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jazz
& **blues** report



MONTEREY JAZZ FESTIVAL NEXT GENERATION ORCHESTRA

jazz & blues report

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"Buffalonious"

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

MONTEREY JAZZ FESTIVAL NEXT GENERATION ORCHESTRA



47th Annual Next Generation Jazz Festival Presented by Monterey Jazz Festival Hosts America's Top Student Jazz Musicians, March 31-April 2 in Monterey CA

Monterey, Calif., March 1, 2017; The 47th Annual Next Generation Jazz Festival Presented by Monterey Jazz Festival takes place March 31- April 2, 2017 in downtown Monterey. The weekend-long event includes big bands, combos, vocal ensembles, and individual musicians vying for a spot on the stages of the 60th Annual Monterey Jazz Festival. Sponsored by the City of Monterey and the California Jazz Conservatory, all competition events are open to the public, free of charge.

With more than 1200 students participating in the Next Generation Jazz Festival, the public can enjoy the largest gathering of young jazz talent in Northern California, outside of the Monterey Jazz Festival itself. In 2017, 68 groups from nine states are finalists in the adjudicated categories. Visit www.montereyjazzfestival.org/NGJF for a list of finalists and special guests.

Finalists from California are represented by 59 ensembles from 15 counties—including Alameda, Contra Costa, El Dorado, Fresno, Los Angeles, Marin, Merced, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Ventura counties.

Eight other American states for the finalists include Arizona, Florida, Indiana, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington State. In addition, 22 special guest groups are from Arizona, California, Quebec, Canada; Kansas, Nevada, Texas, and Washington State. Altogether, 90 bands are scheduled to perform at the 47th Next Generation Jazz Festival.

The Next Generation Jazz Festival officially starts with the annual Opening Night Judges Concert Presented by the California Jazz Conservatory at 7 p.m. on Friday, March 31 at the Golden State Theatre in downtown

Monterey. The show features performances by the Festival's team of internationally-renowned artists and competition judges, including the festival's 2017 Artists-in-Residence, bassist John Clayton, drummer Jeff Hamilton, and pianist Gerald Clayton. Also featured will be trumpeters Gilbert Castellanos and Jeff Jarvis; saxophonists Joel Frahm, Tia Fuller and Gary Smulyan; trombonist John Fedchock; guitarist Dan Balmer, and vocalist Carla Cook. Opening the concert at 7 p.m. is the Danae Greenfield Quartet from Berklee College of Music.

A limited number of reserved Gold Circle Tickets are available for \$35, and are available online by visiting www.montereyjazzfestival.org. Gold Circle tickets include reserved seating in the front rows of the Golden State Theatre. Seating in the Golden State Theatre is limited.

The Next Generation Jazz Festival will also continue its College Fair, allowing students an opportunity to visit with colleges and organizations offering jazz and other music programs. For a complete schedule of activities and competition times, visit www.montereyjazzfestival.org/NGJF.

The High School Competition begins at 9 a.m. on Saturday, April 1, in the De Anza Ballroom and Portola Room at the Portola Hotel, and the Golden State Theatre, with additional spotlight performances throughout the day at Dali 17, Turn 12 Bar and Grill, and Bay of Pines Restaurant in downtown Monterey and educational clinics from Danae Greenfield Quartet and the Artists-in-Residence. College Combos will also compete from 5:30-8:30 p.m.

The top groups from the High School Vocal, Combo, Big Band, and Vocal Soloist divisions will be announced at 6:15 p.m. Saturday evening at the Golden State Theatre, with a Showcase concert at 8:30 p.m. The final rankings of the High School and College Combo Divisions will be announced at the end of the evening. In addition, the University of North Texas One O'Clock Lab Band will perform a special exhibition set.

The Next Generation Jazz Festival continues on Sunday, April 2, at 9 a.m. with Middle School, College Big Band, High School Conglomerate Big Band, Combos, Vocal Soloists, and College Vocal Ensemble Divisions. The top selected competition ensembles will also earn a performance slot at the 60th Monterey Jazz Festival.

Introduced in 1971 as the California High School Jazz Band Competition by Monterey Jazz Festival Founder Jimmy Lyons, the competition was conceived as a way to bring talented student groups to Monterey, and to cultivate musicians for the future. Renamed the Next Generation Jazz Festival in 2004, notable participants of the competition and Next Generation Jazz Orchestra include saxophonists Joshua Redman, Dave Koz, Ted Nash, Mark Turner, and Donny McCaslin; pianists Benny Green, Gerald Clayton, and Patrice Rushen; trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, flutist Elena Pinderhughes, multi-

instrumentalist Peter Apfelbaum; bassist Larry Grenadier, and many others.

The 2017 Next Generation Jazz Festival is sponsored by the City of Monterey, and the California Jazz Conservatory. Partners include Inns of Monterey, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Dali 17, Remo Drumheads, Scheid Family Wines, Yamaha Drums, and Yamaha Pianos.

Supporters include York School, ACTION Council of Monterey County, Arts Council for Monterey County, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, D'Addario Music Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, William H. Donner Foundation, Joseph Drown Foundation, Monterey Peninsula Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Monterey Peninsula Volunteer Services, Pacific Grove Rotary Club, Carmel Rotary Club, Rotary Club of Monterey, S.T.A.R. Foundation, Sally Hughes Church Foundation, Yellow Brick Road Foundation, and the Upjohn California Fund.

Sponsorship opportunities, program advertising information, and more details on the 2017 Next Generation Jazz Festival can be seen by visiting www.montereyjazzfestival.org/NGJF or by calling 831.373.3366.

Monterey Jazz Festival, a leader in the jazz world since 1958, celebrates the legacy of jazz, expands its boundaries, and provides opportunities to experience jazz through the creative production of performances and educational programs.

Founded in 1997 in Berkeley, California, as the Jazzschool—a community music school with jazz classes, workshops and concerts, which continue to be a focus to this day—the institution introduced a new four-year degree program in 2009, offering a Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies. At that time, the Jazzschool was incorporated into the newly renamed California Jazz Conservatory.

The institution was fully accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music in December of 2013, making the California Jazz Conservatory the only fully accredited, completely independent music conservatory in America totally devoted to the study and performance of jazz.



Monterey Jazz Festival to Receive 30K Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts

John Clayton, Gerald Clayton and Jeff Hamilton Named as Artists-In-Residence for the 2017 Monterey Jazz Festival

Monterey, Calif; January 23, 2017 - National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Jane Chu has approved more than \$30 million in grants as part of the NEA's first major funding announcement for fiscal year 2017.

Included in this announcement is an Art Works grant of \$30,000 to Monterey Jazz Festival to support the Commission Artist for the 60th Annual Monterey Jazz Festival, September, 15-17, 2017.

The Art Works category focuses on the creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence, public engagement with diverse and excellent art, lifelong learning in the arts, and the strengthening of communities through the arts.

"The arts are for all of us, and by supporting organizations such as the Monterey Jazz Festival, the National Endowment for the Arts is providing more opportunities for the public to engage with the arts," said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. "Whether in a theater, a town square, a museum, or a hospital, the arts are everywhere and make our lives richer."

"The NEA has been a longtime supporter of our artistic and educational programs," said Elizabeth Welden-Smith, Director of Strategic Relations for Monterey Jazz Festival. "We are proud to have been awarded this Arts Work grant to support this important and enduring artistic component of the festival's history."

In 2016, saxophonist and composer Wayne Shorter acted as the Commission Artist, premiering *The Unfolding* at the 59th Monterey Jazz Festival.

"For our 60th festival in 2017, we are excited to announce bassist John Clayton as our Commission Artist, composing a new work for his Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra," continued Welden-Smith. "The commission piece will feature John's son, Gerald Clayton and his Trio, as a centerpiece ensemble within the orchestra."

John Clayton, drummer Jeff Hamilton and pianist/composer Gerald Clayton will also act as the 2017 Artists-In-Residence. It is the first time in the Monterey Jazz Festival's history that a father and son have been chosen in this role. All three of them have a long history with the Monterey Jazz Festival, and have won or appeared on 12 GRAMMY-winning albums, with an additional 21 GRAMMY nominations.

Past Commission pieces by John Clayton include 2006's *Red Man-Black Man* with Kurt Elling and 2013's tribute to Dave Brubeck, *Suite Sweet Dave: The Brubeck Files*, both performed by the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra. In 2015, John Clayton and Jeff Hamilton acted as the rhythm section with the Monty Alexander

Trio. John also directed the Monterey Jazz Festival Orchestra in a tribute to Quincy Jones in 2016.

Gerald Clayton recently acted as Musical Director for Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour, which performed 28 shows in 17 cities in 10 states in 2016. Gerald is also a scholarship and soloist award winner at Monterey Jazz Festival's 2000 and 2001 Next Generation Jazz Festival, and has made trio appearances at MJF in 2010 and 2012 and as in duo with Charles Lloyd in 2014.

The Monterey Jazz Festival celebrates the legacy of jazz, expands its boundaries, and provides opportunities to experience jazz through the creative production of performances and educational programs.

Visit www.montereyjazzfestival.com

MJF Partners include: Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Scheid Family Wines, Gilead Sciences, Yamaha Drums, Yamaha Pianos, NEA Artworks, North Coast Brewing Company, Inns of Monterey, Alaska Airlines, Taylor Farms, The Jazz Cruise, KSBW/Central Coast ABC, DownBeat, Jazziz, Monterey-Salinas Transit, San Francisco Chronicle, Cal Humanities, Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, Macy's, Monterey Bay Aquarium, JazzTimes, Alvarez Technology Group, AT&T, City of Monterey, LARABAR, SmoothJazzGlobal.com, Mission Linen Supply, KAZU 90.3FM, Monterey County Herald, Remo, and Tesla.

Community Partners include: Hartnell College, Monterey Bay Veterans, Monterey Peninsula College, Monterey Pines Golf Course, Monterey Regional Waste Management District, Monterey Rotary, and The Offset Project.



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**The Apollo Theater In Partnership with
World Music Institute Presents 5th
Annual AFRICA NOW! Concert March 11
Celebrating The Best Of The
Contemporary African Music Scene**

**Featuring Mbongwana Star, Songhoy Blues,
Daby Touré, TUELO and DJ Nenim**



Mbongwana Star

Harlem, NY – The Apollo Theater, in partnership with World Music Institute, presents the fifth installment of the Africa Now! concert, celebrating the best of the contemporary African music scene, on Saturday, March 11th, at 8pm.

This year's concert will be hosted by South African comedian Loyiso Gola featuring performances from Mbongwana Star, Songhoy Blues, Daby Touré, TUELO and DJ Nenim - artists who have drawn from their African roots for inspiration and transplanted them onto the global music landscape.

As part of the Apollo's 2017 Winter/Spring season, Africa Now! further establishes the legendary Theater's longstanding role as a creative catalyst for Harlem, New York, and the nation and as a platform for culturally diverse artists.

"We are absolutely delighted to present the fifth year of Africa Now! with World Music Institute. The evening truly showcases the incredible array of musical talent coming out of the contemporary African music scene. Each year that we do this show, the bar is set even higher and those who attend know that they can expect a world-class event, a great line-up, and an overall amazing experience," said Apollo Executive Producer, Kamilah Forbes.

ABOUT LOYISO GOLA

South African comedian Loyiso Gola is best known for his satirical news show, "Late Nite News with Loyiso Gola." Gola burst onto the scene at the age of 17, winning

the Sprite Soul Comedy competition. Since then his work in TV, radio, film and live performance has earned him the title of one of South Africa's best and most loved comedians. He has performed alongside the legendary Pieter Dirk-Uys, was named by The Wall Street Journal as one of South Africa's comedy greats and recorded his debut US special, *Loyiso Gola: Live in New York* for Vimeo Originals last year.

ABOUT AFRICA NOW ARTISTS

The band Mbongwana Star hails from Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo—a network of shantytowns and night shelters where founding members Coco Ngambali and Theo Nzonza (of Staff Benda Bilili fame) pulled together members of a new generation of Kinshasa musicians embodying the concept of "mbongwana," or "change." Along with maverick Parisian producer Doctor L (Tony Allen, Stomy Bugsy), the band has created a sound that embodies the "smashed-together" nature of the surroundings from which it was born—a sound that fuses traditional Congolese rhythms with European post-punk bass and busted electronics from recycled and reconstructed instruments miked and distorted in unexpected ways.

Produced by Nick Zinner (Yeah Yeah Yeahs) and Marc-Antoine Moreau (Amadou & Mariam, K'naan), Songhoy Blues' first album "Music In Exile" marked the arrival of a powerful and truly unique new band. Though their music bears elements of contemporary rock and hip hop, at its heart is Songhoy Blues' deep attachment to the homegrown songs and dances of Mali's Songhoy people as well as iconic West African guitar heroes such as Baba Salah and Ali Farka Touré. Songhoy Blues blends the traditional and the modern, the homegrown and the foreign, the youthful and the ancient.

Daby Touré spent his childhood in Mauritania and moved to France as a teenager. A musical and linguistic polyglot, Touré creates an elegant sonic mixture that merges the linguistic inflections of the six languages he speaks. His music is a puzzle whose pieces, once assembled, form a comprehensive map of the world. It builds bridges between cultures, crossing borders and gives life to a poetic language and a universal sound.

TUELO is lead by a tiny South African girl who brings her traditional influences to the bold, soulful, punk rock sound from New York City that can simply be dubbed revival music. There is heartbreaking innocence and rebellious passion in Tuelo's music, with an unraveling mind and captivating voice which inspired a recent Huffington Post article to dub her "New York's Best Singer (and the world's)!"

DJ Nenim grew up in Lagos, Nigeria where he made his way to DJ at the biggest clubs in Nigeria. His sets are usually geared towards Afrofunk, Afrobeat, Jazz, Funk & Soul with very eclectic playlists. He recently started his own record label "5th Circle Records."

TICKETS

Tickets for Africa Now! are \$30 - \$55. Tickets are available at the Apollo Theater Box Office: (212) 531-5305, 253 West 125th Street, and Ticketmaster at 1-800-745-3000, www.ticketmaster.com.

Jazz at Princeton University Presents Diverse and Compelling Spring 2017 Season

Guest artists include Steve Lehman's Sélébéyone, Darmon Meader and Billy Childs premiering a new work commissioned by Jazz at Princeton University



Rudresh Mahanthappa

Jazz at Princeton University, helmed by acclaimed saxophonist/composer Rudresh Mahanthappa, presents a diverse and compelling series spring 2017 season, currently running through May 13, 2017.

