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now in our 42nd year

jazz
& **blues** report



MUCHO JAZZ IN CUBA



December 15–18

jazz & blues report

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"Buffalorious"

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



32nd Annual Jazz Plaza Havana



& Inaugural Jazz Plaza Santiago December 15–18, 2016

**Festival Internacional Jazz Plaza Cuba Announces
World-class Lineup for 32nd Annual Jazz Plaza Havana
& Inaugural Jazz Plaza Santiago**

**Headliners Christian McBride,
Terence Blanchard, Snarky Puppy and
Fatoumata Diawara To Make Havana Debuts**

"...the Cuban Mecca for all jazz music lovers." - Roberto Fonseca

For over three decades, Jazz Plaza Havana has served as the ultimate tribute to the boundless legacy of Afro-Cuban music. Their stages have seen unforgettable performances by jazz icons from Dizzy Gillespie to Tete Montoliu and Max Roach, alongside the young stars of tomorrow. In its 32nd edition, Jazz Plaza Havana continues to foster musical collaboration, cultural exchange, and community outreach under the artistic direction of one of Cuba's own pianist and composer Chucho Valdés. "The festival represented something very important in my career because I got the chance to present my project Irakere in all its splendor. For me as a pianist was very important as well for sharing the stage with the best jazz artists in the world," says Valdés.

Innovative Cuban pianist Roberto Fonseca was just 15 years old at his Jazz Plaza Havana debut, and 25 years later he returns as artistic director of an exciting new endeavor, Jazz Plaza Santiago. Santiago de Cuba is to Cuban music what New Orleans is to American jazz--the creative heart of

the genre and home to many of its greatest masters.

From December 15-18, 2016 the two jazz festivals will present concerts, workshops, multidisciplinary exhibits, and more with events spanning the breadth of this beautiful island. All-star headliners at this year's festivals include Chucho Valdés and Roberto Fonseca as well as Havana debuts from the Christian McBride Trio, Terence Blanchard featuring the E-Collective, Snarky Puppy, and Fatoumata Diawara, plus performances by countless other local and international musicians.

Jazz Plaza is under the direction of Cuba's Ministry of Culture, Instituto de la Musica Cubana and produced by the National Centre for Popular Music represented by director Víctor Rodríguez García, whose policy is to "espouse freedom of artistic creation while preserving and defending the cultural wealth and heritage of the nation." This year's international headliners have been booked in collaboration with Montuno Productions' Daniel Florestano and International Music Network's Scott Southard. Partnering with García and the National Centre for Popular Music, Florestano and Southard have pooled their extensive international resources to bring together this remarkable lineup of guest artists. Jazz Plaza, will be for first time sponsored by Blue Note Entertainment Group.

Chucho Valdés,

Artistic Director, Jazz Plaza Havana

Winner of five GRAMMY® Awards and three Latin GRAMMY® Awards, the Cuban pianist, composer, arranger, and bandleader Chucho Valdés has been a key figure in the evolution of Afro-Cuban jazz for the past 50 years. The New York Times calls Valdés, "A pianist of imperial command, possessed of a dazzling, deceptively casual virtuosity."

Roberto Fonseca,

Artistic Director, Jazz Plaza Santiago

A brilliant and innovative pianist, Roberto Fonseca has toured the world with the legendary Buena Vista Social Club, with Omara Portuondo, and as a bandleader, blending jazz, soul, and traditional Afro-Cuban roots. "One of the most exciting musicians in the new Cuban scene," the BBC exclaims. Fonseca will release his eighth album, ABUC, digitally on October 28 and physically on November 11 on the impulse! label. This new album will feature guests artists such as Trombone Shorty, Eliades Ochoa, Rafael Lay and Manuel 'Guajiro' Mirabal.

Christian McBride Trio

Five-time GRAMMY®-winning jazz bassist, Mack Avenue recording artist and host of NPR's Jazz Night in America, Christian McBride can be likened to a force of nature, fusing the fire and fury of a virtuoso with the depth and grounding of a seasoned journeyman. Powered by a relentless energy and a boundless love of swing, McBride's path has described a continuous positive arc since his arrival on the scene. With a career

now blazing into its third decade, the Philadelphia native has become one of the most requested, most recorded, and most respected figures in the music world today.

Terence Blanchard featuring The E-Collective

GRAMMY®-winning trumpeter and composer Terence Blanchard breaks the mold with The E-Collective, journeying to an exciting realm of grooved fusion teeming with funk, R&B, and blues colors. This revolutionary ensemble thrives off the perfect mixture of Blanchard's genius and the innovations of the surrounding musical pioneers. After emerging on the scene with Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, Blanchard's career as a leader and co-leader has led to over 30 recorded albums traversing various genres and styles.

Snarky Puppy

Formed in 2004 at the acclaimed music school of the University of North Texas, GRAMMY®-winning Snarky Puppy records on their own label, GroundUp, and exists as both a production team/session band, touring and recording with the likes of Justin Timberlake, Snoop Dogg, and an original ensemble. Voted "Best Jazz Group" in DownBeat's 2015 Reader's Poll, as well as "Best New Artist" and "Best Electric/Jazz Rock/Contemporary Group/Artist" in JazzTimes' 2014 Reader's Poll, they have earned accolades everywhere from the BBC to The Los Angeles Times, and All Music recently called the group "one of modern music's bright lights."

Fatoumata Diawara

Born on the Ivory Coast, singer Fatoumata Diawara feels a strong connection to the music and dance traditions of her ancestral home in Mali. NPR says, "Gifted with enormous stage presence and great looks, Diawara put on a tightly choreographed set that screamed with energy and edged towards rock and funk."

For more information on Festival Internacional Jazz Plaza Cuba, please visit: festivaljazzplaza.com





Photo: Aaron Meekcoms courtesy of Chick Corea Productions

CHICK COREA

Adds Duets with Herbie Hancock, John McLaughlin, Brad Mehldau & Gonzalo Rubalcaba to Two-Month Birthday Celebration at The Blue Note

New York, NY - Final lineup additions have been announced for Chick Corea's unprecedented two-month 75th Birthday Celebration at The Blue Note, which began October 19 and runs through December 11.

Lineup additions to the 80-show engagement, which will feature Corea leading 15 legendary bands comprised of 60 musical friends from over half a century, include the following:

- Chick Corea Piano Duets: November 18-20
- w/ Brad Mehldau (November 18)
- w/ Herbie Hancock (November 19)
- w/ Gonzalo Rubalcaba (November 20)
- Chick Corea & John McLaughlin Duet: December 7

Tickets are now available to the general public and can be purchased at www.bluenotejazz.com or call 212-475-8592.

Additionally, genre-defying multi-instrumentalist and producer Taylor McFerrin and firebrand Cuban saxophonist Yosvany Terry have been added to the "Experiments in Electronica" project (November 9-10), in which Corea debuts his new, next-level take on electronica with drummer Marcus Gilmore.

Corea's first Blue Note birthday run, marking his 60th anniversary in the fall of 2001, was a cathartic two-week engagement for a city just beginning to heal following the 9/11 attacks. The run produced the GRAMMY®-winning album *Rendezvous in New York*. In November 2011, he returned to The Blue Note with a month-long 70th birthday residency featuring countless artistic giants. This year's 75th birthday celebration marks his most ambitious Blue Note residency ever.

Chick Corea's 75th Birthday Celebration will feature two shows nightly, at 8pm and 10:30pm.

CHICK COREA BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION AT THE BLUE NOTE Complete Remaining Schedule

Wednesday - Sunday, October 19-23
THE CHICK COREA ELEKTRIC BAND
Chick Corea (keyboards), Eric Marienthal (saxes), Frank Gamble (guitar), John Patitucci (bass), Dave Weckl (drums)

Wednesday - Thursday, November 2-3
THREE QUARTETS BAND
Chick Corea (piano), Steve Gadd (drums), Eddie Gomez (bass), Ben Solomon (sax)

Friday - Sunday, November 4-6
THE LEPRECHAUN BAND
Chick Corea (keyboards), Steve Gadd (drums), Gayle Moran Corea (vocals), Steve Wilson (sax & flute), Michael Rodriguez (trumpet), Steve Davis (trombone), Eddie Gomez (acoustic bass), TBA (electric bass)

Wednesday - Thursday, November 9-10
EXPERIMENTS IN ELECTRONICA
Chick Corea (keyboards + computers), Marcus Gilmore (drums), Taylor McFerrin

Friday - Sunday, November 11 - 13
CHICK'S FLAMENCO HEART
Chick Corea (keyboards), Jorge Pardo (sax & flute), Niño Josele (acoustic guitar), Carles Benevent (bass), Tom Brechtlein (drums), Luisito Quintero (percussion), Flamenco Dancer (TBA), Vocalist (TBA)

Wednesday - Thursday, November 16-17
THE CHICK COREA BIG BAND
Chick Corea (keyboards), Erlend Skomsvoll (arranger & conductor), the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra - 13-Piece Big Band (8 horns, guitar, bass & drums)

Friday - Sunday, November 18-20
CHICK COREA PIANO DUETS
Friday, November 18: Chick Corea & Brad Mehldau
Saturday, November 19: Chick Corea & Herbie Hancock
Sunday, November 20: Chick Corea & Gonzalo Rubalcaba

Tuesday - Wednesday, November 22 & 23
CHICK COREA & GARY BURTON
with the Harlem String Quartet
Chick Corea (piano), Gary Burton (vibes), Ilmar Gavilán (violin), Melissa White (violin), Jaime Amador (viola), Felix Umansky (cello)

Friday - Sunday, November 25-27
ORIGIN II
Chick Corea (piano), Ravi Coltrane (sax),

Steve Wilson (sax & flute), Steve Davis (trombone),
Carlitos Del Puerto (bass), Marcus Gilmore (drums)

Wednesday - Sunday, November 30 - December 4
THE MUSIC OF RETURN TO FOREVER AND MORE (ACOUSTIC)

Chick Corea (keyboards), Ravi Coltrane (sax),
Hubert Laws (flute), Avishai Cohen (bass), Lenny White (drums)

Wednesday, December 7
CHICK COREA & JOHN McLAUGHLIN
DUET

Thursday - Sunday, December 8-11
THE MUSIC OF RETURN TO FOREVER AND MORE (ELECTRIC)

Chick Corea (keyboards), John McLaughlin (guitar),
Victor Wooten (bass), Lenny White (drums)



Diana Krall's Classic Holiday Album Christmas Songs, Featuring The Clayton/Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, Released Back On Vinyl

#1 Jazz and Holiday Album Reissued As Double LP

Diana Krall's beloved holiday album, Christmas Songs, is now available back on vinyl as of mid-October via Verve/UMe. Originally released to wide spread critical acclaim in 2005, the album featuring the GRAMMY® Award-winning pianist/singer backed by the Clayton/Hamilton Jazz Orchestra was the #1 Jazz and #1 Holiday record in the U.S. upon release, and #17 in the Top 200. The album is being made available as a double LP just in time for the holidays.

Christmas Songs follows the vinyl release of eight

essential Krall albums this past summer as part of Verve's ongoing 60th anniversary celebration. On July 15, Krall's acclaimed records -- All For You, Love Scenes, When I Look In Your Eyes, The Look Of Love, Live In Paris, The Girl In The Other Room, From This Moment On and Quiet Nights -- were released as 180-gram double LPs.

Christmas Songs was co-produced by longtime friend and fellow GRAMMY® Award-winner Tommy LiPuma, and features the talents of renowned bassist/arranger John Clayton (Count Basie, Duke Ellington), guitarist Anthony Wilson (Chris Botti, Michael Bublé), drummer Jeff Hamilton (Rosemary Clooney, Natalie Cole) and bassist Bob Hurst (The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, Saturday Night Live). The Clayton/Hamilton Orchestra accompanies Krall for season standards including "Let It Snow," "I'll Be Home For Christmas," "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town," and "Jingle Bells," while legendary composer Johnny Mandel contributes a string arrangement to "Count Your Blessings Instead of Sheep." Rounding out the album are perennial favorites "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas" and "Christmas Time Is Here" with a band that includes guitarist Russell Malone.

