

**January / February 2018**  
**Issue 376**  
**now in our 43rd year**

# **jazz** **& blues** report



**Jazzmeia  
Horn**

# jazz & blues report

Editor & Founder

Bill Wahl

Layout & Design Bill Wahl

Operations Jim Martin

Pilar Martin

## Contributors

Michael Braxton, Peanuts, Wanda Simpson, Mark Smith, Duane Verh, Emily Wahl and Ron Weinstock.

**RIP** JBR Writers Tom Alabiso, John Hunt, Chris Colombi, Mark A. Cole, Hal Hill

Check out our constantly updated website. All of our issues from our first PDFs in September 2003 and on are posted, as well as many special issues with festival reviews, Blues Cruise and Gift Guides. Now you can search for CD Reviews by artists, titles, record labels, keyword or JBR Writers. 15 years of reviews are up from our archives and we will be adding more, especially from our early years back to 1974.

Comments...billwahl@jazz-blues.com

Web www.jazz-blues.com

Copyright © 2017 Jazz & Blues Report

No portion of this publication may be reproduced without written permission from the publisher. All rights Reserved.

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

# jazz & blues report

www.jazz-blues.com



"Buffalonious"

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



**Buster Williams**



**Jazzmeia Horn**

## Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival February 16-18

**By Ron Weinstock**

Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival Returns to Rockville MD, President's Day Weekend, February 16-18, 2018. Presented by the Jazz Academy of Music to support and spotlight Jazz Education as well as present a range of top-notch Jazz performances, this year's Festival will be highlighted by a Jazz Vibes summit, and several stellar Jazz Vocalists. Headline performers include Warren Wolf, Jazzmeia Horn, Buster Williams, Joe Locke, Paul Carr, Carmen Bradford, Wycliffe Gordon, Eric Byrd Trio, Matthew Whittaker, Craig Handy and Carmen Lundy. It takes place at the Hilton Washington DC/Rockville Hotel Executive Meeting Center, 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland 20852.

The Festival is held on various stages at the Hotel. The main stage is the Ronnie Wells Main Stage, and on Friday Night will have performances by Warren Wolf and the Mid-Atlantic Collegiate All Stars featuring the Baltimore, Maryland native who is a great vibraphone player and currently a member of the San Francisco Jazz Ensemble. He played several years with Christian McBride as well as led his own groups. He will be fol-

lowed by vocalist Jazzmeia Horn, winner of the 2015 Thelonious Monk International Vocal Competition and who has worked with such artists as Winard Harper (with whom she has appeared at a prior MAJF), Junior Mance, Billy Harper, Delfeayo Marsalis, Mike LeDonne, Peter Bernstein, Johnny O'Neal, Vincent Herring, Kirk Lightsey, Frank Wess, and Ellis



**Carmen Bradford**



Marsalis. She thrilled audiences at the Kennedy Center last season and will be joined by saxophonist Joel Frahm for her performance here. Closing out the Friday Night performances will be the great Buster Williams and Something More. Williams, one of the great jazz bassists of all time has worked with a who's who of modern jazz including Art Blakey, Betty Carter, Carmen McRae, Chet Baker, Chick Corea, Dexter Gordon, Jimmy Heath, Branford Marsalis, Wynton Marsalis, Gene Ammons, Sonny Stitt, Herbie Hancock, Larry Coryell, Lee Konitz, McCoy Tyner, Illinois Jacquet, Nancy Wilson, Elvin Jones, Miles Davis, the Jazz Crusaders, Ron Carter, Woody Shaw, Sarah Vaughan, Benny Golson, Mary Lou Williams, Hank Jones, and so many more.

Saturday afternoon's program on the Ronnie Wells stage will include two Discovery Acts selected from performers who submitted to Paul Carr's 2018 Discovery Act Competition. Their performance will be followed by Lydia Harrell, the Boston-based winner of the 2017 Mid-Atlantic Jazz Voice competition. Saturday evening's performance starts with the Paul Carr Quartet with special guest, vocalist Carmen Bradford. Carr is a strong, hard-bop centered saxophonist as well as educator and will have the great Ms. Bradford, formerly with Count Basie as part of his set. After his set there will be a Vibes Summit with Warren Wolf, Joe Locke and another player to be announced. The evening closes with a performance by trombonist Wycliffe Gordon and



**Eric Byrd**

the Mid-Atlantic Jazz Orchestra.

Sunday afternoon opens with Carmen Bradford and the Jazz Academy Orchestra which is followed by the Eric Byrd Trio. The Baltimore based Byrd is a superb pianist rooted in blues and gospel as well as bop and they will celebrate their new CD release "Saints Are Still Marching." They will be followed by one of my favorite singers from the DMV area, Janine Gilbert-Carter who also has a new release, "My Foolish Heart." Sunday evening opens with a fabulous young pianist, Matthew Whitaker, followed by saxophonist Craig Handy and Second Line Smith with another great vocalist, Carmen Lundy closing out the main stage.

In addition to the Main Stage, there are many performers in the more intimate MAJF Club, including saxophonists Terry Koger and Braxton Cook, and vocalists Candice Bostwick, Petra Martin, and Chad Carter. Every night the Wes Biles Trio hosts a jam session in the MAJF Club. There are also a number of High School Big Bands and Ensembles that perform with the High School Band Competition Finals taking place Saturday Afternoon in the Ronnie Wells Main Stage. There are also a Films show, artist interviews and workshops for young musicians offered during the Festival.

The festival is presented by the Jazz Academy of Music. The Jazz Academy of Music Inc, a non-profit 501c3 organization, established in 2002, is a manifestation of a longtime dream of Paul Carr, its Music Director, to extend the music education opportunities afforded him, as an inner city youth, to others.

The Jazz Academy programs draw from and build upon the disciplines of music education Paul experienced in his youth. The mission of the Academy is to advance and preserve Jazz music through education. Its website is <http://www.jazzacademy.org>.

For more information on the performers and the Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival, including artist bios (and video clips), tickets, accommodations and more, visit <https://www.midatlanticjazzfestival.org/> or email [inquiry@midatlanticjazzfestival.org](mailto:inquiry@midatlanticjazzfestival.org). *Photos by Ron Weinstock*

## LIKE JAZZ & BLUES PHOTOS?



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

# Oscar Peterson International Jazz Festival

## February 16-18

By Ron Weinstock



**Jimmy Greene**



**Cecile McLorin Salvant**

The Inaugural Oscar Peterson International Jazz Festival takes place during the weekend of February 16 - 18, 2018 with venues are in the historic Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and nearby City of St. Catharines in the Niagara Wine Country of Ontario, Canada. Spearheaded by Artistic Director, celebrated jazz pianist Renee Rosnes, the world's first (and only!) jazz festival bearing the name of Canada's greatest jazz artist will honor and celebrate the great pianist's legacy of excellence.

This Festival is not intended to simply present concerts in tribute to Oscar Peterson, but rather to truly present jazz, showcasing the rich history and the future of the music Oscar loved. In addition to Artistic Director Rosnes, the festival is led by Artistic Producer Kelly Peterson, and Executive Producers Christine Mori and Alexis Spieldenner of Bravo Niagara! Festival of the Arts.

The 2018 Festival will be dedicated to Norman Granz, celebrating the 100th anniversary of his birth. "Impresario, record producer, civil rights activist, and founder of Jazz at the Philharmonic, Norman Granz is

arguably the most important non-musician in jazz history," said Kelly Peterson, noting his use of jazz concerts to attack racial discrimination. Jazz at the Philharmonic ("JATP" as it was known) was a series of all-star jam-session-style concerts that began in 1944 when Granz presented a concert at the Philharmonic Auditorium in Los Angeles.

The first to present jazz in concert halls, giving it the same respect as classical music, he made it a contractual obligation for there to be no segregation in the concert venues, leading the charge against discrimination long before the Civil Rights Movement began. Granz himself said, "The whole reason for Jazz at the Philharmonic was to take it to places where I could break down segregation and discrimination."

Friday night, February 16, they will present an International All-Star "Jazz at the Philharmonic" with multiple GRAMMY Award and Jazz Poll winners, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Jon Faddis, Jimmy Greene, Michael Dease, Benny Green, Christian McBride, and Kenny Washington. They will be performing in a JATP style program at the Festival's all-star opening night event at the FirstOn-

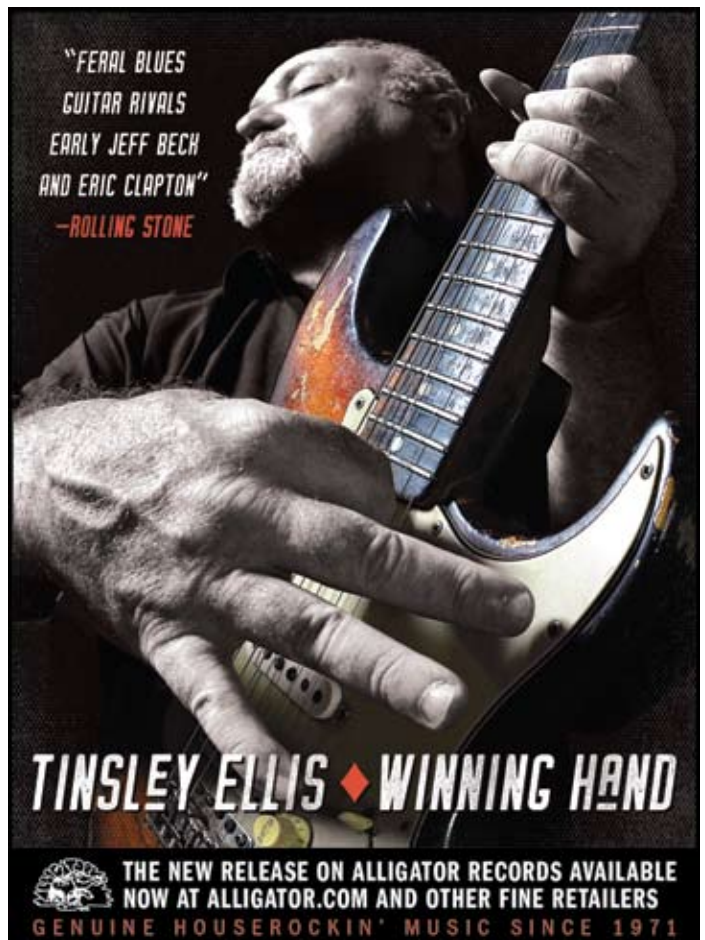


tario Performing Arts Centre, in St. Catharines. Saturday afternoon, the historic 1792 St. Mark's Anglican Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake will be the venue for screenings on Saturday afternoon of two documentaries produced by Norman Granz (one of which, "Jammin' the Blues," was nominated for an Oscar), as well as a JATP concert film. Tad Hershorn, jazz archivist and Granz biographer, will moderate, along with Jacques Muyal, long-time associate of Granz.

Saturday evening will bring a Gala affair to Stratus Vineyards in Niagara-on-the-Lake with Double Portrait, the piano duo of the Festival's Artistic Director Renee Rosnes, the 5-time JUNO Award-winning pianist, and GRAMMY Award-winning pianist Bill Charlap. The post-concert Gala Reception includes hors d'oeuvres by Chef Horne of Canoe Restaurant, Stratus wine, and Soma chocolate. The Festival concludes on Sunday at Stratus Vineyards with its grand finale, featuring Canadian artists Carol Welsman, Kevin Turcotte, Mike Murley, Robi Botos, Dave Young, and Jim Doxas in another Jazz at the Philharmonic-style concert. Sunday afternoon's event will also feature the premiere presentation of the newly created Canadian Jazz Master Awards.