Highlights include the world premiere of a Princeton-commissioned work by pianist/composer Billy Childs, and appearances by saxophonist Walter Smith III, saxophonist Steve Lehman's global hip hop project Sélébéyone, and vocalist, arranger and saxophonist Darmon Meader.

"Jazz at Princeton University has a very exciting spring season that embraces this music in its many styles and forms," says Mahanthappa. "Some of the top jazz artists of our day will be performing and working with our students. From saxophonist Walter Smith III performing with our top small jazz group to esteemed composer and alto saxophonist Steve Lehman's global hip-hop project Sélébéyone to a newly commissioned work by the amazing pianist Billy Childs, this will truly be a season to remember."

Remaining Spring 2017 Schedule

Tuesday, March 28 – Steve Lehman's Sélébéyone
- 7:30 p.m. – Taplin Auditorium in Fine Hall Free and open to the public. Formed in 2015 by award-winning saxophonist Steve Lehman, HPrizm, Maciek Lasserre, and Bamar Ndoeye, Sélébéyone is a collaborative project that draws from Senegalese rap, French spectral music, modern jazz, underground Hip Hop, interactive electronics, and beyond. The band's first full-length album was called one of the "Top 10 CDs of 2016 by NPR Music, The NY Times Popcast, The Denver Post, The LA Times and The Chicago Reader, among many others.

Wednesday, April 12 – Small Group 1 and Small

Group A - 7:30 pm – Taplin Auditorium in Fine Hall Free and open to the public. Sunday, April 23 - Small Group A 2 p.m. at Princeton Public Library Free and open to the public. Come celebrate Jazz Appreciation Month in a special concert of jazz standards from Princeton's Small Group A.

Thursday, April 27 – Jazz Vocal Collective I and II with special guest Darmon Meader - 7:30 pm – Taplin Auditorium in Fine Hall Free and open to the public. Recognized in both the jazz vocal and instrumental worlds, Darmon Meader is a highly respected vocalist, arranger and saxophonist. Meader has achieved international recognition as the founder, musical director, chief arranger, composer, producer, saxophonist, and vocalist with New York Voices. As a member of New York Voices, he has released numerous recordings on the GRP, RCA/Victor, Concord and MCG Jazz labels.

Saturday, May 13 – Creative Large Ensemble with special guest pianist/composer Billy Childs - 8 pm – Richardson Auditorium in Alexander Hall - Tickets are \$15; \$5 for students, available at 609-258-9220, or online at tickets.princeton.edu. Creative Large Ensemble with special guest pianist and composer Billy Childs, one of the foremost American composers of his era working in jazz, classical, and rock. CLE will be premiering a new work of Mr. Childs commissioned by Jazz at Princeton University as well as performing his previous work in arrangements by Grammy Award Nominee Darcy James Argue.

Jazz at Princeton University serves to promote this

uniquely American music as a contemporary and relevant art form. Our goals are to convey the vast musical and social history of jazz, establish a strong theoretical and stylistic foundation with regard to improvisation and composition, and emphasize the development of individual expression and creativity. Offerings of this program include academic course work, performing ensembles, master classes, private study, and independent projects.

Colorado's Durango Blues Train Announces June Artist Lineup



Durango, CO - The summer season in Durango, Colorado heats up with the announcement of the artist lineup for the Durango Blues Train on June 2 & 3. The list of the artists set to play the summertime event on June 2 & 3 includes returning veteran artists, internationally acclaimed blues acts and up-and-coming performers. The June lineup features Phil Wiggins and George Kilby Jr., Felix Y Los Gatos, A.J. Fullerton featuring Nic Clark, Ben Prestage, Grant Sabin and Chris Yakopcic.

"Each ride on the Blues Train brings different energy and I'm thrilled to be able to mix traditional and contemporary blues acts," said Steve Gumble, founder of the Durango Blues Train. "Phil Wiggins has graced the Telluride Blues & Brews Festival stage many times so to have him up close and intimate on the train is a special treat. Phil is best known for his acoustic Piermont style of Blues but has promised to pull out all stops and throw a dance party!"

For 30 years, Phil Wiggins was half of the internationally acclaimed acoustic blues duo "Cephas and Wiggins". Wiggins is widely regarded as one of the best harmonica players in the blues genre. Joined by George Kilby Jr., an artist whose sound has been called everything from New Orleans R&B to Alternative Country, the two combine masterful harmonica playing and unique songwriting to create an immersive bluesy, folksy performance.

On the opposite end of the train will be Felix Y Los

Gatos with a unique style of Tex-Mex Zydeco. Hailing from Santa Fe, New Mexico, Felix Y Los Gatos are best known for their blend of diverse genres. South-Westerners call it "Zydejano", a fusion of New Orleans Zydeco and Texan/Northern Mexican Ranchero music. Regardless of the classification, this party band will have the train rocking.

Returning for his second train appearance, A.J. Fullerton brings smooth vocals, nimble finger-picking, raw bottleneck slide, and a steady thump of his homemade stomp-box. Alongside A.J., 21-year-old vocalist and harmonica phenom Nic Clark will be debuting his skills. The pair of Colorado natives form a vibrant duo that is perfect for the lively atmosphere on the train.

Adding to the cadre of talent, Ben Prestage joins the bill with an interesting approach to instrumentation and original songwriting. Prestage combines a unique fingerstyle guitar with harmonica, banjo, lap-steel, fiddle, resonator guitar, foot-drums, and vocals. He has proven himself to be a core element of the future of American Blues, Roots, and Americana.

Giving riders a glimpse of the future of blues is young singer, songwriter and guitar virtuoso Grant Sabin. Sabin delivers the excitement of rhythmic mysticism while drawing in his audience into the experience.

Rounding out the June lineup is International Blues Challenge finalist Chris Yakopcic. Wielding a charming small town voice, Yakopcic's performance is complete with smooth storytelling and precise finger picking guitar work.

Blues Train tickets are now on sale. Tickets are \$100 per person per night, plus a Historic Train Preservation fee. Tickets for Saturday night have already sold out and Friday tickets are now limited. Purchasers must be 21 years old to participate. Tickets are available online at www.durangobluesrain.com/tickets and over the phone at (888) 512-7469.

Tickets and the artist lineup for August 18 & 19 will be released later this spring. For more information, visit DurangoBluesTrain.com.

About Durango Blues Train

The Blues Train is an exciting 3.5-hour moving musical experience of live blues music on board the coal-fired, steam-powered Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad through the San Juan National Forest. The event starts and ends in Durango, Colorado featuring six live blues performances inside the train coaches with a festive musical environment. Each artist performs in their own vintage coach, while passengers can pass freely from coach to coach. The Blues Train with nine passenger cars, a steam-engine locomotive, two full bands, four solo/duo acts and three craft beer and wine bars.

jazz-blues.com

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

KIDS DON'T GET ENOUGH

ART THESE DAYS. So you can see why some of them might accidentally confuse a jazz legend named Duke with royalty named duke. But it's finally time to set the record straight.

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

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



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

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

Jazz is art, you dig? Art can

really transform lives.

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



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



Give your kids a chance
to succeed. Up their
daily dose of art.

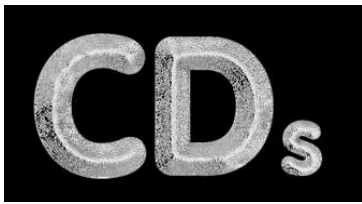
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We only bring you
the Cream of the Crop!



THORNETTA DAVIS

Honest Woman
SWEET MAMA MUSIC

The opening track to Thornetta Davis' "Honest Woman" is a recitation from her sister on how her sister makes her feel "When My Sister Sings the Blues." Next up, listening to "I Gotta Sing the Blues," one easily appreciates why this powerhouse vocalist is Detroit's Queen of the Blues. It certainly does not hurt that she has a fine band that includes on many tracks guitarist Brett Lucas, bassist James Simonson, keyboardist Philip J. Hale and drummer Todd Glass, or that Kim Wilson adds harmonica and who also shares the vocal.

Then she rocks things a bit as she tells her man that the things he does to make up for his cheating ways, as she tells him "That Don't Appease Me," as she sings that his sorry does not work and get on out of here. The music on this incorporates a riff from "You Don't Love Me," that complements her sassy, take no nonsense vocal.

Guitarist Larry McCray, brother Steve on drums and Kerry Clark along with the keyboards of Chris Codfish back her soulful singing on the gospel blues "Set Me Free," which is followed by a strong soulful ballad "Am I Just A Shadow." After the rollicking New Orleans groove of "I Need A Whole Lotta Lovin' (To Satisfy Me)," she takes it down in the alley with a superb slow blues "I'd Rather Be Alone," with a vocal that builds in intensity until it explodes.

Other tracks include an uptempo rocker about recovering after her lying ex, "I Believe (Everything Gonna Be Alright)," while on "Get Up And Dance Away Your Blues" she shouts with joy for the listener to get up on this jump blues swinger. Then there is

another terrific slow blues "Can We Do It Again," with a backing (including the marvelous horn arrangement) that evokes some of the classic blues-funk of Johnny 'Guitar' Watson from the seventies. Like "I'd Rather Be Alone," this track stands out among a very impressive recording with a choice Lucas guitar solo in addition to Davis' compelling vocal.

The title track is a wonderful soul number followed by another rocking gospel blues "Feels Like Religion," that closes this album. It is an impressive recording with Thornetta Davis' impressive singing and the fine backing and production.

Ron Weinstock



ELIANE ELIAS

Dance of Time
CONCORD JAZZ

A follow-up to her Grammy Award winning "Made in Brazil," Eliane Elias returned to Brazil to record her latest recording which in part celebrates a century of samba. Last year marked the 100th anniversary of the first samba ever recorded and registered, "Pelo Telefone." She observes that "Samba is the most authentic and contagious dance rhythm of Brazil, and there is no better place in the world to capture this music. I just had to be in Brazil to make 'Dance of Time.'"

Her vocals and piano are supported by a several extraordinary guests including pianist Amilton Godoy; singer-songwriting guitarists João Bosco and Toquinho—from Brazil; along with trumpeter Randy Brecker, vibraphonist Mike Mainieri and singer Mark Kibble—from the United States. Still the star is Elias with her intimate, breezy vocals and her flowing piano with some spirited improvisations starting with the sparkling rendition of "O Pato" that João Gilberto first recorded. Her piano accompaniment along with the superb rhythm section propels this transformation of a bossa nova into a samba before a marvelous piano solo.

Most of the performances were sung in Portuguese, however her bossa nova rendition of "You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me," which Frank Sinatra recorded in 1956, delights with her whispering vocal and Mike Mainieri adding some spice with his vibraphone in the backing. Mike Kibble of Take 6 provides multi-tracked vocal harmonies behind her vocal on her interpretation 1944 Brazilian classic "Copacabana," and as she

rides out her performance with propulsive piano, the vocal harmonies provide a sonically enchanting cap-pella close. João Bosco, one of Brazil's most eminent singer-songwriters, duets with Elias on the feisty take of his "Coisa Feita," with its simmering, hard swinging samba groove and perhaps Elias' most aggressive piano improvisation on this album. It is followed by the charm of "By Hand (Em Mãos)," again with Kibble's vocal harmonies.

There is also an infectious take on João Donato's 1965 hit "Sambou Sambou" with more marvelous piano along with her lovely indigo-tinged ballad, "Little Paradise," another performance with Mainieri's vibraphones adding coloring in the backing. Randy Brecker contributes melodious flugelhorn backing on the captivating rendering of Kurt Weil's "Speak Low," while Toquinho does a vocal duet (as well as adds his guitar) on the bittersweet "Samba de Orly," that Toquinho penned with de Moraes and Chico Buarque. Ary Barroso's "Na Batucada da Vida," an intrepid ballad written in 1934, receives a tender vocal, while on her "An Up Dawn," she shares the piano chair with one of her mentors, Amilton Godoy, for a festive piano duet as Godoy plays the prancing melody while Elias handles the groove and sings in unison with his playing.

Toquinho returns for the closing "Not To Cry (Pas Não Chorar)," a vocal duet with just piano and guitar. This was a composition that was originally titled "Eliane," but unfinished. He wrote the nostalgic lyrics that Elias describes as "about the times we were together with Vinicius, rehearsing, touring and living a life in music and art." It is a lovely conclusion to an exquisite recording of Brazilian jazz that is superbly sung and performed.

Ron Weinstock



JJ THAMES

Raw Sugar
DECHAMP RECORDS

JJ Thames impressed on her debut recording "Tell You What I Know," where the Jackson Mississippi based vocalist impressed "as a singer who certainly can belt out a vocal, but displays a nuanced vocal approach and admirable vocal dynamics." "Raw Sugar," produced by Guitarist Eddie Cotton who also co-wrote the songs here (with one exception), is another recording that will hopefully get her better known among blues

audiences.

Thames may have formal vocal training but her delivery here as on the earlier recording shows how natural she sounds starting with the opening gospel lament "Oh Lord" (that she penned herself) with Ben Hunter's mandolin and Cotton's guitar and the rollicking rock and roll of "Hattie Pearl," which comes across as a Ike and Tina styled rave-up, and followed by a brisk blues shuffle "I'm Leavin'," first thing in the morning as she has had enough of her man's lying and cheating with some nice idiomatic guitar from Cotton.

"Leftovers" is a southern soul gem in the vein of Barbara Carr with a nice vocal and illustrative of Cotton's production touches with the backing and keyboardist Darryl Sanford contributed to the arrangements. Another excellent track in this vein is the soulful ballad "Only Fool Was Me," while "Bad Man," takes us back in the alley with Cotton playing aggressively. The rest of "Raw Sugar" is equally interesting, making this another impressive recording by Ms. Thames.

Ron Weinstock



LEE KONITZ

Frescalalto
IMPULSE!

This is a stunning new album by Lee Konitz with a stellar rhythm section of Kenny Barron on piano, Kenny Washington on drums and Peter Washington on bass on a collection of standards that allows the alto saxophone legend to display his fruitful improvisatory skills. "Stella by Starlight" opens with Konitz playing briefly unaccompanied before the rhythm enters and both Barron and Peter Washington take choice solos along with the leader's own dry, slightly sour alto. Konitz's original "Thingin'" also allows his band to shine along with his unpredictable and fresh playing, even avoiding cliches when trading fours with Kenny Washington while the performance fades at close.

A trio record of Barron with this rhythm section would be heaven enough, but add Konitz's alto and you have some magic. Unexpectedly, Konitz scats backed by piano to open "Darn That Dream" before taking an alto solo and then scats after Barron's lovely playing on this duet. The Washingtons return on the swinging "Kary's Trance," and "Out of Nowhere" provides another showcase for Konitz's ability to take a familiar

number and delight us with his unexpected and fresh improvisation and then scats an improvisation between solos from Peter and Kenny.

