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# jazz & blues report





# 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!



Regina Carter



Roy Hargrove

## DC Jazz Festival 2018 Artists Announced

By Ron Weinstock

DC JazzFest Announces Initial 2018 Artists Leslie Odom Jr., New Supergroup R+R=Now led by Robert Glasper, Maceo Parker to take over The Anthem at The Wharf

DC Jazz Festival continues with its varied programs that take place throughout the District of Columbia with The Wharf as a culminating festival destination this year between July 15 and July 17. The initial list of headliners, a stylistically diverse, global roster of top-tier jazz heavy-

weights are slated to perform in venues across the nation's capital between June 8–17, 2018 include a remarkable range of multi-GRAMMY award-winners and nominees including Leslie Odom Jr., R+R=Now (Robert Glasper, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, Terrace Martin, Taylor McFerrin, Derrick Hodge), Chucho Valdés & Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Roy Hargrove, Ivan Lins, Maceo Parker, Regina Carter, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, Ben Williams,



Robert Glasper



Christian Scott

Oliver Lake Big Band, Gregoire Maret, Fabrizio Bosso, and Patricia Barber.

The Wharf offers a distinct urban experience with vibrant restaurants, shops, entertainment, residences, hotels, the historic Fish Market, and public parks and piers. The waterfront neighborhood reestablishes Washington, D.C. as a waterfront city, and offers the ideal setting for a fully immersive DC JazzFest festival experience. DC JazzFest at The Wharf will also feature four main stages with artists including Ivan Lins & Friends, Christian Scott, Ben Williams, and more. DC JazzFest at The Wharf will also debut an “International Language of Jazz” stage.

As part of DC JazzFest at the Wharf will be a signature concert at The Anthem on the evening of July 16. Headlining artist Leslie Odom Jr. is a multi-talented actor, dancer and singer, with two jazz albums and a plethora of awards and credits to his name. He gained international fame and acclaim for his portrayal of Aaron Burr in the Broadway juggernaut, *Hamilton*, winning the 2016 Tony Award for Best Actor in a Musical and the Grammy Award for Best Musical Theater Album as a principal vocalist. Joining Odom Jr. at The Anthem is R+R=Now, a jazz supergroup formed in late 2017 by the brilliant team of legendary pianist Robert Glasper and multi-instrumentalist, singer, songwriter and Kendrick Lamar producer and rapper Terrace Martin, and is comprised of trumpeter Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, bassist Der-

rick Hodge, drummer Justin Tyson and beatboxer Taylor McFerrin (son of Bobby McFerrin). R+R=NOW stands for Reflect+Respond=NOW, and Glasper has said the name was inspired by the late singer Nina Simone, who said an artist's duty is to reflect the times.

Also happening during the DC Jazz Festival will be Jazz 'n Families Fun Days (Prelude Weekend, June 2–3) In partnership with The Phillips Collection, the Jazz 'n Families Fun Day weekend celebrates jazz and the visual arts with performances by more than a dozen regional artists and rising star ensembles. Then starting June 8 through the 17th this here will be Jazz in the 'Hoods®. The festival's extensive lineup of jazz and jazz-extension musicians is an essential contributor to the cultural diversity of our nation's capital. Jazz will take over the district in 27+ neighborhoods with presentations curated by Hamilton Live, City Winery, Blues Alley, CapitalBop D.C., and East River Jazz. Jazz in the 'Hoods performances will also be held at Twins Jazz, Hartke Theatre, Gallery O/H, National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden, Sixth & I, Ivy City Smokehouse, JoJo's Restaurant and Bar, Sixth & I, Anacostia Playhouse, Mr. Henry's, the Embassies of Korea and Spain, and many other locations. New this year will be DC JazzFest at City Winery (June 7–14), our newest main stage, located in the Ivy City Neighborhood: Frederic Yonnet, Patricia Barber, Raul Midon, the Washington Renaissance Orchestra Octet and more.

The Kennedy Center will also partner with the DC Jazz Festival to present daily free concerts at the Center's Millennium Stage (which are streamed live on the Kennedy Center's website) along with “Trance,” a two-piano project featuring Chucho Valdés and Gonzalo Rubalcaba, brings together the leading living exponents of two generations in the great Cuban piano tradition. The pairing of Cuban piano maestros promises an electric night of vibrant virtuoso performance from two generations of great Afro-Cuban tradition. Trance is a collaboration that speaks of a profound connection to the spiritual forces that flow through the many tongues in music. But the title also alludes to the musical conversation between two brilliant players and composers whose friendship and mutual admiration and respect goes back decades. This concert takes place June 15 in the Kennedy Center's Main Concert Hall with tickets on sale from the Kennedy Center starting March 14.