"I feel that this recording has allowed me to do something I have always wanted to do, in the tradition of the great singers who recorded with the likes of Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Billy May, and, of course, Johnny Mandel, who arranged some of the songs on this album," she noted before originally releasing the album over a decade ago.

"Ray Brown told me once that you should feel like dancing when you hear this music. I hope people do," she adds. "Christmas has always been about music, coming home and gathering together with family and friends to sing and celebrate this joyous time of year. This recording represents the incredible joy that Christmas means to me."

Krall's swinging rendition of "Let It Snow" is featured on UMe's holiday playlist simply titled "Christmas." The 70-song playlist features some of the biggest songs and artists in the holiday canon and pairs timeless classics from Frank Sinatra, Stevie Wonder, The Ronettes, Nat King Cole, Ella Fitzgerald and The Carpenters with modern staples from Mariah Carey, Ariana Grande, Justin Bieber, Sam Smith, Mary J. Blige and many others for an eclectic and festive playlist sure to be the perfect soundtrack for your holidays

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'Art Pepper & Warne Marsh'
Vol. 9 of the Critically Acclaimed
"Unreleased Art" Series, To Be Released by
Laurie Pepper's Widow's Taste Label
November 11, Marking the 10th
Anniversary of the Label

3-Disc Set Features Art Pepper & Warne Marsh
Live at Donte's in North Hollywood, CA,
April 26, 1974
With Mark Levine, John Heard, Lew Malin

On April 26, 1974, two wildly gifted and very different artists, Art Pepper and Warne Marsh, met again, for the first time in 17 years, by accident, on the stage at Donte's in North Hollywood, because Jack Sheldon had to cancel. It must have made for an unforgettable night for those who found themselves sitting in the legendary club and listening to two cult heroes, two profoundly great musicians, playing for the audience and each other -- out of the lives they'd lived at the same time, in the same places, but personally and stylistically so far apart.

Now we can join that audience. The music was recorded. And it will be released as a 3-CD set on November 11, just in time for the anniversary of Widow's Taste, the label Laurie Pepper started ten years ago to bring her collection of Art Pepper's unheard live performances to his fans.

In 1974, Art was at the very outset of what would be his last great comeback. He'd quit his job managing a bakery and was making a living playing bar mitzvahs and weddings. He had just started playing in Jack Sheldon's band, once a month, at Donte's.

Unlike Art's, Warne's career had been relentless and ongoing. He'd been touring with his own bands for years, and in 1974, he was traveling the world with

Supersax, with whom he'd won a Grammy.

Though Warne forbade recording at his gigs, this gig was recorded. On reel-to-reel, quarter-inch, quarter-track tape. The original tapes were quite good; the audio was probably picked up from the sound board. And the tapes were sent to Laurie Pepper by persons never known or now forgotten. She rediscovered them while cleaning out a closet. As she tells us in her liner note: "Sometimes, the way things and people come to me for Art's sake is -- I want to use the word -- miraculous." A good word for this night and those tapes. Laurie gave them to the incomparable Wayne Peet of Newzone Studio, who, "knows how jazz, how Art should sound." He balanced and enriched the onstage sound, killed excessive noise, and dealt delicately with inevitable glitches that occur in live recording. Laurie, a non-musician, goes on to talk about the Pepper/Warne distinctions in the language of a dedicated fan:

"Art lives down in the grime of earth. You can find him on the L.A. Freeway. You can get into your car, roll up the windows, put on any of Art's blues or ballads and delve into your pain and scream aloud to it.

"Warne seeks sublimity, improvising music that's transcendent, that makes mere passions puny. He can take you to a level where shit doesn't matter.

"Warne offers to distract us. He offers art, the endlessness and possibilities of art, the infinite inventiveness and charm. Something in me, if I'll listen, hears his rhythmic and harmonic revelations and responds with pleasure, satisfaction, even laughter, as to a mystic's holy trickery.

"Art discovers, witnesses, makes us confront, the disasters and the raptures swimming through our own, shared, volatile blood, beyond the reach of language. He knows our grief, our joy, our rage, and turns them into something timeless. His music seems to talk about real, actual life, the one that's nasty, sweet, and short. And he convinces us, repeatedly, that, just as-is, it's sacred."

This latest album joins the catalog of previous albums from the Unreleased Art Pepper series. All have gotten rave reviews from well-known critics. They are:

- Volume I, Abashiri (2-CD set)
- Volume II, Last Concert: Kennedy Center
- Volume III, Croydon (2-CD set)
- Volume IV, The Art History Project (3-CD set)
- Volume V, Stuttgart (2-CD set)
- Volume VI, Blues for the Fisherman: Live at Ronnie Scott's (4-CD set)
- Volume VII, Sankei Hall, Osaka (2-CD set)
- Volume VIII, Live at the Winery

And all (except Volume IV, which is available for download only) are available at both Amazon (<http://bit.ly/buyArtPepper>) and CD Baby (<http://www.cdbaby.com/Artist/ArtPepper>). Laurie says she'll keep releasing yearly miracles as long as she keeps finding them. She says there are still plenty in her closets. Maybe, next year, a ballad set? Maybe



Etienne Charles (photo by Laura Ferreira)



Rene Marie (photo by John Abbott)

Houston Person, Renee Marie and Etienne Charles Among Headliners For 2017 Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival

The line up for the 2017 Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival, to be held February 16th through 19th, 2017 at the Hilton Hotel in Rockville, MD has been announced with over 150 artists performing. Artist groups appearing on the main stage include Renee Marie, Houston Person, Etienne Charles, Vanessa Rubin, Kathy Kosins, Paul Carr, The Mid-Atlantic Collegiate Jazz Orchestra with guest conductor Delfeayo Marsalis, Russell Malone, Bobby Broom and Paul Bollenback and Steve Turre. A first this year for the MAJF Event and its producer the Jazz Academy of Music, is a pre-festival Mardi Gras fundraiser Gala featuring their own Jazz Academy Youth Orchestra opening for Delfeayo Marsalis and the Uptown Jazz Orchestra. This pre-festival gala offers a New Orleans theme with New Orleans Jazz, New Orleans Cusines and New Orleans Fun. The Mardi Gras Galla will be held on Thursday February 16th, 2017 starting at 6pm at the Hilton. Proceeds from the Gala will support the Jazz Academy Education Programs. Also new for this year will be a Discovery Stage for which emerging artists can submit an application to Paul Carr, Executive and Artistic Director of the Festival.

As stated this year opens with a Festival Gala on Thursday evening February 16 and features Delfeayo Marsalis and the Uptown Jazz Orchestra. Also appearing will be the Jazz Academy of Music under Paul Carr's Direction. Friday Night opens on the Ronnie Wells Main Stage with the Mid-Atlantic Jazz Collegiate Orchestra, conducted by Delfeayo Marsalis, followed by the wonderful vocalist Vanessa Rubin with tenor saxophonist Houston Person closing this evening's main stage. Herb Scott and Candice Bostwick will be performing in the MAJF Club and David Cole and Main Street Blues will be laying down blues in the MAJF Juke Joint. At Midnight, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the MAJF Midnight Jam Session with the Wes Biles Trio takes place in the MAJF Club.

Saturday Afternoon has the "Mid-Atlantic 2017 Jazz Voice" Finals," the Festivals annual jazz vocal competi-

tion on the Ronnie Wells Main Stage. Performing in the MAJF Club in the afternoon are vocalist Chad Carter, the Terry Koger Sextet and Iva Jean Ambush and Ambuscade. Vocalist Iva Jean Ambush will be doing a tribute to Ella Fitzgerald.

Saturday evening Kathy Kosins Group opens the Ronnie Wells Main Stage, followed by a Guitar Summit featuring Russell Malone, Paul Bollenbeck, and Bobby Broom. Etienne Charles and Creole Soul, featuring the marvelous trumpeter will close the Main Stage this evening. Performers in the MAJF Club this evening include Tacha Coleman Parr and Anthony Compton; and Maija Rejman, while Anthony "Swamp Dog" Clark will be performing in the MAJF Juke Joint.

Sunday morning has the traditional gospel brunch and MAJF Women's Collective featuring Akua Allrich, Janelle Gill, Amy Shook, Savannah Harris are the first afternoon act on the Ronnie Wells Main Stage. Also in the Main Stage will be the Greg Hatza Organization and the Lavenia Nesmith Group who will perform a Tribute to Nancy Wilson, The Lovejoy Group and Petra Martin.

The Festival's last evening has a Tribute to Paul Carr Featuring the Paul Carr's Bantam Orchestra; the Steve Turre Quartet featuring the famed trombonist and conch shell player; and the terrific vocalist Renee Marie. The Festival concludes with the MAJF Midnight Jam Session with the Wes Biles Trio. There are likely some other performers that will be added including those at the Discovery Stage. There are also workshops, interviews with artists, screenings of film, a High School Big Band Competition and more.

The Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival continues the legacy of the East Coast Jazz Festival that ran for 15 years starting in 1992. The ECJF originated in honor of Elmore "Fish" Middleton, a Washington, DC jazz radio programmer, whose commitment to promoting jazz music and supporting emerging jazz artists became the guiding principle behind the festival. The driving force of the ECJF was the late Ronnie

Wells, a Washington DC jazz icon. After her passing, so did the ECJF.

As stated on its website "The Mid Atlantic Jazz Festival (MAJF) represents an auspicious renewal of the spirit and intent of the ECJF, as a showcase for some of the DC area's finest established and emerging artists, student ensembles, and a healthy dose of renowned touring jazz artists as well. MAJF is designed to take the ECJF mid-winter jazz festival tradition to the next level and to further enhance arts & culture in the Washington, DC region." Under the auspices of Washington DC area saxophonist and educator, Paul Carr, the Festival has a focus on not simply bringing some of the best local and national jazz performers to the area, but to help nurture and support Jazz Education. As seen in my brief description of the Festival performances, this remains true.

For more information on the Festival, including hotel accommodations, visit <http://www.midatlanticjazzfestival.org/tickets>.

Ron Weinstock

Shemekia Copeland and Bobby Rush Headline Blues-Filled Catskill Weekend



Shemekia Copeland (photo by Ron Weinstock)

"Bluzin' in the Catskills" brings the blues to the Villa Roma Resort in Calicoon, NY, the weekend of March 24–26, 2017. This will be an all-inclusive weekend of great blues

performers including Shemekia Copeland, The Bobby Rush Revue, John Primer, Johnny Rawls, Teeny Tucker, Slam Allen, Alexis Suter & the Ministers of sound and much more. This blues land cruise is being produced by Michael Cloeren who has produced Blues Festivals in the Poconos for 25 years and produced other events including the Philadelphia Folk Festival for four years.

When Bluzin' attendees arrive Friday, March 24, they will be greeted by keyboard wizard Dave Keyes. That night they will feature the music of The Slam Allen Band (Slam fronted as vocalist with James Cotton for many years and now exciting crowds everywhere with his music); The Teeny Tucker Band (the daughter of Tommy Tucker evokes blues women greats like Big Mama Thornton and Etta James); and The Bobby Rush Revue, with the Blues Hall of Famer who has been singing and performing for over 50 years. That Night concludes a blues jam hosted by Bobby Kyle and the Administers with Vanessa Collier, Mikey Junior and others.

There is a full day of music on Saturday, March 25 starting with a Centennial Celebration with Bobby Kyle and the Administers with Teeny Tucker, Mikey Junior and Vanessa Collier. It will be followed by John Primer & Steve Bell (Primer is one of the great straight Chicago Blues Guitarists and vocalists and Steve Bell is Carey Bell's son); Johnny Rawls & Dave Keller (the great soul-blues singer and guitarist as well former member of OV Wright's band is joined by strong Vermont-based soul-blues singer-guitarist) and followed by pianist Dave Keyes and Friends. Also happening Saturday Afternoon, Guy Davis will perform his one-man show, "The Adventures of Fishy Waters: In Bed With the Blues," an acclaimed mix of storytelling and musical performance.