After a lovely Konitz ballad, “Gundala,” where his lyricism is on full display, there is a superb rendition of the Kaper Bronislaw and Paul Francis Webster classic “Invitation” before the album closes with “Cherokee.” Rather than the breakneck tempo “Cherokee” is usually played at, Konitz leads the quartet in a medium walking tempo as he hints at its melodic theme before Kenny Barron accelerates things with a fiery break followed by Kenny Washington’s explosive drum break and then the pace slows down with Konitz’s reentry. This “Cherokee” is a fresh, imaginative end to a fabulous recording.

Ron Weinstock



TIM GARTLAND
If You Want A Good Woman
 VIZZTONE

Resident in Nashville, Tim Gartland first honed his blues skills in Chicago, then in Boston before moving to Nashville. “If You Want A Good Woman” is apparently his third recording and his slightly grizzled singing and sure sounding harp playing is featured here along with his songwriting on this recording of originals (some penned by his keyboard player Tom West). Others on this include Wendy Moten on supporting vocals; Tom Britt on guitar, Lynn Williams drums and Steve Mackey on bass. Former Delbert McClinton band member Kevin McKendree recorded this, co-produced it with Gartland and added organ and piano to a few selections.

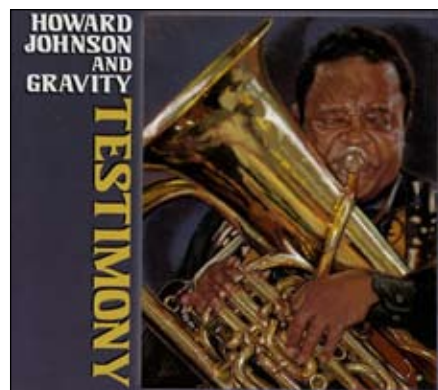
Gartland certainly is ingratiating as a singer and harmonica player with his band providing able support, although much of this I would classify as blues-based roadhouse rock in the vein of Delbert McClinton. This is a descriptive observation, and does not relate to the quality of the music. Gartland has written some exceptional original songs (he has a way with words), and he and the band deliver very strong performances. His vocal on the opening “What The Blues Look Like” reminds me of Paul Butterfield, with some tasty harp and slide guitar. This is a terrific song that one can see many folks covering. “Hours Worth” is a rocker where he sings about having an hours worth of whiskey, and of rent that is a month past due. Wendy Moten

provides backing vocals and there is a rollicky piano break.

His vocal on “I Had It” has some of the qualities of the recent world weary sounding singing from Charlie Musselwhite as Gartland expresses regrets about having had it all wrong. The title track is built around a reggae riff as he sings about a good woman that won’t stay home if the man is doing her wrong, and after all a good woman simply wants a good man. Gartland does not overwhelm with his harmonica playing, but rather it ably complements his singing. The instrumental “Eight Ball” allows him to display his thoughtful, vocalized sound.

There is also a fair amount of humor to be heard here. On “Too Many Groceries,” where tells this lady that she is as subtle as a train wreck, and she has too many groceries for her bag. Another wonderful song is an homage to Willie Dixon, “Willie That’s Who.” The lyric here laced with subtle references to some of the late blues giant’s songs and lyrics. A driving instrumental “Go West,” provides a lively coda to Gartland’s rollicking set of blues and rockers that is wonderfully recorded.

Ron Weinstock



HOWARD JOHNSON AND GRAVITY
Testimony
 Tuscarora Records

Nate Chinen proclaimed in the New York Times in 2006 that Howard Johnson was the individual “most responsible for the tuba’s current status as a full-fledged jazz instrument.” Certainly in more than five decades, his musicianship, invention and imagination has lifted the tuba to its present position as more than a novelty or simply being part of the early history of jazz. He played with the ensembles of Charles Mingus, Carla Bley and Gil Evans (to name a few) as well as being a founding member of the Saturday Night Live Band and pop icons like Paul Simon and Taj Mahal.

Gravity is a tuba-centered band whose current membership includes other tuba players VelvetBrown, Joe Bargerion, Earl McIntyre, Joseph Daley, and Bob Stewart with a rhythm section including Carlton Holmes on piano, Melissa Slocum on bass, and Buddy Williams on drums. Joe Exley guests on tuba for 5 of the 8 songs while Nedra Johnson wrote and sang

one number. McIntyre, Daley and Stewart are long-time associates and members of Gravity and the four appeared with Johnson as part of Taj Mahal's Tuba Band (Taj has also sung, performed and recorded with Gravity as well).

Johnson contributed a couple of originals and the handsome arrangements here and the presence of the rhythm section contributes to the attractiveness of the performances. The title track opens this on a lovely fashion with first his percolating solo followed by one from Barger on with the other low brass adding to the atmosphere with swinging backing and solos from pianist Holmes and a short drum break from Williams as the ensemble takes this number out with some gruff tuba. Up next is a jaunty blues "Working for the Jones" with a very nice vocal from Howard's daughter, Nedra who sings about doing things she swore she would never do. Holmes and the rhythm are excellent supporting her.

There are two McCoy Tyner compositions included here including a fresh take of "Fly With the Wind," which might seem an unusual choice, but the tubas collectively play a role similar to the strings on Tyner's original and Johnson continues to impress with his fluidity and expressiveness. On the other Tyner composition, the bouncy "High Priest," Johnson is heard playing some driving baritone sax with Barger on and McIntyre standing out among the tuba ensemble. Bassist Slocum solos strongly here.

In between these two numbers is a lovely take on the Carole King classic "A Natural Woman," with Velvet Brown playing the melody and improvisation while Johnson handles the ensemble lead. Johnson's "Little Black Lucille" has Johnson opening unaccompanied on the penny-whistle whose high register is far removed from the other selections. His playful playing is joined by Holmes and then the ensemble who provide a frame for his solo which is followed by Holme's stately, gospel-tinged piano.

Bob Neloms composition "Evolution," on which Johnson's arrangement and the composition contribute as much as the solos from him, McIntyre, Barger on and Stewart along with the personality they each provide with their playing. This feeling is also heard on the closing number, a rendition of Wilton Felder's "Way Back Home," which provides its own take on this soul jazz classic, originally performed by The Crusaders.

Far from being a novelty jazz ensemble because of its instrumentation, Gravity plays music that both moves one with its melodicism as much as the unique instrumental harmonies fashioned by its leader. It has been nearly two decades since I saw them, and another decade since I saw them with Taj Mahal's Tuba Band, but like a previous recording by them I have, the music here surprises and consistently delights the listener.

Ron Weinstock

jazz-blues.com



CARY MORIN

Cradle to the Grave MAPLE STREET MUSIC

Of Native American ancestry (he is a Crow Tribe member), singer-songwriter-guitarist Cary Morin in recent years was a member of The Pura Fé Trio before his present solo career.

his is his fourth CD, and completes a three-album project of acoustic recordings by him. The press release accompanying this release states "On 'Cradle to the Grave', Cary Morin brings together the great musical traditions of America and beyond like no other artist. These recordings provide a timeline of his songwriting and guitar work spanning 2014 to 2017. The lyrics range from blues to folk and sometimes shine a light on his Native American Heritage and small town life in America. At times, the collection conveys the simplicity of a single chord to complex finger-style guitar."

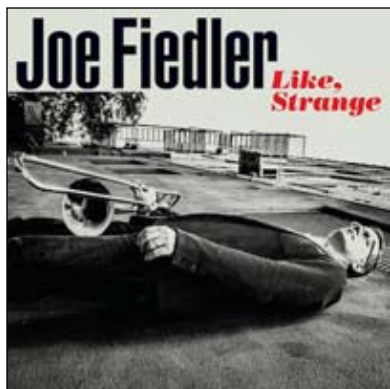
While there is definitely blues roots to the performances here (eight originals and three interpretations), one might view this recording much as folk or Americana. This is a minor point because Morin is wonderful guitarist, who sings with warmth and conviction and writes some real good songs. His rendition of a Library of Congress recording by a Willie Brown (not the Willie Brown associated with Robert Johnson or Son House), is a marvelously rendered performance full of scintillating guitar runs although taken as an uptempo romp. The title track, a straight blues performance, reflects his own realization that life is fleeting and his accompaniment complements his gospel-like pleas. "Laid Back" opens with more startling finger-style playing (reminds me of some of the more gifted guitarists of the folk revival) with his peppery tempoed singing.

"Dawn's Early Light" was written in support of the efforts of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and he notes, "This song may be an oversimplification of the situation, but I have always felt that the honoring of a treaty, no matter when it was made, is not a complex idea. History has proved this not to be the case, but I hope this time it is." It is followed by the jaunty "Lay Baby Lay," an original, not a cover of the Dylan folk-ballad. "Mishawaka" is a superb folk ballad. "Back on the Train" is his take of a number by the jam-band Phish, with more superb guitar and then followed by

a marvelous folk take on Prince's "Nothing Compares To U."

The closing "Watch Over Me," is a different take on the theme explored on the opening title track as he sings about making his way through this world as he asks for one to watch over him as he is only a child. It is a strong close to this album of consistently superb performances. Not having heard of Morin prior to this recording, this writer was thoroughly impressed by him and I believe many others will as well by this first-rate CD.

Ron Weinstock



JOE FIEDLER
Like, Strange
MULTIPHONICS MUSIC

Trombonist Joe Fiedler is back with a new recording that has the trio he has utilized recently of Rob Jost (bass) and Michael Sarin on drums. With his trio he has done tributes to Captain Beefheart, Albert Mangelsdorff and Wayne Shorter, as well as has also recorded with an all trombone group, Big Sackbut. Here he has added saxophonist Jeff Lederer and guitarist Pete McCann which broadens the melodic and harmonic range.

While associated with the avant grade, he also is as capable on the blues and swing music. About expanding from the trio format, Field states, "after more than a decade of playing trio I still love it, but I found myself wanting to branch out and bring different colors and textures to my music. Thus I thought that it was time to add some people who were both unique soloists and great interpreters of music in general."

There is plenty of playfulness to go with some intriguing compositions and the instrumentation adds to the listener's inspiration. The opening "Go Get It" was inspired by Jimmy Guiffre with a mix of jazz waltz with a funk half-time section and introduces guitarist McCann and saxophonist Lederer who take terrific fiery solos before Fiedler's gruff solo with a touch of overblowing at times.

The playfulness continues on "Maple Avenue Tango," with some greasy interaction between the leader and McCann with Lederer's judicious use of tremolo adding coloring. Jost's ostinato bass phrase underlies "A Ladybug In My Notebook," a performance illustrating Fiedler's ability to expand upon a simple motif with McCann's snakelike Soprano sax comple-

menting Fiedler's blustery playing while Lederer solos with considerable imagination and fire, pulling a lot of stops here. John Scofield's early recordings provide inspiration for the title track built upon a simple vamp from Jost and Lederer's wah-wah guitar with McCann's superb, blues-inflected solo set against the funk groove.

"E.T. (For Eje Thelin)" is dedicated to one of the major trombone influences on Fiedler who was known "for his Coltrane-esque 'sheets of sound' in his improvisations." This brisk paced number opens with the leader followed by more fire from McCann. "Guero Nuevo" has a relaxed Latin flavor followed by the more heated Latin jazz rhythm of "Tuna Fish Cans." In each case the rhythm duo of Jost and Sarin anchor and propel the performance with Lederer's mix of single note runs and chords on the latter number standing out with the imaginative work of Lederer and McCann. Sarin solos on the latter number as well.

The playful "Quasi" was intended to be a boogaloo, although the title reflects the leader's uncertainty of its boogaloo-ness. Its groove-centered flair also includes a solo from Jost, but contrasts to the closing "Yinz," whose title is taken from a Pittsburgh expression, with its free improvisational and abstract elements that also exhibits the strong, cohesive playing as well as imaginative interplay that with the original compositions results in a scintillating recording.

Ron Weinstock



COCO MONTOYA
Hard Truth
ALLIGATOR RECORDS

Blues-rocker and powerhouse guitarist Coco Montoya returns to Alligator Records with this new release. Produced by drummer Tony Braunagel and recorded by Johnny Lee Schell (who plays rhythm guitar on several tracks and slide on one) with Mike Finnigan on keyboards and Bob Glaub on bass with Lee Roy Parnell adding slide guitar on one track, this is a nice mix of songs from the likes of Warren Haynes, John Hiatt, Gwen Collins, and Homer Banks & Allen Jones, Jr.

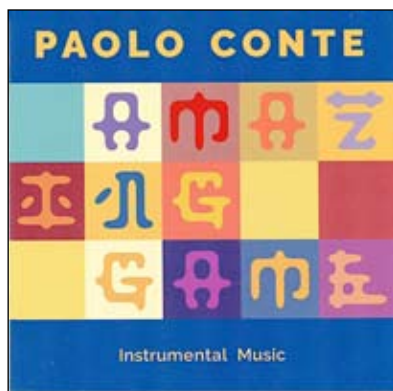
Montoya played with Albert Collins for five years and Collins' influence can be felt and heard throughout starting from the opening "Before the Bullets Fly," from Haynes and others, as well as Collins' "The Moon

Is Full,” where his shouted vocals is matched by his fiery fretwork. Then there is the gospel feel of the Steve Gomes-Ronnie Earl Horvarth penned “I Want to Shout About It,” where his celebration of his woman is matched by his blistering playing with Finnigan’s organ helping this rocking performance. Parnell’s slide adds to the juggernaut feel of “Lost in the Bottle,” as whiskey is talking as his eyes are burning red, while his judicious use of sustain and tone embellishes his more low-key vocal on “Old Habits to Break.”

The underlying groove of “I’ll Find Someone Who Will” is suggestive the Al Green-Syl Johnson classic “Take Me To The River,” while the insistent blues-rock “Hard As Hell” evokes some of the Leon Russell produced Freddie King recordings. The Banks-Jones penned “Where Can a Man Go From Here?” is perhaps the outstanding straight blues performance here with a strong vocal as well as his forceful guitar. Even when he rocks things hard, these performances are nicely paced and do not sound rushed or frenzied.

With the terrific backing CocoMontoya receives, the varied, fresh-sounding material and Montoya’s powerful guitar and heartfelt vocals, the “Hard Truth” is another release to delight those who like blues with a bit of a rock edge.