Also part of the Festival is The Fishman Embassy Series, so named in honor of Charles Fishman, founder of the DC Jazz Festival®. This is an ongoing presentation of DCJF, at festival time and throughout the year. This series presents artists from across the globe in partnership with the foreign embassy community in our nation's capital. Fostering and producing the Fishman Embassy Series is a classic manifestation of DCJF's 2017 theme: “Discover the Unexpected.” The artists performing in the series this year will be announced after this preview has gone to publication.

“Events DC is honored to continue our partnership

## 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)



with DC Jazz Festival, in support of its critically acclaimed DC JazzFest, as well as Jazz in the 'Hoods presented by Events DC and the Charles Fishman Embassy Series," said Erik A. Moses, senior vice president and managing director of sports, entertainment, and special events at Events DC. "This festival's extensive lineup of jazz and jazz-extension musicians is an essential contributor to the cultural diversity of our nation's capital and we are proud to have continually supported this remarkable celebration for more than a decade."

For more information on the 2018 Dc Jazz Festival, visit [dcjazzfest.org](http://dcjazzfest.org).

*Photos by Ron Weinstock*

### **Monterey Jazz Festival to Receive \$35,000 Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts**

National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Jane Chu has approved more than \$25 million in grants as part of the NEA's first major funding announcement for fiscal year 2018. Included in this announcement is an Art Works grant of \$35,000 to the Monterey Jazz Festival in support of the Monterey Jazz Festival's 2018 commission piece, to be composed and performed by Oscar Hernández and the Spanish Harlem Orchestra. The Art Works category is the NEA's largest funding category and supports projects that focus 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/or the strengthening of communities through the arts.

"It is energizing to see the impact that the arts are making throughout the United States. These NEA-supported projects, such as this one to Monterey Jazz Festival are good examples of how the arts build stronger and more vibrant communities, improve well-being, prepare our children to succeed, and increase the quality of our lives," said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. "At the National Endowment for the Arts, we believe that all people should have access to the joy, opportunities and connections the arts bring."

"The support of the NEA allows the Monterey Jazz Festival the ability to continue our "big picture" artistic programs that include commissioning new works, supporting our Artist-in-Residence program and to provide us the opportunity to present fresh new artists to the Monterey stages," said Tim Jackson, Artistic Director of the Monterey Jazz Festival.

The annual commission piece at the Monterey Jazz Festival dates to 1958. Over the festival's 60-year history, many artists wrote music to be debuted at the Festival, including Duke Ellington, Dave Brubeck, John Lewis and the Modern Jazz Quartet; Mary Lou Williams, Gerald Wilson, and many others. In 1994 the Commission Artist Program was revamped by Artistic Director Tim Jackson, and since then, several of the commissioned works have come out on record and have been nominated for or have won GRAMMY Awards. Since 2005, the National Endowment for the Arts has awarded over \$500,000 in grants to support the artistic and educational programs of the Monterey Jazz Festival.

Oscar Hernández is a gifted pianist, composer and arranger on the contemporary Latin, Latin Jazz and Salsa music scene, and is the leader of the world-renowned Grammy-winning Spanish Harlem Orchestra. Hernández has performed and recorded with such seminal artists as Ismael Miranda, Ray Barreto, Celia Cruz, Conjunto Libre, Pete "El Conde" Rodríguez, and Grupo Folklorico. Hernández was responsible for charting the musical course of the Rubén Blades with Seis Del Solar. The piece will debut on the Jimmy Lyons Stage on Saturday, September 22, 2018.

For more information on projects included in the NEA grant announcement, visit [arts.gov/news](http://arts.gov/news).



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

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

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



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

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

Jazz is art, you dig? Art can

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

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



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



Art. Ask for More.

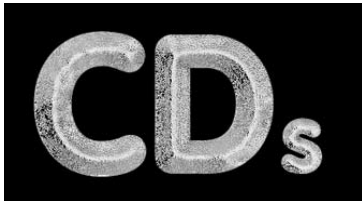
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We only bring you  
the Cream of the Crop!



