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November / December 2014  
Issue 357

jazz  
& blues report



# PORTLAND JAZZ FESTIVAL

PRESENTED BY *Alaska*

# jazz & blues report

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

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

# PORTLAND JAZZ FESTIVAL

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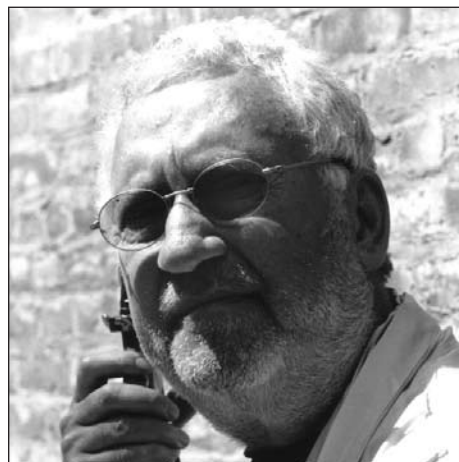
Ron Carter

## Headline Artists Announced For Portland Jazz Festival

**Presented by Alaska Airlines - February 18 through March 1, 2015**

**Tributes to Frank Sinatra @ 100, Ray Charles, Laura Nyro, Michel Legrand, Abbey Lincoln, Jim Hall, Motown and Chi-Town  
Plus Rare Performances by NEA Jazz Masters  
Ron Carter, Lou Donaldson, Lee Konitz and Sheila Jordan**

The 12th Annual Portland Jazz Festival Presented by Alaska Airlines is set to commence Wednesday, February 18 through Sunday, March 1 with a record number of 30 headline concerts at venues throughout the Portland metro region. The festival was co-founded in 2004 with Travel Portland to establish a cultural tourism initiative in the metro Portland area, and to celebrate Black History Month through education and outreach programming.



Lee Konitz



Lou Donaldson (© John Braithwaite)





Lucky Peterson (© Jim Lubrano)



Nicholas Payton

This year's 12-day celebration will also boast the first annual Jazz Forward Competition, a high school competition drawing students from throughout the western region. In partnership with Portland State University, the JFC was created to establish a scholarship program in the tradition of other prestigious regional events held in Reno, Nevada, Monterey, California and Moscow, Idaho. Finalists will compete in five categories, with the winners receiving main stage exposure.

An astounding array of nine singers will headline shows throughout the festival. **Kurt Elling** and the **Art Abrams Big Band** are paying tribute to the seminal early '60s period that focused on three Sinatra/Basie collaborations in a *For Portland Only* program, which features original arrangements by Quincy Jones, titled *Elling Swings Sinatra*. Bay Area singer **Jackie Ryan** debuts in honor of **2015 Portland Jazz Master, Wayne Thompson**. This special program will highlight the music

of Michel Legrand with music director Randy Porter.

**Bebel Gilberto**, the daughter of the legendary Joao Gilberto appears for the first time since 2010 in support of her latest album, *Tudo*. **Karla Harris**, a Portland favorite, will join Luis Conte to cook with the **Bobby Torres** Full Ensemble; and **Joe McBride** makes his debut festival appearance digging Ray Charles with the **Mel Brown** B-3 Organ Band. NEA Jazz Master **Sheila Jordan** debuts, joined by her longstanding bassist **Cameron Brown**. **Becca Stevens**, who is breaking out all over the New York region, and making her Portland debut, will hit three ways - she'll accompany Taylor Eigsti, perform in solo, and cover the captivating music of Laura Nyro.

Label sponsor Mack Avenue Records recently released albums from two stunning vocalists who are set to perform. Vocalist **Freda Payne** will make her Portland debut with the Mel Brown B-3 Organ Group, and offer up a sultry mix of jazz and R&B, all the while recalling her



Luis Conte



Freda Payne (© Raj Naik)



Hailey Niswanger

Motown roots, while label-mate **Cyrille Aimée** returns to PDX with an expanded ensemble since performing her Django to Jobim tribute in 2012. **Adrien Moignard** and **Guilherme Monteiro**, two French guitarists in the style of Reinhardt, will also join Aimée.

Moignard and Monteiro aren't the only guitarists slated to perform. **Joel Harrison** debuts at the festival with his long anticipated Free Country Ensemble (their 2002 release featured Norah Jones), while **Russell Malone** will back the legendary **Ron Carter**. Portland's **Dan Balmer** and **John Stowell** revisit the subtle genius of Jim Hall, and Balmer will also join **Trio Subtonic** and Frank Catalano. **Julian Lage** brings in jazz heavyweights Scott Colley and Eric Harland in an exciting new trio, and legendary blues guitarist **Lucky Peterson** will conclude the festival with what is guaranteed to be a smokin' affair.

Three soulful saxophonists, **Von Freeman**, **Eddie**



Christian McBride (© Chi Modu)

**Harris** and **Gene Ammons**, will be fondly remembered on *Blowin' in From Chicago: For Vonski, Jug and Eddie Who?* **Frank Catalano**, who holds court weekly at the famed Green Mill, will be joined by native Chicagoans Clark Sommers and Mike Raynor with B-3 and piano support from George Colligan and guitarist Dan Balmer.

A handful of celebrated piano trios are scheduled to perform: **Bill Charlap** makes his first festival appearance since 2009, and also celebrates Sinatra on, *In the Wee Small Hours*, a *For Portland Only* instrumental program with the focus on Sinatra's early to mid and late '50s Capitol Records material; he'll be accompanied by Peter and Kenny Washington. **Benny Green**, who last appeared in 2004 as a sideman on a tribute to Ray Brown, will feature his long standing trio; while ECM artist **Vijay Iyer** debuts his classic trio with Stephan Crumb and Marcus Gilmore. **Taylor Eigsti** will make his festival debut in three diverse settings: solo piano, trio



Kurt Elling (© Anna Webber)



Bebel Gilberto





Bill Charlap (© Carol Friedman)



Cyrille Aimee (© Anna Webber)

with Becca Stevens, and the Free Country Ensemble. Classic Pianos will boast five intimate shows: Eigsti, Stevens, **Marc Cary's** *For the Love of Abbey*, former Kurt Elling Music Director **Laurence Hobgood**, and Portland's number one piano son, **Tony Pacini**.

"There's a wealth of critically acclaimed artists in Portland, and what better way to showcase them than in the Festival," states Managing Director **Don Lucoff**. "Just on the headline shows alone, not counting the free gigs around town, we'll have over 50 Portland musicians playing in leader and sideman roles." **Bobby Torres**, **Mel Brown** and **Hailey Niswanger** will lead their respective bands at Jimmy Mak's, the venerable jazz club that is home base to PDX Jazz where upwards of 15 shows a year are presented outside the annual Festival.

Two new initiatives put the spotlight on local artists: The **NYC to PDX Project**, an assembly of transplanted New Yorkers, directed by **Darrell Grant**, playing in a manner of configurations not seen before in PDX; and **Young Lions Revisited**, co-led by **Chris Brown** and **Devin Phillips** welcoming an original young lion, **Ralph Bowen** and special guest **Kamasi Washington** (a Billy Higgins World Stage disciple and Gerald Wilson Big Band alumni). *The Portland Jazz Composers Ensemble Showcase* also returns with three bands in support of new albums under the direction of **Ryan Meagher**.

Additional headline shows at P5 (Newmark and Winningstad Theatres) pair **Lou Donaldson**, who last appeared at the festival in 2009, and Grammy® Award-winning bassist **Christian McBride**, who is making his trio debut with American Pianists Association Cole Porter Fellow, finalist Christian Sands and Ulysses Owens, Jr. **Billy Childs**, the longtime pianist for Freddie Hubbard and Chris Botti, introduces a bold project: *Mapping the Treasure: A Tribute to Laura Nyro*. Appearing on the same show is adventuresome trumpeter, pianist, and vocalist **Nicholas Payton** with Bill Stewart and Vicente

Archer. **Lee Konitz** makes his festival debut with Dan Tepfer, Alan Jones, and Tom Wakeling, and the iconic **Ron Carter** will make a rare Portland appearance on a double bill with **Benny Green** to conclude the festivities at the Newmark Theatre.

Lucoff concludes, "This year's line-up will certainly appeal to a broad demographic of music fans with an ample amount of free music all over the Portland metro area. We are presenting music for the first time in the First Congregational Church and return to the Aladdin Theatre and The Old Church. We look forward to nine exciting shows at Jimmy Mak's, the most we have ever produced during the Festival, our ongoing programming at Classic Pianos, and the Newmark and Winningstad Theatre shows complimented by free Jazz Conversations, music in the Art Bar Atrium of P5, and various hotels throughout the downtown corridor."