The Festival's website is <https://www.opjazzfest.org/> and the email address is [info@opjazzfest.org](mailto:info@opjazzfest.org). They are on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/opijf>, the twitter feed is @opjazzfest and the instagram link is @oscarpetersonjazzfest.

*Photos by Ron Weinstock*



"FERAL BLUES  
GUITAR RIVALS  
EARLY JEFF BECH  
AND ERIC CLAPTON"  
—ROLLING STONE

**TINSLEY ELLIS ♦ WINNING HAND**

THE NEW RELEASE ON ALLIGATOR RECORDS AVAILABLE  
NOW AT ALLIGATOR.COM AND OTHER FINE RETAILERS  
GENUINE HOUSEROCKIN' MUSIC SINCE 1971



**Go Green...  
Go Grey**

**Help Save the Environment  
Help Save an Endangered  
Manatee Today**

**Adopt-A-Manatee!**

**Call 1-800-432-JOIN (5646)  
[www.savethemanatee.org](http://www.savethemanatee.org)**



Photo © Robyn Churchill

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

Jazz is art, you dig? Art can

really transform lives.

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



**Art. Ask for More.**

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

**NAMM**  
Foundation



Image donated by Corbis-Bettmann. TM 2008 Estate of Mercer K. Ellington by CMC Worldwide





We only bring you  
the Cream of the Crop!



## CURTIS SALGADO - ALAN HAGER

**Rough Cut**  
ALLIGATOR RECORDS

This new album brings the veteran singer and harmonica player Salgado with guitarist Hager with whom Salgado has been jamming with since 2003 and who has been a member of his band since 2015.

The pair has also performed at the Portland Waterfront Blues Festival so the sound of this album of stripped down performances of mostly duets with occasional addition of piano, bass and drums will be familiar to some. There are seven originals and six covers in the program.

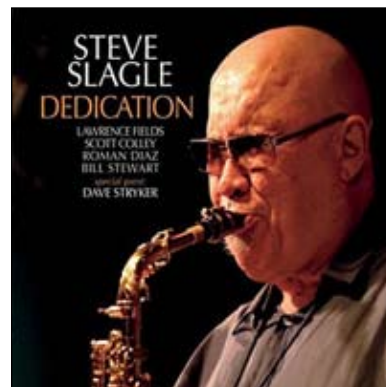
Given Salgado's health issues for a number of years, the vigor of his vocals will be welcome by all. The album starts on a striking note with "I Will Not Surrender," with Hager's atmospheric electric guitar contributing to its mood. With Hager backing him mostly with chords on acoustic guitar, Salgado delivers another moving performance on "So Near To Nowhere," adding nice harmonica. With rollicking piano from Jim Pugh along with light bass and drums, Salgado turns in a solid vocal and crying harp on "One Night Only," with Hager adding some Tampa Red-styled slide guitar.

After an amusing "I Want My Dog To Live Longer (The Greatest Wish)," with nimble Hager guitar, we get five covers. As capable as Salgado and Hager are, I find little satisfaction in his recreations of Muddy Waters "I Can't Be Satisfied" or Son House's "Depot Blues," as they reflect experiences that he only can sing about as opposed to have lived. I have less issue with the renditions of Sonny Boy Williamson's "Too Young To Die" or "You Got To Move," which are less lyrically rooted in the African-American experience.

They are all well performed, and others will differ from me on this. Hager shows himself to be a pretty fair singer on a nice cover of Robert Wilkins' "Long Train Blues," with

Salgado adding nice harp backing to his agile guitar.

Salgado plays piano capably on "Hell in a Handbasket," with a raspy, humorous vocal, while Hager gets a chance to display his ability to craft a moving instrumental as well as his attention to tone on the imaginative instrumental "The Gift of Robert Charles," with its shift in tempos. A lively cover of Big Bill Broonzy's "I Want You By My Side" closes what is a most entertaining, strongly played and sung low-key blues recording. **Ron Weinstock**



## STEVE SLAGLE

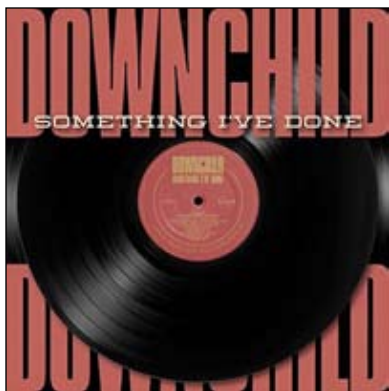
**Dedication**  
PANORAMA RECORDS

The title of saxophonist (and flutist) Steve Slagle's new album refers to a person or a thing directly related to this music and listed with each song. Joining Slagle on alto saxophone (and on flute and soprano sax) are Lawrence Fields-piano, Scott Colley-bass, Roman Diaz-percussion, Bill Stewart-drums, and special guest Dave Stryker-guitar. Slagle composed seven of the nine selections, while guitarist Stryker contributed one and the last track is from Wayne Shorter's pen.

The program opens with a lively calypso, "Sun Song," dedicated to Sonny Rollins followed by the brisk-paced "Niner," a name Steve Swallow gave him years ago. It has striking solos from Slagle, Stryker and Fields while Bill Stewart shines in propelling this performance forward.

There is a double meaning to the quartet's spirited "Major In Come," built on major chords in five keys, with Slagle's explosive sax, Field's vivacious piano and Stewart's rousing drumming. "Opener" is a hard bop flavored original that is dedicated to the late Jackie McLean. Slagle observes about his relationship to McLean, that one can be inspired by an older master while having one's own sound as he shows on the twisting lines he lays out here before closing this with some effervescent flute. Stryker wrote "Corazon," dedicated to Joe Zawinul, which is a charming ballad with some of Slagle's loveliest playing with Stryker providing chordal support.

"Charcoal Blues," by Wayne Shorter, is a loping performance with memorable playing from Stryker and Colley in addition to the leader. With intriguing compositions, an excellent band and imaginative, engrossing performances, "Dedication," is another marvelous recording from Steve Slagle. **Ron Weinstock.**



**DOWNCHILD**  
**Something I've Done**  
 LINUS

Canada's Downchild has been playing road house blues for nearly half a century and Donnie Walsh's band mates have at least 20 years of service with the group. While Walsh (guitar and harmonica) has been the primary songwriter of the band, for this recording most of the material comes from the other members including Chuck Jackson (lead vocals and harmonica), Michael Fonfara (keyboards and dobro guitar), Gary Kendall (bass), and Mike Fitzpatrick (drums).

Also contributing songs are British Columbia bluesman David Vest and one from the late John Witmer, one-time Downchild vocalist. Also on the album is saxophonist Pat Carey and trumpeter Peter Jeffrey.

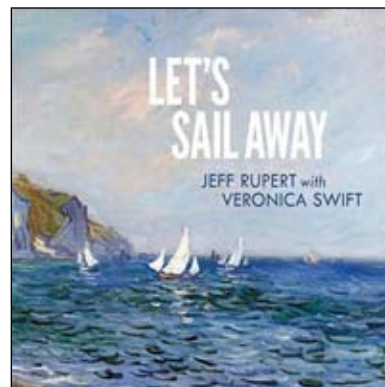
There is a bit of a Fats Domino-NOLA feel to Jackson's "Albany, Albany," about a woman leaving and makes him cry as he remembers "we used to dance and sing all night," and pleading her to come home, with a strong vocal and a tough baritone sax solo. Vest's "Worried About the World" has a catchy hook line with a topical cast – but while "everybody worried about the world, nobody worried about me." Jackson adds some effective harp along with his vocal.

Fonfara contributed "Can't Get Mad At You," on which he contributes dobro while Jackson sings about how he cried but just can't get mad at his lady, while Jackson's other original, "Mississippi Woman, Mississauga Man," is a catchy and slightly cheeky number with some appealing harmonica.

Other selections include Kendall's "Take A Piece of My Heart," which is a soulful, swamp pop styled ballad with some very nice piano and perhaps Jackson's most moving vocal here, while Kendall's "Mailbox Money" is a terrific bluesy piece of rock and roll with a booting tenor sax solo and slashing guitar from Walsh. There is plenty to like about Witmer's clever "She Thinks I Do." "Something I've Done" opens with rollicking piano on a Big Joe Turner flavored jump blues (evocative of "Flip, Flop and Fly") with some effective harmonica from Walsh.

Walsh's contribution is a closing instrumental, "Evelyn," that features Walsh's singing harmonica. It closes a solid effort. The long-time the members of Downchild have been together is reflected by the

tight, supportive ensemble playing that helps provide focus to these performances. Also the focus on the performances are delivering the songs, and with the exception of the closing instrumental, solos do not run more than a chorus or two, so one does not get over-extended jams. As drummer Kendall observes, "This is not blues-rock. This is jump blues. We are trying to move the form forward, writing songs that relate to today, but we have a line we won't cross." The result is contemporary songs that are traditionally performed in a most convincing manner. *Ron Weinstock*



**JEFF RUPERT WITH VERONICA SWIFT**

**Let's Sail Away**  
 RUPE MEDIA

Listening to vocalist Veronica Swift on this recording where she shares billing with saxophonist Jeff Rupert, one can understand why she finished second to Jazzmeia Horn in the 2015 Thelonious Monk Institute vocal competition.

Take for example "Ginza Samba," a hot number where her hornlike scatting in harmony with the saxophonist as well as her own solos and trading fours with drummer Marty Morell displays her marvelous pitch, clarity, crisp phrasing and dynamics. She is the daughter of the late bop pianist Hod O'Brien (from Oscar Pettiford's band and associations with Art Farmer and Chet Baker), and the well-known jazz vocalist Stephanie Nakasian. Currently she is touring with Chris Botti, and when not on tour has a residency at Birdland in New York City. she shines in the interpretation of a lyric as displayed in her handling of a ballad on "Beauty Becomes Her." She herself contributed the lyrics to a stunning rendition of "Pennies From Heaven," which derives from the classic Oscar Peterson/Stan Getz recording, and displays her vocalese talents, along with her voice's lovely qualities.

Saxophonist Jeff Rupert has performing and recording credits that include associations with Diane Schuur, Mel Tormé, Kevin Mahogany, Ernestine Anderson, and Benny Carter's Grammy winning Harlem Renaissance. Jeff Rupert toured for fifteen years with Sam Rivers, from 1997 to 2002 toured with Maynard Ferguson as well as having recorded several albums. Others on this date include pianist Richard Drexler, a frequent collaborator, drummer Marty Morell, and



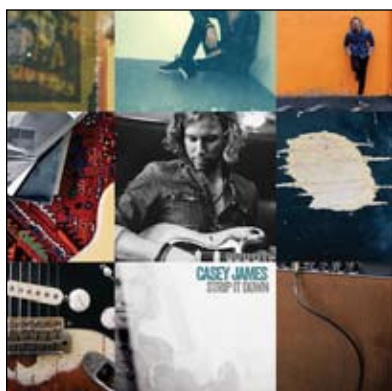
bassist Charlie Silva.

As a composer and arranger, Rupert has written for Bob Berg, James Moody, Maynard Ferguson, Kenny Drew Jr, Kevin Mahogany and Judy Carmichael. The centerpiece of this album is his arrangement of "Rhapsody in Blue." His arrangement was commissioned by the Celebration Foundation of Celebration, Florida, and he drew from Billy Strayhorn's adaption for the Duke Ellington band.