**MUD MORGANFIELD**  
**They Call Me Mud**  
**SEVERN RECORDS**

This is the third Severn release for the late Muddy Waters' son Larry 'Mud' Morganfield. He is joined by some of Chicago's blues musicians to provide authentic, down-home blues touches. Those heard in addition to guitarist Rich Kreher, Mud's co-producer are Billy Flynn on guitar, Studebaker John on harmonica and backing vocals, Sumito Ariyo Ariyoshi on piano, E.G. McDaniel on bass and Melvin "Pookie Stix" Carlisle on drums. Guests include Billy Branch on harmonica, Mike Wheeler on guitar and Mud's daughter Lashunda Williams, who joins her dad on a loving duet, 'Who Loves You.' Several tracks have horns adding a vintage R&B feel.

While there are a couple of new versions of recordings his father made, most of the songs on this are his originals, so this release allows Mud to shine as more than someone recreating his father's music. Certainly the use of horns and original material enables Mud to establish his own personality, despite the similarities of his voice to his father as on the opening title track with some B.B. King styled guitar to the fore while Studebaker John's harp blends in with the horns as Mud boasts about his prowess (likening himself to an earthquake and hurricane). It is followed by a strong modern blues "48 Days," (since his woman has left as he pleads for her to return), and then a nice soul-blues lament "Cheatin' Is Cheatin'," followed by the churning soulful funk of "Who's Fooling Who?" with biting guitar and harmonica breaks.

Vocally he comes off as honest and convincing as he does on a solid cover of Muddy's "Howling Wolf" and "Can't Get No Grindin'." There is some fabulous slide guitar, as well as standout piano and harmonica,

on the former number, while Ariyoshi and Studebaker John add to the rollicking flavor of the latter performance. Mike Wheeler contributes strong guitar to the funky "24 Hours," His duet with his daughter is a superb classic soul ballad performance, while "Oh Yeah," is a terrific blues at times suggesting of John Lee Hooker's "Boom Boom."

The album closes with a captivating, jazz-tinged instrumental "Mud's Groove," that features Billy Branch on harmonica and is one of three selections with Mud on bass. It closes an engaging album that certainly should appeal to anyone wanting to listen to some real straight-ahead blues with a soul touch.

*Ron Weinstock*



**HOUSTON PERSON**  
**Rain or Shine**  
**HIGH NOTE**

One would be hard pressed to top Sid Gribetz's description of Houston Person, "Houston Person plays a "tough" tenor saxophone, the full bodied sound drenched in both hard driving blues and swing together with the tender purring of sweet emotion straight from the heart. While he came of age in the soul-jazz years, in the decades since Person has established himself as a fully developed master, conversant and proficient in myriad shadings and varieties of jazz genres.

In addition to his sound on the horn, Houston's impact also derives from his deep affinity for the melody. He has an encyclopedic knowledge of an extraordinary number of tunes. More than awareness of the repertoire, he possesses an intuitive, expressive, understanding of popular song, be it the American songbook, old rhythm and blues, Classic Soul, or swing dance-band standards."

On this latest High Note release Person is backed by Lafayette Harris on piano, Rodney Jones on guitar, Matthew Parrish on bass and Vincent Ector on drums. Warren Vaché adds his cornet to 5 of the 9 tracks. There is nothing fancy or innovative about Person's music, so it is easy to take for granted his mastery of blues and ballads. There is the scrumptious brisk walking tempo of Jones' blues, "Soupbone," as well as the romanticism of the interpretation of "I Wonder Where Our Love Has Gone," both showcasing his warm, brawny playing along with the impeccable rhythm section. Jones

stands out whether adding chords in support or his clean, fleet imaginative solos. Vaché adds his cornet to the former tune along with the loping funky, “132nd and Madison” with Jones’ guitar vamp setting the tone with Person and Vaché trading lines at the opening and then Person takes a superb solo. It is followed by the ballad “Everything Must Change,” with Person’s atmospheric playing joined by that of Jones and Harris.