Becca Stevens (© Tom Kershaw)

**Mosaic Records Releases  
Blue Note 75th Anniversary Portfolio  
Featuring Seven Photo Series by  
Label Co-Founder Francis Wolff**



Herbie Hancock

Mosaic Records has made a profound impact upon the jazz marketplace with its unparalleled boxed sets, but there is another aspect of the Mosaic brand that is equally important. **Mosaic Images** maintains the complete collection of the art of the peerless photographer and co-founder of Blue Note Records, **Francis Wolff**. His brilliant imagery is as much a part of the Blue Note mystique as its wonderful music, and in conjunction with the iconic label's 75th anniversary, Mosaic has assembled the *Blue Note 75th Anniversary Portfolio*, a commemorative portfolio of seven of Wolff's most outstanding photographs of artists from the label's classic era. Nothing posed, everything in the purity of the moment, yet every image is so impeccably balanced that it looks like Wolff could have spent hours framing it.

**Art Blakey**, drum master and founder of the Jazz Messengers - one of the music's most important "universities" - is perfectly framed by cymbals, snare and toms, his face in concentrated intensity as he presses his elbow into his snare to get the ideal pitch for the drumstick poised to strike.

The ice-hot turbulence of the immortal **Miles Davis** is caught in a moment of relaxed focus, the model of the cool attitude that he embodied in that era as he blows smoothly into his trumpet. Horn bent forward in his familiar manner, framing J.J. Johnson in the background, and casually but elegantly dressed as always.

A young **Herbie Hancock**, one hand hovering over

the piano keys, looks over his shoulder; his eyes, viscerally communicative behind his glasses, clearly sending a meaningful look of unspoken instruction to whoever was its recipient.

The utterly singular **Thelonious Monk** at his first session as a leader, sitting calmly in front of the piano, pointing to his musicians to drive home a concept; the shadow of his body and arm smears against the wall behind him and wraps itself around his chest in a gentle embrace.

**Horace Silver**, one of Blue Note's signature artists, bent forward over the piano, his ultra-long fingers poised to strike, wisps of hair dangling over his forehead and deep shadows making transforming his eyes into endlessly deep pools of smoldering heat.

**Jimmy Smith**, who redefined the B3 organ's modern jazz vernacular in a series of groundbreaking Blue Note albums, is captured at a Philadelphia club, huge hand spread like a lion's paw ready to viciously strike, his face contorted in a rage of agonized joy, screaming to match those of the audience that were undoubtedly accompanying him in the fury.

From the legendary *Blue Train* session, the magnificent **John Coltrane** preaching through his tenor in brooding profile, with Curtis Fuller in the background, his eyes framed between the neck of the tenor and his trombone's slide. The photo splendidly captures the intense depth of Trane's vision as he focuses on that miraculous place that only he could see.

Francis Wolff's genius was his innate ability to portray every aspect of the making of music - playing, discussing, looking over charts, sharing a joke, relaxing between takes - and simultaneously depicting the essence of the musicians with the clarity and depth of Yousuf Karsh. Even more remarkably, he was able to do this with an almost voyeuristic privacy that simply seemed to go unnoticed by the subjects of his artistry. The moments he froze in posterity are so sublimely real and immediate that they make the viewer feel exactly what it was to have been there at that very moment, sharing in an intimacy that is incredibly enriching and transcendent.

This limited edition portfolio (only available through December 31, 2014) comes in a fine, hand-made folio designed as a stylish brief, with a folded-over flap secured with a magnetic closure. They are constructed of archival binder board (.098), bound in smooth, black, linen-textured fabric. The lining is of acid-free paper in bright white. Each folio contains a vellum sheet commemorating Blue Note Records' 75th Anniversary with information about all 7 photographs. These 11" x 17" fine art prints with an image size of 10" x 10" are made with archival pigment inks on 100% acid-free Hahnemuhle watercolor paper with a matte finish.

This limited edition set is available exclusively from Mosaic Records.

Please visit [www.mosaicrecords.com](http://www.mosaicrecords.com) for ordering information, complete track listing and discography.

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### **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.

## BLUES WATCH

BY MARK SMITH

**Winter blues....** Stoke up the fireplace, winter's coming. Here's the last few new discs of the year before the Christmas lists get written: **Joe Bonamassa- *Different Shades of Blue***; **Devon Allman- *Ragged & Dirty***; **Grinder Blues- *Grinder Blues***; **Chris Duarte- *Lucky 13***; **Marcia Ball- *The Tattooed Lady and the Alligator Man***; **Johnnie Basset- *Party My Blues Away***; **Popa Chubby- *I'm Feelin' Lucky- The Blues According to Popa Chubby***; **Mississippi Heat- *Warning Shot***; **Sena Ehrhardt- *Live My Life***; **Jimmy Thackery- *Extra Jimmies***; **The Duke Robillard Band- *Calling All Blues***; **Rory Block- *Hard Luck Child: A Tribute to Skip James***; **Sugar Ray & The Bluetones- *Living Tear to Tear***; **Gary Moore- *Ballads & Blues***; **Dana Fuchs- *Songs from the Road***; **Cyril Davies- *Preachin The Blues Memorial Album***; **Ernie Hawkins- *Monogahela Rye***; **Luke Winslow-King- *Everlasting Arms***; **Louisiana Red- *The Sky is Crying***; **Missy Anderson- *In the Moment***; **Mike Zito and the Wheel- *Songs from the Road***; **Otis Taylor- *Otis Taylor Collection***; **Magic Slim- *Pure Magic***; **Joanne Shaw Taylor- *Dirty Truth***; **Lucky Peterson- *Travelin' Man***; **John Mayall- *Special Life***; **Nashville Jumps (Various Artists)- *A Shot in the Dark***; **Grady Champion- *Bootleg Whiskey***; **Otis Clay & Johnny Rawls- *Soul Brothers***; **Steve Hunter- *Tone Poems Live***; **Sean Costello- *In the Magic Shop***; **Danny Bryant- *Temperature Rising***; **Rob Stone- *Gotta Keep Rollin'***; **JW Jones- *Belmont Boulevard***; **Skyla Burrell Band- *Blues Scars***; **Paul Lamb & the Kingsnakes- *Hole In the Wall***; **Johnny Hoy- *The Dance***; **Linsey Alexander- *Come Back Baby***; **Etta James- *St. Sings Funk***; **The Alexis P. Suter Band- *Love the Way You Roll***; **Chris O'Leary Band- *Live at Blues Now***; **Jay Willie- *Rumblin & Slidin***; **Markey Blue- *Hey Hey***; **The Knickerbocker All-Stars- *Open Mic at the Knick***; **EG Kight- *A New Day***; **Hurricane Ruth- *Born on the River***; **Generation Blues Experience- *Private Angel***; **Kirby Sewell Band- *Girl With A New Tattoo***; **Lisa Mills- *I'm Changing***; **Nathan James- *Hear Me Calling***; **Fo' Reel- *Heavy Water***; **Howard Glazer- *Looking In the Mirror***; **Markus James- *Head For the Hills***; **Gary Clark Jr.- *Live***; **Ironing Board Sam and the Sticks- *Music Maker***; **Eric Bibb- *Blues People***; **Mark "Muleman" Massey- *One Step Ahead of the Blues***; **Lucky Peterson- *I'm Back Again***; **Otis Grand- *Blues From the Heart***; **Pork Chop Willie- *Love is the Devil***; **Luther Dickinson- *Rock 'n' Roll Blues... That's it for this month. See ya!!***

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

**KIDS DON'T GET ENOUGH ART THESE DAYS.** So you can see why some of them might accidentally confuse a jazz legend named Duke with royalty named duke. But it's finally time to set the record straight.

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



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

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

Jazz is art, you dig? Art can

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

really transform lives.

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



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



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**GRADY CHAMPION**  
**Bootleg Whiskey**  
**MALACO**

It seems that Grady Champion has been busy in recent months, with new recordings and a new label on which he has issued recordings by other artists. Now the singer and harmonica player has signed with Malaco and has issued “Bootleg Whiskey,” which brings a nice mix of material and musical settings for his earnest and exuberant music.

Among those heard backing Grady are Clayton Ivey (keyboards), Harrison Callaway (horn arrangements), and David Hood (bass) with appearances by Jimmy Johnson and Mike Griffin amongst others. Grady, Larry Grisham and Darrell Luster contributed some originals along with a few songs from the likes of Ernie Johnson and the late George Jackson.

Those familiar with Grady Champion will have some sense of what to expect, although the use of horns and production lends a different tenor to several selections. The opening “Beg, Borrow, Steal,” is a peppy (almost frantic) rocker about his woman spending his money, as he has to beg borrow and steal to keep on loving. It has some of his better harp playing here.

George Jackson penned the title track with a nice groove and horns as Grady sings about how bootleg whiskey and a cheap hotel rocked his world. Ernie Johnson’s “Don’t waste My Time” is a terrific slow soul-blues in the manner of Artie White or Johnnie Taylor as Grady delivers the powerful phrase of rather being six feet in the grave than to let her waste his time.

The uptown production enhances the lazy groove of Grady’s “Ten Dollars” about being down on his luck, while Darrell Luster’s “South Side” is a soulful number about the side of a town where one can get down and there is a party on every block where they party around

the clock. Luster and Grady collaborate on “Mr. Right” with Grady offering advice that ladies may need to settle for Mr. Wrong until Mr. Right comes along.