Ron Weinstock



PAOLO CONTE
AMAZING GAME
DECCA

Known since the 70’s, particularly in Europe, as a gravelly-voiced singer/songwriter/pianist, Paolo Conte here sticks to the keys- and, on occasion, mallets- on a set of original instrumentals, thematically captivating and abundant in classic jazz values. With songs that have appeared in numerous films and even a Coke commercial interspersed through his considerable catalog, the now octagenarian Conte is a masterful mood-setter; his sense of atmosphere on display here on both short and extended pieces gathered from sessions from the 90’s on up.

Working with lineups of varied size and instrumentation- frequently in intimate duo and trio settings- Mr. Conte approaches his evocative fare at times with free-spirited improvisational flair and, when in ballad mode, with appealing, old-school grace. The all-too-brief “En

Bleu Marine” features a wistful clarinet lead and subtle “gypsy jazz” acoustic guitar touches. The hauntingly blue clarinet/trumpet “head” of the formidably titled “Passa Una Bionda Sugii Anna Grigi” is followed by the equally moody piano/vibes/bass rendering of the set’s title track. Various tracks may conjure Carla Bley, Michael Gibbs, Astor Piazzolla or master film composer Ennio Morricone. Amazing Game is a unique Euro-jazz outing in any case.

Duane Verh



JOHN MAYALL
Talk About That
FORTY BELOW RECORDS

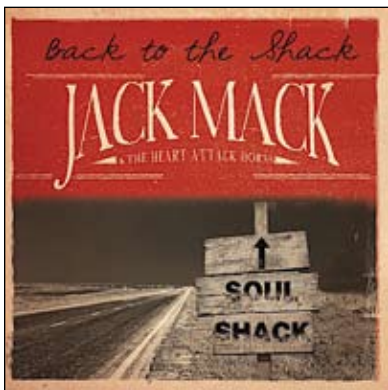
As not being one that gets overly excited by John Mayall recordings, I did find his latest album, “Talk About That,” a fairly entertaining one. His vocals, keyboards and harmonica are supported by Rocky Athas on guitar, Greg Rza on bass and Jay Davenport on drums with Eagles/James Gang guitarist Joe Walsh guesting on two selections. His previous new recording “Find a Way To Care,” with a number of covers, struck me as mediocre whereas this new release with mostly his own songs strikes me as much better and his band plays strongly in support of him.

The title track opens this album with a funky groove and Athas and Rza providing interesting backing riffs as Davenport lays down a hard groove. Horns are added to “It’s Hard Going Up,” with a lyric about hard going up, but twice as hard coming down, and his piano sounds better here than other recent recordings while the band keeps things tight. Joe Walsh contributes lead guitar to “The Devil Must Be Laughing,” a slow topical blues that shows he hasn’t lost his blues touch from playing in Cleveland bars nearly five decades ago. “Give Me Some of That Gumbo” finds Mayall in a Crescent City groove with the horns adding to the flavor, and followed by a very nice low key cover of Jimmy Rogers’ “Goin’ Away Blues.” Walsh returns with the slide lead on “Cards on the Table,” set against a strutting groove.

“I Didn’t Mean To Hurt You” is an appealing slow blues ballad with Mayall singing with much emotion while “Don’t Deny Me,” is a solid blues in the vein of Little Willie John and Chuck Willis, even though Mayall is not a singer on their level. “Blue Midnight”

has a nice swampy feel created by Mayall's electric piano and Athas' guitar riff. Athas also takes a strong, well-constructed solo here along with one by Mayall. "Across the County Line" is a lively shuffle with horns added behind Mayall's vocal and harp playing with another terrific Athas guitar solo. "You Never Know" has a philosophical lyric and jazzy feel. On this, Mayall's vocal and piano are backed only by bass and drums (Davenport using brushes) closing one of Mayall's better recent recordings.

Ron Weinstock



JACK MACK & THE HEART ATTACK HORNS

Back To The Shack
SSR FREEROLL

Those that followed the music scene in 1982 will recall this band's Cardiac Party release. The big R & B/Soul groove provided by the Heart Attack Horns stood in contrast to the punk and new wave music that was finding favor in the face of indulgent art rock and the bloated stadium rock of the dinosaurs of the day.

While never catching on with a large blues audience, the band was a mainstay in the Los Angeles music scene with a weekly musical residence at Club Lingerie where Glenn Frey of the Eagles had a chance to see them and quickly got them signed to the recording contract that resulted in their debut release.

While the name implies a lead player with a backup crew the truth is there never was a "Jack Mack" and the band has had a revolving cast of members over the years. For this release, its first in years, the core members are joined by several first call guests including Tony Braunagel on drums and Mike Finnigan on keyboards.

Current lead signer Mark Campbell has a slick, soulful voice that can be low down and dirty one moment, "Let Me In," while reaching a spine tingling falsetto the next, "Ain't No Way." Either way, it fits perfectly with the hard-hitting Soul, R & B, blues, ballads and funk grooves laid down by the band.

With the horn section pushing the sound towards Tower of Power and Southside Johnny & the Asbury Jukes, the band lays down 10 mostly self-penned tunes. Covering everything from the sheer joy of discovering B. B. King, "Standin' Before the King," to

wondering what is causing everything to be different than it appears, "Somethin' In the Water," to getting your just deserts for being a liar and cheater, "Serves Me Right," and the need to appreciate the love you have rather than seeking greener pastures, "Don't Let Her Go," the band covers a lot of ground without digging too deeply into the cliché bin.

Overall, a nice side trip for those who need a break from boogies, shuffles and all guitar, all the time blues.

Mark Smith



DOUG MUNRO AND LA POMPE ATTACK

The Harry Warren Songbook
GOT MUSIC RECORDS

Harry Warren was an American composer who is known for his work on films with a number of the songs he collaborated on becoming standards (such as "At Last" written for a 1942 film "Orchestra Wives"). Other songs he was associated with (in collaboration with Mack Gordon, Johnny Mercer, Al Dubin and others) include "Lullaby of Broadway," "Jeepers Creepers," "I Only Have Eyes For You," "Chattanooga Choo Choo," "The More I See You," "September in the Rain," "Forty Second Street," "We're in the Money" and others.

He was the great uncle of guitarist Doug Munro who arranged 14 songs in the manner of Django Reinhardt and the Hot Club of France and recruited celebrated guitarists Harold Alden, Vic Juris, Vinny Raniolo and violinist Andrei Matorin to help make this project happen. There were four sessions involved and Munro contributed two originals as well.

This is this writer's first exposure to Munro who has recorded in a wide variety of contexts over the past three decades, which starts off on a lively note with "Lullaby of Broadway," with dazzling guitar as Alden, Raniolo and Munro each get a chance to solo here with the backing rhythm helping propel things along. "Serenade in Blue" is a lovely rendition of this Warren/Gordon ballad while Raniolo and Munro are featured on "Nagasaki," a novelty number popular in the swing era, although we could have been spared the novelty vocal on this. Matorin's violin joins in for exhilarating "Jeepers Creepers" and "Chattanooga Choo Choo," that contrast with the reflective rendition of "I Only Have Eyes For You."

Vic Juris contributes lovely playing to "The More

I See You,” while he and Munro each contribute to “September in the Rain,” that ends with a quote of Jimi Hendrix’s “Wind Cries Mary.” A tribute to Warren, “Blues For Harry,” is one of the two originals and has some fine playing from Raniolo, Ted Gottsegen as well as Munro. “Forty Second Street” is taken at a walking tempo with Bujese’s violin standing out. A lively “We’re in the Money” has sizzling playing from Raniolo, Gottsegen and Munro, although again the vocal could have been dispensed with. The tango rendition of “Boulevard Of Broken Dreams” comes across as perhaps a bit melodramatic, while the breakneck “You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby” is a fun performance

A lovely rendition of “At Last,” the arrangement of which sounds inspired by the classic Etta James recording, closes this tribute to one of the great American film composers. It also stands up as a marvelous album for gypsy jazz and jazz guitar aficionados.

Ron Weinstock



SOUTHERN AVENUE

**Southern Avenue
STAX/CONCORD**

In the new Stax Records group, Southern Avenue, one can hear a variety of blues, gospel and soul influences on their self-titled debut recording.

Southern Avenue is comprised of Memphis-born, church-bred sisters Tierinii and Tikyra Jackson, respectively a soulful, charismatic singer and a subtle, powerful drummer; guitarist Ori Naftaly, an Israeli-born blues disciple who first came to America as an acclaimed solo artist; versatile jazz-inspired bassist Daniel McKee; and the band’s newest addition, keyboardist Jeremy Powell, an early alumnus of Stax’s legendary music academy. Guesting on the 10-song album are Luther Dickinson of the North Mississippi Allstars and trumpeter Marc Franklin of the Bo-Keys.

One hears echoes of the Staples Singers with the opening message song “Don’t Give Up,” with Tierinii’s fervent vocal with supporting vocals and Naftaly’s atmospheric searing slide. It is followed by the funky groove of “What Did I Do” introduced by a guitar riff before the heartfelt song of giving her man her best and need to make things right. And like the rest of the recording, the simple, strong groove anchors powerful vocals with horns embellishing the performance and

help the tension build. Then there is a lovely soulful ballad “Love Me Right.” “80 Miles From Memphis” is a peppy rocker where Tierinii sings about crying her blues away because she is away from home as she has stones in her passage and only ten dollars in her pocket as Naftaly throws in with a rockabilly-tinged solo as an additional delight. Tierinii’s vocals remind me of Shemekia Copeland sharing similar tonal qualities and poise.

The one cover, Ann Peebles’ “Slipped Tripped And Fell In Love” seamlessly fits in with the band’s originals, and has a nice piano break from Jeremy Powell. “Peace Will Come,” another Staples Singers’ styled message song closes this excellent debut recording by a group that certainly you can expect to hear much more about as they tour, play festivals and the like.

Ron Weinstock



BEN WENDEL

**What We Bring
MOTEMA MUSIC**

A member of the band Kneebody, the new recording by saxophonist-composer Ben Wendel is an exhilarating recording with his acoustic quartet of Gerald Clayton on piano, Joe Sanders on bass and Henry Cole on drums. About the music on this he commented, “‘What We Bring’ refers to the experience, inspiration and shared wisdom that musicians collect and absorb throughout their lives, and how that is expressed through their art. All of the pieces on this album are dedicated to masters from the past, peers from the present and musicians of the future. ...”

The opening “Amian,” has moments of energetic playing along with quiet lyricism with the rhythm providing a swirling pulse. Clayton consistently adds his own inspired solo on “Fall,” followed by Wendel’s probing against the bass-drums support. There is a playfulness exhibited by Wendel’s alto and Clayton’s piano on “Spring” that evolves into heated playing marked by Wendel’s slight vibrato on the alto sax as the rhythm section provides a swirling backdrop. Drummer Cole’s behind the beat snare generates a rhythmic tension that underpins the stately, reflective tone of Wendel’s tenor on “Doubt.”

The lyrical “Song Song,” has an exemplary solo

from Clayton and terrific playing from Sanders and Cole before the leader's own sonorous playing as the performance swings strongly to a muted close on an outstanding performance on a consistently engaging, stimulating recording. The swirling energy of "Soli" is followed by the calm of "Austin." The closing "Solar," is not the Miles Davis number. Wendel's composition is given a spirited performance with Cole driving the groove and spotlighted near the end.

This is a terrific recording with Wendel's compositions a springboard for robust, focused playing by a top-notch band.

Ron Weinstock



BETH GARNER

Snake Farm

THE MUSIC OF NASHVILLE

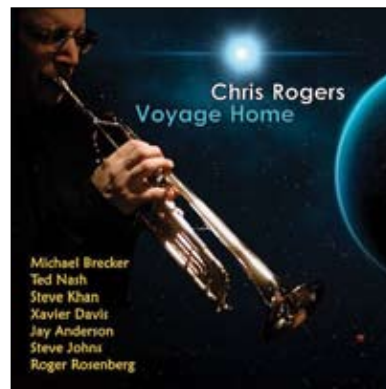
Roots Singer-Songwriter-Guitarist Beth Garner has a new album with a bluesy flavor. Six of the songs are originals, the exception being the title track from Ray Wylie Hubbard. She is backed by a band that includes Rory Hoffman (sax, keyboards and rhythm guitar), Wes Little (drums), Steve Forrest (bass) and Angela Primm and Gale Mayes (background vocals).

Listening to this, comparisons might be made to some of Tony Joe White's swampy roots music of decades ago...certainly the feel of a medium tempo groove of "Backroads Freddie," as well the slow drag groove of "Drop Down." She impresses as a guitarist, whether playing slide or straight, and the huskiness in her voice gives added appeal to the performances. Hoffman's baritone sax adds atmosphere to this latter number. "Used to Be" is an exuberant hot shuffle blues where she plays some rollicking slide guitar in the manner of the late Johnny Winter, while her slide is set against a funk groove on "Ramblin' Man," who she needs.

After the title track about Ramona who works at the reptile house, the album closes with "Wish I Was," again bluesy slow swampy rocker with more slide guitar. Beth Garner impresses with terrific guitar and direct, natural vocals resulting in a fine blues and roots-roots rock effort.

Ron Weinstock

jazz-blues.com



CHRIS ROGERS

Voyage Home

ART OF LIFE RECORDS

This album is the debut as a leader by trumpeter Chris Rogers who is the son of legendary salsa and Latin jazz trombonist Barry Rogers. Rogers was also with the Brecker Brothers and Billy Cobham, a founding member of the legendary jazz-rock band "Dreams."

A remarkable player, he replaced Tom Harrell in Gerry Mulligan's Concert Band at the age of 19. Rogers himself states about his background, "Listening to Mike, Randy and my dad playing together, and all Barry's great solos on those classic Eddie Palmieri sides pretty much informed my concepts... and have been such towering influences upon me that the music here can be considered a direct reflection of their incredible spirits."

There is a wonderful cast for this recording (recorded in 2001 but just now released) with the bass/drums tandem of Jay Anderson and Steve Johns, pianist Xavier Davis and synthesizer/keyboard wizard Mark Falchook joins the rhythm section on three. Two selections have the great Michael Brecker (Randy contributed to the liner booklet), and four have tenor and alto saxophonist Ted Nash, while baritone saxophonist Roger Rosenberg and trombonist Art Baron perform on a very special dedication to Barry Rogers - enhanced by the great man himself on an introductory trombone cadenza (thanks to the blessings of technology). Also guitarist Steve Khan is on three tracks, two of which include conguero/percussionist Willie Martinez.

Rogers contributed the nine compositions performed here which might in overly simplistic terms be viewed as being rooted in the post-Coltrane and Blue Note hard bop of the late sixties and beyond.

