist Sam Trapchak and drummer Nick Anderson are a very suitable section and are fully capable of generating some simmering dialogue of their own.

*Duane Verh*



**RIP LEE PRYOR**  
**Nobody But Me**  
 ELECTRO-FI

There is nothing fancy about the new CD by Rip Lee Pryor, "Nobody But Me" (Electro-Fi). Pryor is the son of the late blues legend and blues harmonica



pioneer, Snooky Pryor, but started learning to play harmonica when his father had dropped out of music. He played with his dad for a time, but in recent years had walked away from music, and recently resumed after bouts with gambling problems and cancer (now in remission). On this disc, Rip Lee plays harmonica (using a rack) and guitar with Alex Fraser or Bucky Berger adding drums on several selections.

His father and John Lee Williamson (the first Sonny Boy Williamson) are obvious influences on his playing especially on the opening “Shake Your Boogie” that both Sonny Boy I and Snooky recorded. His guitar playing is pretty bare, just laying down a bare bass riff on most selections over which he sings and plays his crying harmonica. He is a very expressive singer, like his take on Elmore James’ “You Gotta Move,” but also handles the humor of Rice Miller’s rendition of an old English folk song, the delightful “Wake Up Baby,” with Fraser’s bass and circus drum adding support.

The title track is an original with Rip Lee laying down some boogie guitar to get a rocking groove, which underlies his driving harp solo. Another original, “Lonesome,” is a moody slow blues with some strong harp to accent his pleading vocal. “Heard The News,” credited to Snooky, is an easy boogie shuffle that incorporates “Good Rocking Tonight,” “I Feel So Good” as well as Snooky’s own “Boogie Twist.” “Stuck on Stupid” is a Rip Lee original with a Jimmy Reed boogie groove. His father’s “Pitch a Boogie Woogie” has Berger’s drums which helps propel the easy rocking boogie performance here with some real fine harmonica.

The music here is pretty straight-forward and, as Scott Bock observes in his liner notes, Rip Lee has a pretty stripped down sound. Nothing fancy perhaps, but Rip Lee Pryor proves he doesn’t need “Nobody But Me” for a straight dose of classic Chicago blues that is increasingly rare. Ron Weinstock

## books

### MINGUS SPEAKS

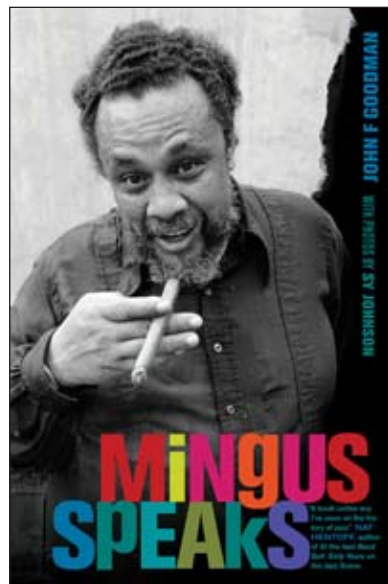
John F Goodman

Photos by Sy Johnson

2013: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

Charles Mingus was one of the singular figures of jazz from the fifties through the seventies. As a bassist, composer, and bandleader, he was a formidable figure and person who left behind some of the most memorable compositions and recordings. He was thoughtful, intense, blunt, outspoken, humorous and, sometimes, volatile. John F Goodman was a writer for Playboy who did a number of jazz features for that publication who reviewed Mingus’ 1972 comeback concert and got intimate with him and some of his musical associates.

Goodman interviewed Mingus a number of times and the conversations on a variety of topics are what



this book is centered around, including the comeback concert, jazz and his own music, his dealings with musicians and club owners, his personal troubles, the publication of his book “Beneath the Underdog,” his relationships with women and his viewpoints on issues of race. Goodman supplements these with interviews and commentary from Mingus’ associates including arranger Sy Johnson (also an accomplished photographer whose photos illustrate the book), Sue Mingus, Teo Macero, George Wein, Max Gordon (Gordon’s recollection of dealing with Mingus include when Mingus tore off the Village Vanguard’s front door and punched Jimmy Knepper), Paul Jeffrey, Sue Mingus, and Bobby Jones.

We get discussions relating to the recording of artists and Mingus’ preparations for major concerts and the chaos relating to some of them. For example Johnson notes that somewhat chaotic preparation for the comeback concert at Carnegie Hall, as Mingus would be continuing to revise the charts up until the performance. He was not a fan of the avant-garde artists like Ornette Coleman (and Bradford Marsalis made similar comments) asserting they could not play straight stuff. He expressed a similar antipathy to fusion and rock music, being particularly outraged by the declining visibility of jazz on the radio. The interviews and commentary round out and provide context for the conversations presented.

“Mingus Speaks” is an invaluable addition to the literature on Charles Mingus as well as jazz literature in general. Goodman’s assembly of this material helps flesh out this larger than life jazz legend and provides insights into his working methods and his life to supplement “Beneath the Underdog” and Gene Santoro’s Mingus biography, “Myself When I Am Real.”

Ron Weinstock

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