Grady Champion’s “Bootleg Whiskey” is a well-produced release that perhaps provides the best display of his maturing vocals along with his distinctive harp stylings, handsomely supported by the studio band and solid horn arrangements.

*Ron Weinstock*



**CHICK COREA**  
**Trilogy**  
**CONCORD JAZZ**

Chick Corea continues to dazzle audiences with his performances and recordings. “Trilogy” (Concord Jazz) is a three-disc release that documents two tours by a remarkable trio of Corea, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Brian Blade, with guest appearances from Jorge Pardo on flute, Niño Josele on acoustic guitar and Gayle Moran Corea on vocals.

17 performances with nearly 3 and a half hours of music span the three discs and it is an understatement that these selections from 10 concerts provide an overview of Corea’s continued remarkable music as the three explore standards such as “This Song Is You” and “How Deep Is The Ocean”, a couple of Thelonious Monk classics, “Work” and “Blue Monk” as well as some of Corea’s compositions including “Spain” and “Armando’s Rhumba.”

This is a stellar trio with Corea blending his crisp, robust attack with a hint of romanticism. The influence of Bill Evans is perhaps most evident in the trio’s renditions of standards (and Corea has recorded an Evans tribute with Eddie Gomez and the late Paul Motian) but his own Iberian touches and romanticism is evident throughout on these remarkable performances. Christopher McBride may be the busiest contemporary bassist, and he provides an anchor for Corea and the playing of Blades who complements Corea’s lead with his dynamic playing and rhythmic accents.

Corea’s “Fingerprints” certainly has some dazzling piano before Blade takes an explosive solo. It is followed a lovely “My Foolish Heart,” on which Josele’s flamenco-rooted guitar and Pardo’s flute were at the forefront early before Corea and company closed out the track. Josele introduces the theme for “Spain” before Corea (with McBride playing arco and Blade

playing small instruments) enters at a lazy pace and the two set the atmosphere enhanced by Pardo's flute before the tempo accelerates with some compelling playing from Corea and all. Corea, Josele, Pardo and McBride are showcased here before a riveting exchange between Corea and Blade. Listening one wants to dance and imagine how difficult it was for those at this Madrid concert to sit still, although the audience joyfully vocalizes in exchanging fours with Corea's piano.

There are other remarkable moments including a marvelous interpretation of "Blue Monk;" a stirring "Armando's Rhumba," and the remarkable "Piano Sonata: The Moon" with exquisite arco work from McBride along with Corea's crisp playing.

Chick Corea has been remarkably productive in a variety of settings over several decades including these past few years. "Trilogy," as well as other recent recordings, displays his continued combination of intelligence, imagination, technique and passion. The brilliance certainly continues to shine here.

*Ron Weinstock*



## MISSISSIPPI HEAT

Warning Shot  
DELMARK RECORDS

Pierre Lacocque's Mississippi Heat have a new release on Delmark, "Warning Shot," that will be welcomed by the band's fans and likely make new fans from those who hear it.

Lacocque's leadership, along with his songwriting and marvelous harmonica playing (Charlie Musselwhite is quoted calling it tasty and brilliant), is joined by one of the most underrated vocalists in the blues, Inetta Visor, vocals and guitar from Michael Dotson, guitar from Giles Corey, bass from Brian Quinn and a vocal from Kenny Smith, who shares the drum chair with Andrew Thomas.

Former band member Carl Weathersby is on guitar on a couple tracks, Neal O'Hara is on keyboards, Ruben Alvarez is on percussion and Sax Gordon handles the saxophones.

The opening "Sweet Poison" is an imaginative original, built upon the Elmore James broom dusting riff with Lacocque's fine harp riding over Dotson's crisp slide playing. The band pushes the groove behind a

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superb vocal from Visor. Years ago she might have been described as a moaner as opposed to a shouter, but her nuanced singing is thoroughly a delight. You get a sense of the vivacious quality of her performances listening to her, but the joy she has singing is evident when one sees Heat live (or on the band's Live DVD "One Eye Open, Live at Rosa's" on Delmark). "Sweet Poison" is followed by a rollicking "Alley Cat Boogie," with pumping piano from O'Hara and an exuberant vocal from Visor.

The original "Come To Mama" sports Caribbean rhythms (handled by Thomas) with Corey taking the guitar lead sounding like he's playing through a Leslie amp. Gordon takes a tough tenor sax solo, while Lacocque's solo suggests some of Walter Horton's playing (thinking of Horton's take "La Cucaracha"). More terrific harp along with Corey's jazzy guitar is heard behind Visor's moving singing on a reworking of a Ruth Brown recording, "I Don't Know." Dotson takes a capable vocal on "Yeah Now Baby" with its North Hills Country meets Muddy Waters rhythms.

"Birthday Song," is a funky, buoyant original that provides blues and soul revival bands with an alternative to the standard birthday song. Corey is in a Santana mode here with Gordon and Lacocque riffing in support.

Dotson's guitar lead on his bouncy rocker, "Swingy Dingy Baby" evokes the late Texas guitarist Cal Valentine. "Too Sad To Wipe Away The Tears" has a low-key backing with terrific Lacocque's harp in a Sonny Boy Williamson II manner. Dotson's restrained slide playing is exceptional.

Set against a crisp shuffle groove and Gordon's one-man sax section, the instrumental rendition of "Your Cheating Heart" showcases Lacocque's wonderful harp. Gordon takes a booting solo on this. "A Part of Special" is a funky Visor original whose backing vocal chorus, the horn arrangements (and a sax solo that would have King Curtis smiling) and a terrific vocal suggests some classic 70s Aretha Franklin (she is really good here).

The terrific "Warning Shot" features tight ensemble playing (one of the things that Lacocque has always focused on with this band), excellent new original material, interpretations of songs that have not been recorded a zillion times, strong solos and the wonderful blues and soul vocals of Inetta Visor.

*Ron Weinstock*

## LIVE BLUES ON THE HIGH SEAS

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## CHARLES DAVIS

### For The Love of Lori

READE STREET RECORDS

With a six decade career that includes associations with such iconic artists as Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington, Sun Ra, Ben Webster, Kenny Dorham, Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison, Illinois Jacquet, Freddie Hubbard, Johnny Griffin, Ahmad Jamal, John Coltrane, Clifford Jordan, Cedar Walton, Sam Jones, Billy Higgins and countless others, Charles Davis has not recorded as frequently as a leader as his talent as a saxophonist, composer and arranger should have merited.

Perhaps best known as a Baritone saxophonist, he is on tenor sax on his new recording "For the Love of Lori" (Reade Street Records). On this session he is joined by a superb band that includes pianist Rick Germanson, trumpeter Joe Magnarelli, trombonist Steve Davis, bassist David Williams and drummer Neil Smith.

The Lori, on the beautiful title track is his wife Lori Samet-Davis, who passed away and the beautiful ballad is one way of his coping with the loss. His wife's passing was not the only loss Davis suffered as his long-time musical collaborator, Cedar Walton, was supposed to be on this recording but passed away prior to the September 2013 recording date, so Rich Germanson replaced him while Walton's long-time bassist Williams helps anchor the album along with the marvelous drummer, Neil Smith.

The wonderful opening selection "Beques" displays the authority of the ensemble, whether soling or playing as an ensemble. Davis' arrangement of Irving Berlin's "What'll I Do?" provides a lazy feel, and after Davis states the theme on tenor, Magnarelli makes judicious use of a mute before Steve Davis' masterful solo, which is one of the album's many pleasures.

Julian Priester's "Juliano" is a bright swinger as Steve Davis swings gruffly, followed by Magnarelli's forceful trumpet that segues into the leader's robust tenor as the rhythm section pushes the performance along (Germanson takes a well conceived solo as well). It is followed by the leader's salute to Kenny Dorham, "KD," that spotlights Magnarelli's lyrical and driving playing.

Charles Davis' warmth, strength and lyricism as a ballad player are evident on the title track while Smith's drumming is wonderful in adding embellishments under the solos and the ensemble portions. In addition to his wonderful playing, Germanson contributed the arrangement for the first-rate hard bop rendition of Cedar Walton's "Cedar's Blues," which also allows him to stretch out with the first solo over Williams' walking bass line and Smith's subtle rhythmic accents. The closing "I'll Be Seeing You" is a nicely paced and wistful rendition of this standard.

From the loss of both his soul mate and a close friend, Charles Davis has found the strength to bring together this excellent band and music that makes "For The Love of Lori" such a delightful hard bop recording. It is another choice addition in his body of recordings.

*Ron Weinstock*



## GENERATION BLUES EXPERIENCE

### Private Angel

R. MUSIC, INC.

Generation Blues Experience arose in 2012, when 12-year-old Ray Goren visited Bell's, a South Central Los Angeles juke joint, and met 78-year-old Jamie Powell and 68 year-old-Sammy Lee, with whom they established bonds that transcended the differences in age and lifestyle. Having shared stages with BB. King and others, and having recorded two albums, R. Music, Inc. has just issued "Private Angel," a recording of seven originals and one cover.