Saturday evening opens with Johnny Rawls & the Dave Keller Band, followed by a Tribute to Johnny Clyde Copeland with Bobby Kyle, Randy Lippincott, Joel Perry and Barry Harrison, all former members of the late Blues Legend's Band. John Primer follows and Shemekia Copeland, a consistent Blues Award nominee and winner finishes up the main show. The late night jam that evening will feature the Dave Keyes Band with guests including Vanessa Collier and Mikey Junior.

The Festival winds down on Sunday, March 26 with Shemekia Copeland talking about her music and career during the brunch. Dave Keyes will be playing solo piano later and the powerhouse vocalist Alexis Suter & The Ministers of Sound will be performing in the afternoon. Those still at the resort that evening can see the Chris Bergson Band with special guest Ellis Hooks.

The all-inclusive packages include Friday dinner, three meals on Saturday and Sunday Brunch, on-site lodging, meet and greet, a movie screening and more. The Villa Roma has an indoor pool, fitness center, Bowling Alley and more. The package does not include adult beverages. Deposits to get the lowest rate must be received by December 5 with the balance due by January 23, 2017. For more information, visit <http://www.michaelcloerenproductions.com/>, click on the Festivals pull down menu and click on the Bluzin' in the Catskills button.

Ron Weinstock

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

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

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



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

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

Jazz is art, you dig? Art can



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

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

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



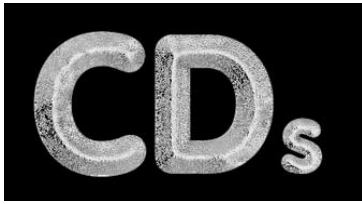
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the Cream of the Crop!



KAT RIGGINS
Blues Revival
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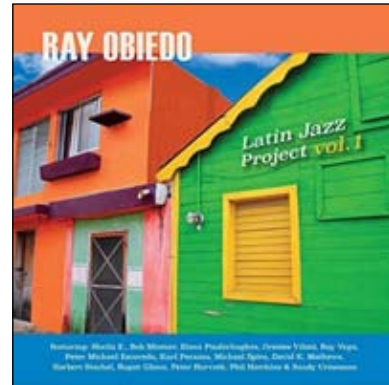
Her website proclaims: "Singer/Songwriter, Artist, Earthchild, God's daughter... Call her any of these things or ALL of these things, but be sure to call her blessed. Kat Riggins is a bluesy songstress with rock-star flair and a hip-hop heartbeat. Music is her passion and her purpose!" "Blues Revival" is the most recent recording the South Florida based artist as well as the name of her band, which includes Darrell Raines on guitars, keyboards and backing vocals, George Caldwell on bass guitar and Doc Allison on drums with Stephen Hooper adding sax to the opening selection, "Now I See (Ooh Wee)."

Riggins is a full-throated singer who grew up in a house where all types of music was played but gravitated to blues. She has grown from singing jazz and blues with just piano accompaniment, touring Asia and the Middle East in a top-40 Band, and all the while developing her own music. Eight of the ten songs here are originals opening with a hot jump-styled blues, "Now I See (Ooh Wee)," with some raspy sax and solid guitar. It is followed by a slower blues "Good Girl Blues," with a melody that strikes me as familiar, but has some fascinating lyrics as she sings about this good girl being bad, as she proclaims that if she wants to go to Church on Sunday, on Monday, it ain't nobody's business if I do. Raines' guitar is both supportive and quite effective. "Wail Away" is a slow blues where Riggins sings "wail away on your guitar" with Raines featured strongly. Another interesting lyric is "Murphy's Law" where she is picking up the pieces of a relationship gone bad and breaking Murphy's Law. An acapella "This Little Light of Mine" with a verse that she will sing her blues,

segues into her rendition of Sam Cooke's "Change Is Gonna Come," which is followed by her interpretation of "Blues Is My Business" (and business is good), with which I am familiar from Ruth Brown's version but she learned from Etta James' recording.

"Blues Revival," closes on a bit of rocking funk as she sings it may not be new, but the "Blues Is The New Black." Kat Riggins is often a striking singer and guitarist Raines also impresses while the rhythm section provides efficient support. This is certainly a recording that is quite enjoyable and a welcome release to introduce her to a more general blues audience.

Ron Weinstock



RAY OBIEDO
Latin Jazz Project Vol. 1
RHYTHMUS RECORDS

Those wanting an easy to listen to album of straightforward Latin Jazz need go no further than the new album from guitarist and composer, Ray Obiedo, "Latin Jazz Project Vol. 1."

Obiedo comes from the San Francisco Bay area where the sounds of Miles Davis, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Henry Mancini and Motown helped form his early musical persona, which later was further shaped by the James Brown revue. His career has included stints with Johnny Hammond Smith, then touring with trombonist Julian Priester, followed by a long association with the great percussionist Pete Escovedo and whose daughter Sheila was part of his funk/fusion band. Sheila and her brother Peter Michael Escovedo participate on this session which also includes Santana members David K. Mathews, Karl Perazzo and Jeff Cressman, Yellowjackets reedman Bob Mintzer, flutists Elena Pinderhughes and Roger Glenn, trumpeter Ray Vega, timbale master Orestes Vilató, vocalist Sandy Cressman, sax and flute player Norbert Stachel, steel pan player Phil Hawkins, and brothers Marc and Paul van Wageningen on bass and drums.

Included here are Latin Jazz standards and three Obiedo originals with this album starting with the rendition of Tito Puente's "Picadillo" with Glenn's flute and Matthews piano standing out along with the leader on acoustic guitar and Peter Michael Escovedo on congas and timbales. It sets the breezy feel for this album that has more of a controlled heat than jet engine bursts

of energy. Pinderhughes' flute along with the wordless vocalizing of Cressman are featured on Walter Bishop's "Coral Keys," followed by Stachel's serpentine soprano sax featured on a lively rendition of the Ellington-Tizol classic "Caravan." A spirited interpretation of Sonny Rollins' "St. Thomas" includes the Hawkins' steel pans, the leader's intriguing single note runs and Stachel's dancing tenor sax along with a percussion heavy segment with the piano and steel pans comping. Obiedo's original, "Cubo Azul," is a Latin-accented hard-bop styled number that Mintzer's tenor is featured on, while flutist Roger Glenn contributed "Santa Cruz," a saucy number with a strong Afro-Cuban foundation as Vega's trumpet and Jeff Cressman's trombone provide support for Glenn's soloing here and Matthews takes a strong solo on piano while there is a short, uncredited vocal break as well, while Vega takes flight leading this performance to a fade.

"Latin Jazz Project Vol. 1" closes with a percussion duet between Sheila E and her brother Peter Michael Escovedo, concluding a solid and very engaging recording.

Ron Weinstock



DUKE ROBILLARD AND HIS ALL-STAR COMBO

Blues Full Circle
STONY PLAIN RECORDS

"Blues Full Circle," the title of Duke Robillard's new Stony Plain recording, in part refers to his back to the basics approach of this mostly small band...old school blues. Duke is joined here by his long-time associates Bruce Bears on keyboards, Brad Fallen on bass and Mark Teixeira on drums with Gordon Beadle and Doug James each adding sax to one track. There are guest vocals from Sugar Ray Norcia and Kelley Hunt, and Jimmy Vaughan adding his guitar on one selection. Duke contributed eleven songs, eight recent ones (one a collaboration with Vaughn) and three from 30 to 45 years ago. Kelley Hunt contributed one and one was a Jimmy 'Baby Face' Lewis song.

Recording of this album was interrupted after recording of seven songs by rotator cuff surgery and after a year off the remainder was cut. I have noticed that in recent recordings Duke's phrasing of his vocals sound self-consciously deliberate. This can be heard on

several tracks here including the opening "Lay a Little Lovin' on Me," although as one listens to the excellent performances here it is a minor issue. The spirit of Eddie 'Guitar Slim' Jones is evident on several selections here including the tribute "Blues For Eddie Jones" as well as "Rain keeps Falling," with the slashing guitar work and the slow "Morning Dove" that also suggests Johnny 'Guitar' Watson, one of numerous guitarists influenced by Slim (also Albert Collins, Buddy Guy, and Earl King).

A nicely paced shuffle "No More Tears," finds Duke more in a B.B. King guitar vein while "Last Night" is influenced by some of the Duke recordings of Bobby Bland and Junior Parker with sax along with a superb Sugar Ray Norcia vocal with Sax Beadle adding tenor and baritone. After the New Orleans groove of "Fool About My Money," with terrific piano from Bears, Kelley Hunt takes the vocal and boogie piano (Bears is on organ here) on her rollicking celebration of Duke's home studio "The Mood Room." Doug James adds baritone sax behind Duke and Jimmy Vaughan on their easy rocking instrumental duet "Shufflin' and Scufflin'," with some organ grease from Bears in addition to the expected superb solos from both guitarists.

As usual, Duke's band is in top form, and whatever quibbles I might have about Duke's singing (and it is a minor point), the music on "Blues Full Circle" is exceptional.

Ron Weinstock



LITTLE JOHNNY RIVERO

Music In Me

TRUTH REVOLUTION RECORDINGS

Veteran Latin percussionist Little Johnny Rivero has his second effort as a leader titled, "Music in Me." Rivero has performed on nearly 100 recordings with La Sonora Ponceña, Eddie Palmieri, Bebo Valdés, Charlie Palmieri, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Paquito D' Rivera, Brian Lynch and Conrad Herwig among others. Growing up he was exposed to a wide range of music.... "including Tito Puente, Machito, Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers, Tony Bennett, all of which my father had in his record collection. Also, there were always rumba jams. Inside of me is a Latin Jazz Rumba."

On "Music in Me" he has assembled a band featuring trumpeter Brian Lynch, alto saxophonist Louis Fouché, pianist Zaccai Curtis and bass player Luques

Curtis. Special guests on this program of nine compositions include trombonist Conrad Herwig, trumpeter Jonathan Powell, violinist Alfredo de la Fé, percussionists Anthony Carrillo and Luisito Quintero, vocalists Manny Mielles and Edwin Ramos and Giovanni Almonte (spoken word). The opening selection, "Mr. LP," dedicated to Marty Cohen the founder of the drum & percussion company Latin Percussion, establishes the tenor of the recording with its Afro-Cuban danceable grooves. Anthony Carrillo's percussion is added here with pianist Curtis laying down his sound along with Herwig's robust contribution followed by a percussion interlude before Herwig and Lynch add some brass fireworks.

Pianist Curtis and Rivero composed the title track, a hot jazz rumba with some terrific trumpet from Lynch, one of today's most brilliant trumpeters whether playing Latin jazz as here, or hard bop (like when he was with the late Phil Woods). Fouché also solos with authority here. Zaccai Curtis' "Let's Do It Again" is built on a nice hard bop line but transformed into a smoking Afro-Cuban groove with Afonso at the fore. Andy Guzman provided what Rivero describes as a Latin Jazz Mambo, "Little Giants," with Jonathan Powell playing the hot trumpet and guest Anthony Carrillo smoking on the bongos.

The cha-cha-cha "Palmieri, Much Respect" was composed by pianist Curtis and dedicated to the great Eddie Palmieri with the leader on timbales and Curtis is wonderful with his spicy melodic invention. A celebration of Africa, the home of all drumming is Brian Lynch's "Africa, My Land" with a recitation of a poem by Giovanni Almonte and strong saxophone from Fouché and Rivero and Manny Mielles chanting over the percussion near the end. After the explosive, percussive "Bombazúl," there is the funky "Afro Rykan Thoughts," with its jamming feel and blazing playing from Lynch and Fouché, along with Curtis' memorable piano.

"Alambique," named after a beach in Isla Verde, Puerto Rico, which sports a timbales solo by Luisito Quintero and a violin solo from Alfredo de la Fe (both stellar), is the final performance on a terrific Latin Jazz recording that is full of excellent ensemble work, intriguing arrangements and hot, driving dance grooves. Little Johnny Rivero has put out a recording with some very big sounds.