The opening "Counter Change" certainly starts in that mode with the leader's crisp trumpet and Brecker's robust, volcanic tenor sax while the following title track (dedicated to Dan Grolnick) has a dreamy flow that to these ears evokes some of Herbie Hancock's recordings and has some lovely tenor from Nash. While "Whit's End" alludes to Whit Sidener, Rogers' teacher at the University of Miami, it is dedicated to Michael Brecker, who is brilliant here also playing with virtuosity and imagination while Rogers own playing displays his

clarity and bite.

Dedicated to Lew Soloff, "The Mask" has a bluesy funk feel to it with more strong tenor from Nash. "Ballad for B.R." is dedicated to his father and the opening trombone cadenza is lifted from one of his father's solos with Eddie Palmieri. Art Baron on trombone and Roger Rosenberg on baritone sax join Nash and Rogers for this performance with some lovely arranging of the four horns in stating the theme and coloring the solos by Nash, bassist Anderson, Rogers, Rosenberg and Nash on an enchanting performance.

There is a three song suite of songs that feature guitarist Steve Khan, starting with "Rebecca" dedicated to Ray Barretto, a spritely paced Latin jazz composition that he brought to a Barretto rehearsal. Pianist Hector Martignon named it after Rogers' sister who had attended one of their gigs. Dedicated to Mike Lawrence, "Ever After," was Rogers' first composition. It is a lovely ballad with the lyricism of Rogers and Khan evident throughout set against a light samba-like rhythm. "Six Degrees" is described as a bebop-influenced composition, with Rogers playing a mute (evoking Miles to an extent) with Khan's gorgeous comping in addition to his own marvelous solo. Bassist Anderson is also showcased here.

Nash returns for "The 12-Year Itch," whose title refers in part to it taking 12 years to finish this jazz shuffle. The head of this bouncy performance reminds me of some of Woody Shaw's compositions. Pianist Davis is featured here with a solid improvisation, along with by the two horns. It closes an excellent recording that sounds contemporary today. **Ron Weinstock**



LAUREN MITCHELL

Desire
SELF PRODUCED

Florida based singer Lauren Mitchell went out to the West Coast to record this new release of hers where she got Tony Braunagel to produce this and drum on it. Some of Tony's associates with the Phantom Blues Band are here as well including Johnny Lee Schell on guitar, Joe Sublett on saxophone, and Darrell Leonard on trumpet along with Reggie McBride on bass, Jim Pugh on keyboards and Lennie Castro on percussion.

The recording has a mix of choice covers and idiomatic originals that showcase her very strong singing, starting with a tough rendition of an Etta James deep soul recording, "(I Don't Need Nobody To Tell Me) How To Treat My Man." She has a husky voice like James which she employs in a nuanced fashion. She can belt out a song with authority and without screaming or sounding shrill. It is followed by the sweet soul groove of her original "Soul Music," with its beach music groove as she sings about no other man can satisfy her and hearing that soul music like her daddy used to play. The joy in her vocal is supported by the excellent backing and punching horns. The title track has a swampy soul feel followed by her strong, sultry take of another song associated with Etta James, "Jump Into My Fire."

With Schell's bluesy guitar and Pugh's piano, she ably tackles an Aretha soul-blues, "Good To Me As I Am To You," as well as an early Bettye Lavette recording "Stan Up Like a Man." Contrasting her tough vocals on those tunes, she displays a tender side on the ballad "Today." There is plenty of sass in her revival of Dina Ross' "I Ain't Been (Licked Yet)," followed by the sensuous reworking Betty Davis' "Anti-Love Song," with backing adapted from Davis' original. A jaunty gospel performance, "Bridge of Dreams," is followed by an original lament, "Lead Me On," that sounds like it might have come out of Muscle Shoals decades ago.

The album closes with "Brown Liquor," with a funky groove and a tough lyric about waking up in Vegas with a hangover and a man in her bed as she does not remember anything after that Maker's Mark. Her forceful, vocal is backed by the terrific studio band closing this very impressive CD of soul with a blues touch.

Ron Weinstock



DUCHESS

Laughing at Life
ANZIC RECORDS

Duchess, the flirty and fun jazz vocal trio of Any Cervini, Hillary Gardner and Melissa Stylianou, have a second recording that provides a contemporary take on such classic vocal trios as the Boswell Sisters and the Andrews Sisters as they provide fresh and delightful takes on mostly classics of early jazz and the American Songbook. They are backed by pianist Mi-

chael Cabe, bassist Matt Aronoff, and drummer Jared Schonig with guitarist Jesse Lewis appearing on 9 of the 14 selections and tenor saxophonist Jeff Lederer on four. Additionally Wycliffe Gordon adds trombone to two selections and Anat Cohen adds clarinet to two. The trio share vocals on eleven tracks while each is featured on one.

The trio opens with a delightful take on Clarence Williams' "Swing Brother Swing," which is handled a bit more sweetly than Catherine Russell's recent recording of this number. Lederer rips off some ferocious tenor sax on it. "On The Sunny Side of the Street" is a pretty familiar standard and their backing trio adds fresh accents to the harmonies and vocal interplay with Cabe taking a lively solo.

The title track is a spry number new to these ears followed by a lively rendition of the classic "Everybody Loves My Baby" with Anat Cohen's adding fills around the vocals that include some double time singing and scatting before she takes a wonderful, fresh solo. This is a marvelous performance followed by a lazy, wistful "Stars Fell on Alabama," with Wycliffe Gordon adding some growling and crying trombone.

Amy Cervini sings Cole Porter's amusing "Give Him the Oo La La" with Gardner and Stylianou adding their backing while Stylianou takes lead on "Where Would You Be Without Me," from a sixties Broadway show and Lewis takes a guitar solo here. Gordon joins again on Ellington's "Creole Love Call," on which Duchess sings lyrics in addition to wordless vocalizing. Gordon conjures up Bubber Miley and Tricky Sam Nanton with his growling mute as well as adds his own vocalizing and scatting to that of Duchess on a marvelous take on Ellingtonia. Gardner is up front on a nice take on the Ray Charles classic, "Hallelujah I Love Her (Him) So," and then the trio provides a ruminative take on Porter's "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye." Johnny Mercer's "Strip Polka" is far from reflective with its zany lyric of a burlesque queen who strips as the band plays a polka while she is always a lady who stops just in time with Lederer's tenor sax providing the right atmosphere.

After a bouncy "Here's to the Losers," Cohen adds some warm clarinet to a lovely "We'll Meet Again" before a bonus track, "Dawn" which sounds like a lullaby. It is an enchanting close to another delightful recording from Duchess.

Ron Weinstock

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PATTY REESE

**Let in the Sun
AZALEA CITY RECORDINGS**

Washington DC area roots-rock stylist and songwriter Patty Reese is a favorite among audiences in the Nation's Capital area. About this album (her fourth) she states, "This collection of songs is an honest representation of who I am, where I come from and where my heart is. The Blues remains the rock on which I have built every song I've ever written. I also love to incorporate songs by artists that inspire me and this time it was Steve Earle and Bob Dylan." Backing her on the nine originals and two covers guitarist Jonathan Sloane, bassist Sonny Petrosky, drummer Andy Hamburger and Tommy Lepson on keys (co-producer with Reese).

Opening with a swampy blues "Is It Too Late For Me?," she proves adept in mixing in references to black cats and killing chains in a performance about searching for a happy home and saving herself from a devil's campaign with an emphatic groove and blues-rock slide. "Your Love" is a Texas blues-rock shuffle as she celebrates her love as a rock to build her home, a feather to make a bed and more. "Soul Satisfier" is a horn driven piece of danceable funk that she belts out while Sloane rocks out a bit in guitar as Lepson provides some grease with his organ while she sings in a sultry fashion on "I Won't Let You Down," as she sings that when the world leaves you cold, "I won't you down." Her vocals throughout are full of heart and honesty.

Other high-points include "Open A Window, Let In The Sun," a roots rocker with a gospel accent with Brian Simms on keyboards and Dave Chappell on guitar, and "Awesome Sauce," a danceable number with a New Orleans styled groove and blues-rock slide guitar evocative of Little Feat's "Dixie Chicken." "I Hear a Lie" is a moving country-rooted lament followed by a fresh interpretation of Dylan's "Don't Think Twice It's Alright."

Steve Earle's lovers lament "Goodbye" is the closing track and Reese's heartfelt singing of her regrets on this moving country performance is standout selection on a solid collection of performances that show her range as a performer and songwriter.

Ron Weinstock



THE YOUNG MASTERS

Coming of Age

LIVE THE SPIRIT RESIDENCY

Live The Spirit Residency is a grass roots education and performance program associated with Ernest Dawkins, one of today's most accomplished saxophonists, educator and composer. The Young Masters are one of the student ensembles he has mentored and includes Dawkins on alto saxophone and director; Isaiah Collier on tenor saxophone; Jeremiah Collier on drums, Alexis Lombre on piano and James Wenzel on bass.

All four of the young masters have contributed to the compositions presented here. Several of these were in response to victims of gun violence in Chicago. The compositions were also performed in public at parks in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood.

This recording opens with Lombre's "Blues in Tyme," that evokes the classic Coltrane Quartet both in Lombre's marvelous piano that hints at McCoy Tyner but shapes her playing in her own voice. Isaiah Collier's robust tenor displays the fact that he has listened to John Coltrane but clearly has his own ideas to share. Dawkins also solos and the duo is excellent.

The rhythm section is terrific, and while the title might suggest it was a tribute to McCoy Tyner, it was first performed in a Chicago's Dawes Park in memory of Tyshawn Lee, a 9 year old victim of Chicago's gun violence. It is a terrific performance that shows how these young players Have learned from their ancestors and indeed are young masters. Her other composition "I'm Tired" is a moody blues with the light backing from Wenzel and Jeremiah Collier (on brushes).

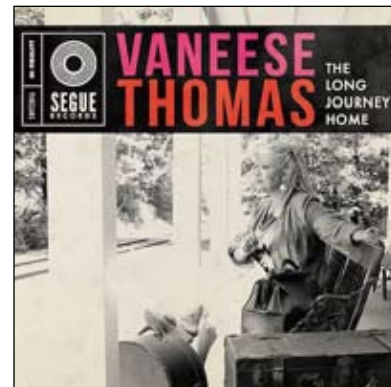
Isaiah Collier composed the ruminative "Before You Go" in memory of a classmate that had been murdered in 2014, and allows the spotlight to shine on both him and pianist Lombre. He also contributed a bouncy "Heath's Groove," that one might surmise is dedicated to the great tenor saxophonist, composer and educator, Jimmy Heath. "Conflicts Cadence" is a lovely ballad from James Wenzel that the quartet marvelously performs. Dawkins joins in for the lively quintet performance of Wenzel's "Finish Line," on which Collier takes the first solo and plays quite energetically, followed by Dawkins' blues-inflected alto and the composer also solos here.

"June 11" is a duet performance between the Collier Brothers and Isaiah's tenor reminds me of the late Johnny Griffin and Eddie 'Lockjaw' Davis with Isaiah's fiery playing here with his brother's drumming pushing this along. "Then there is "Crash," another performance that sounds rooted in the hard bop to free jazz of the sixties and seventies and to these ears particularly suggestive of Pharaoh Sanders in the robust, high energy tenor sax.

It is impressive to note the youthfulness of Lombre and Isaiah Collier who graduated high school not that long ago, and Jeremiah Collier is in 10th Grade I believe, while bassist Wenzel likely finished his Bachelor's at University of Illinois at Chicago. I mention this because there is nothing about the music suggests their youth. They play with a technical facility as well as a musical maturity that far transcends their youth.

Indeed they have Come of Age. They are the latest of the many important musicians who Dawkins has mentored over the years including trumpeters Marquis Hill, Maurice Brown and Corey Wilkes; flutist Nicole Mitchell; saxophonists David Boykin, Aaron Getsug, and Greg Ward; trombonist Norman Palm; and drummer Isaiah Spencer.

Ron Weinstock



VANESSE THOMAS

The Long Journey Home

SEGUE RECORDS

It has been a couple years since Vaneese Thomas, daughter of the legendary Rufus Thomas, issued "Blues For My Father," which I found was "a showcase of Vaneese Thomas' craft as a songwriter and her soul-shaking vocals. Like that release, this was produced by Thomas and her husband Wayne Warnecke, and the core of the musicians on this include Joe Bonadio on drums, Paul Adamy on bass, Paul Mariconda on keyboards, Sergio Cocchi on organ, Wayne Warnecke on percussion or electric guitar, and Al Orlo or Tash Neal on guitar.

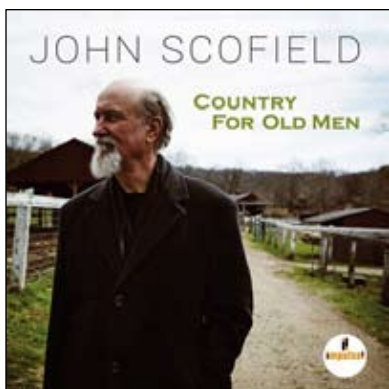
About her last recording I wrote that Vaneese "can flat out sing with a display of vocal dynamics as well as power to leave a strong impression on the listeners." And when they starting rocking on the opening "Sweet Talk Me," she exhibits her power as well her nuance in phrasing set against a driving rhythm. A loping walking groove underlays a fine blues performance,

"Lonely No More." There is a party feel to "Sat'day Night On The River," with its relaxed shuffle groove and Cliff Lyons booting tenor sax solo. "Mystified" is a soul-blues number as she celebrates being captured in his embrace with Al Orlo.

"Country Funk" mixes a funk groove with a dash of country-rock violin, dobro and banjo in the backing, and is followed by the topicality of "The More Things Change" ("the more they stay the same"). "Prince of Fools" a strong soul performance about someone she loves and only a fool would let Vaneese go. "I Got A Man In Tn" has a tough blues-rock setting as she sings about traveling performing and having met many men in her travels, but she has a message for them that she has a man in Tennessee who is waiting for her in the County of Shelby, while there is a low-key feel as she sings about rocking away on her front porch as she is "Rockin' Away The Blues," with bluesy dobro from Peter Calo. With a jaunty, Jimmy Reed-styled groove, "Revelation" celebrates her finding a love that is true, followed by a slow roots performance "Mean World," with a plea for civility and to live a life with a heart full of charity.

A strongly sung cover of Fleetwood Mac's "The Chain" is the final recording on another strong recording that is up to the high standard of the earlier album, as well as her live performances which this writer was fortunate enough to attend. Vaneese Thomas continues to impress with her marvelous singing and songwriting on this recording.