Generation Blues Experience is comprised of Ray Goren (guitar and vocals), Jamie Powell (guitar and vocals), Sammy Lee (harmonica and vocals), Lester Lands (bass, rhythm guitar and vocals), Tadg Galleran (keyboards) and Albert Trepagnier, Jr. (drums). Bobby 'Hurricane' Spencer is musical director, plays tenor saxophone and did the album's horn arrangements. Others on the recording are Dan Weinstein (cornet and trumpet), Terry DeRouen (formerly with Lowell Fulson and Guitar Shorty - rhythm guitar), Andrew Bush (keyboards) and Retha Petruzates joining Lands and Spencer on backing vocals.

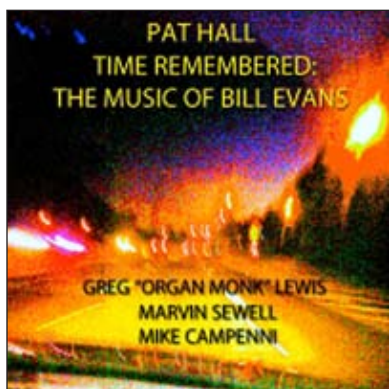
Sammy Lee takes the vocal on the opening "Little Mama," with a Latin groove and punchy horns as he sings about a lady in her skinny jeans and working it on out

before Goren takes a very impressive couple of choruses that displays a clean and crisp attack before Lee closes the vocal out over Goren's guitar. The title track is a slow minor blues that displays Goren's maturity as a singer, a vocal set against a backing that suggests B.B. King's recording of "The Thrill Is Gone." Goren wrote the country blues "Crazy" for Powell, whose strong singing is complemented by Lee's down home harp as well as being a showcase for Goren's guitar pyrotechnics.

Goren displays a different side from his hard rocking guitar style on a lovely ballad "Rainin'," with his plea as to why did you leave baby, "cause its sunny outside baby but raining in my room." Besides his vocal, the jazzy solo displays a different side to Goren's playing. It is followed by a shuffle "Katrina," on which Lee sings about the Hurricane that treated New Orleans so mean with fine guitar and a bit of down home harp. "Sugar Momma" is a lazy blues spotlighting Lee's down home harp and vocals which reworks the classic Sonny Boy Williamson I and Howlin' Wolf recording with solos by Goren and Lee.

Bassist Lands sings soulfully on "Put Love On Your Guest List," (and take hate off your mind) with a short crisp Goren guitar break followed by a concert recording of Bill Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine" to close out this album. Goren's capable vocal showcases a lengthy solo on which he builds from some jazzy filigrees to some serious guitar fireworks. It's a solo that certainly illustrates why he is someone who likely will become prominent, among contemporary audiences especially. The solo perhaps goes on a bit long, but there is no denying his capabilities as a guitarist or a singer. And while he shares the spotlight with the rest of Generation Blues Experience, "Private Angel" is as much a coming out showcase for a precocious and very talented Ray Goren.

*Ron Weinstock*



## PAT HALL

### Time Remembered: The Music of Bill Evans (UNSEENRAIN)

Trombonist Pat Hall's "Time Remembered: The Music of Bill Evans" (Unseenrain) is an unusual exploration of music associated with the late Bill Evans. Backed by Greg "Organ Monk" Lewis on the Hammond

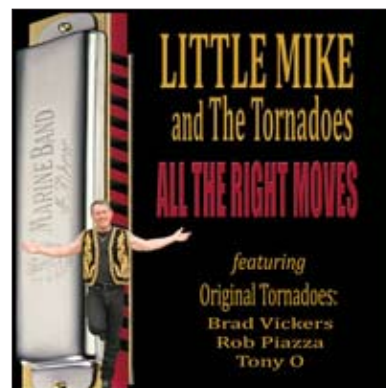
B-3, Marvin Sewell on guitar and Mike Campenni on drums, the organ trio and trombone setting is somewhat removed from the piano trios that Evans led during his highly influential career. This provides a very different cast to the performances of the music of pianist Evans.

"Time Remembered" is a lively recording with its light swing, the leader's gravelly trombone playing, Sewell's fleet fretwork, and Lewis' B-3 work whether providing some color under the other soloists or getting greasy during his solos. All the while Campenni adds his solid groove along with his rhythmic accents. One hears this on the opening rendition of Scott LaFaro's "Gloria's Step."

Lewis sets the tone on what is perhaps Evans' most famous composition, "Waltz For Debbie," with a rhapsodic opening with just percussive accents before he kicks up the tempo for Hall to state the theme and take a spirited solo. Employing a mute, Hall provides a languid tone to the rendition of the Rogers & Hart standard "Spring Is Here" that also includes nice playing from Sewell and Lewis. Hall and band are more animated on a sparkling rendition of Earl Zindas' "Elsa," with a fine solo from guitarist Sewell. The title track is opens with Sewell in a low-key, pensive fashion before Hall and Lewis take more extroverted spots.

The album closes with the light swing of "Peri's Scope," continuing to exhibit the engaging quality of the performances by Hall and his band. This is an entertaining exploration of Bill Evans music that captivates with its mix of swing and lyricism from Pat Hall and associates.

*Ron Weinstock*



## LITTLE MIKE AND THE TORNADOES

### All the Right Moves ELROB RECORDS

Michael (Little Mike) Markowitz has been busy the past few decades after moving to Florida with his band Little Mike and the Tornadoes. The band was originally from Queens, New York and spent considerable time backing the likes of Hubert Sumlin, Jimmy Rogers, Louis Myers and Pinetop Perkins and they learned their craft touring (and in some cases recording) with these legends.

Markowitz has reunited the original line-up of Tony



O. Melio on guitar, Brad Vickers on bass and Rob Piazza on drums for the new Little Mike and the Tornadoes recording "All the Right Moves" (Elrob Records). For this recording they are joined by a fine pianist Jim McKaba on a program of mostly originals.

Listening to this release brings back memories of hearing them at the legendary Bethesda Maryland club "Twist & Shout," with both their own songs and their adept backing they gave to various blues legends. There is nothing fancy, just some straight blues that was made for dancing and good times. There are not hard-rock accouterments to their music, just a simple harp led band and Little Mike's straight-forward singing with Tony O's sympathetic guitar and the swinging rhythm section. It's good to hear the nice shuffle groove as Mike sings about it being a "Hard Hard Way" to make a living playing the blues. "Since My Mother Been Ill" is a sober, slow blues as she sings about a mother's love.

Tony O's B.B. King styled guitar kicks off "(I Got) Drunk Last Night" as Mike sings about whether he might drink whiskey or wine. It is followed by a driving harp feature for Mike, "Sam's Stomp" that is reminiscent of James Cotton's "The Creeper." "Little on the Side" has a nice Latin groove as well as a harp solo and is followed by the title track, a solid mid-tempo shuffle with more deft playing from Tony O as Mike sings about how one has to keep oneself together by making all the right moves. The list of tracks on the back cover mixes up the order of these tracks.

The remainder of the album has more of these idiomatic Chicago blues performances by a band that sounds like they have still been playing all these years, and that as a band they still know how to put forth "All the Right Moves."

**Ron Weinstock**



## ERIC JOHNSON / MIKE STERN

**Eclectic  
HEADS UP/CONCORD**

The likely audience for this release can be assured that the co-leaders do not disappoint. Guitar addicts should get a serious fix from this bountiful lick-trading feast. Axe masters Johnson and Stern do right by the album's title as well as they navigate multiple moods and modes, from muscular rock- "Roll With It" to

light-hearted swing- "Benny Man's Blues" to breezy smooth-school ballad work- "Wishing Well", with a number of stops between.

The constant in this varied program is the compatibility of the featured players. While tones and voicings change frequently to accommodate the continuous style and genre shifts throughout the set, each player's sound clearly complements the other, jointly conveying a common mood on each track. Both newcomers to these artists and established fans should be pleased.

**Duane Verh**



## KAYE BOHLER

**Handle The Curves  
SELF-PRODUCED**

Hailing from the San Francisco area, Kaye Bohler has been belting out blues and rhythm music for over 25 years, and has just released a new self-produced CD (her 5th), "Handle The Curves."

In getting this album produced, she utilized crowd-funding with over 60 persons contributing and she was able to get Pete Anderson (best known for his playing with Dwight Yoakum but a formidable blues guitarist) to produce and play on this (on bass as well as guitar). Others on this set include Michael Murphy on keyboards, Lee Thornburg on trumpet and trombone, Ron Dzibula on saxophone, Jeff Sorenson and John Paul on drums, and Kelly Back on guitar.

It's a solid band that plays with a Memphis feel to it. Anderson takes the bulk of the guitar solos and mixes some sizzling playing with taste and restraint while Dzibula exhibits a full-bodied, vigorous sound on his solos. But this is Kate Bohler's recording, and her husky vocals impresses throughout with her power and vocal dynamics.