It is a magical performance with Rupert's sax and Swift's superb horn-like scatting joined on this track by trumpeter Dan Miller (who takes a terrific solo); trombonist Christian Herrera, and baritone saxophonist Saul Dautch (who helps launch the Gershwin classic). Pianist Drexler also dazzles here. It is followed by "Home Blues" from Gershwin's *An American in Paris*. This melodic statement is found in the middle of the original work and there is an additional verse here. There is wonderful interplay between Swift's singing and Rupert's sax on this as well as a superb sax solo.

Among other delights are the spirited Brazilian jazz of "Vou Deitar E Rolar - Aviso Aos Na," that Swift arranged, and the closing "Dream a Little Dream of Me," as Rupert describes Swift's as singing it "as if it was her own tune for a delightful close to this recording. Veronica Swift is a splendid singer from whom we will be hearing much more from in the future. Her collaboration with saxophonist Jeff Rupert and his excellent band has produced this superlative jazz vocal album.

*Ron Weinstock*



## CASEY JAMES

**Strip It Down**  
SELF-PRODUCED

Casey James maybe familiar to many as a finalist on season 9 of "American Idol," and familiar to still more as a country artist who notched a Top 15 single with "Crying on a Suitcase." On this new release he focuses on this and roots music roots. Produced by Tom Hambridge (who is on drums), others on this include Kevin McKendree on keyboards, Tommy MacDonald on bass, Pat Buchanan on rhythm guitar, and the Muscle Shoals Horns. Delbert McClinton makes an appearance on one song, singing and playing harmonica.

There is plenty to enjoy about James' blues-soul-

PAGE NINE

country-roots stew. Most of the songs are his originals and range from the driving blues of the opening "All I Need," where his gritty, urgent singing impresses along with his searing, singing guitar riffs, and the duet with McClinton on the shuffle "Bulletproof" where they trade their strong vocals with McKendree adding some honky tonk piano, and the soul-infused "Hard Times, Heartaches & Scars." Pat Buchanan handles harmonica on the lively rhumba blues "I Got To Go," while there is a blues-rock feel on "Messin' Around." The title track is a blues-tinged driving rock number with strong lyrics, heartfelt vocal and insistent backing.

The one non-original is of Little Willie John's "Need Your Love So Bad," with a low-key opening with an intensity that builds through this wonderfully paced performance with an especially nice guitar break. Other songs include the hard rock (not heavy metal) "Supernatural," the country rock of "Makin' Up," with rollicking piano from McKendree, and the wistful country-flavored "Stupid Crazy."

Rob McKinley adds slide guitar to the closing blues-rock "Fight You For the Blues." It rounds out a release that shows James to be a strong vocalist, forceful as well as adroit in his vocal dynamics, an exceptional songwriter and an able guitar slinger. Backed by the tight, supportive studio band, Casey James has produced this gem for blues-roots fans.

*Ron Weinstock*



## JOSEPH BOWIE • OLIVER LAKE

**Live at 'A Space' 1976**  
SACKVILLE/ DELMARK

It was in Spring 1978 when I went to an Art Gallery in New York's Greenwich Village to see a duet concert by Oliver Lake and I believe Julius Hemphill. This was towards the end of the loft scene in New York City but concerts like this also took place in other cities. I saw in Buffalo in 1977 Muhal Richard Abrams and Leroy Jenkins.

Sackville issued a recording of a similar concert by saxophonist Oliver Lake and trombonist Joseph Bowie recorded in Toronto in 1976 at the A Space gallery and Delmark has just reissued this concert with liner notes from Barry Tepperman that originally appeared in the Canadian magazine, *Coda*, as a concert review of these 'free jazz' duets.

This is passionate music and one of moments of

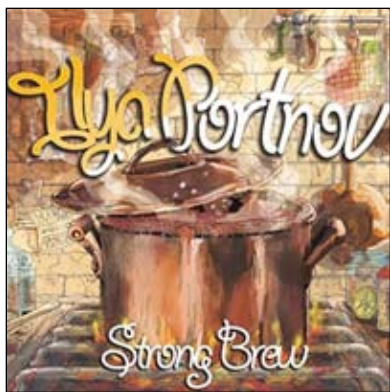
January • February 2018 • Issue 376

jazz  
& blues

lyricism matched with squawks and shouts played with power as they mix phases from an underlying motif as Lake's alto sax lines would be matched by Bowie's hoarse shouts as they both use slight and broad shifts of timbre in making their passionate musical displays from the opening "Zaki," where Lake extends himself with some moments of lyricism along with high energy with Bowie's gruff slide adding staccato bursts. Lake's flute provides a tranquil, almost picturesque quality to the opening of "Orange Butterflies," with Bowie at first complementing Lake's sometimes playful lead and then growling in response with Bowie switching to alto sax. "After Assistance" is a fascinating performance built around a bluesy motif and with Lake's leaps, honks and cries, Bowie responds with growly, swirling slurs and honks.

As my description of these tracks would suggest, this is not a recording for casual listening and certainly not for all tastes. It certainly documents a specific moment of impassioned free improvisation and those whose interests include the more experimental forms of improvisation will find this well worth checking out. Both Lake and Bowie continue to make impressive, original music. Lake was one of the founders of the World Saxophone Quartet and continues to compose and perform in a variety of contexts including the Oliver Lake Organ Quartet, Oliver Lake Big Band and Trio 3. Bowie has been involved in both jazz and funk spheres helped form the funk band Defunct and worked with a variety of funk and jazz groups including the Ethnic Heritage Ensemble and the Oliver Lake Big Band.

*Ron Weinstock*



## ILYA PORTNOV

**Strong Brew**  
**SELF-PRODUCED**

Russian born harmonica player Portnov impresses on this most enjoyable collection of blues, gypsy jazz and other roots music. A background that included studying classical piano, he also absorbed rock and blues growing up. He studied at the New England Conservatory of Music where he received a Masters Degree. He was the first person accepted in NEC with the diatonic harmonica as his main instrument. Taught in Russia to play the harmonica, his teacher Alex Bratsky showed him an overflow technique, and

introduced him to harmonica innovators, Howard Levy, Jason Ricci and Carlos del Junco, making him realize he could play anything on the harmonica. Moving to the US enabled him to meet and study with them, and delve deeper into blues and other roots music including Brazilian choro.

On this nine song program Portnov is supported by Kid Andersen on guitar and bass, Chris Burns on piano and keyboards, June Core on drums with Ben Andrews (a member of Portnov's band Choro Bastardo) adding violin to two tracks, Rob Vye, adding guitar on one track and percussion on another and Robby Yamilov adding bass to one track. It was recorded by Kid Andersen at his Greaseland Studios.

It opens with the very appealing, old time country tinged "Sunny Afternoon Blues," where his harmonica and Andrews' violin make for a very engaging performance with his playing evocative of jazz harmonica players such as Henrik Meurkens. Against an energetic gypsy flavor (Burns keyboards adds to the flavor with Andersen channeling the Ventures and other surf guitar instrumentals), Portnov dazzles with his sax-like lines. On "Dance Of A Lonely Doll," his wonderful playing is in a gypsy jazz vein with Burns' deft piano accompaniment along with very light bass and drums. Rob Vye's guitar introduces Rev Gary Davis' "Cincinnati Flow Rag" with some wonderful fingerstyle picking before Portnov joins in and then the full ensemble on a lively acoustic band number.

The waltz "In a Town Garden" is another charming gypsy-flavored tune with some nicely played harmonica and organ from Burns. "Behind The Wall" is a solid instrumental in a Little Walter vein with some fat toned Mississippi saxophone while Burns and Anderson lay down some solid support and Core is superb on this easy rocking instrumental. The title track is a laid back, four o'clock in morning, blues instrumental played relatively softly with tasteful solos from Burns and Andersen in addition to the leader. "1928" is a lovely tango which also features Ben Andrews' violin.

Its back to the blues on the closing "Till Early Morning," with its infectious Bo Diddley groove and enticing tremolo employed in Andersen's guitar playing. Portnov is a marvelous harmonica player and is backed by the likewise marvelous studio band on this likewise marvelous recording.

*Ron Weinstock*

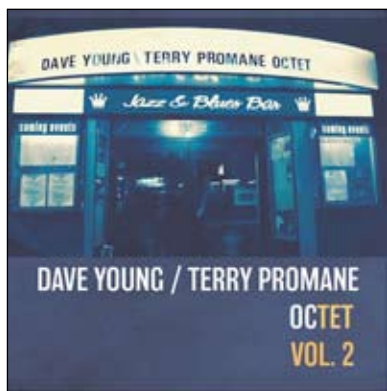
**LIVE BLUES**  
**ON**  
**THE HIGH**  
**SEAS**

Read The Review  
[www.jazz-blues.com](http://www.jazz-blues.com)

click the Notable' button







## DAVE YOUNG / TERRY PROMANE OCTET

**Octet Volume 2**  
MODICA MUSIC LTD

As evident from the title, this is the second volume of music from this band led by bassist Young and trombonist Promane. Dave Young is a gifted jazz and classical bassist who has performed with the Edmonton and Winnipeg Symphonies, and also collaborated with Oscar Peterson, Clark Terry, Zoot Sims, Oliver Jones, Rob McConnell, James Moody, and Cedar Walton.

Terry Promane is Associate Professor – Jazz Studies at the University of Toronto and is best known for his work as a trombonist with Rob McConnell, Mike Murley, John MacLeod, and Kirk MacDonald who also is an award winning composer and arranger with many of Canada's most prolific small and large jazz ensembles. In addition to the leaders, there are more of Canada's leading improvisors: Kevin Turcotte (trumpet), Mike Murley (tenor sax) Vern Dorge (alto sax), Perry White (baritone sax), Terry Clarke (drums), and David Restivo (piano).

This album features originals, lush arrangements of songs from the Great American Song Book, and tributes to the music of jazz greats Dizzy Gillespie, Charles Mingus and Cedar Walton. The opening "Oh What a Beautiful Morning" certainly showcases the handsome arrangements (this one from Young), the solid ensemble playing on a fresh take on a very familiar number. Perry White's baritone sax stands out as he helps anchor this performance along with taking a brawny solo, while Turcotte's brassy playing also impresses.

Restivo's piano opens a lovely rendition of Charles Mingus' "Duke Ellington's Sounds Of Love," again with a Young arrangement providing the appealing horn voicings of the theme in a lovely, fresh rendition of a number that seems to have been subject to a number of recent interpretations. Dorge impresses with his solo, and the ensemble horns are exemplary while Restivo accompanies them imaginatively.

A hard swinging "I Can't Give You Anything But Love (Baby)" has Promane (who arranged this as well) taking flight early and then Terry Clarke takes a crisp drum solo followed by Murley's authoritative tenor sax. "Detour Ahead" is an attractive ballad with memorable solos from Murley and Young (whose

playing is handsomely framed by Promane's horn arrangement). The Octet imaginatively approaches Dizzy Gillespie's "Bebop," initially taking it at a slower tempo before Clarke's drum break leads to the pace quickening and again wonderful scoring (this time from Young) of the theme with some impassioned alto sax. Murley's "Can't You See," a lively contrafact of "Tea For Two," has vigorous solos from Young, Promane and the composer. This recording closes with a swinging rendering of Cedar Walton's "Hindsight," featuring Murley, Restivo and Young (also the arranger). Other performances similarly have strong playing by this superb group. The renditions of this material, imaginatively arranged and played resulted in some superb music. *Ron Weinstock*



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**Down Home Blues: Chicago • Fine Boogie**  
WIENERWORLD

If you are thinking about a gift for the blues lover in your life, this public domain 5 CD box set certainly is well worthy of considering. With 134 songs from both famous and obscure blues performers, and an 88 page booklet with an overview of the post-war Chicago blues scene and the artists heard, along with a full sessionography, it provides over 6 hours of prime Chicago blues. The mastering is as good as one can expect with some of this material coming from rare acetates or 78s.