Ron Weinstock

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THE TERRY HANCK BAND

From Roadhouse To Your House Live **VIZZTONE**

Two years after The Terry Hanck Band's last release, VizzTone has issued a new live recording by them titled "From Roadhouse To Your House Live," recorded at the California State Fair by Chris 'Kid' Andersen.

The band consists of Hanck on saxophone and vocals, guitarist Johnny 'Cat' Soubrand, bassist Tim Wager and drummer Butch Cousins, with special guest Jimmy Pugh on keyboards. About their last album, "Gotta Bring It On Home To You," I noted the range of music to be from lively R&B, straight blues, swamp blues and pop, and if anything, they continue in this vein on what must have been quite a performance for those at the Fair that day.

Hanck is quite a congenial vocalist with a bit of grizzle whose robust saxophone contains a mix of King Curtis yackety-yak with Junior Walker honking. Wager and Cousins provide a solid foundation with Pugh (who also gets to display his Hammond B-3 sound on the opening track, Hanck's "Good Good Rockin' Going On," an updating of "Good Rockin' Tonight," on which Soubrand tears off one of his blistering solos. Some yackety-yak sax opens the rollicking cover of T.V. Slim's "Flatfoot Sam," with Pugh's boogie-infused piano leading into a crisp guitar break. Hanck's "Junior's Walk," is the leader's tribute to the Motown legend while Soubrand's tremolo on Chuck Willis' "Whatcha Gonna Do When Your Baby Leaves You" gives the performance the feel of some of Little Willie John's recordings. Hanck's "Smilin' Through My Tears," is an appealing swamp pop-styled ballad with a booting sax solo.

The remainder of this performance is equally varied and entertaining, including a cover of Louis Jordan's "Ain't That Just Like A Woman," which opens with Hanck playing Cleanhead Vinson's "Kidney Stew" followed by a bit of "Chattanooga Choo Choo" before launching into the Jordan song. This is followed by a cover of Tyrone Davis' classic "Can I Change My Mind" (there is also a nice rendition of "Slip Away" here).

Dave Spector's "Octavate'n," is an instrumental

with Soubrand featured and pulling out all the stops. Hanck's original, "Peace of Mind," is evocative of some of Magic Sam's recordings and Soubrand's guitar evokes Sam here.

"From Roadhouse To Your House Live" captures the engaging and strong blues, R&B and rock of the Terry Hanck Band in very strong form.

Ron Weinstock



VARIOUS
Cafe Society (Soundtrack)
SONY CLASSICAL

A soundtrack to the new Woody Allen film of the same name, "Cafe Society" is a curious collection of a number of new performances of classic songs by Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks mixed with several from classic 78s. 8 of the 15 songs (selected by Allen) were composed by Rogers and Hart, and the other songs mostly are classics of the American songbook. I have not seen the film and will make no comment on it .

The personnel for Giordano and his group includes Giordano on bass, Chris Flory or Vinny Raniola on guitar, Mark Shane on piano and Christopher Gelb on drums. What is surprising is the lack of horns in the band and while the crisply played performances may be delightful, if the movie is supposed to conjure up swing music that was featured at the actual Cafe Society, Barney Josephson's pioneering club that was the first racially integrated nightclub in the United States, the Nighthawks come across almost as a gypsy jazz band with the music not bearing relationship to what was played by the Boogie Woogie Trio, Billie Holiday, Hazel Scott, Lena Horne, Al Casey, Eddie Barefield, and the like. A vocal by Kat Edmondson backed by The Nighthawks on Rogers & Hart's "Mountain Greenery" has charm, but is far removed from Holiday singing "Strange Fruit."

This is not to say there is anything bad about the new performances. Pianist Shane has a deft touch displayed nicely on the ballad "Manhattan" and the sprite treatment of "My Romance," the latter of several tracks where Flory distinguishes himself. Of note is the YeraSon trio's marvelous rendition of "The Peanut Vendor," followed by a restrained rendition of "Out of Nowhere" by Conol Fowkes on piano, Brian Naepka on

bass and John Gill on drums. Fowkes' spirited stride-rooted piano does delight on "This Can't Be Love," a performance that perhaps captures the actual Cafe Society spirit. Still the musical highlight of this album is an alternate take of the Count Basie classic, "Taxi War Dance" with some marvelous Lester Young, with Benny Goodman's "I Didn't Know What Time It Is" also being notable.

The music on this soundtrack is quite congenial and listenable although not as exciting or passionate as might be found at the actual Cafe Society where Barney Josephson persuaded Lena Horne to stop singing "When Its Sleepy Time Down South."

Ron Weinstock



BIG JON ATKINSON & BOB CORRITORE

House Party At Big Jon's
DELTA GROOVE RECORDS

"House Party At Big Jon's," a new Delta Groove release by Big Jon Atkinson & Bob Corritore is a rollicking traditional blues recording featuring the 26-year-old Atkinson, who plays and sings with an authority of someone much older, and veteran harmonica master Bob Corritore, who was producing classic blues recordings before Atkinson entered this world.

The two are supported by a variety of players including guitarist Danny Michel, bassist Troy Sandow, and drummers Malachi Johnson, Brain Fahey, and Marty Dodson. Recorded at Big Jon's home studio with vintage equipment, these originals and choice covers capture the sound of vintage recordings from Chess, Excello and Trumpet. Adding spice are guest appearances by Dave Riley, Willie Buck, Alabama Mike and Tomcat Courtney, providing their well seasoned voices.

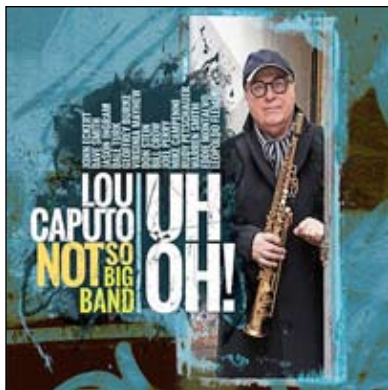
There are many pleasures to listen to here, from the swamp blues meets Sonny Boy Williamson ambience of Atkinson's opening "Goin' Back To Tennessee," and his own evocation of a classic Jay Miller recording on another original "It Wasn't Easy," followed by a rocking swamp blues penned by Miller, "She's My Crazy Little Baby," that almost sounds like an unissued Lonesome Sundown recording. Corritore's "Here Comes My Baby," sounds like a like a Sonny Boy Williamson Chess recording although retro-traditional with Little Walter styled harp. Dave Riley's down-home rendition

of Charles Johnson's gospel number "At the Meeting" is followed by a rearrangement of Lightnin' Hopkin's "Mojo Hand" with biting guitar from Atkinson and vocal from Alabama Mike. Tomcat Courtney follows with his own Muddy Waters' styled down-home blues "Mojo in My Bread."

Atkinson's "Mad About It" is a Muddy Waters styled blues, musically reminiscent of "Tiger in My Tank," with hot slide guitar and some strong Corritore harp while the pair challenge the Second Sonny Boy Williamson on "Empty Bedroom." Also nice is a cover of Slim Harpo's "I'm Gonna Miss You Like The Devil," followed by Willie Buck channeling Muddy Waters in his vocal on his "You Want Me To Trust You," and then Dave Riley is more in a Memphis meets Chicago mood on "Mississippi Plow." "El Centro," a harmonica feature set against a Tex-Mex groove, is followed by Willie Buck taking the vocal on a cover of Slim Harpo's "I'm a King Bee," with the band capturing that Baton Rouge groove.

The recording closes with Alabama Mike channeling Muddy Waters singing Casey Bill Weldon's "Somebody Done Changed The Lock On My Door," as Big Jon channel's Muddy's slide style, and then Big Jon lets us know "My Feelings Won't Be Hurt," taken a medium tempo and sung and played with the authority characteristic of the entire "House Party at Big Jon's." It was quite a party indeed as they evoke the classic blues recording sounds of the fifties and the sixties with these excellent performances.

Ron Weinstock



LOU CAPUTO NOT SO BIG BAND

Uh Oh!

JAZZCAT 47 RECORDS

Lou Caputo's Not So Big Band is a working big band that has 12 pieces, not the typical sixteen piece or larger variety. It has been together for over ten years playing various venues in New York City. Caputo is a multi-instrumentalist, heard here on various saxophones and flute, who has played in various show bands ranging from Motown to Harry Connick Jr, as well as Howard Johnson's 5 Bari Saxophone Group (Beartones), Warren Smith's Jazz Composer's Orchestra and the Ellington and Basie bands.

Others in the Not So Big Band include percussionist Eddie Montalvo (Grammy nominee, Latin Grammy winner, Fania All-Stars), saxophonist Virginia Mayhew

(Saxophone Journal Saxophonist of the Year), trumpeter John Eckart (performed with Toshiko Akiyoshi and Lee Konitz), legendary bassist and jazz author Bill Crow (performed with Gerry Mulligan and Phil Woods), Geoffrey Burke (performs with Harry Connick Jr.) and percussionist and vibraphonist Warren Smith who has performed with everyone from John Cage and Gil Evans to Barbra Streisand. I am most familiar with Smith's work and also guitarist Joel Perry who I met decades ago in Buffalo, who also spent years playing second guitar behind legendary blues man, Johnny 'Clyde' Copeland.

This is a marvelous swinging modern big band recording with some terrific renditions of jazz staples from the pens of Joe Henderson, Leo Wright, Jack DeJohnette, Oliver Nelson, Bill Crow, Chick Corea Tadd Dameron, Dexter Gordon, Mary Lou Williams and others. The disc kicks off with a driving rendition of Henderson's "Black Nile," on which Caputo takes the first solo with his robust baritone sax followed by Perry's fleet guitar against Geoffrey Burke's arrangement.

Trombonist Jason Ingram contributed and arranged the Latin jazz original "Los Cielos De Ayer," with Caputo on soprano, with other solos from trumpeter Dave Smith and guitarist Perry. The Don Elliot composed title track was apparently a popular number by the Nutty Squirrels. The loping groove and sound of the reeds give it a somewhat cool flavor with Warren Smith taking the first solo on vibes, followed by Kohn Eckert's nice middle range trumpet, then Caputo's brawny baritone and a short bass solo from Crow.

Leo Wright's "Midnight in Berlin" is a particular favorite selection with the late Chris White's arrangement and Caputo's outstanding alto (suggestive of John Handy) lending this a Mingus-like feel, with pianist Don Smith and Warren Smith adding solos. A Caribbean carnival feel marks the ebullient rendition of DeJohnette's "Festival" with Caputo's airy flute showcased along with the alto sax of Geoffrey Burke and drummer Mike Campenni before guitarist Perry's acoustic guitar leads to the close.

Ryan Krewer's arrangement for "Stolen Moments" gives it a fresh sound as does Caputo's use of soprano and the performance also has Dale Turk's tuba solo. Chick Corea's "Guijara," is another latin flavored number with Caputo on flute (with trumpet like lines) followed by Perry's fiery electric guitar (evoking a jazzy Santana perhaps) and then some wonderful trombone from Ingram (set against Chris Rinaman's marvelous arrangement).

Bill Whited provided arrangements for the lovely rendition of Tadd Dameron's "If You Could See Me Know" (with marvelous ballad playing by Caputo on the baritone) and Dexter Gordon's "Fried Bananas," with Caputo on soprano, Dan Stein on piano and Virginia Mayhew on tenor sax. Virginia Mayhew arranged the closing performance, Mary Lou Williams' "Busy Busy Busy."

Caputo is a superb player, and his Not So Big band is a sterling aggregation with a marvelous book, terrific arrangements as well as soloists and a marvelous rhythm section and the result is this excellent recording.

Ron Weinstock



KEEFE JACKSON - JASON ADASIEWICZ

Rows and Rows
DELMARK RECORDS

Two of the leading members of the Chicago jazz and improvised music community, Keefe Jackson and Jason Adasiewicz, have just had a duo recording issued, "Rows and Rows" for Delmark Records. The two have been coming together as a duo since 2013 and bring the multiple reeds of Jackson (here on tenor sax and bass clarinet) with the vibraphone of Adasiewicz as they explore nine compositions (six by Jackson and three by Adasiewicz) which serve as vehicles for their improvisational conversations.