Bohler has a commanding presence shown on the title track where she sings to a would be suitor "I can handle my own load; Can you handles the curves of my highway, Can you handle the curves of my road." It's perhaps the best highway metaphor since Percy Mayfield's "The Highway Is Like a Woman." This self-confidence is also heard on "Back Bone," where noting a woman got through her depression and tears, raised her babies all by herself "Cause you had a little Back-bone to get you through." While she can acknowledge her own bad decisions on "Bubble Gum," she also can

shout out she is “Diggin’ On My Man,” and “getting all the lovin’ that I can.” and while she can get ready for “Party Time,” when she gets really down “It’s the Blues” that heals her.

The solid support she receives, the solid originals she has brought here and her dominating vocals make “Handle With Curves” a most impressive recording.

*Ron Weinstock*



## THE BUDDY TATE QUARTET

**Texas Tenor**  
SACKVILLE/DELMARK

Buddy Tate was both a bandmate of, and successor to, fellow Texas tenor saxophonist Herschel Evans. Both had played together in Troy Floyd’s Band, and when Evans passed away at a young age Tate was called to replace him. Like Evans, he had a big sound drenched in the blues, and like Evans, his playing contrasted with Lester Young, and was typical of what has become known as the Texas Tenor sound, which includes such other masters as Illinois Jacquet and Arnett Cobb.

Tate had a long career after leaving Basie in 1949, leading his own Celebrity Club band in Harlem and in touring Europe. By the time the Sackville album *Texas Tenor* was recorded in 1978, many artists would travel as single artists and hook up with local rhythm sections. In the present case, Tate was hooked up with the terrific rhythm section of pianist Wray Downes, bassist Dave Young and drummer Pete Magadini for a session of ballads and standards.

This is a wonderful date full of swing and some marvelous ballad playing. The opening tunes “June Night” and “Someday Sweetheart” are swinging renditions of numbers that were popular in Tate’s youth. The latter number was recorded by Jelly Roll Morton and King Oliver, although Tate’s version is more modern rhythmically than the versions of those pioneering jazz figures.

“If You Could See Me Know” is a wonderful rendition of Tadd Dameron’s ballad displaying the warmth and tenderness Tate was capable of while the rhythm section provides a light touch. The rhythm is hotter on the rendition of “I’ll remember April,” with Downes adding some nice Latin accents.

Tate is heard on clarinet on a bluesy take of “Georgia on My Mind,” followed by a somewhat breathy tenor sound for “Alone Together” and a spirited rendition of “Bye Bye Blackbird,” where his swinging, nuanced playing thoroughly delights. This Delmark reissue of the Sackville LP includes two previously unissued selections, a lovely rendition of the Ellington-Strayhorn collaboration “Isfahan” (Tate evokes later day Ben Webster here), and “Lullaby of the Leaves,” which provides another example of his clarinet playing with a woody, bluesy flavor.

Supported by this terrific rhythm section, Tate is simply terrific throughout the splendid “Texas Tenor.”

*Ron Weinstock*



## AUSTIN WALKIN CANE

**ONE HEART WALKIN'**  
LAZY EYE

Guitarist Austin Walkin Cane (aka Austin Charang-hat, as his creditors know him) is out with his latest dip into Memphis and all other kinds of blues.

Co-written with longtime music buddy Chris Allen, “One Heart Walkin’” spotlights many different styles, sometimes in the same song. Walkin Cane has appeared all over the world including blues festivals from France to Nepal.

Special guest harpist Dave Morrison drives “Midnight Creep” as Freddie Perez-Sable builds the shuffle that the entire song is based upon. Morrison pops up in the title cut as The Revolution Brass Band starts the party, or wake, in New Orleans via “Doin’ The Lindy Hop.”

The horns later start a conga line of sorts during “Who Is Gonna Love You” as a quieter “Waitin For A Little Sunshine” gives blues in a different manner. “Wounded Dove” is flat out boogie that would make John Lee Hooker smile. “Do As Your Mama Says” is like slow syrup poured on a hangover, thank to Morrison’s return on harp.

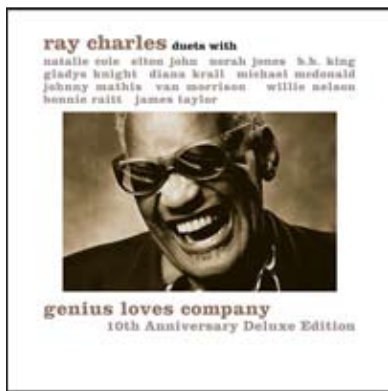
“One Heart Walkin’” has something for everyone when it comes to the blues.

For more info, visit <http://www.walkincane.com/>

*Peanuts*

**jazz-blues.com**





**RAY CHARLES**  
**Genius Loves Company**  
**10th Anniversary Deluxe Edition**  
**CONCORD RECORDS**

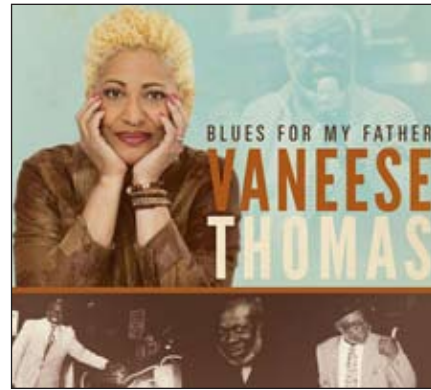
It is hard to believe that 10 years has gone by since the passing of Ray Charles (1930-2004) and his “Genius Loves Company” release. The 2004 CD was released as a single disc, and it has been re-released by Concord/Hear Music in three different versions. The one I have in hand is a 2-CD set - one disc being the audio CD, and the other a DVD titled “The Making Of Genius Loves Company, a music and documentary companion which pretty much delivers what its title suggests.

The final album for Ray Charles paired him in duets with several singers between June 2003 and March 2004. In Ray’s own words “I’ve recorded with so many amazing musicians in my career, but never on a duets album all my own. I thought it was time to have some of the friends that I love and the artists that I admire come into my studio and sing with me live.” The result of that thought is this intimate 14 song album, most all of which was produced by either Phil Ramone or John Burk and mixed by Al Schmitt. Most of the cuts were recorded at RPM Studios in Los Angeles and they all fit together perfectly well.

You’ll hear Ray with Norah Jones, James Taylor, Diana Krall, Elton John, Natalie Cole, Bonnie Raitt, Willie Nelson, Michael McDonald, B.B. King, Gladys Knight, Johnny Mathis and Van Morrison. Those were the artists he was featured with on the original issue. This new issue includes two bonus tracks - Ray’s own “Mary Ann,” performed with Poncho Sanchez, and a collaboration with the a cappella jazz group Take 6 for a version of “Unchain My Heart.” Three of the songs were written by the artist Ray performs with - James Taylor’s “Sweet Potato Pie,” Elton John’s “Sorry Seems to be the Hardest Word,” and Van Morrison’s “Crazy Love.”

I’d have to say that every song is an absolute standout here, and this album should please anyone who likes good music-period. The included DVD offers live clips and statements from some of the artists he performs with, as well as some of those involved with the production of the album. I remember seeing it back

when the album was first issued, but back then it was a promotional DVD the record company sent out. As mentioned above, it is now included as a companion to the CD. This CD/DVD Deluxe Edition was released September 30, 2014; a three disc Limited Collector’s Edition Box Set (with the movie Ray) will be released November 11 and the Two-LP Vinyl Edition is due out December 9. All three versions will be released in time for the holidays...of course!  
*Bill Wahl*



**VANESE THOMAS**  
**Blues For My father**  
**SEGUE RECORDS**

The youngest daughter of the legendary Rufus Thomas, Vaneese Thomas, like her sister Carla and brother Marvel, have been involved in the music business dating back to singing back-up vocals for Stax. After college she relocated to New York where she was a session singer and songwriter.

She has issued several albums that showcase her singing and songwriting, and the latest is “Blues For My Father” (Segue Records). It had been five years since her last album, “Soul Sisters Volume 1” (Segue Records), where she resurrected classic soul recordings from the likes of Bettye Swan, Tina Turner, Etta James and her sister Carla. This new recording, as indicated by the title, has her delving more into blues and she contributed ten originals and also handles two covers, one of which is from her late father.

Produced by Thomas and her husband Wayne Warnecke, there is a variety of musicians appearing on this, but the core is Buddy Williams on drums, Will Lee on bass, Robbie Kondor on piano and Tash Neal on guitars with Warnecke on percussion. There are appearances by (among others) Marvel Thomas and Paul Shaffer on organ, Ron Mathes and Jeff Mironov on guitars, horns led by Tim Ouimette and Perry Gartner and Shawn Pelton on drums.

What stands out on “Blues For My Father” is Thomas’ vocals. Rob Bowman, who penned the liner notes, mentions “Vaneese’s masterful control of phrasing, breath, intonation and timbre.” In other words, she can flat out sing with a display of vocal dynamics as well as power to leave a strong impression on the listeners. She belts out about having the blues while

sitting at the station waiting for the train to bring her lover back on the opening “Southern Central Blues.” Then she gets sassy celebrating her man who plays no tricks and “10 X The Man You Are.”