Musically, this compilation takes us from recordings in the relaxed band sound that some scholars termed "the Bluebeat Beat," to the more familiar impassioned ensemble blues of Mississippi natives Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters and Elmore James. Included are the earliest commercial recordings of Muddy Waters and Johnny Shines, that were not issued until a couple decades later.

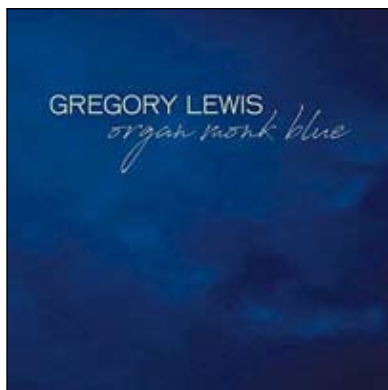
There are recordings from small independent labels like the Maxwell Street based Ora Nelle label with Johnny Young's "Money Taking Woman," the J.O.B. label with Johnny Shines' "Ramblin'," Old Swingmaster for Snooky & Moody's "Keep what You Got," Parrot with Dusty Brown's "He Don't Love Me," Cool Records with Billy Boy Arnold's "Hello Stranger," and more.

There are artists new to me such as Grey Haired Bill, Mildred White (who recorded at a session with Pete

Franklin (with Tampa Red on piano), and 'Blues Boy' Bill, along with representative recordings of Muddy Waters, Jimmy Reed, Jimmy Rogers, Little Walter and Howlin' Wolf, with some of these being alternate takes to those on 78s and 45s and only available on out-of-print album reissues on labels like Blues Classics, Nighthawk, Muskadine, Flyright and others. There are also rarities from Birmingham Jones, St. Louis Jimmy, Robert Nighthawk, Albert King, Baby Face Leroy Foster, J.B. Hutto, Pete Franklin, Sunnyland Slim, Eddie Boyd, Memphis Minnie and Po' Joe Williams (aka (Big Joe)).

While not every one of the 134 songs is a blues classic, this collection is filled with so many gems as well as some entertaining selections that give a solid overview of early blues recording in Chicago. Add the 88 page booklet from Blues Scholar Mike Rowe, and this release is invaluable to lovers of Chicago blues. There is almost 6 and 1/2 hours of music on these five CDs which does not duplicate any of the selections on another reissue collection, the four-disc "Down Home Blues Classics Vol. 3: Chicago" on Boulevard Vintage which is also highly recommended if you can find it.

*Ron Weinstock*



**GREGORY LEWIS**  
**Organ Monk Blue**  
**SELF PRODUCED**

The latest Organ Monk effort from Hammond B-3 player Gregory Lewis has him accompanied by guitarist Marc Ribot-guitar and drummer Jeremy Bean Clemons. The presence of guitarist Ribot, one of today's most highly regarded and genre defying players, provides a new voice to explore eight Thelonious Monk compositions (some not often performed) with Lewis on his latest Organ Monk recording.

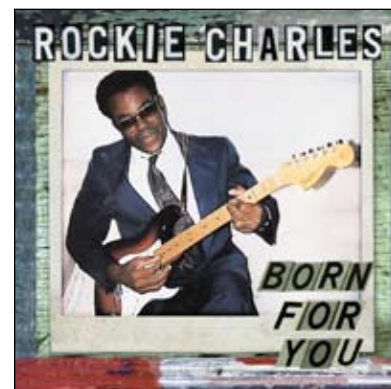
The opening "Green Chimneys" opens with a clipped groove with Ribot playing in a straight-ahead vein contrasting with a more rock textured tone in accord with Lewis' own atmospheric playing on the languorous "Blue Sphere," with a well constructed bluesy solo taken while Lewis interpolates a bit of "Crepuscle With Nellie" in his orchestral solo.

"Raise Four" blasts off with a straight-ahead duet between Lewis and Clemons before Ribot's electrified sax-like guitar on this exciting interpretation, while the

rendition of "Misteriso" has Ribot building his solo with cleanly articulated single note runs followed by Lewis' own mix of single note runs and chords set against Lewis' employment of the full range of B-3 tones.

"Blue Hawk" is a bluesy, almost conventional B-3 blues with a strong bluesy solo from Ribot and then some punchy playing from Lewis. At the beginning of "Nutty," Lewis implies the theme amongst the swirling sounds he produces before stating the theme while there is a stop-time rhythm on the opening of "Blues Five Spot," with Ribot taking an especially sparkling solo. There is a playfulness heard on "Ba-Lue Bolivar Ba-Lues-Are," which closes this latest installment of Monk interpretations. The collaborations with Marc Ribot provides a fresh dimension to Lewis' own organ inventions resulting into some very inspired and enthralling music.

*Ron Weinstock*



**ROCKIE CHARLES**  
**Born For You**  
**ORLEANS RECORDS**

A most pleasant surprise is this reissue of the late New Orleans based soul singer's 1996 release. Nick-named "The President of Soul" after a 1970s recording released on his own label, he returned to recording when Carlos Ditta contacted him after seeing an ad Charles had placed, which resulted in this recording. Outside of Smokey Greenwell's harmonica and Jerry Embree's tenor sax, none of the players on this session backing Charles' guitar and vocals is a name I remember. They do a fine job in backing Charles on his eleven originals here.

This was a marvelous soul session with a bit of country flavor in the vein of some of Joe Tex's recordings, although Charles' voice is suggestive of Al Green. The album opens in a solid vein with his emotive yearning vocal on the lament "Born For You," with the smoldering heat in his vocal while Embree's tenor sax adds a mournful riff over the understated backing. "Old Black Joe" is a marvelous half-talking piece of story telling in the Joe Tex manner.

Greenwell's harmonica adds to the atmosphere of another lament "Oh My Darling, Look What You're Doing to Me," as he sings about wanting to move but his body does not seem able. Another song with a Joe Tex feel is "Something IS Wrong With Our Love," with



his plead to find a way out of this with solid idiomatic horn playing. With steel guitar added to the backing, Charles' lyrical skills are heard on the catchy "Festis Believe in Justice." There is more of a Memphis feel with the chugging rhythms of "I Need Your Love so Bad, I'm About to Loose My Mind," while there is also a fine holiday song, "I Just Called to Wish You a Merry Christmas" (and a Happy New Year.)

"This"Born For You," was a most welcome return for Rockie Charles which led to a variety of Jazz Fest, Ponderosa Stomp and other performances over the next decade. I had the pleasure of seeing him perform a couple times prior to his passing away in 2007. The soulful performances on this most welcome re-release, are gems of down-home, understated, southern soul.

**Ron Weinstock**



## **ELLA FITZGERALD**

**Live at Zardi's  
VERVE**

This new release makes available a live recording from February 1956 by the first lady of song. Recorded shortly after she signed with Norman Granz's new Verve label, there are two sets of her captured on February 2, 1956, backed by a trio comprised of pianist Don Abney, bassist Vernon Alley and drummer Frank Capp.

Granz had been managing Fitzgerald and featuring her on his Jazz at the Philharmonic series of concerts. He was dissatisfied with how Decca Records was recording her and an opportunity came for him to sign her. During this engagement she was recording singles for the new Granz label and a few days after this three week engagement ended would record "Ella Fitzgerald Sings The Cole Porter Song Book," the first of her historic Song Book releases.

There are familiar favorites of her repertoire at the time that display her marvelous musicality, phrasing, dynamics and scatting including "How High the Moon," and "Tenderly." The Gershwins' "S'Wonderful," Duke Ellington's "In a Mellow Tone," Cole Porter's "My Heart Belongs To Daddy," and "I've Got a Crush On You," and Jerome Kern's "A Fine Romance," are tunes that she would revisit in the Songbooks. There are some nods to the blues such as her rendition of the Lil Green classic "Why Don't You Do Right?," although she does not have the depth or sultriness of the original or Peggy

Lee's more familiar rendition. In contrast, her treatment of "Cry Me a River" conveys the sadness of this lament. There also are a spirited "Joe Williams Blues," based on the classic boogie woogie "Roll 'Em Pete," and the lively scatting on "It's Bernie's Tune".

A swinging "S'Wonderful" kicks off the second of the two sets presented on this CD (21 songs with an hour and 8 minutes) with other favorites that night including "Lullabye Of Birdland," "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," and the song that kicked off her fame in the late thirties while with Chick Webb, "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," with an acknowledgement of one of the songs' writers who was in the audience that night. After the charm of "My Heart Belongs To Daddy," she astonishes on "Air Mail Special," before she closes with the heartfelt "I've Got A Crush On You."

These performances sat in the vault for six decades and now we have them to savor. With over an hour of Ella Fitzgerald in her prime, this is another most welcome addition to the celebration of her centenary.

**Ron Weinstock**



## **HEATHER NEWMAN**

**Burn Me Alive  
VIZZTONE**

Bassist-vocalist Heather Newman was introduced to folks on Nick Schnebelen Band "Live at Knuckleheads Vol. 1." "Burn Me Alive" is her debut album which also showcases her songwriting with 12 originals. Her band includes Keith Ladd on guitar, Ryan Flemmer on keyboards and Cole Dillingham on guitar and drums. Nick Schnebelen guests on one selection as does saxophonist Michael Lefever.

This is a nicely played and sung recording of blues and blues-rock. The band is tight and Newman is a dynamic, forceful vocalist which is evident with her storytelling on the opening "Willie James," which displays her forceful singing with a nice guitar solo and a nice lyrical hook.

About her singing, I observed in a review of the Schnebelen album, "... I wish Newman would tone her singing down at spots, but this is a quibble as her phrasing and pitch is spot on... ." My comment about toning her vocals down is more a matter of taste, as her delivery is impressive and her vocal dynamics impresses especially with her judicious use of a lion-

ess growl. This is further illustrated on the next number, “Bring the Swing,” a peppy number with a Bo Diddley influenced groove and some stinging guitar as she sings “let’s keep on loving babe,” as “I got the rhythm and you got the swing... ”

With respect to other songs, there is a relaxed walking groove on “Howling For Love,” with more solid backing as she sings about her man howling for love and not wanting her to leave, and Flemmer takes a nice solo. The title track is an atmospheric slow blues with her yearning for her lover to ease her to sleep. Flemmer takes a restrained electric piano solo while Ladd’s use of vibrato adds to the feel of this strong performance. Schnebelen is on “High Mountain Blues,” and his crisp solo adds to the pleasures of this number, while “How Many Times” has a jazzy opening before her sultry vocal. “Dirty Blues” is another number that opens in a sultry, jazz vein with saxophonist Lefever lending his raspy tenor sax to support of her evocative singing. Another point about the music here is the nice pace of the performances which never come across as rushed or frantic.

With the strong, empathic support by her band throughout, Heather Newman impresses with her wholehearted, passionate vocals on a most noteworthy recording debut.