There is also the bossa accented swing of Person’s wonderful revival of Ruby and the Romantic’s hit, “Our Day Will Come,” with more sublime playing from Person, Vaché and Harris, before the lyricism and warmth of Person’s tenor on “Danny Boy” with minimalist backing. It is easy to take Houston Person for granted as a ‘tough’ tenor in the vein of Gene Ammons or Red Holloway. The fact that he is not a new voice should not detract that few play so soulfully, lyrically and at such a high level as he has and continues to do as shown on this superlative recording.

**Ron Weinstock**



## JOHNNY NICHOLAS & FRIENDS

### Too Many Bad Habits THE PEOPLE’S LABEL

In the spring of 1977 I saw Guitar Johnny (Nicholas) & the Rhythm Rockers along with Johnny Shines and Walter Horton outside of Buffalo, NY. Around that time I acquired the album “Too Many Bad Habits” on Blind Pig (and somewhere I may still have the original vinyl album).

Released in 1977, it was deleted by Blind Pig in 1978 shortly after Nicholas joined Asleep at the Wheel, and stopped touring under his own name. While he requested getting the original masters back from the label, he was finally able (in January 2016) to get back the original multi-track tapes, masters, artwork and photos. After transferring the old tapes, he discovered a bunch of recordings that had not been released so in reissuing his lost album, he has been able to add new material to the original recording, including performances from Shines, Horton and pianist Boogie Woogie Red, in addition to some with Asleep’s Ray Benson and other luminaries.

I do not recall what tracks were on the issued LP but I believe they are all on the first of the two discs, which include some standout ensemble tracks “Looks Can Be Deceivin’” and the witty title track that display

how good a songwriter Nicholas was and is, with his enumeration of things his doctor tells him he should give up. There is some nice mandolin on the opening “Mandolin Boogie” along with a solid “Sittin’ On Top of the World,” with nice fiddle and sax as well. After a rocking band shuffle with Boogie City Red’s piano, “Rock My Blues Away,” there is a lovely showcase for Walter Horton’s harmonica “Blues Walk,” with Nicholas providing solid backing.

An a cappella cover of Son House’s gospel shout “Grinnin’ in Your Face,” is followed by “The New Canned Heat Blues” a reworking of Tommy Johnson recording with Nicholas adding lyrics about taking Robitussin in lieu of Sterno, with Horton adding harp to the vocal and acoustic guitar. Horton sings and plays on “West Wind,” followed by Shines’ feature, “Blues Came Fallin’ Down,” an excellent number using the “Rollin’ and Tumblin’ melody that is similar to some of Shines’ early Testament recordings.

More Shines and Horton follow with a lovely “Careless Love,” and then an instrumental feature for Horton “Gettin’ Outta Town,” where Nicholas opens playing “The Dirty Dozens” before Horton shifts into what was a familiar boogie instrumental for him. Having misplaced my discs, I am not sure if Shines is on guitar behind Nicholas on a cover of “Hellhound on My Trail,” with solid Horton harp and a straight-forward vocal. One of Nicholas strengths is the fact he never forces or strains when he delivers his vocals.

There are some solid performances on the second disc but some have flaws such as “Believe I’ll Make a Change,” a “Dust My Broom” variation with the vocal off mike at first, the alternate take of “Looks Can Be Deceivin’” is slower and not as realized. “Move on Down the Line” is a vocal duet with Horton, and probably would have benefited from being a tad faster.

The second disc has a number of more showcases for Horton like his backing on “Pump Jockey Blues” and the instrumental, “Apple Grove Boogie,” which has some slide guitar as well. “Prisoner Blues” is a slow blues with exquisite harmonica, while the brief, brooding “That’s Alright Mama” comes across as brooding Hill Country blues. Boogie Woogie Red is featured on a rendition of Jay McShann’s “Hootie Blues,” followed by a straight take of Jimmy Rogers’ “Money Marbles and Chalk,” again with wonderful Horton harmonica. There is also more Big Walter on the folk-ish “Lonesome Traveler” and the lazy tempo shuffle “Froggy Bottom.” The final track is a nice rendition of St. Louis Jimmy’s “Soon Forgotten,” with Boogie Woogie Red on piano and Big Walter on harp.

The music on “Too Many Bad Habits” may not be essential, but its re-release is most welcome with fine performances by Nicholas and the cameos and assistance of blues legends Boogie Woogie Red, Johnny Shines and Walter Horton.