The Memphis funk of “Wrong Turn” is a delightful duet with sister Carla (while Marvel adds organ) with some punchy horns in the backing and a crisp guitar solo from Jeff Mironov. “Wrap Your Arms Around Me” has a bit of southern rock feel as Tash Neal is on dobro with Mironov again on guitar. Part of the melody here is evocative of the Ricky Allen recording “Cut You Loose,” although her lyric is telling her man to wrap his arms around her and never let go.

The centerpiece of this release is a duet with her father Rufus, “Can’t Ever Let You Go.” Like Natalie Cole did with her recordings with her deceased father, Vaneese adds her vocal to the original Rufus Thomas recording. Husband Warnecke pulled out Rufus’ vocal from the original analog masters, added some exhortations from other Thomas recordings, then provided a contemporary backing, and guitar and sax solos along with Vaneese improvising around her father’s vocals.

Other highlights on this set include “Corner Of Heartache And Pain,” a straight, slow blues about the pain felt after her man left with Paul Shaffer on organ. “Love’ Em And Leave’ Em Behind” is a soulful number where Vaneese tells a heartbreaker she has seen her friends in too much pain, but he won’t do the same to her. “Southern Girl” is a celebration of her roots and the south with Kirk Whalum taking the sax solo. There is also a straight cover of John Fogerty’s “The Old Man Down The Road” before the disc closes with a wonderfully sung lament, “Blue Ridge Blues” backed simply by Rob Mathes’ guitars.

“Blues For My Father” is a showcase of Vaneese Thomas’ craft as a songwriter and her soul-shaking vocals and should have considerable appeal among blues and southern soul audiences. **Ron Weinstock**



## THE MIKE LONGO TRIO

**Celebrates Oscar Peterson Live**

**CAP - CONSOLIDATED ARTISTS PRODUCTIONS**

Mike Longo has been a familiar name for as long as I can remember. In fact, when I started this magazine in 1974, the pianist had just finished his stint with the

Dizzy Gillespie Quintet (1966-1973) and had ventured out on his own. Several years prior to joining Dizzy, Longo had studied for six months with the great pianist Oscar Peterson, who taught him, among many other things, to not try to play “like anyone but yourself.” He added, “So don’t make the mistake of trying to play like me, Mike.”

Longo started playing boogie-woogie at three, and later the white teen spent a year playing gospel piano at a black church, and he then went on to get a bachelor’s degree in Classical Piano.

After touring with a Dixieland band, he was hired at the Metropole Café in New York City as the house pianist, where he backed slew of big name jazz artists, including Coleman Hawkins and Gene Krupa. It was after Dizzy heard Longo at the Metropole that he hired him, and their long association began. That is as brief an overview of Mike Longo’s early career as I can deliver here, but it would be easy to fill ten times the space.

Longo recoded this album for his own label, CAP - Consolidated Artists Productions, live at the Baha’i Center in New York’s John Birks Gillespie Auditorium on June 25, 2013. Longo was performing with bassist Paul West (who had worked with Dizzy in the fifties) and former Oscar Peterson drummer Ray Mosca.

For this night, Longo, West & Mosca decided to go without any rehearsal and just a list of songs. The outcome from start to finish is brilliant, as they swing at various tempos until the cows come home on 13 songs the late Oscar Peterson loved to play, but they do offer two very slow ballads in the mix with “A Child Is Born” and “I Remember You.” It is refreshing to hear a new album these days with three masters performing well known fare, bringing back some bright memories of good times gone by.

The list of the composers of the songs selected includes Duke Ellington, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Fats Waller, Clifford Brown, Monk, Thad Jones, Jerome Kern and Nat Adderley.

This is an extremely classy set, destined to please all who like acoustic, swinging trio jazz. Sample the songs at Amazon (only under digital music so far as of this writing).

The website for Longo’s Consolidated Artists Productions is [www.jazzbeat.com](http://www.jazzbeat.com)

**Bill Wahl**

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## ROD PIAZZA AND THE MIGHTY FLYERS

**Emergency Situation**  
BLIND PIG

With a live show that has earned them four "Band of the Year" awards from the Blues Foundation, Rod Piazza and the Mighty Flyers have been lighting up clubs and festivals for years. They also have a solid track record as recording artists with some 18 discs to their credit.

While only Piazza and his piano pounding wife Miss Honey have been along for the entire ride, the band has always featured other top notch musicians including Jimi Bott, Alex Schultz, Rick Holmstrom, Bill Stuuve and the current line-up of Henry Carvajal on guitar, David Kida on drums and Norm Gonzales on bass. With Piazza's multi-faceted harmonica prowess and earnest vocals leading the way, the band has always featured a combination of gritty Chicago blues, West Coast jump blues and a bit of R & B. This new disc, which reunites the band with Blind Pig Records, is no different.

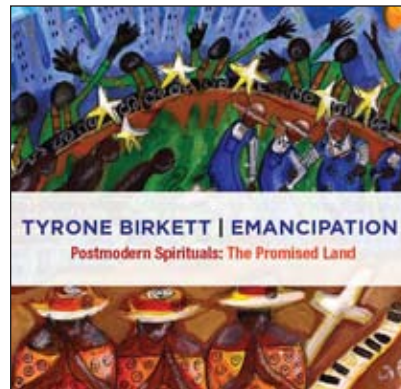
The title track is a low down slinky blues tour de force. A pair of James Wee Willie Wayne numbers, "Neighbor, Neighbor" and "Bad Weather Blues" swing from upbeat R & B to greasy blues while Amos Milburn's "Milk & Water" treads closer to jump blues. Big Walter's "Gambling Woman" is an upbeat number featuring not only ample doses of Miss Honey's rocking piano but also some wailing saxophone compliments of Ron Dziubla and Jim Jedikin.

Piazza gives a nod to another harmonica legend, Sam Myers, with a cover of his "Sleeping In the Ground." "Frankenbop" and "Colored Salt" are harmonica-driven instrumental showcases revealing the wide breadth of Piazza's skill on his chosen instrument while "The Clock" is an end of the night, lights out ballad. Guitarist Carvajal takes over the microphone for Lee Dorsey's "Ya-Ya" which gets an early rock and roll treatment with plenty of saxophone as well as Carvajal's own tasty guitar licks.

Overall, another solid outing from this fine band that keeps pushing itself with new material.

*Mark Smith*

**jazz-blues.com**



## TYRONE BIRKETT | EMANCIPATION

**Postmodern Spirituals: The Promised Land**  
ARAMINTA MUSIC

Mentored by Frank Foster and Budd Johnson, and having spent years in black churches as well in soul-jazz groups, saxophonist and keyboard player, Tyrone Birkett has a new project "Postmodern Spirituals: The Promised Land" (Araminta Music).

The album is succinctly described as freedom music for the 21st Century. The group Tyrone Birkett | Emancipation includes (besides Birkett's saxophones and keyboards): Paula Ralph Birkett (vocals), Gregory Royals (piano, organ), Reggie Young (electric Bass) and Jason Patterson (drums). One selection includes Pablo Vergara (electric keyboards) and Camille Gainer

**MARCIA BALL**

**IN THE FLESH!**

**THE TATTOOED LADY and — THE ALLIGATOR MAN**

**"ROLICKING ROADHOUSE RAVE-UPS AND SOULFUL GULF COAST R&B"**

**—USA TODAY**

**THE NEW RELEASE ON ALLIGATOR RECORDS AVAILABLE NOW AT ALLIGATOR.COM AND OTHER FINE RETAILERS**

**GENUINE HOUSEROCKIN' MUSIC SINCE 1971**

Jones (drums) while another has Pablo Vergara (piano), John Benitez (acoustic Bass) and Camille Gainer Jones (drums).

Tyrone Birkett | Emancipation has produced a very stirring recording with allusions to the spiritual side of John Coltrane's music, the leader's own soulful playing, reworking of classic spirituals and the message of keeping the dream alive in the new century as sung by his wife, Paula Ralph Birkett. As she tells us in "The Postmodern Spiritual," "So we need a 21st Century freedom song, music that will help us transcend our circumstances, ... free to be and to live self-determined lives ... ." "Motherless Child Visited" updates the venerable spiritual which takes off after her initial statement of the spiritual before the ensemble picks up the tempo and adds heat in the backing matched by her soaring vocal and scatting while her husband provides some hot alto sax.

More of the leader's striking and impassioned alto playing is present on "Strength," with Pablo Vergara on electric keyboards along with the drumming of Camille Gainer Jones. This is followed by a more reflective approach on his remarkable rendition of "Deep River."

"Postmodern Spirituals: The Promised Land" is a remarkable mix of strong music and moving vocals imbued with a strong spiritual foundation and a message of hope and freedom. Tyrone Birkett | Emancipation has certainly left a very memorable impression with the music here.

**Ron Weinstock**



## SHAWN AMOS

### The Reverend Shawn Amos Tells It PUT TOGETHER

Shawn Amos' "The Reverend Shawn Amos Tells It" (Put Together) is recording containing covers of some classic blues with a few originals. Amos is the son of Wally "Famous" Amos and R&B singer Shirlee May, who grew up in Los Angeles in the 1970s when his father was booking legendary Motown acts like Marvin Gaye.