**Ron Weinstock**



## HIROMI & EDMAR CASTANEDA

Live In Montreal  
TELARC

Those not familiar with harpist Edmar Castaneda’s playing may need to check any preconceptions about this axe at the door. Far from the delicate waves and showers of notes and pinpoint plucking often associated with the instrument, the Columbia-born Castaneda’s approach is typically hard-plucked and aggressive, frequently approximating an acoustic guitar in attack. His style makes for great sonic and textural interplay with pianist Hiromi’s dazzling technique and elegant touch.

Impish, low-register conversation sets up the groove of Castaneda’s “For Jaco” which sets up a smart, cooking chorus from Hiromi. The pianist’s ballad “Moonlight Sunshine” gets graceful treatment from Castaneda. Hiromi goes near-barrelhouse on John Williams’ “Cantina Band” and Astor Piazzola’s “Libertango” is a solid set-closer.

**Duane Verh**



## RONNIE EARL & THE BROADCASTERS

The Luckiest Man  
STONY PLAIN

The title of Ronnie Earl’s latest recording is from a quote of the late Jim Mouradian, Ronnie’s long-time bass player and in whose memory this recording is dedicated. Paul Kochanski has taken over the bass spot in the Broadcasters with Dave Limina on keyboards and Forrest Padgett on drums with Diane Blu taking the vocals with one exception.

Guests include guitarists Nicholas Tabarias and Peter Ward, saxophonists Mark Earley and Mario Perrett and bassist Michael ‘Mudcat’ Ward. On one track, Ronnie plays with Sugar Ray & the Bluetones, with Sugar Ray Norcia handling the vocal.

Earl is amongst the finest living blues guitarists with a nuanced attack with particular attention to employing minor changes in pitch and tone as well as his oft unpredictable development of solos. Certainly things get off on a strong note with Diana Blue’s vocal on “Ain’t That Loving you,” with Earl’s deft homage to the likes of Roy Gaines, Clarence Holliman and Mel Brown, whose fleet fretwork graced Bobby Bland’s Duke recordings.

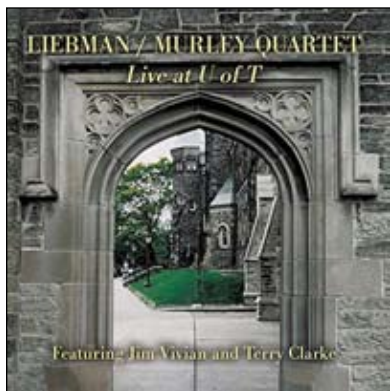
Then there is a stirring, haunting rendition of Reverend Gary Davis’ “Death Don’t Have No Mercy,” that is a guitar duet along with Diane Blue’s poignant vocal. It is one of two numbers that sound directed to the memory of Jim Mouradian, the other being “Jim’s Song,” a moving solo instrumental tune.

Limina shines on the Jon Thomas classic “Heartbreak,” before Earl’s jazz-tinged solo, while “Howlin’ Blues,” is a neat instrumental shuffle. “Long Lost Conversation” features Sugar Ray Norcia on vocal and harmonica and is a terrific late night blues while “Blues For Magic Sam” is a strong, evocative instrumental. The longest performance is an extended reworking of Otis Rush’s Chess recording, “So Many Roads,” with a fresh arrangement, a superb vocal and more astonishing guitar.

Equally superb is the rendition of Fenton Robinson’s “You Don’t Know What Love Is,” with terrific playing from everybody and Blue singing terrifically. It closes another superb Ronnie Earl recording who dazzles here on his 25th album.

**Ron Weinstock**





## LIEBMAN / MURLEY QUARTET

Live at U of T  
U OF T JAZZ

This is the second recording by saxophonists Dave Liebman and Mike Murley, the first being the previously issued *Day and Night* on Cornerstone Records. The two have performed together for more than a decade, and this release has them backed by bassist Jim Vivian and drummer Terry Clarke. It came about as a result of Liebman's appointment as Visiting Adjunct Professor at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Music, where Murley currently holds Jazz Area Chair at the Faculty of Music.

The relationship between Liebman and Murley began when Murley studied with Liebman in the 1980s at the Banff Jazz Workshop and in New York. He and Vivian have worked frequently with Liebman over the years, primarily in the Toronto area but also at recording sessions and concerts in Halifax and Montreal. Drummer Clarke is, like NEA Jazz Master Liebman, a veteran of the international jazz scene, and completed a strong cohesive group that was recorded in a small concert space with an appreciative, attentive audience. Both Murley and Liebman play tenor and soprano saxophones and Liebman also plays flute.

This is a recording full of exceptional performances of interesting material with the feel of some of the music akin to that of classic Ornette Coleman at times such as on Vivian's "Split or Whole," with the bass and drums providing an anchor for the interplay and solos between the two horn players (think about the Coleman-Dewey Redman recordings) and the playful "Ysbn," with playful prancing from the two tenors here set against Vivian's walking bass. Another Coleman styled performance is Liebman's "Missing Persons," a mournful composition that is just played by the two. The closing rendition of Joe Lovano's "Blackwell's Message," a tribute to Coleman's legendary drummer, opens with a fine Clarke drum solo (not emulating Blackwell's distinctive approach) before the horns enter for a buoyant performance.

Clarke's drum solo kicks off Liebman's lively "Off a Bird," with its ebullient feel and a choice soprano sax solo followed by a strong bass solo and then energetic tenor sax while Liebman's flute helps state the theme for Murley's "Open Spaces," and the composer himself

has a marvelously fashioned tenor sax solo. Vivian's haunting Arco playing opens "Nebula," with Clarke adding accents on cymbals to establish the mood of this performance before Liebman and Murley enter and add to the sonic coloring on this dirge. The one standard is a terrific hard bop flavored "And the Angels Sing," with more superb improvising from the two.

As indicated, this is an outstanding live recording that captures this exceptional group of musicians with these superb performances. **Ron Weinstock**



## STEVE CROPPER, LOU MARINI & THE ORIGINAL BLUES BROTHERS BAND

The Last Shade Of Blue Before Black  
SEVERN

This one will do a couple double takes among the readers, but I knew the band was still playing because I saw them at The House Of Blues a couple years ago. Now, unless my memory is tricking me, I think this is their fourth release overall. Needless to say, John Belushi, Donald "Duck" Dunn and Alan Rubin are no longer in the line-up, but the remaining members are pushing on to revive some good R&B and blues tunes that would otherwise be forgotten.

Jimmy Reed's "Baby What You Want Me To Do" leads it off with help from the horn section and the lead guitar of John Tropea. "Itch And Scratch" sounds like it could easily fit on a Tower Of Power release as Willie Dixon's "Don't Go No Further" is powered by Joe Louis Walker's guest lead vocal, Tommy McDonnell on harp and Steve Howard's trumpet solo. Barbara Lynn's 1966 #42 charting R&B tune, "You Left The Water Running" returns, pushed by the horns, especially Lou Marini's tenor sax solo.

One of the neater cuts is Eddie Floyd guesting on a tune he wrote, "Don't Forget About James Brown." The funk laden knock off/tribute then sets up the cover version of Brown's "Sex Machine," with help from a Paul Schaffer piano solo.

Speaking of piano, now on keyboards for the Blues Brothers is former Southside Johnny keyboardist Rusty Cloud, who gets to sing one of his tunes "Blues In My Feet," with help from Tom Malone's baritone sax and Rob Paparozzi's harp solo. Grand finale is the seven plus minute slow blues title cut, a showcase for Lou Marini's tenor sax solo and lead vocal.

It appears to be time to gas up the old police car. The mission from God looks to be far from over. **Peanuts**



## WES MONTGOMERY

### In Paris: The Definitive ORTF Recordings RESONANCE RECORDS

Some of the music on this terrific new Resonance reissue of Wes Montgomery in Paris has been available on earlier releases made without the authorization or cooperation of his family. Nor was the family compensated for the previous release of this material.

This is the fifth posthumous Wes Montgomery reissue done with full cooperation of his family and the second Resonance release done in collaboration with the Office of French Radio and Television and their historic archives, the first being the excellent Larry Young release of a couple years ago. This release is taken from the original session tape reels and provided a chance for high resolution transfer from these original tapes. This allowed a remix of the original recording which provided a wider range of sound and, ultimately, improved audio.

This improved audio allows us to appreciate even more the wonderful music of Wes Montgomery and his quartet that included pianist Harold Mabern, bassist Arthur Harper and drummer Jimmy Lovelace with the Little Giant, Johnny Griffin, guesting on three tracks. The magic starts with Wes' "Four on Six" with Montgomery's dazzling mix of single notes, octaves and block chords that was swing with a wonderfully constructed solo, followed by Mabern's dazzling arpeggios and block chords with Montgomery chording in support.

This is followed by a brisk rendition of John Coltrane's "Impressions," with his superb technique supporting his imaginative, fully constructed solo as he does a bit of call and response with himself. One can't praise this swinging rhythm section enough here and elsewhere. The mood is quieter on a lovely ballad, "The Girl Next Door," as it opens with Montgomery's unaccompanied chord melody statement continuing with single notes backed by bass and drums. When he starts adding octaves, Mabern joins the accompaniment on this lovely showcase of his ballad playing. "Here's That Rainy Day" is crisply played set against a light Latin groove.

The brisk tempo of "Jingles," leads to a hot rendition where Montgomery lays out chords and octaves with such ease that it continues to astound, and he

further astounds on Mabern's salute to Wayne Shorter "To Wane," where he starts his solo with single notes at breakneck speed, which marveled listeners because he used his thumb and not a pick, yet executed his solos so quickly and authoritatively. Mabern's own playing here is brilliant and in part shows the influence on Phineas Newborn.

Johnny Griffin joins in first on a loping blues "Full House," with the guitarist and the tenor saxophonist playing with much fire. It is followed by a sublime rendition of Monk's "'Round Midnight," with Montgomery first soulfully rendering the melody before Griffin enters with his solo building in its fire before Montgomery returns for an inspired improvisation. A staple of Dizzy Gillespie's early days, "Blues 'N' Boogie" has Montgomery soloing first at a bright tempo followed by the tenor saxophonist who incorporates quotes from "The Mexican Hat Song," and "Turkey in the Straw" along with a mesmerizing unaccompanied segment during his excellent, compelling solo. This performance segues into Montgomery's usual closing theme where he acknowledges the other musicians.

A captivating rendition of "Twisted Blues" which also includes the only bass solo on the program, provides a solid close to the fabulous music that was heard in Paris that March 1965 evening. As on other Resonance releases on vintage material,

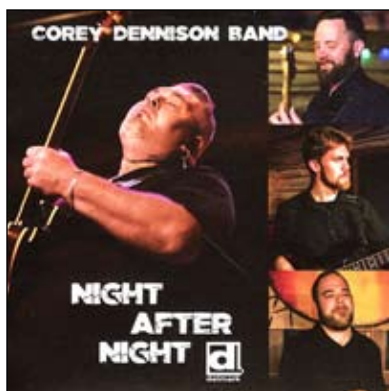
there is a booklet (32 pages) with producer Zev Feldman's overview of how this reissue came to be; a brief overview of Wes Montgomery's career in 1965 (he had started recording for Verve with the more pop-oriented orchestrated albums, but was still regarded as a straight-ahead jazz artist); brief biographies of the band members; Vincent Pelote's astute comments on the music; Pascal Rozat's observations of Montgomery's reception in France; a conversation with Harold Mabern (the only living participant in this concert) with Zev Feldman about his time with Montgomery, the band and the concert; and a conversation by Feldman with guitarist Russell Malone on Wes' impact and influence, and the music on the Paris Concert. It is a wonderful part of another superlative Resonance release.