**Ron Weinstock**

**jazz-blues.com**



## HOT TEXAS SWING BAND

### Off the Beaten Trail

INDIE 1701

A modern, jazzy updating of the classic Bob Wills and more recent Asleep at the Wheel, the Hot Texas Swing Band is comprised of leader Alex Dormont- Vocals and Upright Bass, Selena Rosanbalm- Vocals, Liz Morphis- Vocals, Cat Clemons- Guitar, Ileana Nina-Fiddle, Stephen Bidwell- Drums, Joey Colarusso- Sax, Jimmy Shortell- Trumpet, Dave Biller- Steel Guitar, Dan Walton- Piano.

The opening title track, with Dormont's baritone, comes off a classic Texas Swing styled number (slightly evocative of Ernest Tubbs) with the horns a bit more upfront in the backing. Selena sings the bouncy "I Hear You Talkin'" while Liz takes the brisk "How Do I Not." Both of the women are expressive singers displaying engaging intonation while cleanly articulating the lyrics. Backing them, the horns solo strongly in a modern vein. Dormont's baritone is heard on the nicely played waltz, "Headed Back To The Barn," with a unison horn break. The band's versatility is heard behind Liz on a latin jazz flavored "This Time," followed by Dormont on the rollicking "Texas Plains," and then Liz on the country-boogie, "Cow Cow Boogie," originally recorded by Freddie Slack,

There is an enjoyable Dormont original honky tonk romp "Snow in Amarillo," with a booting sax solo, scintillating steel guitar and guitar that sounds like something Spade Colley could have done. Selena is outstanding in a Julie London vein on "Cry Me a River," with outstanding fretwork by Clemons, while "Bull Whip" is a bright instrumental that allows all to strut their playing, followed by Liz's charming singing on "Baton Rouge Waltz," with accordion and fiddle in the backing. Horns, rockabilly guitar and booting tenor sax, give George Jones' "White Lightnin'" a fresh take.

The album closes with another delightful waltz, "My Blue Guitar." This is their 4th CD, and the lively, fun performances shows why they are so popular among contemporary Western Swing enthusiasts. Well played, sung with heart, the engaging performances should entertain roots music lovers.

*Ron Weinstock*

**jazz-blues.com**



## DANIELLE NICOLE

### Cry No More

CONCORD

About her new album (second solo album), Danielle Nicole says, "I grew up playing the blues, and the blues is still a big part of what I do. But now I'm reaching out more and trying different things. It still sounds like me, but I'm stretching out a lot more than I have previously." The bassist-songwriter-singer first came to notice as part of the sibling band, Trampled Under Foot, and after that band wound up its 13 year run, Danielle formed her own band and signed to Concord.

Her present album was produced by Tony Braunaigel, who also plays drums, and engineered by Johnnie Lee Schell who plays guitar. There are some notable guests including guitarists Kenny Wayne Shepherd (on "Save Me"), Luther Dickinson (on "Just Can't Keep From Crying"), Walter Trout (on "Burnin' for You"), Sonny Landreth (on "I'm Going Home"), Danielle's touring guitarist Brandon Miller (on "Baby Eyes"), and her brother and former bandmate Nick Schnebelen (on "Crawl").

Danielle wrote or co-wrote 9 of the 14 songs, and one of the songs, "Hot Spell," was given to Danielle by its author, long-retired R&B legend Bill Withers, who was a surprise visitor to one of the sessions and was so impressed by her singing he gave her this song that he wrote in the 1970s but never recorded.

As she says, she is doing a lot of different things on her prior album, "Wolf Den." "Cry No More" might be superficially described as a blues and rhythm infused recording. I emphasize that this is not an evaluation, because as soon as Danielle starts singing on the opening "Crawl," the strength of her personality as a performer and singer is evident as she notes her relationship has blood on her memories and that he had a power, and she ain't his sugar and if he wants to get her love back at all, get on the floor and crawl. She impresses as a vocalist with not simply her intensity, but her phrasing and expressiveness set against the firm backing with her brother adding some biting blues-rock guitar fills.

The passion in her performances here is also displayed in "I'm Going Home," where she sings about a relationship where all she was fed was lies with Sonny Landreth's slide guitar adding to the brooding atmo-



sphere here. Not all of her songs are about betrayal. On Withers' "Hot Spell," she sings about her lover been getting ready and setting the mood she likes, so that she is going to give her love tonight, while on "Burnin' For You" she sings about the passion of being immersed in love with someone with Walter Trout adding some incisive guitar fills and solo.