It is interesting to contrast the robust, throaty playing of Jackson with the sometimes shimmering sound provided by Adasiewicz and watch them shift from their playing phrases in unison with the more conversational and responsive moments during these performances. Jackson exploits the full range of his instruments and sometimes sounding like he is simply playing the keys to some shrieks while Adasiewicz's use of the sustain pedal and other devices provides underlying shifts in mood and texture to complement Jackson's often vocalized horn lines.

The listenability of the music here in part results from the relative brevity of the performances and the fact that Jackson's explorations are of the upper reaches of his instruments while Adasiewicz provides contrasting musical colors. Furthermore, the compositions are varied and mix impressionist playing with some more melodic passages. While perhaps not for casual listeners, the free improvisations and interplay on "Rows and Rows" make for intriguing and stimulating listening.

Ron Weinstock



OLEG KIREYEV & KEITH JAVORS

The Meeting
INARHYME RECORDS

The title of the new album by Russian saxophonist Oleg Kireyev and American pianist, Keith Javors, "The Meeting," might suggest a first-time pairing of the two. In fact it is their second recorded collaboration after 2010's "Rhyme & Reason." The two here are joined by trumpet icon Tom Harrell and a terrific rhythm duo of bassist Ben Williams and drummer E.J. Strickland (who was on the earlier release by the two). This new recording has four originals by the pair (with two alternate takes) and fresh renderings of three standards.

The album gets off to a breezy start with the easy swing of Kireyev's "April," and the easy, swinging tempo set up by Javors and rhythm is followed by the lyricism of both Harrell and Kireyev. Javors himself establishes his fluidity, deft touch and his melodicism. Javors' lovely ballad "Inwardly" contrasts with his bouncy title track. Bruno Martino's classic samba "Estate," is done just by the rhythm trio and while the opening hints at Herbie Hancock, the performance quickly transitions into a lovely, wistful number. The

rendition of “Caravan” opens with a middle-Eastern flavor with Kireyev adding a snatch of Tuvan throat singing before the groove kicks in and there is wonderful interplay between sax and piano over the smoldering rhythm section. Kireyev offers a very appealing, tenor solo (evoking Ben Webster and Chu Berry) on “Body and Soul,” made perhaps more striking set against a hip hop-tinged groove of Williams and Strickland. The closing “Fresh Blues” is a brisk hard bop flavored groover with Harrell, and both leaders soloing strongly with Strickland standing out.

The deluxe edition of this includes additional takes of “April” and “Fresh Blues,” completely this delightful musical collaboration. **Ron Weinstock**



JASON ELMORE & HOODOO WITCH

Champagne Velvet
DAG NAB MUSIC

A new recording by the Texas blues-rock power trio Jason Elmore & Hoodoo Switch certainly perks up these jaded ears. Singer-guitarist Elmore is backed by drummer Mike Talbot and bassist Brandon Katona for 13 original, varied and spirited performances that range from straight blues, Allman Brother’s influenced instrumentals to pop ballads and blues-rock boogies.

What is refreshing about this group is they can swing a fast boogie rocker as well as play a jazz-tinged instrumental with the same authority. Furthermore, the music breathes and they never overdo their playing to complement Elmore’s warm and assured vocals that match his lyrics that have hooks that stick in one’s head.

From the opening number of the rollicking “House Rockin’ Boogie,” where he sings “we will rock until the break of day,” to the closing, warp-drive rockabilly number “Mary Jane,” They tear into the rockers while caressing a pop-styled number like the marvelous “Midnight in Memphis.”

There is the chugging groove of “Double My Money,” as he recalls his grandma’s advice if one deals with the devil one will pay the price as his woman takes his pay check and what she doesn’t give the damn casino she drinks at the bar and the only sugar she gives him is in the gas tank of his car.

“Shine Your Light” is a terrific country-laced ballad performed with plenty of heart and soul, while

“Cross-Eyed Woman,” is a hot blues that opens with some T-Bone Walker influenced guitar. Then there is “Lament For Evelyn McHale,” a concise, atmospheric instrumental that evokes classic Allman Brothers. Elmore’s acoustic folk side is shown on the reflective “Wish,” as well as the witty trio “Green Is Gone,” with slide guitar as he laments that the man shut his moonshine operation down, can’t get his plough in the green, and his money now goes from green to gone. The title track is a delightful and nifty jazz instrumental with Talbot using brushes.

Again, Jason Elmore & Hoodoo Witch has produced a recording that will delight many. **Ron Weinstock**



CHARLIE HADEN LIBERATION MUSIC ORCHESTRA

Time/Life: Song for the Whales and Other Beings
IMPULSE!/VERVE

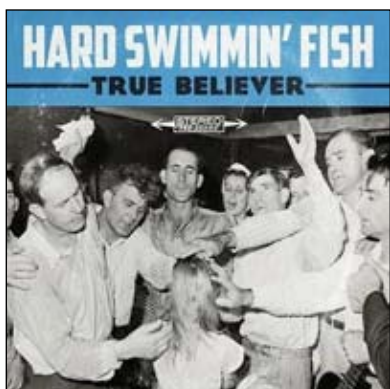
Encased between two concert performances of the late, great bassist’s expanded group format- an assemblage he used as his voice for social/political commentary and protest- are three captivating works recorded after Mr. Haden’s passing in 2014; works which he intended for an upcoming studio project, courtesy of his longtime LMO co-conspirator, Carla Bley.

Leading off is a splendid Bley-charted take on Miles Davis’ “Blue In Green”, featuring a signature Haden solo: graceful, inventive and constantly attentive to structure.

The attendant, well-executed sax and brass work, here and throughout the program, is not credited in review versions of the disc. Two of Bley’s contributions come from her vast catalogue, performed by a LMO edition including Steve Swallow on bass. The inspiration for “Útviklingssang” and “Silent Spring” were environmental concerns, and “Time/Life” was composed as a memorial to Haden. All three are haunting in character, possessed of Bley’s very distinctive, compelling melodic sensibility.

Haden’s “Song For The Whales” closes this set, melodically reminiscent of his “Song For Che” from the LMO’s impressive 1969 debut album. The sewn-together nature of this release in no way detracts from the excellent, distinctive music contained within.

Duane Verh



HARD SWIMMIN' FISH

True Believer
HARD SWIMMIN' FISH

Acme Blues Company, a former Northern Virginia group that included harmonica player and vocalist Waverly Milor, once described themselves as 'Industrial Strength Blues.' Such a description might be applied to Milor's present group, Hard Swimmin' Fish, also based in Northern and Central Virginia. Its other members are Demian Lewis on guitar, banjo and vocals, Randy Ball on bass, and Jason Walker on drums and percussion. On their latest self-produced album, they are supported by the organ of John Sharrar on one selection.

On their website, they describe themselves "Hard Swimmin' Fish is an ensemble deeply rooted in the traditions of American music. Our down home roots sound pilfers from the best that early American music has to offer including blues, jazz, funk and swing, and churn it all up into a spicy brew that is familiar yet uniquely our own." Listening to this latest release, one is struck by the blues center of the performances and the impressive ensemble playing that overshadows the instrumental solos which are quick and to the point.

The tenor of their sound is set with the insistent, machine-like groove of the opening title song as Milor gruffly delivers the lyrics of being a true believer tied to the stake with his overdubbed harmonica adding to the feel of the performance. Plenty of grit follows on "Five Years Hard Labor," with its chugging rhythm and his being let go from his job for his five years of hard labor and having his woman walk out the door. "Come Together" is not the Beatles number, but a Lewis original with him laying down some hot acoustic slide guitar set against a tight groove. Covers include a straight, rocking treatment of Howlin' Wolf's "Howlin' For My Darling"; an atmospheric reworking of Little Willie John's classic "Need Your Love So Bad," with one of the nicest vocals on this and organ from Sharrar; and a warp speed rendition of the classic Ray Charles stomp "Mess Around."

A traditional gospel number, "Don't Let the Devil Ride" which segues into "Wish I Was In Heaven Sitting Down" closes out this latest release that perhaps exhibits why Hard Swimmin' Fish has been developing a following around Northern and Central Virginia and parts of Maryland.

Ron Weinstock



DOYLE BRAMHALL II

Rich Man
CONCORD

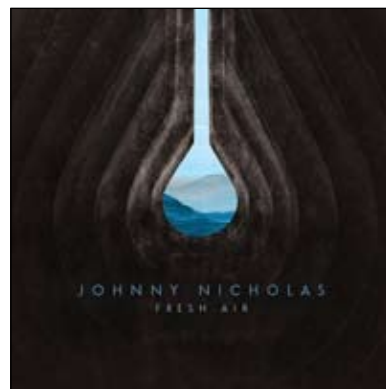
Singer/songwriter/guitarist Doyle Bramhall II has his first release in a decade, "Rich Man," now out. Bramhall II has been delving into the music of India & Morocco, so I guess I'm going to have to dub this "world blues," due to all the exotic percussion going on. Bramhall is the son of the late singer/songwriter/drummer Doyle Bramhall.

The opener, "Mama Can't Help You," is funky, thanks to drummer James Gadson, on loan from Bill Withers. "The Veil" is a slow number where Bramhall II gets to show off some guitar work. "My People" is more haunting, due to the background added by Ustad Surjett Singh on Sarangi. As Norah Jones makes a guest appearance on the co-vocal of "New Faith," "Keep You Dreaming" lives up to its name via riding a dreamy R&B riff. "Hands Up" is also on the thick side, with a lot of percussion going on, with Bramhall II's guitar leading the way.

"Harmony" floats along and while the majority of the tunes on "Rich Man" are original, Bramhall II makes a gutsy move at the end by covering Jimi Hendrix's "Hear My Train A-Coming" from "Rainbow Bridge." It won't make you forget Hendrix's version, but it is a worthwhile effort.

Bottom line is I'd call "Rich Man" mood music, if you are in the mood to meditate.

Peanuts



JOHNNY NICHOLAS

Fresh Air
BONA DEA MUSIC

It has been about four decades since I saw Guitar Johnny and the Rhythm Rockers along with blues legends Walter Horton and Johnny Shines outside Buffalo

NY. Of course, the chance to see Horton and Shines may have been my prime motivation, but Johnny Nicholas and his band were outstanding on their own, not simply as a backing band to Horton and Shines. That was part of a tour promoting albums by Nicholas, Horton and Shines and it was quite a memorable night. Nicholas, part of a New England scene that included Duke Robillard, Sugar Ray and the BlueTones, and Roomful of Blues, would eventually move to Austin, Texas where he became part of that music scene as well as expanding his musical palette to include Western Swing in a tenure with Asleep at the Wheel.

Nicholas has a new album "Fresh Air," with blues and roots songs where he and his multi-instrumental talents (piano, guitars and more) is joined by an all-star cast that includes Scrappy Jud Newcomb (guitars, mandolin, mandocello), John Chipman (drums, percussion, vocals) and Bruce Hughes (bass, vocals, percussion), plus a guest list that includes Cindy Cashdollar (lap steel and additional guitars) and Steve Riley on button accordion. There are interpretations of Sleepy John Estes' "Kid Man Blues" and Howlin' Wolf's classic recording, "Back Door Man," along with eleven originals that he penned or had a hand in writing.

His blues roots are evident on his opener, "Moonlight Train" where he sings about dreaming about the falling rain and a chill down his spine when he heard that moonlight train set against a reworking of the "Rollin' and Tumblin'" melody. It is followed by his original take of Estes' "Kid Man Blues," adding a country accent, almost in the manner of the late Levon Helm.

"Red Light" is a stomping rocker with Cindy Cashdollar's steel guitar with Nicholas pounding the piano and Steve Riley adding accordion breaks almost in the manner of Spade Cooley or Garth Hudson. "Sweet Katrina" has him recalling hoboeing on freight trains from Chicago to Memphis and meeting Katrina, initially a sweet woman but who got meaner than a one-eyed dog," and might evoke classic Little Feat for some. Then there is his woman who wants Johnny to "Play

Me (Like You Play Your Guitar)," a neat lyric by him and Gary Nicholson.