*Ron Weinstock*

**ISSUES, SPECIAL ISSUES,  
BACK ISSUES AND  
THOUSANDS OF  
CD & DVD REVIEWS  
& MORE COOL STUFF  
IN THE WORKS!**

**jazz-blues.com**





## COREY DENNISON BAND

**Night After Night**  
DELMARK RECORDS

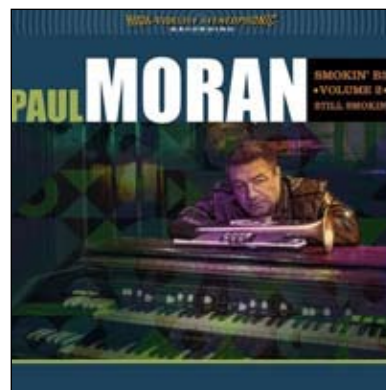
This is the second release by the former member of Carl Weathersby's Band. Born in Tennessee, but a long-time Chicago resident, Dennison has a tight band of Gerry Hundt on keyboards, guitar and harp, Nik Skilnik on bass and Joel Baer on drums and percussion on a set of 8 well-crafted originals and 5 interpretations. His blue-eyed soul blues shows influences from the likes of Weathersby, Otis Clay, Tyrone Davis, Jimmy Johnson and Magic Slim and his pinched vocals and searing guitar are similar to Bobby Radcliffe who also forged a personal approach from primarily West Side Chicago blues influences.

His tough attack is apparent on the opening "Hear My Plea," with stinging guitar and a vibrato-laden vocal as he begs his woman to hear his plea which is followed by "Misti," opening with a "Pick Up the Pieces" riff that goes into a Tyrone Davis groove with some samples and jazzy phrasing in his guitar lines as he sings about it raining in his heart as he misses Misti but he has to let her go.

In contrast, "I Got the Shivers" has a pumped up Jimmy Reed shuffle groove that evokes Magic Slim with its relentless drive, while "Better Man," has some backdoor harmonica from Hundt (along with organ) with a relaxed country-soul feel as he talks and sings about how the bad times made him who he is, and while he made mistakes, lost friends and he would not trade these bad times. After a crisp, stinging guitar break, he sings about some of the performers he misses like Chico Banks, Little Milton, Otis Clay, Johnny Taylor and Bobby Bland. It is also an especially good example of historical songwriting abilities. Another standout song is the part talking blues, "Nightcrawler 2," with its shattering guitar riffs.

Other songs include a the insistent funk of "The Phone Keeps Ringing," the Memphis feel of "Nothing's Too Good For My Baby," the slow gutty, "It's So Easy," and the down-in the alley rendition of Carl Weathersby's "Love Ain't Fair." Other covers include the Tyrone Davis flavored "Are You Serious?," the surging grooves of Cate Brothers "Stuck in Chicago," the uplifting traditional gospel hymn, "Troubles Of The World," and a lazy Jimmy Reed shuffle, "Down in Virginia," that suggests

Rice Miller with the group vocal. It is a solid close to an impressive outing for the blue-eyed soul-blues from Dennison and his band. *Ron Weinstock*



## PAUL MORAN

**Smokin' B3 • Volume 2 • Still Smokin'**  
PRUDENTIAL RECORDS

A versatile talent on the Hammond B-3 and other keyboards as well as trumpet and flugelhorn, Paul Moran also currently is Van Morrison's musical director. This is his second album of hot Hammond B3 sides. On its website, Prudential Records describes this album as Moran "paying tribute to organ greats he cites as influences including Jimmy Smith, Jimmy McGriff and Richard "Groove" Holmes."

Recorded in London, it has him with two bands. One is a quintet with guitarist Nigel Price, electric bassist Laurence Cottle, drummer Mex Clough and percussionist Michael Osbourne. The other is a quartet where he plays bass pedal along with guitarist Jim Mullen, drummer Adam Roman, and percussionist Jeff Scantlebury.

This is a solid, straight-ahead date starting with The Beatles' "Come Together," with plenty of filthy grease (nice guitar from Price), and then the punchy, shuffle blues, "Scallywag," with Moran showing why folks like Jimmy McGriff called him the real deal and more strong playing from Price with the rhythm section right in the pocket and Moran also playing flugelhorn while comping on the B3 followed by Cottle's bass solo.

The mood shifts to a late night feel of, "Moments," followed by an exhilarating "One Note Samba," with a hot acoustic guitar solo from Price. An engaging treatment of the old soul classic "Have You Seen Her," the first of the numbers with Mullen on guitar, is followed by a brisk, bouncy take on Nat Adderley's "The Work Song."

A perky "Blueberry Hill," with strong Mullen guitar, is followed by another blues shuffle, "Fried Chicken," with plenty of greasy organ along with Price's jazzy blues playing that certainly is another smoking performance

An ebullient rendering of the Rogers-Hart standard, "When or Where" closes this strong album of "Smokin' B3," that should have considerable appeal to organ jazz listeners. *Ron Weinstock*



## VEIN

### Vein Plays Ravel CHALLENGE RECORDS

Comprised of pianist Michael Arbenz, drummer Florian Arbenz and bassist Thomas Lähns, Vein's aim is to achieve with their music - their understanding of music - nothing less than the greatest possible balance of their three voices - not simply the musical interplay of a piano trio. This genre-bending trio turns their focus in the present recording on the works of the impressionistic French composer Joseph Maurice Ravel. One of the most enigmatic figures of classical music, Ravel lived in an era during which tradition transitioned into abstract modernity and he encompassed many styles of music into his compositions including baroque, Spanish music and jazz. In a similar fashion, VEIN breaks new ground without rejecting the traditional values of jazz. This album also features one of Europe's most distinctive saxophone voices, Andy Shepard.

Certainly the trio's dazzling musical approach is evident on the three pieces from "Le Tombeau de Couperin." On the opening "Prelude" their romanticism isn't inhibited from liveliness of their improvisation. It is followed by the lyrical, meditative "Forlane," with the interplay of Michael and Lähns complemented by Florian's adept use of brushes. The adaptation of the final piece "Toccata," is primarily a duet between the brothers with Florian very prominent here. "Blues" is taken from a violin sonata and anchored by Lähns's Arco playing with Michael's use of riffs, single note runs and chords supported by an atemporal employment of cymbals.

"Bolero" is the most familiar, and iconic, of Ravel's compositions, and one of the two tracks on which saxophonist Shepard is featured, along with a horn section that expresses the opulent orchestral aspect of this provocative work. His saxophone is embedded with the trio as the mesmerizing performance builds in intensity, becoming more heated until reaching an orgiastic climax. Shepard is a wonderful player with a marvelous tone and impeccable sense of dynamics and the interplay of him with the trio set against the smoldering fire of the horn section is riveting.

After the fiery "Bolero," "Pavane pour une infante defunte..." provides a welcome calm. Shepard returns on "Mouvement de Menuet" from the sonatina for piano, adding the warmth of his saxophone here. The trio is gripping

in the closing "Five O'clock Foxtrot," with each member making significant, and unexpected contributions in a performance marked by moments of fire and lyricism. It closes an imaginative take of Ravel's music, true to the spirit of the composer, yet fresh in the adaptation of his compositions.

**Ron Weinstock**



## DAVE KEYES

### The Healing KEYESLAND RECORDS

I am more familiar with Dave Keyes from his work as a sideman behind the likes of Slam Allen, Alexis Suter and a Johnny Copeland tribute than as a leader. This is apparently his 6th album and a good one indeed. He is backed by Frank Pagano on drums (with Steve Rushton on some tracks) and bassist David J. Keyes with guests guitarists Popa Chubby and Arthur Neilson, singers Vaneese Thomas and Alexis Suter, and harmonica player Rob Paparozzi. Keyes penned 9 originals along with two covers on a program that includes soul-drenched rock, blues and boogie with some gospel touches.

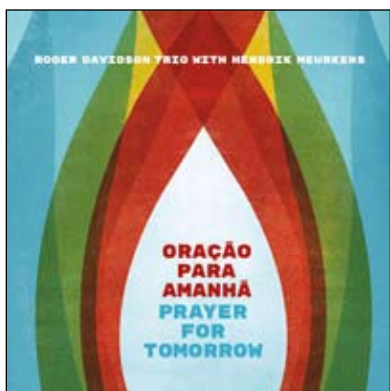
What immediately struck this listener was the level of Keyes' vocals. I knew he had serious keyboard chops, but the quality, diction, dynamics, and authoritativeness of his vocals was a very pleasant surprise. This can be heard on his very intriguing reworking of Robert Johnson's "Traveling Riverside Blues" and Sister Rosetta Tharpe's "Strange Things Happening," both of which he places a personal stamp on. It is also true of his originals including his duet with Vaneese Thomas on the soulful "Ain't Looking For Love," with its chugging rhythm, nice harmonica from Paparozzi and its refrain of some people looking for love and some just looking for sex. Suter and the Brooklyn Interdenominational Choir provide vocal backing on the gospel-tinged "Faith Grace Love And Forgiveness," another performance which illustrates the honesty and conviction Keyes invests his singing with

Keyes instrumentally being solid throughout whether as part of the rhythm section or playing rollicking solo boogie woogie on "Boogie For Stefan."

Furthermore, his songs have memorable lyrics and are well played by the studio band resulting in a striking recording. After listening to this, I would love to see Dave Keyes as a leader, not simply a sideman.

**Ron Weinstock**





## ROGER DAVIDSON TRIO WITH HENDRIK MEURKENS

### Oração para Amanhã (Prayer for Tomorrow) SOUNDBRUSH

This recording is the first by Davidson's new trio, with stellar Brazilian musicians based in New York; Eduardo Belo (bass) and Adriano Santos (drums) who are joined by another mainstay of the New York Brazilian jazz community, harmonica and vibraphone extraordinaire Hendrik Meurkens as featured soloist. Recorded at the Zinc Bar in New York City, the musicians had played several engagements there before recording this album of original Brazilian jazz compositions by Davidson, who had previously published a songbook.

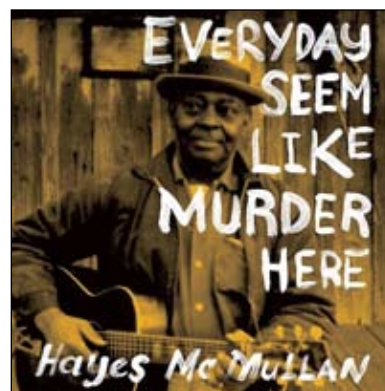
The delightful "September Samba" opens this with the interplay between the trio and Meurkens along with terrific piano and vibes solos while Santos' keeps the breezy tempos alive. On "Sonho Da Tarde" Meurkens switches to harmonica and is lending a reflective mood to this performance. "Oração para Amanhã," the title track, opens with delicate interplay by piano and vibes on a lovely performance with scintillating vibes and a solo by Belo with Davidson setting forth the theme and then taking an elegant solo.

The tempo picks up for a hot "Rio De Janeiro," with breezy harmonica, tight rhythm with Davidson taking a terrific, imaginative, solo along with a samba parade evoking drum solo. Not knowing if the programming of the CD follows the live performances, but the charm of the lovely "Saudades" in part arises from the contrast to "Rio." Also, there is the lively "Tarde Sonhadora," the wistful "Amor Brasileiro" with hauntingly beautiful harmonica, the lively "A Estrada," with Meurkens' playful harmonica and a sparkling solo from Davidson, and the appealing solo piano performance "Tres Estrelas."