Produced by Steve Jordan, Amos' vocals and harmonica are supported by his trio of Don Medina (drums), Chris Roberts (guitar) and Ed Terrio (bass), along with Anthony Marinelli (Hammond B-3 organ) and Gia Ciambotti and Kim Yarbrough (vocals). It

opens with a straight cover of Junior Wells Delmark LP rendition of "Hoodoo Man Blues," with the guitar perhaps a bit too up front in the mix. Shawn Amos certainly sings with animation yet avoids going over the top.

"(The Girl Is) Heavy" is a number with somewhat simple lyrics and a pretty direct approach with the guitarist making evocative use of tremolo while "I'm the Face" is a swamp blues rock that adapts the "Got Love If You Want It" melody as Amos sings about being the big wheel. There is some restrained guitar playing on this, which contrasts with the guitar fireworks on the cover of Elmore James' "Something Inside Of Me." My complaint here is also that the guitar is mixed too upfront. Amos certainly sings with fervor, although he will not make people forget Elmore James, but is not too shabby.

Junior Wells' influence is also evident on rendition of "Good Morning, School Girl," including adapting Wells' vocal mannerisms such as "hey hey" and "ooh ooh wee." The album closes with a passionate plea whether his woman even notices he is here, titled "Sometimes I Wonder." There is nothing new here, but Amos brings a fair amount of personality to his performances and also brings plenty of fervor to this recording.

**Ron Weinstock**



## SACKVILLE ALL STARS

### Sackville All Star Christmas Record SACKVILLE / DELMARK

For those looking for some holiday jazz, Delmark has re-released a 1986 Sackville album, The Sackville All Star Christmas Record. The recording presents soprano saxophonist Jim Galloway, pianist Ralph Sutton, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Gus Johnson for a swinging cross mix of traditional Christmas Carols, popular Christmas tunes, spirituals and songs from the jazz repertoire with references to Christmas in the lyrics. Galloway's sometimes playful, and other times reflective, soprano is an extension of Sidney Bechet, and his disciples such as Bob Wilbur and Kenny Davern, backed by a superb rhythm section.

As John Norris noted in the 1986 liner notes, Christmas songs also have always been part of popular music where they are part of the annual social



celebration of the holidays. This certainly is reflected in the swinging rendition of "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town" with a playful solo from Galloway along with some two-handed piano from Sutton. Sutton is more sedate on the hymn "We Three Kings" as is Galloway with a light touch by Hinton and Johnson. Galloway exhibits a bit more vibrato with Sutton displaying a light barrelhouse touch on the rendition of "At the Christmas Ball," a 1925 Bessie Smith recording on which Hinton solos.

Other delights include a buoyant "Winter Wonderland," Sutton's rollicking piano on "Go Tell It On the Mountain" and his stride opening for "Santa Claus Came in the Spring," with Galloway playful on the latter number, and a light Latin rhythm employed for "Let It Snow," with perhaps Galloway finest solo here. A highly energetic rendition of "Old Time Religion" concludes a thoroughly captivating recording of holiday swing.

**Ron Weinstock**



## MARCIA BALL

### The Tattooed Lady and the Alligator Man ALLIGATOR RECORDS

Marcia Ball has a new Alligator Records recording, "The Tattooed Lady and the Alligator Man," that will certainly delight listeners with her gulf coast musical gumbo.

Ms. Ball and her vocals and piano are supported here by her band of Don Bennett on bass, Damien Llanes on drums, Michael Schermer on guitar and Thad Scott on tenor sax with Kaz Kazanoff, Delbert McClinton, and Terrence Semien amongst those heard on this Tom Hambridge production for her 6th album for Alligator.

Marcia Ball's Crescent City-rooted rollicking piano and her honey-laced soulful singing will certainly be familiar on this program on mostly Ball originals (the only cover being Hank Ballard's "He's The One"). The title track about two characters of a traveling carnival show gets things started with its buoyant romp. Ball's sense of humor is exhibited on "Clean My House," set up by a second line groove, while "Just Keep Holding On" is a lovely swamp pop-styled ballad followed by the infectious party groove of "Like There's No Tomorrow."

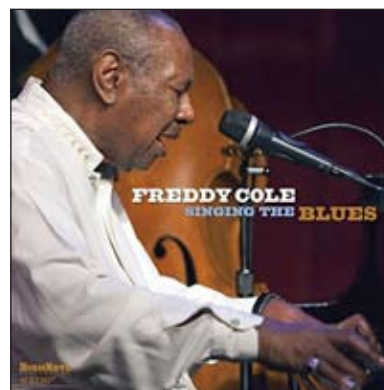
There is plenty of soul heard in Ball's delivery of

"He's the One," while Terrence Semien's accordion and harmony vocal adds a zydeco accent to Ball's message of folks trying to pay bills and simply scrape by on "The Squeeze Is On." "Human Kindness" is another message song urging us to show some empathy and open up hearts to our fellow man. McClinton adds harmonica behind Ball's easy rocking shuffle where she says don't cry about her shuffles because Marcia "Can't Blame Nobody But Myself."

The closing, "The Last To Know," is a blues about looking back and people seeing what they want to see with a hint of "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out" in its melody. It's a wonderfully, played and sung recording.

"The Tattooed Lady and the Alligator Man" delights with Ball's strong talents as a singer and pianist who also continues to display her gift as a songwriter. With her excellent band and guests, she has produced another fabulous recording of party grooves mixed with messages of love and hope.

**Ron Weinstock**



## FREDDY COLE

### Singing the Blues HIGH NOTE

There is an appealing weariness in Freddy Cole's treatment of a Bobby Bland recording "This Time I'm Gone For Good" on his new High Note release titled "Singing the Blues." For part of the album Cole handles several classic blues themes and a few originals, including some mournful ballads as well. He simply sings here as John Di Martino handles the piano chair with Harry Allen on tenor sax, Randy Napoleon on guitar Elias Bailey on bass and Curtis Boyd on drums with Theresa Hightower sharing vocals on two of the eleven songs.

Derrick Lucas' liner notes state that this album reflects an era in which Cole grew up which was "the final generation of African-Americans to view the blues as their own popular music and culture," and the renditions contained "reflect the elegance of the blues represented by Charles Brown, Percy Mayfield, Amos Milburn and Ivory Joe Hunter and of course, Freddy's brother Nat."

It is now 50 years ago that Freddy Cole recorded his first album, which contained a rendition of Fred-

die Spruell's "Muddy Water Blues," which opens this in a very appealing way. A real highlight is the version of "Goin' Down Slow," which reflects the Oliver Nelson-Stanley Turrentine rendition of the song set to the groove of Percy Mayfield's "River's Invitation." Allen's marvelous tenor sax and Napoleon's fleet guitar evokes memories of Charles Brown's terrific 1990s group with the late Clifford Solomon and Danny Caron. Another song that captures this ambience is brother Nat's "My Mother Told Me," with terrific short solos from Allen and Napoleon.

Cole's relaxed vocal is matched with Theresa Hightower's vivacious singing on "All We Need Is a Place," about getting it on to snuggle. Cole penned the original blues that lends the album its title as he warns this girl she will be singing the blues one of these mornings, she will be miserable and while he won't be happy, Freddy will feel great. "The Ballad of the Sad Young Men" is a moody lament about sad young men drifting through their lives and growing with Allen's tenor adding to the melancholy of the performance.

Steve Allen's "An Old Piano Plays the Blues" closes this album with Allen's tenor again complementing Cole's mournful vocal with a deftly played solo from Di Martino followed by a short tenor sax chorus.

Freddy Cole's "Singing the Blues" indeed captures the sophisticated eloquence of the blues of late forties and early fifties. Not simply Freddy Cole's fans, but fans of the late Charles Brown and his contemporaries will enjoy this music of late night blues and ballads.

*Ron Weinstock*



## NATHAN JAMES

### Hear Me Calling/ Natural Born This Way Sacred Cat Recordings

A member of James Harman's Band for several years, Nathan James is also known for his home made instruments such as his Tritar (a three string instrument made out of a washboard and axe handle) and other similar instruments (such as the Baritone Washtar, a baritone guitar built over a washboard).

While such instruments might provide some novelty in themselves, James has proven to be a gifted performer with a deep knowledge of early and more modern blues and R&B styles, so his employment of such instruments rises far beyond a gimmick.

A two CD release by James, "Hear Me Calling/ Natural

Born This Way" (Sacred Cat Recordings) presents two sides to James. "Hear Me Calling" is simply James playing acoustically with rack harmonica and percussion coming off like a one-man band. "Natural Born This Way" has him and his Rhythm Scratchers, Marty Dodson on drums and percussion and Troy Sandow on bass and harmonica, with appearances by Carl Sonny Leyland on piano and Big Jon Atkinson on rhythm guitar. There are eleven selections on each with "Hear Me Calling" including eight originals and three interpretations of old blues while on "Natural Born This Way" there are four band renditions of songs on the solo album, two more originals and five interpretations.