"How Do You Follow a Broken Heart" is a lovely blues-ballad that will conjure up some classic West Coast blues from Charles Brown and early Ray Charles with lovely Cashdollar steel guitar adding to its appeal, while "Roll On Mississippi" is a reflective folk-country ballad, with Newcomb's mandolin adding to the song's mood. Other high points includes a very imaginative recasting of "Backdoor Man," and the title song, a lovely country ballad.

The playing from Nicholas and his band is terrific, and Nicholas sings with heart and authority throughout making this a superb album of American roots in the tradition of The Band, Levon Helm, Anders Osborne, and others.

Ron Weinstock



MADELEINE PEYROUX

Secular Hymns

Impulse

Recorded in a small church in the Oxfordshire countryside of England, Madeleine Peyroux's new album "Secular Hymns" is a collection of secular songs she describes "that are very individual, personal, introverted." Accompanied by her touring band-mates of the last two years-electric guitarist Jon Herington and upright bassist Barak Mori, she revisits tunes by seminal blues artists Willie Dixon and Lil Green, classic gospel singer Sister Rosetta Tharpe, dub reggae innovator Linton Kwesi Johnson, contemporary craftsmen Tom Waits, Townes Van Zandt, Allen Toussaint, 19th century American giant Stephen Foster, and an early African-American spiritual.

She has certainly grown being a Billie Holiday imitator first with a low-key introverted take on an R&B classic "Got You on My Mind," followed by a bit more melodramatic attack on Tom Waits' "Tango Till They're Sore," with Herington's guitar and Mori's Arco bass adding to the drama of the performance. Townes Van Zandt's "The Highway Kind" is a more reflective tune with Herington more in a folk guitar mode, while Allen Toussaint's "Everything I Do Is Gonna Be Funky" benefits from the swampy-sounding backing.

The varied repertoire includes Stephen Foster's lament, "Hard Times Come Again No More," the playful Lil Green blues "Hello Babe," the reggae groove of

LIVE BLUES ON THE HIGH SEAS



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Linton Kwesi Johnson's "More Time" with its lyrics of wanting more time for pleasure and leisure if things are really getting better, and a spritely rendition of one of Sister Rosetta Tharpe's most famous songs, "Shout Sister Shout," before this unusual collection of mostly contemporary songs closes with a traditional spiritual "Tampin." It is a lovely performance that ends this very charming recording that displays why Peyroux has become a singer of considerable appeal with the splendid support of her band-mates. **Ron Weinstock**



DEB RYDER
Grit Grease & Tears
BEJEB MUSIC

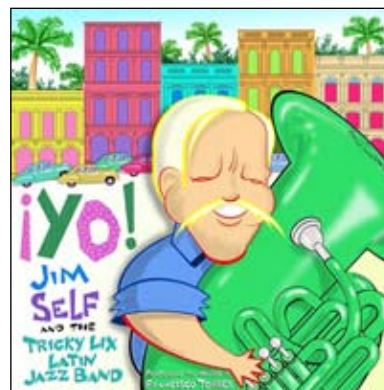
Deb Ryder impresses right off the bat with "It Ain't Gonna Be Easy," the opening track of her third album, "Grit Grease & Tears." As she shouts on this hot jumping blues...it ain't gonna be easy but its gonna be a helluva lot of fun, and that is what this album is, a helluva lot of fun. Ryder cites Etta James and Koko Taylor, and she has captured not only the powerful approaches they employed, but also their expressive abilities and nuanced aspects of their singing.

Add to this her abilities as a songwriter (she contributed all the songs here) and the production of Tony Braunagel, Johnny Schell's engineering, and a fine studio band including her husband Rick on bass, Braunagel on drums, Schell on guitar, Mike Finnigan on keyboards with Kirk Fletcher adding guitar to half the twelve songs, Albert Lee to one and harp added by Pieter Van Der Pluijm or Bob Corritore, and one has some hard hitting blues and rocking R&B.

Deb Ryder has a presence that the musicians enhance throughout the variations in mood and songs. Sugaray Rayford duets with her on a funky blues "Get a Little Steam Up," while the guitars of Schell and Fletcher and Van Der Pluijm's harmonica create a swampy feel for the powerful title track where she prays for a miracle as "you can't try anymore and I can't cry anymore," as she sings about being "a moth to your flame," with the band adding an insistent backing. It is followed by "Sweet Mary Anne," a song recalling the summer of 1968, and sweet Mary Anne who everyone loved but who wanted to leave that town with crisp, punchy horns from Jim Sublett and Darrell Leonard adding to the flavor of this retro-soul

rock. "Lord Knows I Do," is a terrific slow blues with some scintillating B.B. King styled guitar set against a stop-time accompaniment. The consistency of the performances here is noteworthy including the "River's Forgiveness," with Schell's guitar and Corritore's harp adding to the flavor of this moody performance contrasting with the frenzied boogie of "Prisoner of War," but even at this tempo, Ryder's vocal does not sound hurried or rushed.

The easy rocking shuffle "Right Side of the Grass" closes this recording. Special kudos to Finnigan's keyboards and Braunagel's solid drumming throughout this latest strong, striking effort from Deb Ryder, who certainly has more than fulfilled the promise of her excellent earlier recordings. **Ron Weinstock**



JIM SELF AND THE TRICKY
LIX LATIN JAZZ BAND
!Yo!

BASSET HOUND MUSIC

What a wonderful new release by tuba player Jim Self and The Tricky Lix Latin Jazz Band. The title "!Yo!" is a translation of self, and the release is a terrific latin jazz recording unusually anchored by Self's Tuba (and on two selections the Fluba, a big tuba sized flugelhorn). Self is a long-time studio musician who can be heard on over 1500 movie scores (his tuba projected those galactic tones as the Voice of Mothership in "Close Encounters of the Third Kind"). He has also done a variety of projects and this release is his 13th album. For this, he has brought together a "who's who" of young West Coast Latin Jazz Musicians (most of whom are on the great Poncho Sanchez Band). Foremost is trombonist/composer/arranger Francisco Torres who produced, wrote or arranged much of the music. The other players are Ron Blake, Trumpet/Flugelhorn; Rob Hardt, Tenor and Soprano Saxes/Flute; Andy Langham, Piano; Rene Camacho, String Bass; Joey De Leon, Timbales, Batá, Shekere; Giancarlo Anderson, Congas and George Ortiz, Bongos.

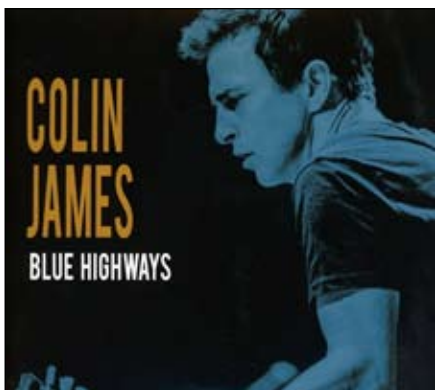
Evident on the opening mambo by Eddie Cano "Cal's Pals," dedicated to the great Cal Tjader, is the marvelous arrangements that are fluently played with marvelous solos from trumpeter Blake, Self on tuba, Hardt on tenor sax and De Leon on Timbales. The

music is bright, lively and bouncy resulting in an infectious performance that is characteristic of the entire recording. The classic "Poinciana" has the ensemble's seamless rendering of Curt Berg's arrangement to frame the leader's solo. In addition to the warmth of the horns, the mix of rhythm with the horns lends such a relaxed feel to this very charming performance. Even when the groove is kicked up a notch, as on Torres' mambo "For Charlie," there is a relaxed, yet exhilarating quality as Torres on trombone and Self on tuba play a duet before each solos. Self's own "Encognito" is a slow cha-cha with Blake's trumpet solo followed by Self on fluba.

Torres' "Sweetest Blue" is a spicy Afro-Cuban number with a delightful tropical groove, with a choice soprano sax solo from Hardt, an intricate piano solo from Langham and a Batá solo by De Leon and is followed by the calmness of his lovely "Quiero Liegar," with Self playing the melody before some gorgeous trombone and piano. Self composed the title track which is a cheerful, and lovely cha cha. An invigorating interpretation of Tito Puente's "Old Arrival," with a robust trombone solo and the three percussionists trading eights, is followed by the closing track, Clare Fischer's "Morning," with an arrangement by Bill Cunliffe and solos by Rob Hardt on flute and Self on Fluba, after which Stanley the Bassett Hound howls to end this latest Basset Hound recording.

"!Yo!" is a complete listening delight. Like New Orleans Brass bands, and Howard Johnson and Gravity (also known as the horns of Taj Mahal's Tuba Band), Jim Self's performances on tuba exhibit imagination and fluidity that far transcend any novelty, and with the superb ensemble and arrangements here, has provided an album of Latin jazz that is easy to listen to and full of joy.

Ron Weinstock



COLIN JAMES
Blue Highways
 HIGH ROMANCE/TRUE NORTH

Long time Canadian blues guitarist gets to do his dream project. Number eighteen in his series of releases, Colin James came off the road with his band and went right into a studio in Vancouver for two days to record thirteen tunes that influenced him into playing.

The list for the most part has some familiar names with the Freddie King instrumental "Boogie Funk" starting the party via Simon Kendall's organ and Steve Marriner's harmonica. Next up is an old Fleetwood Mac number from 1971's "Fleetwood Mac In Chicago," titled "Watch Out," written by their then guitarist Peter Green. For those who don't know, Fleetwood Mac started out as a high tensile British blues machine before they became feminized. It all sets up for the tune that made Jeff Beck famous, or vice versa, "Going Down" as drummer Geoff Hicks starts the runaway train and the rest of the band attempts to keep pace.

Muddy Waters "Gypsy Woman" goes more down home, thanks to Steve Marriner's harmonica and Jesse O'Brien's piano. "Lonesome" chugs along at a nice pace followed by the lowdown "Hoodoo Man Blues." With just guitar and Mariner's harmonica, James has a quiet medley of Howling Wolf's "Riding In The Moonlight" turning into Jimmy Reed's "Mr. Luck." "Blue Highway" finishes off with another quiet moment as Colin James goes solo on Robert Johnson's "Last Fair Deal."

Interesting idea that delivers and reanimates some tunes that have been lost to the ages in various cases. Raise a glass to all involved.

Peanuts



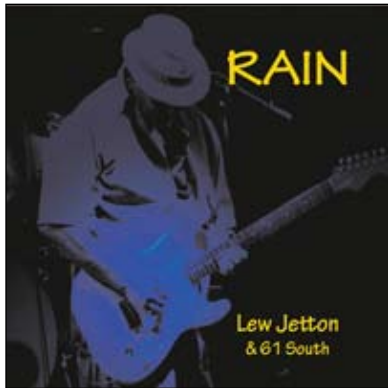
STEVE GADD BAND
Way Back Home
 BFM JAZZ 1CD/2DVD SET

The designation that this is a "band" recording and not that of a featured artist- in this case, the well traveled and highly respected drummer Mr. Gadd, is made clear throughout this tasty, groove-laden set.

Grooves, indeed, are the primary stock in trade; delivered in a continuously morphing manner by this very solid ensemble. Mr. G tends to "lead from behind," masterfully pushing the band through the many rhythmic changeups; the group-authored leadoff track, "Green Foam," providing multiple metrics all on its own. An extended coda on guitarist Michael Landau's "Africa" is a rare stretch here where the leader gets a close-up.

Trumpeter Walt Fowler and keyboardist Larry Goldings emerge as the standout solo voices and bassist Jimmy Johnson makes for a most suitable section partner. While Wilton Felder's Crusaders soul classic

serves as the album's title track, its theme gets perfunctory treatment in a nevertheless satisfying, highly charged workout. An old-school run-through on "Bye Bye Blackbird" featuring Golding and the keyboardist's majestic "Cavaliero" are tracks of note as is Jan Hammer's "Oh, Yeah!". DVD concert & interview collections fill out this package. Nice work. **Duane Verh**



LEW JETTON & 61 SOUTH

Rain

COFFEE STREET RECORDS

Singer, songwriter and guitarist Lew Jetton and his band 61 South brings a new audio gumbo mix of southern rock, blues and other roots elements to his latest recording "Rain," one of the most appealing recent blues-rock roots efforts this individual has heard recently.