"Oração para Amanhã" is full of marvelous Brazilian jazz that has much charm and is superbly performed by Davidson, his featured guest Meurkens, and the wonderful rhythm duo of Belo and Santos.

*Ron Weinstock*

**jazz & blues report**  
**jazz-blues.com**



## HAYES MCMULLAN

### Everyday Seem Like Murder Here LIGHT IN THE ATTIC RECORDS

Gayle Dean Wardlow was traveling in Black communities in his native Mississippi in the mid-sixties looking for old blues 78s when his comment regarding Charlie Patton 78s to Hayes McMullan was answered by Hayes who told Wardlow he knew and played with Patton.

Wardlow recorded interviews with McMullan where he discussed experiences with Patton, Willie Brown, Ishman Bracey and others. Also Wardlow recorded performances by him on several occasions, even though McMullan had stopped playing music in the early 1930s, so he had to practice and had some song lyrics written down as he had forgotten them over the years. The interview materials have been incorporated in Wardlow's work on Patton (including the biography of Patton co-authored with the late Stephen Calt and currently being rewritten by Wardlow). Now, a half century after this encounter, Light in the Attic Records has issued a CD of the music from around a half century with some brief interview excerpts, such as what it was like to play a party-dance with Patton, or what songs Patton regularly played.

McMullan was recorded over several occasions and had different instruments to play. Given the fact he had stopped playing decades earlier after his brother had been poisoned, one might hear some rust or tentativeness in some of these performances, but he still had a certain robustness in his music on many of these starting with on an 8-bar blues "Fast Old Train," heard after a short interview segment when he talks about himself. It is followed by a terrific "Look-a Here Woman Blues," a solid blues that musically evokes Tommy Johnson along with the incorporation in the second verse of "No Special Rider Blues."

There are short false starts (like for "Back Water Blues") followed by a fine "Goin' Away Mama Blues," followed by his take on a girl every day theme, "Every Day in the Week," which John Miller, in his astute musical analysis in the accompanying booklet, observes is a rare instance of a Mississippi bluesman recording in A, although his simple self-accompaniment has a strong rhythmic emphasis. Listening to "Hurry Sundown," one is reminded of some of the field recordings

from this period in terms of the gristle in the voice and the rhythmic aspect of the playing, although it ends abruptly (issue with tape recorded on perhaps). "Smoke Like Lightning" is influenced by Charlie Patton opening with the "chips flying everywhere" verse with a Tommy Johnson falsetto although his vocal sounds a bit tentative.

There are so many intriguing things like his variation in his accompaniment of "Goin' Where The Chilly Winds Don't Blow," or his comments of Patton's music, and what he was playing, with Patton's "High Water" playing in the background. There is a driving rendition of the parlor guitar piece, "Spanish Fandango," a tantalizing fragment of another Patton number "Hitch Up My Pony," and the title selection with the underlying triplet feel in the accompaniment showing kinship to Skip James' "Special Rider Blues," as he sings about packing up and going. Another variation on getting a girl everyday of the week is "Gonna Get Me A Woman (Aka Sunday Woman)," with a simple accompaniment.

The repertoire is fascinating and includes "Kansas City Blues," a rendition of the Jim Jackson "hit" that Jackson recorded several times and Patton covered changing the location to Alabama. Also he has a unique take of "Bo Weevil Blues," a common theme and then two short takes of "'Bout a Spoonful," with some very nimble picking. "No Triflin' Kid," is a short performance with some Patton like beating on the guitar and a Tommy Johnson falsetto, followed by an instrumental, "Delta Walk," and his robust self-accompaniment of "Roll and Tumble."

The closing "I'm Goin', Don't You Wanna Go?" might suggest Furry Lewis at places and the lyric has him incorporating "hurry sundown, let tomorrow come," and hearing "Billy and Stagolee arguin' in the dark." McMullan turned down the opportunity to go North to record with Patton (and Son House and Willie Brown) and one can only imagine what he might have sounded if he recorded then.

The performances, with some imperfections and tentativeness, stand up well a half century later and show what a strong Delta blues musician he was. Rather than be part of the blues scene, McMullan was a church deacon, was involved in civil rights work and trying to get blacks registered to vote as well as worked on a plantation. He did perform for a 1979 Mississippi Public Television documentary narrated by B.B. King. In this writer's humble opinion, "Everyday Seem Like Murder Here," is the major country blues release of the past couple years.

**Ron Weinstock**

Issues, Special Issues, Back Issues and  
Thousands of CD & DVD Reviews

**jazz-blues.com**



## CALABRIA FOTI

### In The Still of the Night MOCO RECORDS

It has been almost a decade since Calabria Foti last had a recording under her name. A singer who has the likes of Johnny Mathis and Johnny Mandel boosting her, her album "A Lovely Way to Spend An Evening," was a treasure of romanticism and sensuousness as she brought her own voice to the American songbook. The present release is certainly welcome and turns her voice to the wonderful works of Cole Porter. On this, she is backed by Michael Patterson, piano; Eddie Daniels, clarinet; Gene Bertoncini, guitar; Richard Locker, cello; Bob McChesney, trombone; Ike Sturm, bass; and Jared Schonig, drums in various combinations.

Like her last recording, Foti brings a mix of sensuousness and romanticism. The clarity in her delivery, her use of vocal dynamics, phrasing, pitch and timing plus her voice's own quality help make for some wonderful renditions of these classic American songs with the sublime, imaginative and understated backing. Bertoncini's guitar and Daniels' clarinet embellish the opening "Just One of Those Things," Locker's cello adds unusual coloring to her wistful performance of "Miss Otis Regrets," while McChesney's gruff trombone complements the slow tempo treatment of "Anything Goes" with her deliberate phasing matched by the uncluttered backing.

Patterson's accompaniments are a significant additional factor underlying the sublime music here such as his solo accompaniment that opens "What Is This Thing Called Love" with Sturm's firm bass and Schonig's adroit use of brushes backing her wonderful handling of this ballad with Daniels providing a clarinet solo, and his obligatos on a relaxed "Night and Day," add to its charm which also includes some unison vocalizing by Foti with Daniels, while the presence of cello and guitar contribute to the poignancy of the delivery of "Every Time We Say Goodbye." "Its Alright With Me" is perhaps the liveliest of vocals here with a smoky, twisting clarinet solo. The romanticism she can bring to a lyric is most evident on "So in Love."

Her superb heartfelt rendition of the title track with Locker's cello establishing the mood closes this superb, engrossing tribute to one of the 20th Century's greatest songwriters. Hopefully we will not have to wait almost a decade for Calabria Foti's next recording.

**Ron Weinstock**





## HILARY GARDNER & EHUD ASHERIE

**The Late Set**  
ANZIC RECORDS

I have not been to Mezzrow, the intimate Greenwich Village club, but from what I understand about this small, listening jazz venue, the duo collaboration between vocalist Gardner and pianist Asherie sounds like the type of performance that is featured there. In fact, the credits include special thanks to Spike Wilner, Mitch Borden and Mezzrow, and the cover photographs were taken there.

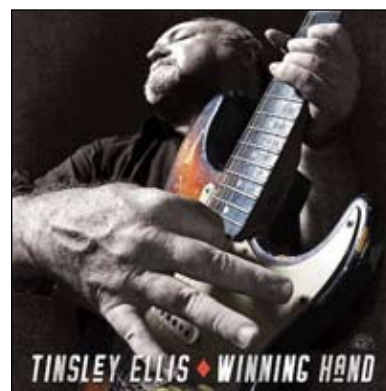
This is a delightful, informal tour through the American songbook by the two with Gardner's, strong, tuneful alto, along with the clarity in enunciation matched by Asherie's nuanced, often restrained by deft, congenial accompaniment and solos. Another thing that stands out is the fact that the songs are not particularly well known songs except for "After You've Gone," and "Make Someone Happy."

The program opens with a couple of Al Dubin and Harry Warren collaborations, "Shadow Waltz," and "Sweet and Slow." The former number opens with a stately piano chorus before Gardner starts her vocal, showcasing her nuanced phrasing and dynamics with a delightful, spare piano solo. It is followed by the unhurried "Sweet and Slow," where she encourages her partner to take his time while the band is moaning low as Asherie is exquisite in his accompaniment with a late-night, bluesy feel.

After a wistful take on a lesser known Rodgers and Hart number, "A Ship Without a Sail," comes a remarkable rendition of a song going back to the twenties, "After You've Gone." This performance begins as a slow lament with light piano and plaintive vocal and then halfway through Asherie picks up the tempo and gives a propulsive accompaniment as Gardner sings defiantly about how he will be the one suffering "after I've gone" with a superb stride piano solo.

"After You've Gone" is a performance that stands out on this mostly lovely program that also includes the cute "I've Never Seen Snow" from Harold Arlen and Truman Capote; the fetching rendition of Irving Berlin's "I Used to Be Color Blind"; the ebullient interpretation of Rodgers and Hart's "Everything I've Got"; the heartfelt, precious "Make Someone Happy"; and a captivating, reflective "Seems Like Old Times" (by John Jacob Loeb and Carmen Lombardo). Gardner's wonderful singing and Asherie's marvelous piano results in a delightful recording.

*Ron Weinstock*



## TINSLEY ELLIS

**Winning Hand**  
ALLIGATOR RECORDS

It's been nearly thirty years since he first recorded for Alligator Records (and twenty since his last Alligator album), as Tinsley Ellis returns with an album of house rocking blues and rock, showcasing his brawny, volcanic guitar and husky singing.

He is joined by Kevin McKendree on keyboards (who co-produced this with Ellis), Steve Mackey on bass and Lynn Williams on drums and was engineered and mixed by McKendree at The Rock House.

Nine of the ten songs are Ellis originals and display the range of his music starting with the searing, hold no prisoners opening blues-rock of "Sound of a Broken Man."

In contrast, the easy rocking shuffle blues, "Nothing But Fine," illustrates the clarity and precision, along with fire of his playing along with a more relaxed vocal, while "Gamblin' Man," is a nice original blues performance (the melody slightly evocative of Box Scaggs recording of "Someone Loan Me a Dime"), with a well-shaped, fiery guitar solo and a heartfelt, expressive vocal. Another fine blues performance is "Don't Turn Off The Light."

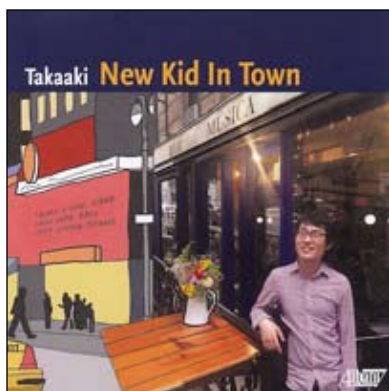
There is also high energy blues-rock of "Kiss This World" with its swelling groove and the rock and roll of "Satisfied," with McKendree's rollicking road house piano in addition to Ellis' guitar. The one cover, Leon Russell's "Dixie Lullaby," sports more rollicking piano (and organ grease) along with some fiery Freddie King inspired guitar.

This is another impressive collection of music from Ellis who playing shows him to be a tone master and a fiery guitar slinger. His high energy playing is firmly backed by the terrific studio band. Ellis is also a most congenial, expressive singer and contributed some solid original blues on this memorable blues-rock release.