Ron Weinstock



JOHN SCOFIELD
Country For Old Men
IMPULSE

This new release by John Scofield has him reinvestigating his country/folk roots alongside accomplished colleagues Steve Swallow, Larry Goldings and Bill Stewart. It is a homage to such greats as George Jones, Dolly Parton, Merle Haggard, James Taylor and Hank Williams among others, with some songs evoking a classic honky tonk feel like the opening rendition of a George Jones classic "Mr. Fool," with Scofield's twang and use of sustain set against Goldings' country-flavored piano and a simple rhythm groove. A few others take a different tack as the transformation of Hank Williams' lament, "I'm So Lonesome I Could

Cry," into a rollicking roadhouse stomp and almost a mash up with Jay McShann's "Jumpin' the Blues" on a stunning performance with some fiery playing in his improvisation.

There is the restrained rendition of James Taylor's "Bartender's Blues," the percolating groove over a spirited "Wildwood Flower," and a sober "Wayfaring Stranger." The sparkling flavor of the interpretation of Merle Haggard's "Mama Tried" contrasts the bluesy flavor of the rendition of Dolly Parton's "Jolene." Other treats include the Bob Wills' classic ballad "Faded Love," and the classic "Red River Valley," transformed into a rocking organ-guitar feature with some of Scofield's most inventive improvisation. A brief, acoustic statement of the theme of "I'm an Old Cowhand" serves to end a most appealing album of jazz renditions of classic country tunes.

Ron Weinstock



TERESA JAMES
THE RHYTHM TRAMPS
Bonafide
JESI-LU PRODUCTIONS

Roots-blues singer Teresa James will be familiar with many from her association with Delbert McClinton (she's a regular on his cruises), as well as from festival appearances and club dates.

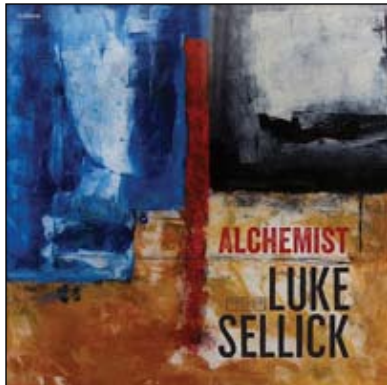
Born in Houston and now based in Los Angeles, her band the Rhythm Tramps includes bassist Terry Wilson (who wrote most of the songs here as well as plays guitar and produced and engineered this recording); guitarist Billy Watts, drummer Herman Matthews, trumpeter Lee Thornburg and saxophonist Ron Dziuba. While they all appear on this, only Wilson and Watts are featured on most of the songs with the likes of drummer Tony Braunagel and keyboardist Mike Finnigan of The Phantom Blues Band adding their talents to a number of selections, along with Teresa herself on piano and Wurlitzer Piano.

Starting with the cover of a Five Royales song, "I Like It Like That," one gets impressed by James with a slight bit of sandpaper in her voice that adds to its grit and character. She is a singer, not a shouter, as she ably demonstrates on this rocker with the somewhat skeletal backing of the title track as well as with fuller backing on the soulful "The Power of Need." This latter track is a standout track with nice horns in

the backing and Watts taking a crisp guitar break as she sings of yearning of the power of wanting to love someone. "Hollywood Way" has a funky groove with Wilson playing an effective simple organ riff and wah wah guitar riff as she sings in an understated manner about games being played and all our heroes never fade away.

"My God Is Better Than Yours" is a gospel-tinged song about religious hypocrisy, followed by another soulful ballad celebrating her lover, "You Always Pick Me Up." "What Happens In Vegas" has a New Orleans groove (think Huey "Piano" Smith and the Clowns) and takes the advertising slogan as what stays in Vegas to include one's money and one's honey. "Funny Like That" is an attractive ballad with an island groove while "No Regrets" finds her reflecting about having "no regrets about you" although she doesn't make things easy for her man. She delivers a marvelous closing vocal on John Hiatt's "Have a Little Faith in Me," as she pleads for her man to give her loving arms a try and have a little faith in her. She plays piano here, while the spare, uncluttered, backing provides a cushion for her heartfelt singing. It is the close on this first-rate album of roots, blues and soul performances.

Ron Weinstock



LUKE SELICK

Alchemist
CELLAR LIVE

Bassist-of-choice for Russell Malone, Johnny O'Neal, Jimmy Greene and others, 26-year-old Luke Sellick has his debut album as a leader. Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, coming to New York he studied at Juilliard where he was mentored by the great Ron Carter who writes the liner notes for this recording.

Sellick has an impressive group of musicians to interpret his nine compositions including Adam Birnbaum on piano and Andrew Renfroe on guitar, who play on all the tracks, and Jimmy Greene on tenor saxophone; Jordan Pettay on alto saxophone; Benny Benack III on trumpet; Mat Jodrell on trumpet; Adam Birnbaum on piano; Kush Abadey on drums; Jimmy Macbride on drums and Andrew Gutauskas on bass clarinet.

After the brief sober "Prelude," "Q-Tippin'" (dedicated to drummer Quincy Davis) has Kush Abadey

channeling Tony Williams with the Latin-tinged groove Jimmy Greene, Mat Koddell and Andrew Renfroe all sounding impressive on a performance that evokes classic sixties Blue Note recordings. "Brothers," inspired by Sellick's upbringing, has Jimmy McBride driving the stately, relaxed groove on a lovely theme that Pettay and Benack state before the leader solos followed Benack's lyrical playing and a brief break from Renfroe.

"Hymn," a mediation on Sellick's faith, is a reflective piece played at a languid tempo with some thoughtful tenor from Greene. "The Alchemist" is a more energetic number with Renfroe displaying great facility and thoughtfulness on his solo followed by Pettay's spirited alto solo. The relaxed tempo of "Dog Days" backdrops Greene and pianist Birnbaum with Abadey propelling the performance with his rhythmic accents. The charming waltz, "Abacus," features lovely trumpet from Jodrell along with Birnbaum's ruminative piano, while "Uptown!" is a swinging quartet performance enlivened by solos from Renfroe and Birnbaum and then Sellick himself with more outstanding support from Abadey. McBride crisply backs the closing "Home," with a light blue cast and enticing solos from Renfroe, Benack and Birnbaum along with their interplay during the closing bars.

Throughout the performances, one is struck by the steady anchor Luke Sellick provides on bass, and the wonderful musicians and the integrated ensemble work on these intriguing compositions, resulting in some very appealing musical alchemy.

Ron Weinstock



LISA BIALES

The Beauty of My Heart
BIG SONG MUSIC

A new album from the singer Lisa Biales brings together some terrific covers and backing from members of The Phantom Blues Band, drummer Tony Braunagel (who produced this), guitarist Johnny Lee Schell (who engineered this), bassist Larry Fulcher, trumpeter Darrell Leonard and saxophonist Joe Sublett, along with keyboardist Jim Pugh, bassist Larry Taylor, bassist Chuck Berghofer (member of The Wrecking Crew), trumpeter Lee Thornberg and others. The result is a

very appealing recording.

The performances here include the jump blues revival of Mabel Scott's "Disgusted" with a terrific Joe Sublett tenor sax solo, a solid New Orleans funk reworking of Allen Toussaint's "I Don't Wanna Hear It" (originally waxed by Betty Harris), a smoldering cover of Nina Simone's "Be My Husband," a jazzy rendition of Lil Green's "Romance in the Dark" with the legendary Chuck Berghofer on acoustic bass, a moving rendition of Eric Bibb's "Don't Let Nobody Drag Your Spirit Down" with brief solos by Jim Pugh and Johnny Lee Schell adding to its smokey atmosphere, and a spirited gospel performance of Alex Bradford's "Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody." She may have quite the voice of an Aretha but she puts everything in her delivery of this latter song's simple message affirming one's faith.

This is just an overview of some of the very enjoyable performances on this. One song of special note is "Crying Over You." This song has special significance for Biales, as it recorded in 1947 by her mother Alberta Rogers who also wrote it. The performance opens with the first verse of her mother's recording before Biales completes the performance as she sings yearning for her phone to ring crying for her love. Chuck Berghofer is on double bass and Lee Thornberg plays a delightful trumpet solo behind Biales' charming vocal.

Lisa Biales has proven to real fine interpreter of blues and roots with her honeyed voice and natural, unforced delivery. She enchants here and, with superb backing, has produced another gem.

Ron Weinstock



THE FAT BABIES

Solid Gassuh

DELMARK RECORDS

The Chicago classic jazz band The Fat Babies has a new release from their extensive repertoire that includes more idiomatic renditions of songs from the twenties and thirties. The Fat Babies is comprised of leader Beau Sample on bass, Andy Schumm on cornet, Dave Bock on trombone, Paul Asaro on piano and vocals, Jake Sanders on tenor banjo and guitar, Alex Hall on drums and John Otto on clarinet and saxophones, the same personnel that were on their first album, "Chicago Hot," accounting for the crisp ensemble sound and assured solos.

Unlike that earlier album, the songs here are lesser known songs of the era. Like that recording, they inject a definite spirit in their recreations. Ricky Riccardi, Director of Research Collections for the Louis Armstrong House Museum, notes that bands often playing such music get hot as playing "nostalgia" or "museum pieces," but suggests that the appeal of The Fat Babies is that they "treat this music as a living, breathing thing." This is something that is difficult to accomplish while trying to stay stylistically true to the recordings that are the source for these performances.

A lively rendition of the Luis Russell-Paul Barbarin "Doctor Blues" opening this album is a joyful reaffirmation of the quality of their performances of these vintage numbers. Schumm, who arranged this music, plays his cornet in the spirit of Bix Beiderbecke, like on "Slow River," a lesser known Clarence Williams composition. In its playing, The Fat Babies generally avoids being 'nostalgic,' and also being campy, but there are exceptions in the vocals. Pianist Asaro's crooning on "Did You Ever See A Dream Walking?" is appealing with Sanders' guitar adding a nice touch here, although his Ted Lewis styling on "Egyptian Ella," comes off as a bit campy.

The spirited rendition of Thomas Morris' "Original Charleston Strut" (with Hall's drumming standing out with his rhythmic accents), and the lively rendition of "Alabama Bound" (one of the most familiar numbers here) are other standout selections. Also noteworthy is the rendition of Arthur Schutt's "Delirium," which Riccardi suggests they provide "an almost Bix-meets-Raymond Scott treatment," taking what was originally a unique chart and performing "something surprising, unpredictable and even a little haunting," although I might suggest evocative as the mood engendered.

A breakneck tempo rendition of "Maple Leaf Rag," closes "Solid Gassuh," which Riccardi observed would be quite a very high compliment from Louis Armstrong and appropriate to use describing the music herein. If this listener has some reservations about several vocals, there are none about the consistent solid performances by The Fat Babies.

Ron Weinstock

JOHN BOYD

The Real Deal

Little Village Foundation

In his brief notes to this debut by John Boyd, Rick Estrin speaks of his stylistic range at times reminiscent of shouters like Big Joe Turner and Wyonnie Harris and other times like blues crooners like Junior Parker and early B.B. King. I am not sure I agree, although listening to this I agree with the Rick Estrin penned opening track where Boyd proclaims "I Am The Real Deal," as he certainly is. I assume Estrin is the harp player on this selection while Aki Kumar is also heard on this album. Others here include Kid Andersen, Big Jon Atkinson and Robert Welsh on guitar; Jim Pugh, Welsh and An-



dersen on keyboards; Dave Chavez, Danny Michel and Andersen on bass; June Core, Atkinson and D'Mar Martin are among those on drums; while horns include the saxophones of Eric Spaulding and Terry Hanck. Andersen produced and recorded this at his Greaseland Studios. Boyd wrote

ten of these songs

After emphatically letting us know he is the real deal, Boyd takes on a hot rocking shuffle "I Will Discover" that suggests classic Junior Parker with some blistering guitar in the vein of Roy Gaines backing Bobby Bland on Duke, whereas the following "I'm Like A Stranger To You," has the feel of a Percy Mayfield Tangerine recording.

Whoever did the arrangement here is to be commended, while Boyd again shows just how fine a singer he is. There is plenty of humor in Rick Estrin's ode to big-legged woman "That's Big!" with a bass line that evokes Jimmy McCracklin's "The Walk." Another hot shuffle, "That Certain Day" features some outstanding guitar in the vein of classic Freddie King.

An Estrin-Andersen collaboration "Dona Mae" takes us to Chicago in a performance in the manner of vintage Muddy Waters, while the musical setting of "I'm So Weak Right Now" evokes B.B. King's "The Thrill Is Gone," as Boyd sings about not being able to get himself together as his lady has gone.

Then there is a terrific slow blues with some haunting sax at the opening "Screaming in the Night" with a great vocal and backing evocative of an unissued Otis Rush Cobra side, whereas musically "(Have You Ever Been To) Marvin Gardens" is reminiscent of the Willie Dixon Argo album by Walter Horton. Unlike the limited vocal of the late harmonica wizard, Boyd handles the vocal with plenty of personality and there is some fine harp here.

The album closes with Boyd's marvelous "John, The Blues Is Calling You," as he sings he knows what must do, because he was born a blues disciple with some greasy organ and more terrific guitar.

With the excellent players Kid Andersen assembled, it would be pretty hard to produce something other than a very entertaining recording. When one adds a terrific singer like John Boyd, then one has a stellar recording that is as impressive a contemporary real blues debut as one might have heard in some time.

Ron Weinstock



JIMMY SCOTT

I Go Back Home

EDEN RIVER RECORDS

Jimmy Scott's career was one of great frustration as for years he was bound to an onerous recording contract with the result that in his prime years, his musical career was stifled. Fortunately starting in the 1980s, Scott's fortune changed. He was amongst the early recipients of the Pioneer Award from the Rhythm and Blues Foundation. Still, despite the efforts of his friends like the late Doc Pomus, it wasn't until a record company exec saw Scott sing at Pomus' funeral that he was signed to a record label.

As one close to Doc Pomus noted in the film, "AKA Doc Pomus," it took Pomus to f*****g die for Jimmy Scott to get a recording contract. Fortunately we were blessed with many memorable recordings that displayed his unique vocal styling.

This new album was recorded prior to Scott's passing in 2014 and was the result of the desire of German producer Ralf Kemper to produce Scott that this elaborate production occurred. Mixed by the late Phil Ramone, Scott is joined by a number of collaborators including Bossa nova icon Oscar Castro-Neves and legendary saxophonist James Moody, both of whom themselves passed away after their contributions to this recording.