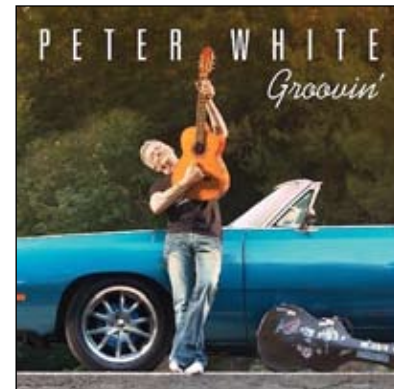
One can hear such influences as the Allman Brothers, Eric Clapton, Duane Allman, Little Feat and others on this set where the Tennessee-born Jetton is backed by his regular lineup of Sam Moore on guitar, Dan Bell on keyboards and guitar, Otis Walker and James Sullivan on bass and Erik Eicholtz on drums. Guests here include thumbpicking guitarist Alonzo Pennington; keyboard player Solon Smith; backup singer Miranda Louise (she was with Lonnie Mack) and harmonica player J.D. Wilkes.

The album takes its title likely from the three very different numbers that contain rain in their title, but in addition to this there are topical themes of broken relationships and hopes for better times. The opening number, "Who's Texting You," an amusing contemporary song about cheating through the cell phone, immediately showcases the appeal of Jetton as a singer and how he's able to lay down well shaped solos that complement his very agreeable, grainy singing and the amusing lyrics.

He rock and rolls things on "Move On Yvonne," with harmonica and Miranda Louise adding her short vocal, and a rollicking piano break, followed by the urgency of his vocal on "Mississippi Rain," which opens with a swampy tremolo guitar and an insistent groove as he sings about the heavy rain and thunder and how things that one knows will never be the same.

"Lay Me Down" is a soulful southern rock ballad evocative of Eric Clapton and is followed by a country gospel boogie "Glory Train," and then a very nice rendition of John Hiatt's "Feel Like Rain." The southern rock

groove and vocal "Done Done It" sounds like it would be at home on Country Music Television, while there is some nice acoustic guitar that is part of the easy going rocker "Sandy Lee." "Keeping Me Awake" is a hot rocking shuffle which leads to an excellent rendition of Allen Toussaint's "It's Raining." With only piano accompaniment, Jetton's baritone is quite moving in this wonderful performance. It closes a very enjoyable album of varied musical grooves and blues moods. **Ron Weinstock**



PETER WHITE

Groovin'

HEADS UP/CONCORD

Over the years, I have seen British smooth jazz guitarist Peter White perform several times, but always in a Christmas concert. My first reaction upon seeing this new album was that it was a holiday music offering.

Wrong. "Groovin'" is a set of ten well chosen hit songs from the years gone by, such as the title track done by the Rascals in '67 and redone here with nice solos from White and trumpeter Rick Braun (who is on this track only). White has been around for many years, having spent two decades with Al Stewart he and worked with Polish singer Basia. He's been recording albums under his own name since 1990.

The songs on this new disc range from the year 1959 ("Sleep Walk") and into the 80s, such as Stevie Wonder's "Do I Do." Some of the other songs White selected are the reggae grooved "I Can See Clearly Now," "(Sittin' On) The Dock Of the Bay" (a huge hit for Otis Redding), "I Heard It Through The Grapevine," "Never Knew Love Like This Before" and the closing cut, a short but sweet version of The Beatles "Here, There and Everywhere." Different groupings of musicians are featured on the various tracks, and all the songs, whether they feature horns or programming, are done with taste and class.

Nicely done from start to finish, this album would make a fitting gift for those who enjoy smooth jazz and are baby boomers (roughly ages 50-70) as well as those who were into classic pop/rock. As a final note, White is in the midst of a tour for this album, and will then be doing a Christmas concert tour November 25 through December 23. You can get the info at www.peterwhite.com and click Tour. **Michael Braxton**



LITTLE MIKE

How Long
ELROB RECORDS

Michael Markowitz, aka Little Mike, has a new set of Chicago-styled blues “How Long,” although his usual cohorts, The Tornados are not present. Musically there will be little surprises as Mike brings his harmonica, some piano and vocals to a mix of classic blues and idiomatic originals with varying studio personnel, but stylistically very akin to what he done with the Tornados.

The title song is the J.B. Lenoir classic, although Mike’s rendition is reminiscent of that by Pinetop Perkins with whom he backed numerous times. The studio band is quite tight behind him, even at a breakneck tempo (perhaps a tad too fast) as on “Smokin’,” where

he sings about cigarettes gonna kill him and he can’t quit no matter how hard he tries.

There is a surprising take on the Bobby Timmons hard bop classic “Moanin’,” with some twisting harp lines and nice guitar. His brisk shuffle “When My Baby Left Me” is followed by a feverish take of Johnny Young’s instrumental “Slam Hammer.” Other highlights include a cover of Eddie Taylor’s “Bad Boy,” where he adds rollicking piano behind his harp and earnest vocal, and the atmospheric “Not What Mama Planned,” with some nifty guitar.

In an interview excerpted in the liner notes, Mike describes his blues as “deep, hard hitting and raw.” Certainly there is little contrived here, just straight-forward blues that fans of Little Mike will be quite familiar with and others will find to their taste. **Ron Weinstock**



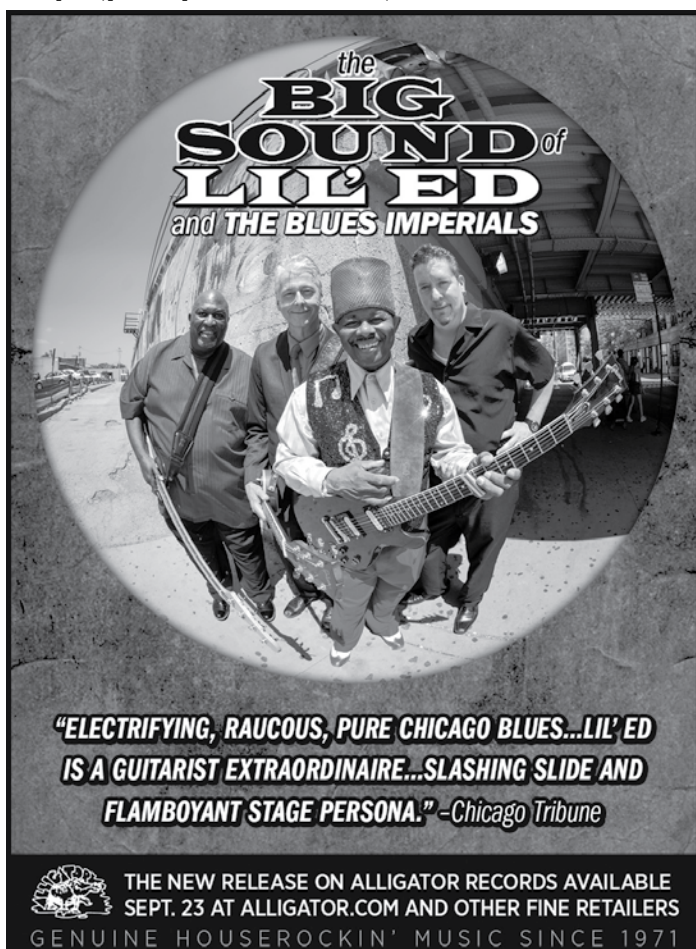
GREG DIAMOND

Avenida Graham
ZOH0 MUSIC

I have heard Canadians refer to the vertical mosaic of their country’s blend of many cultures in contrast to the melting pot used when folks talk about the US. Former New York City Mayor David Dinkins apparently referred to the richness of many cultures living together in New York City as a “glorious mosaic.”

It is set against this background that Bill Milkowski refers to Greg Diamond as a “hybrid musician,” coming from East European Jewish and Columbian backgrounds. The title of Diamond’s new recording “Avenida Graham,” aka the Avenue of Puerto Rico in Brooklyn (the intersection of Graham Avenue and Broadway), is where he lived near for over a decade early in this century where he would soak in the sounds of Hector Lavoe and Willie Colón blasting out of cars, apartment windows and porches which informed his musical focus that had been centered on the jazz tradition. Milkowski observes that “Avenida Graham is a reflection of all his varied influences that have come together organically in his music.”

This recording provides an opportunity for Diamond to showcase his talents as a composer, guitarist and group leader. He has assembled a superb band that consists of Stacy Dillard on saxophone (Seamus Blake replaces him on two selections), Mike Eckroth on piano, Peter Slavov on bass, Henry Cole on drums.

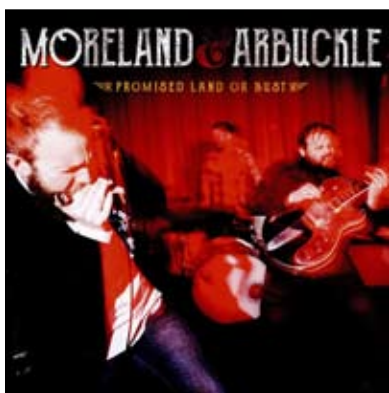


Mauricio Herrera is on congas and percussion for four of the nine selections adding additional rhythmic flavor to this recording.

There are so many pleasures listening to these originals, whether Diamond's clean, fleet picking and warm tone, his unison heads with saxophonists Dillard or Blake, the marvelous rhythm section and pianist Eckroth, able to move from hard bop to Afro-Cuban as on one of this writer's favorite selections, the buoyant "El Coronel," with an infectious son montuno jam in the middle of this lively performance with its entrancing melodic theme. Then there is a ballad that opens with Diamond's finger-style acoustic archtop solo opening on a charming ballad with Dillard's expressive, nuanced tenor followed by the leader's restrained clean, picking. Dillard displays a slightly hotter approach on the nicely paced "Gentrix, again complementing the leader's guitar lines.

The performances of the other compositions are equally striking with the interplay between Diamond and his saxophonists, the comping and soloing from Eckroth and the terrific rhythm section making this such a terrific recording.

Ron Weinstock



MORELAND & ARBUCKLE
Promised Land Or Bust
ALLIGATOR RECORDS

Aaron Moreland (guitars) and Dustin Arbuckle (harmonica and vocals) are the Kansas based front men of a band that also includes Kendall Newby on drums and percussion. For this, their Alligator Records debut, they are joined in the studio by a couple of keyboardists and a bass player. The resulting collection is a wild and raucous affair with traditional Hill Country blues pushed through a grunge rock filter. It is a sound that rockers the Black Crowes pursued for years with varying degrees of success. With nowhere to hide in the spare mix, Moreland and Arbuckle need to be, and are at the top of their game with innovative, forceful instrumental work. Regardless of which of the two take the instrumental lead, the songs are equally satisfying. Witness Moreland's hot guitar break on Slim Harpo's oft covered "I'm A King Bee" and Arbuckle's greasy harmonica grooves on "Mean and Evil." Their many years playing together are evident by the ease with which they seamlessly pass the lead back and forth so that the difference between guitar and harmonica is

almost irrelevant in the mix. Arbuckle's double duty as vocalist isn't just a concession to the need for someone to sing. He is an adept vocalist, whether he is leading the charge over a hard hitting number such as the opener, "Take Me With You (When You Go)," crooning his way through a more subdued number such as "Mount Comfort" and "Waco Avenue," or taking on the more traditional blues of "Woman Down in Arkansas." Solid from start to finish.

Mark Smith



OUR THING
Manhattan Style
JAZZHEADS

The group Our Thing is a collaboration between guitarist Roni Ben-Hur, whose roots are in Tunisia and Israel, bassist Santi Debriano, who was born in Panama and grew up in Brooklyn, and percussionist Duduka Da Fonseca, whose roots are in Brazil, and their latest effort is "Manhattan Style" (Jazzheads). In the publicity materials for this release, mention is made of 'home' as a theme underlying the album whether in the originals from the trio or the covers of compositions from Ellington, Coleman and Jobim.