There is a lighter feel to her soulful performance on the title track about moving on and letting go from a relationship. "Bobby" has a folk-rock feel with the use of a banjo in the backing which is a song about her late father and how he inspires her still. Then there is the heartfelt singing in "How Come U Don't Call Me Anymore," where she is down on her knees asking papa to call her sometime.

The other songs are of a similar quality, including a moving rendition of Blind Willie Johnson's, "Lord I Just Can't Keep From Crying," that closes the his album. Danielle Nicole is a terrific, expressive vocalist who sings with passion, but without emoting. With the first-rate musical backing here, excellent songs and production, "Cry No More" is simply superb.

*Ron Weinstock*

with Byrd's deft, wonderfully articulated solo. There is a refreshing original arrangement for "When The Saints Go Marching In," with the trio taking this at a much more relaxed tempo than it's usually played at, with more outstanding solos from all three. The horns return for the spirited performance of "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho," with some fiery Stafford after Warfield's heated sax, and the Gaithers' gospel ballad, "There's Just Something About That Name (Jesus)," with lovely soprano and trumpet along with another scintillating solo from Byrd. "I Want Jesus To Walk With Me" has a funky gospel feel and one of Byrd's three strong, heartfelt vocals. This writer has seen Byrd accompany vocalists, but this is the first time to hear his own solid singing with the marvelous piano accompaniments.

There are hints of Ray Charles (and Byrd has recorded a Charles' tribute recording) in his unaccompanied opening to "Just A Closer Walk with Thee," before the rest of the trio enters and they change from a stately tempo into a New Orleans second-line rhythm with another fine vocal. It is the last track on an excellently performed, and inspiring recording.

*Ron Weinstock*



## THE ERIC BYRD TRIO

**Sacred Music Vol. 1: Saints Are Still Marching**  
ERIC BYRD MUSIC

The Eric Byrd Trio, pianist/vocalist Eric Byrd, bassist Bhagwan Khalsa, and drummer Alphonso Young, Jr., have been together nearly two decades and traveled the world as enthusiastic ambassadors of jazz. Rooted in swing and be-bop, The Trio also embraces gospel and the blues as core elements of their expansive performance style. On this album, the trio performs a collection of sacred music with guest appearances by jazz trumpeter Terrell Stafford and alto saxophonist Tim Warfield on three of the nine selections.

As folks in the DMV (District-Maryland-Virginia) region are aware, Byrd is a superb pianist and his trio is a terrific straight-ahead hard bop trio. With Stafford and Warfield (on soprano sax) there is a lively rendition of the spiritual, "Ain-a That Good News," with some fine clean, crisp Stafford trumpet, Warfield's serpentine soprano sax, and some fiery piano from the leader. Doris Akers' "Sweet Sweet Spirit" is handled by the trio as a waltz with bassist Khalsa outstanding along



## ANDREW NEU

**Catwalk**  
CGN RECORDS

This new release is subtitled "The Big Band Side of Andrew Neu," who according to his website "is one of the most exciting, multi-genre musicians today. He is well respected throughout the industry for his work as a saxophonist, woodwind player, arranger, composer, educator and recording artist." About this he says, "After rehearsing for years with these veteran LA studio musicians I'm thrilled to finally release this exciting and fun collection of modern big band music." He has some special guests to enliven the bright, brassy music here including trumpeters Randy Brecker, Rick Braun and Wayne Bergeron, saxophonists Bob Mintzer, Eric Marienthal and Gordon Goodwin, and bassist Brian Bromberg.

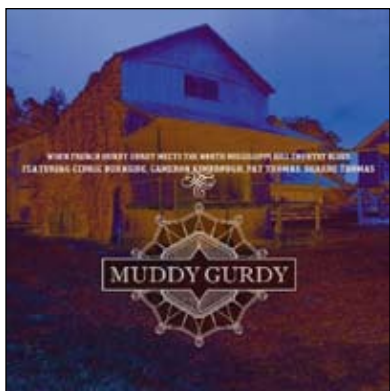
This is a strong, tight, swinging band who play with nuance and heat. The opening "Juggernaut" has a jaunty rhythm, displays the crisp, buoyant quality of the band and the freshness of the arrangements. There are strong solos from trombonist Andrew Lipp-

mann along with Neu's husky tenor sax. The rhythm section of pianist Andy Langham, guitarist Matt Hornbeck, bassist David Hughes and Jamey Tate provides a strong foundation with Tate also taking a solo here. The spicy "Zebrano" is a number that would seem to get a Latin Dance floor full with Brecker featured with a fiery solo here along with Neu and Tate. Craig Fundyga guests on vibraphone on the title track with a prancing groove and muted trumpet in the opening choruses. It has a driving muted trumpet solo from Michael Stever preceding Fundyga's vibes solo with the horns framing his solo.