*Ron Weinstock*

Issues, Special Issues, Back Issues and  
Thousands of CD & DVD Reviews

**jazz-blues.com**



**TAKAAKI**  
**New Kid in Town**  
**ALBANY RECORDS**

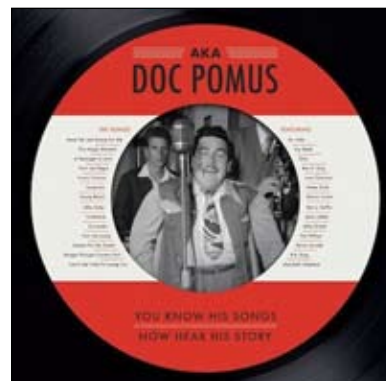
Composer Bernard Hoffer first heard jazz pianist Takaaki Otomo at a restaurant in New York and was impressed by his musicality, dynamic sensitivity, and beautiful harmonic sense. This led to this present piano trio recording by this Japanese native who trained originally in classical piano before turning to jazz, joined by a fellow Japanese native, bassist Noriko Ueda, and drummer Jared Schonig who currently tours with Kurt Elling. This recording is comprised of two originals from Takaaki, one by bassist Ueda, two from Hoffer, four jazz standards, and two novelties from Gustav Holst's "The Planets," which Hoffer arranged.

Stated influences on Takaaki include Oscar Peterson, Bill Evans, Fred Hersch and Brad Mehldau. One is easily impressed by the buoyant, romantic and lyrical playing of Takaaki on the opening original "Evening Glow." Bassist Ueda also impresses with her vigorous attack as Schonig completes this exemplary trio. Hoffer contributed the title track with its bouncy, funk groove and Takaaki's rolling arpeggios with Ueda's strong bass prominent in support of the leader's very inventive and thoughtful playing along with taking a solo also demonstrating her strength and imagination. John Lewis' "Django" further displays Takaaki's interpretive skills with a lovely brief solo opening and then a bright solo followed by another memorable bass solo. Bassist Ueda's "LullWater" is a lovely ballad and there is also a lovely performance of "People," with Takaaki and Ueda both providing intriguing improvisations over the melody aided by Schonig's skilled brush work. Hoffer's arrangements of "Mars" and "Venus" from Holst's "The Planets" provide frameworks for the trio's imaginative presentations of these two very parts, with their very different moods, from this famed work.

There is plenty of charm and dynamism in Takaaki's lively "Grandmas' Song," and there is an exquisite performance of Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way." Also of note is Hoffer's "Rush Hour," with crisp, energetic, playing from the trio and a spirited drum solo. If not his first recording, for most listeners in North America, this superb recording will be the first exposure to Takaaki Otomo, and something that will whet an appetite for more from him.

**Ron Weinstock**

**DVDs**



**DOC POMUS**

**A.K.A. Doc Pomus**

**CLEAR LAKE HISTORICAL PRODUCTIONS DVD**

A couple decades ago I wrote a review of Johnny Adams' album, "Walking On a Tightrope" for Living Blues and out of the blue I received a call from Doc Pomus telling me he enjoyed my review, especially an observation I made about the recording and its overall sound, not simply the excellent singing from Johnny Adams.

It was my only contact with this giant of American music. This 2012 film documentary, conceived by his daughter Sharyn Felder and directed by Peter Miller, along with the 2007 biography by Alex Halberstadt, "Lonely Avenue: The Unlikely Life And Times Of Doc Pomus," provides not simply the details of his life but a sense of the man who went from being a blues singer on crutches to a songwriter who crafted (often with others) some of the most memorable songs of the past 70 years.

The documentary, through interview clips from a variety of family, friends, artists, producers and music scholars traces his growing up in Brooklyn, contracting polio, hearing Joe Turner's recording "Piney Brown Blues," and becoming a blues shouter in Greenwich Village and Brooklyn, making a number of rhythm and blues recordings before chance has him starting to write songs for artists at Atlantic Records, including his hero, Big Joe Turner, including "Chains of Love," which he states he sold the rights to. It would launch a career that had him spin out classics like Ray Charles' "Lonely Avenue."

Then there would be his Brill Building partnership with Mort Shuman where they penned so many songs like "Why Do I Have To Be a Teenager In Love," "This Magic Moment," "Sweets For My Sweet," "Suspicion," "Save the Last Dance For Me," "Viva Las Vegas," "Little Sister," "Go Jimmy Go," "Can't Get Used to Losing You" and so many more.

This wonderfully crafted film interweaves his personal life along with his professional life including his marriage, the songwriting partnership with Shuman,



moving to the suburbs as well as hanging in Manhattan. Some of the backstory for some of his songs is given as well. "Save the Last Dance For Me" has a moving story as it reflects his wedding night where he couldn't dance with his wife but insisted she dance, and later she mentioned enjoying the dancing but was saving her best for him. Ben E King, who sang lead on the Drifters classic recording, mentions how he was affected before he recorded it, knowing the story behind it.

And we are taken to Elvis calling him at 2 in the morning with Doc thinking it was a prank at first and the fact he and Shuman produced a number of songs for Elvis' movies. The movie takes us through the bad times as well, such as after the partnership with Shuman broke up, and his marriage broke up, how he coped, as well as how he became a center of late night hangs at his hotel lobby with all sorts of night folk. Later Doc would be mentoring young songwriters like Kenny Hirsch with whom he wrote "There Is Always One More Time" for Ray Charles.

Doc was admired by many and he recounts going to a BMI dinner which he regarded as professional obligation and he was seated next to John Lennon and Yoko Ono with John introducing himself which Doc found funny as if he did not know who Lennon was. His daughter Sharyn recalled how Doc and John would meet in the neighborhood wearing disguises and one day she saw John and Yoko in a supermarket and introduced

herself with Lennon responding "DOC POMUS" and then singing "Save the Last Dance For Me." And Doc recounts how Dylan once asked him to supply lyrics for some music, which Doc found incredible.

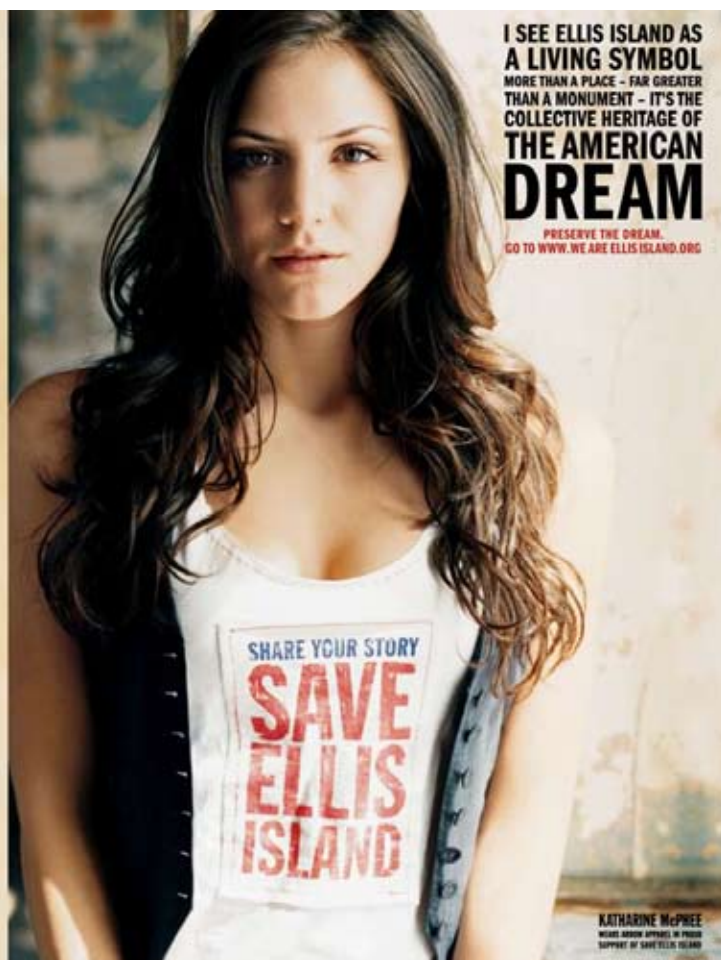
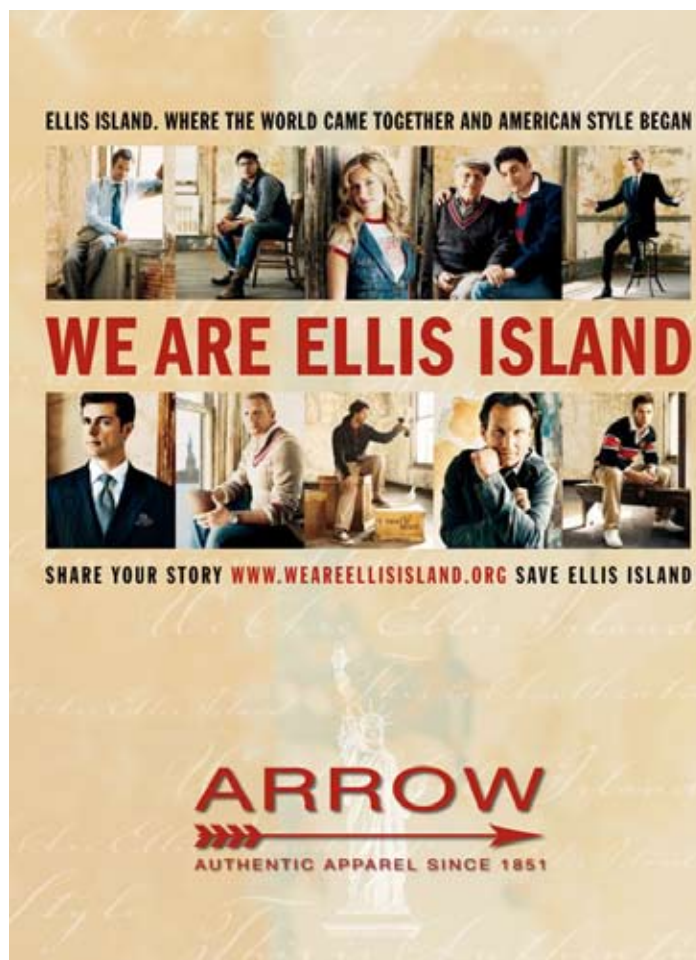
There are so many stories about how Doc would go out of his way to help folks in different ways, his efforts to revive his friend Jimmy Scott's career (and it took Doc's f\*\*king funeral to get Scott a recording contract), assist Big Joe Turner including an anecdote that he was pissed because he thought The Cookery was over-working Big Joe by having him play three shows that night, that he left in a huff and had his driver call in a bomb threat that emptied the club and made sure Turner did not do a third set that night

Doc was a larger than life person that if one wrote a novel about, no one would believe. This is a movie I have watched over a half dozen times and it moves me each time and I learn something new each time as well. Truly a remarkable film about a remarkable person.

*Ron Weinstock*

Issues, Special Issues,  
Back Issues, Thousands of  
CD & DVD Reviews  
& More Cool Stuff In The Works!

**jazz-blues.com**







**To a visitor, it's barren desert.  
To our supporters, it's bustling with life.**

**Even the most arid landscapes are home to Earth's amazing species. The Nature Conservancy is dedicated to protecting the variety of plant and animal life on Earth—even when found in the most unlikely places. The Nature Conservancy has protected 117 million acres in 28 countries. With your support, that number will keep growing. Visit [nature.org](http://nature.org) or call 1-888-2 JOIN TNC.**

San Rafael Desert, Utah © David Muench

*This message is made possible by the generous support of this publication.*