The music here is breezy, uplifting, reflective and exuberant. Ben-Hur's "Home" opens on an exhilarating fashion as he exhibits marvelous technique and tone displayed before solos from Debriano and then Da Fonseca on a scintillating opening track. Ornette Coleman's mid-tempo blues, "The Blessing," is another vehicle for Ben-Hur to showcase his touch, tone and musical sense that evokes Wes Montgomery and Grant Green to these ears before another taut Debriano solo while the trio's rendition of Jobim's "Polo Pony" further evidences their sophisticated interplay, with the deft support of Ben-Hur's wonderful playing. Ellington's "African Flower" just may be the diamond of this recording of many musical jewels, with mallets and percussion used to accent Ben-Hur as he states the theme with a marvelous Arco solo from Debriano the centerpiece.

The sober, melancholic tone of Debriano's "Imaginary Guinea" reflects it being composed during the earthquake in Haiti in 2010. Its title is a reference to Vodun, whose followers in Haiti believe that Guinea is where their ancestors reside and that they will be

reunited with them there in death. Guinea also represents Africa.

This superb recording closes with the lively title track that Da Fonseca composed after seeing Freddie Hubbard at the Blue Note in the 1980s where Hubbard was “playing his butt off.” This selection opens with Ben-Hur’s vibrant lead before Da Fonseca takes an explosive solo. “Manhattan Style” is simply terrific.

Ron Weinstock



THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS

Strong Like That
SEVERN RECORDS

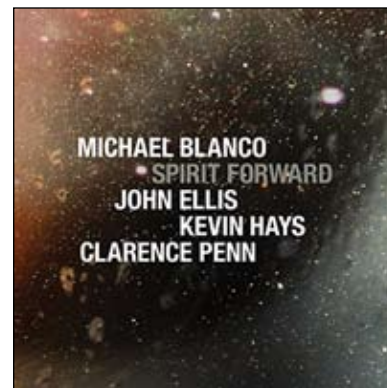
Severn has just issued the latest by The Fabulous Thunderbirds, “Strong Like That.” While in its earliest incarnation it was as much associated with both pop tunes and classic blues, this new release is rhythm and blues associated with a distinct Memphis-Muscle Shoals flavor starting with the opening rendition of the Temptations classic “(I Know) I’m Losing You” on which Roosevelt Collier adds steel guitar behind Wilson and this edition of the Thunderbirds of Johnny Moeller on guitar, Kevin Anker on keyboards, Steve Gomes on bass and Robb Stupka on bass. Wilson immediately establishes how authoritative a singer he is and Collier’s steel guitar dominates the performance while Wilson adds harp.

Paul Kelly’s southern soul classic “Don’t Burn Me” follows with a guest appearance from Anson Funderburgh with Wilson’s very soulful singing caressed by the solid accompaniment and backing vocals along with Funderburgh’s guitar break. It is followed by some swampy blues soul with Moeller’s effective use of tremolo and Wilson’s harp on “You’re Gonna Miss Me.” Wilson and band provides a fresh arrangement of an Albert King recording, “Drowning On Dry Land,” with some harp that evokes Junior Parker on a terrific and original performance of this number. Wilson’s original “Smooth,” has a danceable loping groove and nice harp and the title might aptly describe the character of the performances here, smoothly and cleanly executed but also soulful and far from sterile. Nice punchy horns here led and arranged by trumpeter Kenny Rittenhouse.

After a solid cheating soul number, “Somebody’s Getting It,” Wilson opens his original “Meet Me On the Corner,” with some tough amplified harp as he tells his

lady to meet him when no one can see. Also among the songs here is a nice rendition of the Eddie Floyd classic “I’ve Never Found A Girl (To Love Me Like You Do).” Gomes contributed the closing title track, another strong slice of soul-laced blues with some harp and solid horns behind a fine vocal that closes this likewise fine new recording by the Thunderbirds.

Ron Weinstock



MICHAEL BLANCO

Spirit Forward
BROOKLYN JAZZ UNDERGROUND RECORDS

“Spirit Forward” the title of bassist-composer Michael Blanco’s new album, is a bartending term for a type of cocktail made with strong spirits (like the Manhattan or Martini) that seeks to highlight and enhance the flavor of the base spirit, not to mask its flavor. Blanco states, “When choosing Spirit Forward for the album title, I had this definition in mind and how it relates to my music. It’s a good metaphor for how strong musical personalities can come together and create a dynamic unit, while still maintaining their individuality.” This refers to the Michael Blanco Quartet featuring John Ellis (tenor saxophone), Kevin Hays (piano) and Clarence Penn (drums). He also observed “I like the idea that the act of releasing an album of original music is akin to putting your ‘spirit forward’ out into the world, as well as the way the word spirit can be used to mean motion (like ‘spirit away’), so Spirit Forward also means forward motion and continuing progress.”

Saxophonist Ellis has been a long-time friend and musical collaborator with Blanco, whereas the pianist Hays and drummer Penn (who I am most familiar with) are more recent additions to his group. And the band did a number of dates in 2015 working out on these compositions before actually going into the studio resulting in this imaginative and intriguing recording. This is suggested by the first composition, “The Mystic Chord” which Blanco observes “The Mystic Chord is a six-note chord used by Russian composer Alexander Scriabin, and believed by Scriabin to have mystical properties. While practicing at home one day, I discovered that I could create a bass line with an interesting 6/4 groove by spelling out this chord one note at a time.” The resulting melody has a “funky,

lopsided quality,” and the quartet explores the possibilities of this chord with Ellis’ tenor providing a fluid, light sound.

“Notes From the Underground” was inspired by the Cornelia Street Cafe, and employs a low-register piano/bass counter-melody that offsets Ellis’ tenor at several points as well as impresses with his own solo. Blanco notes that so many of his favorite jazz clubs are basement rooms, hence the double entendre of the title. “Song Without Words” is a pretty number where the quartet displays its lyricism with Hays displaying his nice touch here, while the swinging title track evokes some classic 70s hard bop compositions with Hayes, Ellis and the leader stretching out. Then there is a quirky blues “Last Stable Orbit,” (title is an astronomical term that denotes “last orbit possible before an object (planet, spaceship, etc) gets sucked into a black hole”) with Ellis on soprano sax with a bit of squeal in his tone. A Neal LaBute play is the source of the title for “Reasons To Be Pretty,” a slow number opening with Ellis, again on soprano sax, setting the mood before Hays takes a beautiful solo. Penn’s cymbals play, whether with brushes or sticks, merits mention here, but is expectedly superb throughout.

Blanco’s prior two albums have both garnered considerable praise. Listening to “Spirit Forward” one can understand why. There is so much to enjoy on this sparkling recording.

Ron Weinstock



LURRIE BELL
Can't Shake This Feeling
DELMARK

The Mercurial Son, Lurrie Bell has a new recording on Delmark “Can't Shake This Feeling,” finding this singular guitarist and singer backed by a first-rate band of Roosevelt Purifoy on keyboards, Matthew Skoller on harmonica, Melvin Smith on bass and Willie Hayes on drums. Produced by Dick Shurman, Lurrie wrote or co-wrote 4 of the 13 songs, and the other songs here are not ones that have been over-recorded with perhaps “Sinner’s Prayer” being the best known.

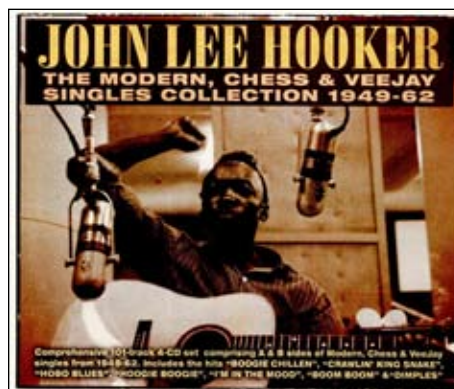
Lurrie’s unpredictability makes him such a fascinating guitarist to listen to and this is evident starting with the opening “Blues Is Trying to Keep up with Me,” which he penned as well as his solo on Eddie Boyd’s shuffle “Drifting,” with Skoller and Purifoy also soloing,

while Lurrie’s natural, slightly gritty vocals add to the appeal. There is some nice string popping on a lesser known T-Bone Walker number “I Get So Weary,” while he unplugs for “One-Eyed Woman” backed only by Skoller. Another strong original, the slow, moody “This Worrisome Feeling in My Heart,” is followed by a cover of one of Willie Dixon’s lesser songs, “Sit Down Baby.” Lurrie can not do much on a cover of Otis Rush’s Cobra recording of this song.

A brisk Little Milton cover “Hold Me Tight,” is followed by a nice interpretation of “Sinner’s Prayer,” that sounds adapted from Ray Charles and then the nice walking groove of Lurrie’s “I Can’t Shake This Feeling,” a gem that sounds like it came from Willie Dixon’s golden age with Skoller’s backing harp being strong and a typically fine Bell solo. Lurrie sings and plays his heart out on Buster Benton’s “Born With The Blues,” followed by Carey Bell’s shuffle “Do You Hear,” and Bell’s reading of Dixon’s “Hidden Charms,” and while Lurrie is among the few guitarists who can conjure up Hubert Sumlin, he lacks Howlin’ Wolf’s vocal authority, exposing this as another lesser Willie Dixon lyric.

“Can’t Shake This Feeling” closes with the reflective original (co-penned with Shurman) “Faith and Music” with just Lurrie on electric guitar. There is some exceptional music here along with a couple of lesser selections, but Lurrie Bell remains one of today’s most singular talents in the blues and this is another strong addition to his discography.

Ron Weinstock



JOHN LEE HOOKER
The Modern, Chess & Veejay Singles Collection
1949-1962
ACROBAT 4-CD BOX SET

There have been so many reissues of John Lee Hooker’s amazingly prolific recording career, especially those of his early recording career, to which this four-disc set from Acrobat is another addition. The title of this collection, “The Modern, Chess & Veejay Singles Collection 1949-1962,” fairly describes its contents. It is not an exhaustive reissue of Hooker’s early recordings, but one simply organized around those commercially issued 78s and 45s of Hooker’s music that were released on the Bihari Brothers Modern label, recordings issued on Chess, and then a good selection of

Hooker's Vee-Jay recordings ending in 1962. That date likely reflects that those recordings were not affected by European copyright law changes that extended the period for copyright of recordings for recordings issued in 1963 and after, so that they were not in the public domain in Europe.

This is one of a number of recent public domain reissues that have compiled complete A and B sides of various musical performers. In the case of performers like Eddie Boyd, who have not exactly been over-represented by reissues, this has been very valuable and hopefully made more folks aware of the artist's importance. In Hooker's case, where so much has been reissued, and whose importance is undeniable, perhaps there is less value, but one cannot dismiss having such a nice chunk of his early, pre-Endless Boogie recordings available.

The value of this release is such even if some of Hooker's most gripping recorded performances are excluded because they were issued on other labels like Specialty, King, Sensation, and other small labels, some of which might have been unavailable for copyright or contractual reasons per the liner notes from Paul Watts.

So we get to hear the original classic Hooker recordings including "Boogie Chillun," "Hobo Blues," "Crawlin' King Snake," "Drifting From Door To Door," "Women in My Life," "I'm in the Mood," "It's My Own

Fault," "Dimples," and "Boom Boom," some heard in several versions. The chronological presentation of the material allows one to hear the evolution of Hooker's recordings, including the increasing presence of small groups backing him, along with a few recordings from performances he made originally for the folk market that Vee-Jay released. Generally the sound is quite acceptable although a couple of the tracks apparently came from worn originals. It is also fascinating to listen to the early Vee-Jay recordings where the group and Hooker sometimes seemed not totally together. There is simply too much music here to go into depth about specific performances but it does provide a generous sampling of his music directed towards the commercial record buying public.

Full discographical information by Paul Watts provides a nice overview of Hooker's biography and the recordings on this which as he observes provides a substantial chunk of the recordings during the period he established his reputation and made some of his most influential recordings. If one wanted a collection of early John Lee Hooker, one could do far worse this convenient set.

Ron Weinstock

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