James plays and sings with a natural, unforced authority and his instrumental prowess is exemplary. It is striking that he can come off like a one-man band on the title track of "Hear Me Calling," display a mastery of the Piedmont finger-style approach on the charming "Still I Wanna Know," channel the Mississippi Delta on "Baby Where Did You Go?," revive Curley Weaver's "No No Blues" in an exhilarating manner and cover Lonnie Johnson's "She's Making Whoopee In Hell Tonight" with a relaxed vocal and some stunning guitar. There are no over the top vocals and James ability to play so well in different approaches is quite noteworthy.

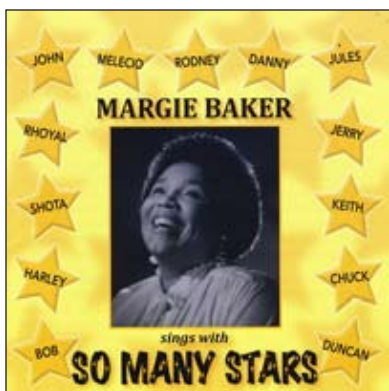


A rendition of Freddie Fender's swamp pop rocker opens "Natural Born This Way," with Leyland contributing rollicking piano behind the rocking shuffle performance that includes some adroit use of the whammy bar on James' guitar. It's interesting to contrast the driving juke joint trio rendition of "Look Out Your Window" here with the one-man band treatment on the other disc. Both versions are striking performances and display James' mastery in either setting. James is obviously a fan of the late New Orleans legend Earl King, as heard on covers of "Take You Back Home" and "It Must Have Been Love." Leyland lends his piano to these performances and James judiciously employs tremolo here. James takes a romp through Long John Hunter's "Ride With Me" and channels some of the fifties Memphis guitarists like Floyd Murphy, Willie Johnson and Pat Hare. "Cow Pies" is an instrumental by Sandow and James that allows Sandow to display his harp playing with James' slide backing and solo.

I was impressed by James excellent Delta Groove release "What You Make Of It" and this double dose of Nathan James is an equally impressive follow-up.

*Ron Weinstock*





## MARGIE BAKER

### Sings With So Many Stars

CAP CONSOLIDATED ARTISTS PRODUCTIONS

Jazz and blues singer Margie Baker may have just turned 81, but her rich voice is in great form – possibly partly due the fact that her 40+ year professional career did not even begin until she was just shy of 40 years old.

She spent her earlier years getting an education, to the point of eventually earning a Master's Degree, as well as concentrating on educating her children. In the early seventies she was called up to sit in with a band for a song, and it was noticed by Conrad Hilton who happened to be in the house. This chance encounter led to a wonderful career, that she carries on today in the San Francisco Bay area.

Margie's PR representative, whom I have known since her days with Fantasy Records many moons ago, seems to have a knack for attracting and working with some marvelous artists. Margie Baker is one of several of these outstanding artists, and this two-CD set offers up a total of 20 newly-recorded gems pairing her with 13 musicians she has worked with over the years, mostly from the Bay area, heard in various groupings throughout the set. She calls them Margie's Musical Galaxy, and considers them all to be stars in that galaxy.

Some names, like Rodney Jones may be familiar to many – and others to those folks living in Northern California, but many may not. No matter, as the performances here will perk up a lot of ears, and open a lot of eyes. And while there are some well-known songs here, such as Monk's "Round Midnight, Duke's "In A Mellow Tone" and Horace Silver's "Senor Blues," there are also some fine compositions that many listeners have not heard before, including Margie's own "Mood For Mr. Moody," an obvious tribute to the late James Moody.

As Ron Weinstock stated on these pages in a review of an earlier Margie Baker album "Margie Baker is a wonderful vocalist who puts plenty of feeling into her singing while maintaining a relaxed quality to her delivery." This set of small to large band recordings contains twenty perfect settings for her star to shine brightly along with the rest of the stars in her galaxy.

You can sample the songs at Amazon. *Bill Wahl*



## DEXTER ALLEN

### Bluez Of My Soul

DEEP RUSH RECORDS

Dexter Allen may be known for being the guitarist with Bobby Rush, but he steps forth on his own on "Bluez Of My Soul," a solid release on Rush's Deep Rush Records label. Allen, like many, himself started in gospel before touring with Rush, which led him to the blues highway. Not simply a guitarist, Allen also plays keyboards and bass, and on this release he plays guitar and bass while accompanied by Joey Robinson (drums, bass, guitar, keyboards), Jeremy Robinson (drums), Fred Robinson (bass) and Bobby Rush (vocal, harmonica).

Dexter Allen has released several albums in the

past, and while this is the first of his music I have heard, I am quite impressed. The music reminds me a bit of Theodis Ealey, with his mix of soulful vocals with blues guitar (think about “Bluesman Lover” and not “Stand Up in it”) and there is a real nice mix of material from straight blues like “Come Out and Play” and the opening “Come Home To Mississippi,” one of the selections on which Bobby Rush adds his harmonica. The rocking groove of “Have a Time” is reminiscent of Ealey’s Move With the Motion,” and the first rate performance conveys much of the let’s get up and have a good time feel. “Bluez Party” is another rocker as Allen conveys that we don’t need no dee-jay and just let the band go, which is followed by “Deep Inside,” where Allen mixes some fuzz-toned guitar with his impassioned vocal where he really pulls out everything as he sings he is so deep inside of his girl.

“I Doubt It” is a nice piece of soulful funk as is the closing “The Same Thang.” This later number is a song similar to Muddy Waters’ “The Same Thing,” with Bobby Rush adding harmonica and is set against a hip-hop groove. It ends a recording that should deservedly garner some attention for its strong, soulful blues performances. Allen impresses as a singer, guitarist and songwriter and one looks forward to more by him.

*Ron Weinstock*



**BILLY CHILDS**  
**Map To The Treasure –**  
**Reimagining Laura Nyro**  
**SONY MASTERWORKS**

While the abundance of “names” present on this set might suggest this is one more “tribute album,” pianist/arranger Billy Childs has taken that notion to another level, offering a compelling suite of Nyro compositions, interestingly sequenced and connected by threads of the leader’s own evocative, string-enhanced passages.

The suitability of each featured female vocalist is convincingly stated by the seamless progressions from one to the next. Jazz singer Becca Stevens’ “The Confession” follow-up to classical soprano Renee Fleming’s leadoff “New York Tendaberry” flows so easily as to be barely noticeable at first. There’s juxtaposition as well as Rickie Lee Jones’ quirky take on “Been On A

Train” finds comforting resolution in Ledisi’s “Stoned Soul Picnic”.

Instrumental contributions of note include trumpeter Chris Botti’s work on “Save The Country”- vocal by Shawn Colvin- and sax master Wayne Shorter’s soprano on “Upstairs By A Chinese Lamp”- featuring Esperanza Spalding.

It seems there’s always two or three splendid releases that show up just before year’s end. This celebration of one of America’s greatest songwriters is one of these.

*Duane Verh*



**MARKEY BLUE**

**Hey Hey**  
**SOULOSOUND RECORDS**

“Hey Hey” is a debut album by Nashville based chanteuse, Markey Blue, with vocalist Jeanette Markey and guitarist Ric Latina, who are supported by some of Nashville’s top musicians. The album attempts to recall the glories of the classic Memphis and Muscle Shoals soul. Markey herself helped pen all the 12 originals that comprise this release.

This is a solid and brassy recording, right from the driving opening track “When Love Comes Along (Hey Hey)” that helps provide the disc its title. “I Can’t Let You Go” has a bluesy feel aided by Latina’s guitar. “Something’s Wrong” is an outstanding track with the studio band hitting that groove and illustrates Markey’s strengths as a singer, including a bit of raspy grit and an unforced delivery that conjures up classic soul singers such as Ann Peebles. The Peebles comparison might be most evident on “Feeling Blue,” a heartfelt performance that musically suggests “Feel Like Breaking Up Someone’s Home,” with punchy horns, backing vocals and crisp guitar breaks adding emphasis, as well as on “Flames” with its suggestion of Billy Preston’s “Will It Go Round in Circles” in the accompaniment.

Former Allman Brothers guitarist Jack Pearson co-wrote “Play Me” with Markey, and also takes a solo while Markey really soars with her vocal. She also tears into the lyric of “Another Lover” as she sings good-bye and that she’s gonna find the best man she can, which is followed by the tender soul ballad “With You,” where she tells her lover he is crying at night, he needs her loving arms and call her when he needs her. Latina’s guitar solo here may



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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](http://www.flickr.com/photos/novaron)

be his best on the album. The trebly swamp-blues infused "Voodoo Do" sports Markey at her most sensual while the performance smolders with building intensity. "By My Side" is another solid ballad performance with solid rhythm and crisp horns that evoke classic Stax recordings.

"Hey Hey" concludes on a most impressive fashion with a funky lament, "Baby I'm Cryin'", which Steve Cropper produced the vocals for. There is so much to enjoy about this release with the strong backing, good original songs and Ms. Markey's heartfelt, persuasive vocals. Markey Blue certainly makes fans of blues and soul take note with this.

*Ron Weinstock*

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