Scott is wonderfully backed on many songs by drummer Peter Erskine, the great pianist Kenny Barron and organist and trumpet player Joey DeFrancesco. Jazz icon Dee Dee Bridgewater joins Scott on "For Once in My Life," while vocalist Monica Mancini and trumpet master Arturo Sandoval are on "I Remember You," while several tracks have lush orchestrations played by the HBR Studio Symphony Orchestra.

This album is clearly a labor of love from the producer but one would be hard pressed to call this among Scott's finest works. Scott was among the most singular singers whose phrasing, timing and pitch could wring emotion out of what would sound like cliches when sung by lesser vocalists. Yet there are passages here when his vocals sound a tad frayed. Still his ability to move the listener is evident on the opening "Motherless Child," enhanced by Joey DeFrancesco's organ. On "Easy Living" his vocal is half-spoken with a fine

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DeFrancesco solo. The bossa nova “Love Letters” is an appealing vocal duet with Oscar Castro-Neves who contributes his guitar along with his vocal in Portuguese, while Dee Dee Bridgewater joins Scott for a duet of Stevie Wonder’s “For Once In My Life,” with James Moody contributing a terrific tenor sax solo.

Furthermore, on some of the other performances another singer is at the fore, such as Monica Mancini’s marvelous featured vocal on “I Remember You,” which also has the guitar of Oscar Castro-Neves in the accompaniment and includes Sandoval’s trumpet. On “Someone to Watch Over Me” (perhaps a song he is most identified with), Scott provides a brief spoken introduction before Renee Olstead sings the vocal in an attractive understated manner. There are two duets with actor Joe Pesci that are among the high points of this recording. Kenny Barron’s piano is noteworthy on “The Nearness of You,” where Pesci both shows Scott’s influence in his approach as well as complements Scott.

There is plenty of poignancy throughout, including the closing “Poor Butterfly,” with Gregoire Maret’s wistful harmonica, but Scott himself shows his years and perhaps health issues. If one was looking for an introduction to Jimmy Scott, there would be other recordings that one would recommend before this. This is more a recording for those who are already fans of him, and wish to hear his last musical testament, as it is wonderfully played even if it has some flaws.

Ron Weinstock



EIGHT O'FIVE JIVE

Swing Set

RED RUDY TOO TUNES

This five-piece outfit hails from Nashville where they’ve collected a pile of awards including Best Live Blues Performers, Best Blues Band and the Nashville Blues Challenge top prize for both 2016 and 2017’s International Blues Challenge.

So, what’s all the fuss about? Rather than join the legions of bands that feature headline soloists occasionally interrupted by the rest of the band in the interest of calling the time spent a song, this crew focuses on what can be accomplished in three to four minutes. Most importantly, they spend the time wisely with witty, jump-blues oriented numbers aimed clearly

at the dance floor and a good time.

With vocalist Lee Shropshire leading the charge with her nimble vocal stylings, the band gets the party started with many a fan’s rallying cry for a good time “Make Mine a Double;” sets the stage for a break from the routine, “Get Away;” extols the virtue of America’s favorite brown liquor, “A Little Bit of Bourbon,” and declares it’s time to get to pass the bottle for everyone’s party pleasure, “Put It Back.”

The band also follows the tradition of the likes of Louis Prima, Wyonnie Harris and Roy Brown in turning relationship blues into humorous tales with dark twists such as the notice served on an errant lover that his departure is going to be cause for a celebration, “I Won’t Wear Flats (To your Funeral);” the warning to a mate with a wandering eye of his impending fate, “Back of My Hand;” the flat out proclamation that your best efforts at a making a love connection are going to fail, “Never,” and the escort to the door of someone who would rather talk than listen- but with instructions on how the lock works, “One More Glass of Wine.” Throughout, guitarist Andy Scheinman and saxophonist Patrick Morris display top notch skills on their respective instruments with economical solos propelling the high-energy tunes.

Relentlessly fun both musically and lyrically, this is a terrific release that you need in your party blues collection.

Mark Smith



RON KING

Triumph

PERSEVERANCE DISTRIBUTION

While classically trained, Ron King has taken his brass chops to a variety of settings working with such artists as George Benson, Ricki Lee Jones and Marvin Gaye, performing with the Tonight Show Orchestra as well as with Tony Bennett, Frank Sinatra and others while doing studio work for films and the like. Currently he leads a quartet as well as a big band, and now has a new album with a variety of grooves and the like with him overdubbing on a variety of instruments while joined by Jeff Lorber and others on this.

The title track opens things up with its tuneful (if programmed) backing and lyrical trumpet along with wordless vocal backing. He switches to flugelhorn on

"Luv Vibe" and displays impressive facility and invention. Support on this includes Jeff Lorber on piano (who solos), Bennett Brandeis on guitar and Preston Shepard on French Horn with an easy listening veneer. With full band and strings, "Celtic Horizons" sports some lovely flugelhorn along with pianist Andy Langham's solo and Bob Sheppard's flute with the strings adding sweetening. "A Long Way Home," with King on trumpet, Bob Sheppard on tenor sax and Lenny Castro on congas is spicy, straight-ahead Latin jazz (with the bass riff akin to that of Dizzy Gillespie's "Manteca"). Some of King's most exciting playing is on this song as his trumpet blazes into the upper register followed by some very fervent tenor sax and then Langham plays piano in a highly charged manner before some hot percussion from drummer Gary Novak and Castro on congas on a standout performance. The closing "Peace and Love" takes us back to the smooth jazz feel of several selections with programmed rhythm and synthesized strings in support his lovely trumpet.

Ron King plays trumpet and flugelhorn with lyricism and invention although this album as he mixes a straight-ahead performance with others more in a smooth jazz vein, making for some wonderful playing and relaxing listening.

Ron Weinstock



ELVIN BISHOP

Elvin Bishop's Big Fun Trio
ALLIGATOR RECORDS

The aptly titled Elvin Bishop's Big Fun Trio brings together guitarist and vocalist Bishop with pianist and guitarist Bob Welsh and percussionist and vocalist Willy Jordan who brought a cajón, a South American percussion instrument. The three started jamming in Elvin's studio one day and the combination of the three clicked big time, leading to the present recording which has four Bishop originals, three co-writes and four covers. Kim Wilson, Charlie Musselwhite and Rick Estrin each lend their harmonica talents to a song each.

Big Fun is so true and the sparse instrumentation matched with the good-time feel from the interplay by the three make for some marvelous listening. Not being familiar with Willy Jordan, to these ears he was a revelation as a singer. Bishop has his appeal in his almost goofy, back porch style, but Jordan can mix humor and a deep blues soulfulness while Welsh's piano

helps push things along. Things open up with Welsh's rollicking piano and a steady groove on "Let it Roll" with its message of don't let the politician bastards get you down. "Honey Babe" matches Bishop's stinging guitar with Welsh playing bass lines on his guitar on a number with a back porch feel. Wilson joins in on a raucous and terrific cover of Sunnyland Slim's "It's You, Baby," with a standout vocal by Jordan, and terrific piano, and fat-toned harmonica.

"Delta Lowdown" is an instrumental that sounds based on the Jimmy Rogers' 1950 Chess recording "Goin' Away Blues," with Estrin channelling Little Walters' country inflected harp. Jordan then takes the vocal on a solid cover of The Velentinos' "It's All Over Now," as Elvin channels Bobby Womack in his guitar playing. "100 Years of Blues" is a talking blues duet between Bishop and Charlie Musselwhite as they recall their old times that evokes Louisiana swamp blues of Lightnin' Slim and others with the restrained backing. Elvin plays slide guitar with some New Orleans piano behind Jordan's solid vocal on a lively cover of "Let the Four Winds Blow." "That's What I'm Talkin' About" is a culinary travelogue as Elvin talks about going to a place on Polydas in New Orleans as Jordan sings some of the items on the menu; then making it Seattle, and Elvin suggests a drive through and get burgers and instead there is a soul food menu with Jordan again singing about some of the menu items. "Can't Take No More" has a gospel-inflected Jordan vocal on this slow blues with Bishop laying down a super West Side Chicago styled guitar solo.

A nice, lazy instrumental "Southside Slide," that sounds inspired by "Blue Monk" and "Honky Tonk," closes this marvelously entertaining recording of blues...Big Fun Trio.

Ron Weinstock



ROBERTO FONSECA

ABÚC
IMPULSE!

Grammy nominated pianist Roberto Fonseca has been exploring and celebrating the music of his native Cuba for some time as a composer, producer, solo artist and collaborator with other Latin American music luminaries, brining forth richly melodic compositions and recordings that capture the irrepressible Cuban sound and its rich musical history. His latest effort

"ABUC" continues, and as the title is Cuba spelled backwards, this present effort might be said to "look backward at the evolution of Cuban jazz," with Fonseca writing or co-writing nearly all 14 of the tracks. "I wanted to review the Cuban music history - not only the styles that have influenced me most, but in a broader sense, so people could have a better idea of how the orchestras used to sound in those times." It's a wonderful mix of material with Fonseca also attempting to capture sound of music when audio technology was not so advanced.

Things start on a very hot note with Ray Bryant's "Cubano Chant" with the heat of the performance including a fiery solo from guest Trombone Shorty. "Afro Mambo" is just as raucous, with spirited vocal performances by Daymé Arocena and Carlos Calunga amid the orchestration. "The challenge was to make it sound like the orchestras from the 1940s and 1950s. We invited to EGREM one of the studio's oldest technicians, who really taught us how they recorded back in the day. ...It was really sonic time traveling!" Listening to this one might be forgiven for thinking that Fonseca spliced an older recording onto this performance. "Tumbao de la Unidad," with Eliades Ochoa on guitar and vocal, is Fonseca's call for unity among all cultures set at a much more relaxed tempo, and followed by "Contradanza del Espiritu," which opens with some morose violin before the horns set a more stately feeling here with this listener being reminded of Dr. John's performance of "Litanie Des Saints" that was inspired by 18th century composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk. Fonseca's piano playing, and use of delay, reverb and other enhancements engenders an unusual feel here.

"Tierra Santa" tells the story of a musician from Santiago de Cuba who's invited to play in New Orleans, where he discovers an amazing wind ensemble playing in the streets. "He's awestruck, and he rapidly imagines home (probably should be how - ed) these melodies would sound with the Santiago conga rhythm." With the insistent, distinctive congas beat, it comes off almost as a blend Afro-Cuban jazz with Fela Kuti's funk and horns, and a highlight on this exceptional recording. "Family," inspired by memories of listening to the radio at home with his mother when he was a boy in the 1970s and the performance displays a fusion of musical styles with hot trumpet in the accompaniment.

Other noteworthy performances include "Soul Guardians," a melodious performance with an incorporation of a variety of influences, including rap, hip-hop and reggaeton. The spirited "Asere Monina Bonco" has brilliant flute work from Policarpo "Polo" Tamayo, who passed away shortly after the album was finished along with some very impressive bass playing. The lovely bolero, "Después," has Mercedes Cortés Alfaro, Fonseca's mother, on vocals along with the brilliant Manuel "Guajiro" Mirabal on trumpet. Fonseca's brief solo piano reprise of "Cubano Chant," is the coda for the superb "ABUC," which is highly recommended to lovers of Afro-Cuban music and Latin jazz. **Ron Weinstock**



LAZYEYE

Pocket The Black; Live at Chapel Lane SELF-PRODUCED

Lazyeye is an Australian blues trio consisting of Evan Whetter, vocals, organ and harmonica; Erica Graf, guitar and backing vocals; and Mario Marino, drums & backing vocals. Veray popular and honored down-under, they competed in the Blues Foundation's 2016 International Blues Challenge. "Pocket The Black" was recorded live at the Chapel Lane Studio with a studio audience. This is not unprecedented as Otis Spann's Bluesway album, "The Blues Is Where It's At" was recorded with a studio audience. While noting a studio recording allows one to capture as close to perfect a performance and make overdubs to correct minor imperfections. However, given the live approach they chose for this recording the best 'feeling' takes rather than seek perfection.

This band is new to this reviewer, but the trio impressed, especially instrumentally from the first moments of "Keepin' From Lovin'," to the ending "Swing From Marz." This is not to take anything away from Whetter's very capable singing and Graf's very fine guitar playing. Her well thought out lines set against Whetter's punchy organ and Marino's crisp drumming stands out on these performances that are nicely paced and nicely balanced. The title track is a swinging shuffle with a nice use of billiard metaphors with a jazzy solo from Graf. "Let Me Down Easy" is not the Bettye Lavette soul classic, but an original slow blues with understated organ and marvelous guitar to support the grainy vocal. "Mucho Jalapeño" is an outstanding instrumental akin to Kenny Burrell's "Chitlins Con Carne," with a nice Latin groove. Whetter provides some grease on the organ followed by Graf's carefully articulated, jazzy fretwork.

They call "Shack O' Mine" a tribute to Bo Diddley, although the performance reminds these ears of Johnny Otis' "Willie and the Hand Jive" and Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away," itself built on the famous "a shave and a haircut" beat. There is nice interplay between the band although the lyrics are somewhat inconsequential. "Do You Know How It Feels" is another slow blues, although perhaps the solos could have been a bit more concise, perhaps a consequence of recording as a live performance. With Whetter on harmonica and Graf on

acoustic guitar, the lazy “Treat Your Lover Right,” has a nice Jimmy Reed styled feel. “It Ain’t Right,” has a spirited groove and unusual twists in its melodic line and the album closes with a jazzy “Swing For Marz,” with some greasy B-3 and nice comping from Graf before she takes a sweet single note solo.

Listening to LazyEye here, one appreciates the fact that even when the tempo picks up as on “It Ain’t Right,” they never sound hurried or frantic. The ensemble sound is wonderful, drummer Marino stays consistently in the pocket and Whetter is a good, personable singer. This is quite an enjoyable recording and this writer would certainly enjoy more from them in the future.

Ron Weinstock



THE WEE TRIO

Wee + 3

BIONIC RECORDS

A new album is out from The Wee Trio, a Brooklyn, NY based group comprised of vibraphonist James Westfall, bassist Dan Loomis and drummer Jared Schonig. The trio is known for transcending musical genres in their material, but with their latest release they recruited colleagues Nicholas Payton (trumpet), Nir Felder (guitar) and Fabian Almazán (piano) to appear as guest soloists on individual tracks.

Discussing the guest artists, Loomis explains “Nicholas Payton is the prelude to our story as a band. We say that the trio connects so well because we had listened to so many of the same records. Mr. Payton’s music was definitely an important part of all our lives. His playing, his intention as a bandleader, and his compositions were important building blocks for all of our own musical conceptions and development. Nir Felder is the present tense in the story of the band. We all met Nir very soon after we moved to the city and played with him a lot in our first years here.

Our encounter with Fabian Almazán is a look to the future. Jared has known Fabian for a several years, but James and I just started playing with him for this project. Fabian plays with relentless creativity that really brings out the best side of the band. We love to play familiar material and take a lot of risks with it - push it to see what new options we can find hidden in it. With Fabian we got a chance to expand that approach to a quartet

setting and bring it some new material that we wrote especially for him.”

The trio opens with a chamber jazz mood with guitarist Felder on “R T 3.” His guitar and Westfall’s vibes initially mesmerize. Felder’s solo quietly builds its heat with supple support from Loomis and Schonig. He is also heard on the closing two tracks, “Gibbs Street” and “Apparition,” with marvelous interplay with Westfall and playing from both and the seamless backing from Loomis and Schonig.

With pianist Almazán, “Titan Up” is a brief, quite energetic performance followed by another performance with him, “Climb,” where he displays his facility and imagination as he takes off from the somewhat reflective opening to very spirited mode followed by lively playing from Westfall. “Redwood” is a tribute to the California Redwood groves, with pianist Almazán joining on a performance of a composition that attempts to grasp the expansiveness of the feeling of walking there, of being in an endless horizontal and vertical space.

Nicholas Payton is heard on a blues, “Sabotage,” and then “No Justice,” playing exquisitely, imaginatively and lyrically as he constructs his solos which serve as the take off for Westfall’s own (marimba on “Sabotage” and vibraphone on “No Justice”). “Belle Femme De Voodoo,” the last selection with Payton evokes a New Orleans parade with Payton’s playful solo incorporating growls and slurs against the bouncy rhythm.

The one cover is Meshell Ndegeocello’s “Lola,” that Schonig arranged with Loomis’ bass providing the center of the performance before Westfall takes off on his solo. It is one of the two trio performances on this latest release from The Wee Trio. With their accomplished guests they have provided another fresh and highly engaging recording.

Ron Weinstock



VIN MOTT

Quit The Women For The Blues

VIN MOTT MUSIC

Just in his twenties, young harmonica wizard Vin Mott will surely attract notice with his debut recording. On this CD he is backed by his band of Sean Ronan (guitar), Dean Shot (upright, electric bass) and Andrei Koribanics (drums) with keyboards audible in the backing at times. Mott kicks off a collection of idiomatic Chicago-styled blues with the title track, “Quit The

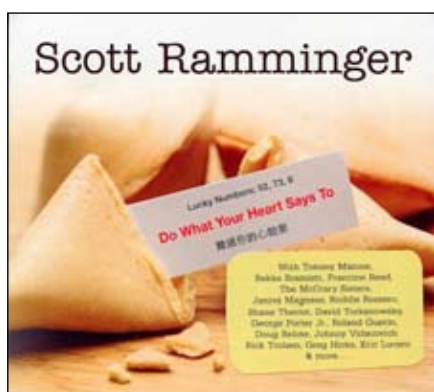
Women (For The Blues),” as he sings about quitting the women for a little thing called the blues set to a groove that evokes Howlin’ Wolf’s “Killing Floor,” and Ronan shows a bit of Hubert Sumlin’s influence in his playing but is far from a copyist. The leader shows off his wet, fat tone on his lengthy solo as well as being a credible singer.

The medium tempo rocker “Make Up Your Mind” is another showcase for his driving harmonica style as well as Ronan’s precise playing. An atmospheric, slow blues, “The Factory,” where he sings about can’t do no more whisky or more cocaine, this living ain’t living, as he has been beaten down by the factory, has him on chromatic harp while Ronan (with a short guitar break) and the rhythm provide low-key support. Ronan is on slide guitar adding some “Dust My Broom” on the shuffle “I’m a Filthy Man,” where his animated vocal sounds slight distorted (perhaps singing through the harp mike). “Freight Train” sounds inspired by Junior Parker’s “Mystery Train,” with more impressive harmonica and a fast, fleet guitar solo, although the tempo is a trifle too fast (probably great for dancers live). There is a nod to the “Key to the Highway” melody on the animated shuffle, “Ol’ Greasy Blues,” another performance that shows Mott’s ability to take traditional blues materials to construct his originals.

The album closes with the instrumental “Hott Mott’s Theme,” a hyper-kinetic tempoed feature for the leader’s harp and Ronan’s crisp, swinging fretwork.

This is certainly a fun recording to listen to and takes this listener back to the bar bands I was listening to when I got into the blues decades ago. One can imagine the good times when they play various taverns and other venues in their native New Jersey and will be looking to more from Mott in the future.

Ron Weinstock



SCOTT RAMMINGER

Do What Your Heart Says To

Arbor Lane Music

What a pleasure it is to have a new CD for Mid-Atlantic saxophonist-singer-songwriter Scott Ramminger full of the bluesy, roots-rock gumbo with a heavy dash of New Orleans flavor with a Crescent City studio band of David Torkanowsky on keyboards, Shane Theriot

on guitar, George Porter on bass, and Doug Belote on drums, with Roland Guerin replacing Porter and Johnny Vidacovich replacing Belote on two tracks. Trombones and trumpet add a full horn section and there are guest vocalists who support Scott including Tommy Malone, Bekka Bramlett, Francine Reed, The McCrary Sisters, Janiva Magness and Roddie Romero (who plays accordion on one track).

Scott writes good songs, full of humor and a perspective on the affairs of the heart and sings in a most appealing, natural, rustic style while adding his fluent, idiomatic sax to these selections backed by this stellar rhythm section. The album gets off with a New Orleans funk groove of “Living Too Fast” as he tells his tale about this woman with brains, looks and the like who poured his bottle into the ocean, cigarettes in the trash, coming to the conclusion Scott was living too fast (with Malone adding harmony), and while on May 1 he thought she was the one, by Labor Day she had extinguished all his fun with a booting sax solo and some New Orleans piano from Torkanowsky. With Bekka Bramlett adding support, “Someone New To Disappoint,” is a nice hard rock number with Scott as someone who won’t be changed so he is looking for someone else to disappoint. On the title track Scott deals with being battered by a lover, and sometimes instead of using one’s brain, one should “Do What Your Heart Says To,” with him taking another booting sax solo followed by Torkanowsky with some idiomatic Crescent City piano and Francine Reed on backing vocal.

Scott has taken a beating and has not slept since she left and he’s “Hoping That The Sun Won’t Shine,” with Bekka Bramlett supporting his vocal and Scott playing baritone as well as tenor sax on this blue ballad. “Winter Is Always Worse” is a strong slow performance that opens with some sizzling guitar from Theriot while “Get Back Up,” with Guerin and Vidacovich, gets into a funk groove as he sings about getting back up when dealing with what life throws at you while The McCrary Sisters add vocal backing and a short trombone break is followed by some deep in the gut baritone sax, guitar and chicken fried organ. Janiva Magness guests backing Scott on the easy rocking shuffle “It’s Hard To Be Me,” as Scott sings about his trouble and coming up with these lies and make up stories to hold on to a love.

“Off My Mind” is another solid slow blues while “My Girl For Life,” is a swamp pop styled ballad. Roddie Romero’s accordion lends a Tex-Mex accent to the rock and roll groove of “Stubborn Man,” with honking sax, brief blistering guitar, and hot piano to take this and the album to a rollicking close. Like he has done on his excellent prior recordings, Scott has produced some seriously entertaining music with plenty of substance. He writes real good songs, is a most engaging singer and a strong saxophonist who backs himself with some stellar players. The result is another helping of some real fine musical gumbo.

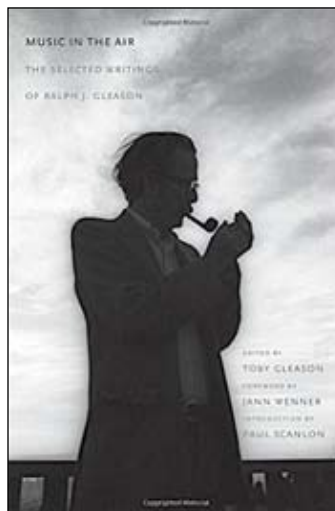
Ron Weinstock

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

books



MUSIC IN THE AIR: THE SELECTED WRITINGS OF RALPH J. GLEASON

Edited by Toby Gleason
YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS
2016: 328 PP

This is a companion to the recently published "Conversations In Jazz; The Ralph Gleason Interviews," which was transcripts of interviews with jazz musicians by the late journalist and television host. The present volume is a compilation of newspaper articles and reviews, liner notes, essays for scholarly publications and the like including some of his writings for Rolling Stone that Ralph Gleason co-founded. Rolling Stone's Jann Wenner provides the foreword here and Paul Scanlon provides an introduction. The book is organized into four parts. The lengthiest is devoted to jazz and blues followed by one on folk, pop and rock.

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

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WELLES ARROW APPEARS IN PHOTOS
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After a part on comedy the book concludes with a part on politics and culture.

Gleason may be the only person to interview Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, John Coltrane, B.B. King, and Hank Williams. Yes Hank Williams, several months before his early passing. I have no doubt that the portion of the book devoted to music will be of the greatest interest to many. The very first piece is on jazz and blues entitled “Jazz: Black Art/ American Art,” with a condensed distillation of the music’s history along with blues folk like Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Leadbelly, Big Bill Broonzy, Lightnin’ Hopkins, Muddy Waters, B.B. King and others along with brief mentions of Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Lester Young, John Coltrane and others.

This 1969 essay won the ASCAP/Deems Taylor Award for Excellence in Music Journalism. Other essays on jazz and blues include his liner notes to Jimmy Witherspoon “At the Monterey Jazz Festival,” John Coltrane “Ole Coltrane,” Billie Holiday “The Golden Years Volume 2,” B.B. King “Completely Well” and Miles Davis “Bitches Brew.” There is an article on the San Francisco Jazz Scene of the Time, a review of Louis Armstrong playing the Claremont Hotel, appreciations of Johnny Hodges and Ben Webster from Rolling Stone after Hodges passed, and lengthy appreciations of Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington after they had left us.

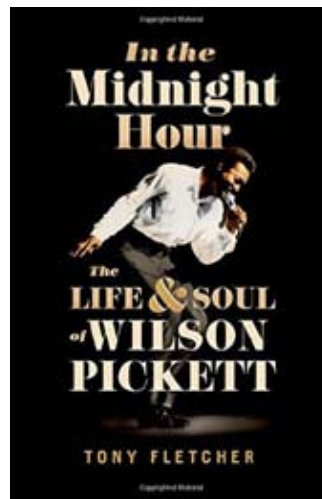
The part on folk, pop and rock opens with liner notes on The Limelites, a review of Joan Baez in concert, an article previewing a Pete Seeger appearance, a review of the incomparable Odetta in concert, several pieces on Bob Dylan (who Gleason was an early advocate of) including a 1964 concert review, early article on The Beatles, liner notes to the first Jefferson Airplane album, his appreciation of Hank Williams that includes quotes from the Oakland, California interview he did six months before Williams passed away, liner notes to Simon and Garfunkel’s “Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme,” and consideration of San Francisco as the American Liverpool. I wish I had Gleason’s ability to so concisely (and so clearly) describe his musical subject and what is on the recording or the significance of the performance. And whether talking about jazz or folk and rock, one comes across with insights about the subject one may not have had.

For the part on comedy there are brief pieces on Dick Gregory, Jonathan Winter, and Bill Cosby before a lengthy biographical essay on Lenny Bruce that served as liner notes for a Fantasy album by him. The Politics and Culture part has pieces on the Free Speech Movement, Hippie Culture, Music and social change of the time, and related matter of the times including his opposition to President Nixon. Gleason was what we call a progressive voice today and while some of his observations may be time bound, one would imagine how he would write about today’s world.

Ralph Gleason was only 57 when he passed in 1975 and his centenary is in 2017. This and the companion volume of jazz interviews seems like the proper way to celebrate what he left us. Highly recommended.

Ron Weinstock

March • April 2017 • Issue 371



IN THE MIDNIGHT HOUR: THE LIFE AND SOUL OF WILSON PICKETT

Tony Fletcher
OXFORD UNIVERSITY
PRESS 2017: 320 PAGES

I first heard about this biography of the great soul legend Wilson Pickett from the social media post of Curtis Pope, the Washington area musician who led Pickett’s band for a number of years. The enthusiasm expressed about this biography made it an easy choice for purchase. Upon reading it, the

hopes I had about this book was more than realized.

Taken from interviews with family members, band-members and interviews held with the great soul singer, Tony Fletcher, it provides a well-knit story of Pickett’s life from the poverty of growing up in Jim Crow Alabama, to moving to Detroit and his development on the gospel circuit, then crossing over and making recordings as a member of the Falcons to his remarkable career as one of the greatest of the deep soul artists to emerge in the 1960s.

Fletcher tells the story with warts and all starting from his childhood where he first displayed the mean streak that would be part of his personality for years, the suffering of deep physical punishment growing up, spending time in rural Alabama and Detroit as he grew up and emerged into his career. Through interviews with family members, fellow members of the groups he performed in, the studio bands on his recordings, the musicians in his touring band we get inside the studio when with The Falcons he recorded “I Found a Love” with his vocal set against Robert Ward’s fiery, echoey guitar playing.

The success of the Falcons led to his time with Atlantic Records and Fletcher takes us to the sessions in which so many classic recordings such as “In the Midnight Hour,” “634-5789,” “Land of a Thousand Dances,” “Mustang Sally” and so many others. We are there as he improvises around the lyrics of “Thousand Dances” and go down to Muscle Shoals for the inspired cover of The Beatles’ “Hey Jude” with his vocal and Duane Allman’s celebrated slide guitar creating so much magic. His friendship with Don Covay as well as Solomon Burke (from whom he covered “Everybody Needs Someone to Love”) and the rivalry with James Brown are part of his legacy.

Fletcher takes us to Europe, the Apollo and other concerts, shows and festivals by Pickett as well and the legendary Soul Clan recording that was bittersweet because of the tragic passing of Otis Redding. Then there is the decline in his career as well as some of the personal troubles he had with substance abuse and domestic violence issues as well by the revival of his recording and performing career before his passing.

This is a wonderful written and documented biography of one of the greatest singers and performers to emerge in the sixties and seventies that I had difficulty putting down before I finished it. This has my highest recommendation.

Ron Weinstock

PAGE THIRTY ONE



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