Neu's arrangement of "Body and Soul" is striking as it opens for a couple choruses at a ballad tempo before Langham's piano leads it into an Afro-Cuban mode and his solo is followed by Mintzer who sounds quite strong. Neu's lovely ballad, "My Neu" is a feature for Eric Marienthal's lovely alto sax solo, while Neu provides a wonderful orchestration for a lively performance of the Cole Porter classic, "What Is This Thing Called Love," with memorable solos from Dan Kaneyuki on alto sax, trumpeter Stever and Neu. "Wasamba" is highlighted by Wayne Bergeron's adept trumpet, along with Brian Bromberg's fleet fingered piccolo bass.

The tenor sax of Gordon Goodwin is featured on a crisply played "Too Much of a Good Thing," while Rick Braun's mix of lyricism and heat is heard on Ennio Morricone's marvelous "Cinema Paradiso" on which Neu is also heard. After a lively "Blue Sesame" with a heated muted trumpet solo from Jeff Jarvis, there is a spirited "Alpha Dog," with Brian Bromberg adding a funky electric bass solo, along with nice high register work from Anthony Bonsera on trumpet and Tate's drum solo to close this recording. Neu's compositions, arrangements and the strong ensemble work behind the excellent soloists result in a terrific, hard swinging big band recording.

**Ron Weinstock**



## MUDDY GURDY

**Feat Cedric Burnside, Cameron Kimbrough, Pat Thomas, Sharde Thomas**  
VIZZTONE

This intriguing recording brings together a French trio (Hypnotic Wheels) with several of the most prominent living players of Mississippi North Hill Country Blues. Hypnotic Wheels is comprised of Tia Gouttebel on vocals  
PAGE TEN

and guitar; Gilles Chabenat on the hurdy gurdy, a French traditional instrument and Marco Glomeau on percussion and is inspired by French traditional music as well as the North Mississippi Hill Country Blues with the hurdy gurdy serving as a second guitar. Their first album alternated original songs with revisited blues. Marco, the percussionist, got this crazy idea: take the hurdy-gurdy to Mississippi and this recording is the result.

After a brief instrumental, we hear four field recordings with Cedric Burnside (and one can hear dogs barking in the background) as they launch into a mesmerizing treatment of RL Burnside's "Goin' Down South," with Cedric and Tia alternating vocals with some spellbinding single note guitar runs against a drone musical background. After the performance ends Cedric talks about times with his brother Cody who died at 29 before going into "The Girl is Bad," with its somewhat jerky groove and slashing slide guitar. A high stepping "See My Jumper Hanging On the Line" follows, with the French trio adding their congenial, if unusual sound to this spirited performance of another RL Burnside song. Cedric further shows how well he continues in the manner of his father on "Rollin' and Tumblin'."

Shardé Thomas adds vocals and fife to a vibrant rendition of "Station Blues" (a retitled "Sitting on Top of the World") with Glomeau providing the fife and drum band groove with Tia and Gilles adding their buzzing backing. It is followed by a haunting "Shawty Blues," and the spiritual "Glory, Glory Hallelujah." Cameron Kimbrough then leads us on a lively rendition of "Leave Her Alone," from his father Junior Kimbrough, "set against the mesmerizing backing, while his own "Gonna Love You" is a tough performance in a similar vein.

Pat Thomas' "Dream" has a wistful quality while the hurdy gurdy of Chabenat provides a somber fiddle-like backing. It is followed by the trio's own interpretations including a rendition of Jesse Mae Hemphill's "She Wolf," recorded at Dockery Farms, along with renditions of Mississippi Fred McDowell's "Shake 'Em On Down," and B.B. King's recording, "Help The Poor." One wonders what Jesse Mae Hemphill might have thought of her music influencing this French singer and guitarist, who does a more than simply capable job in singing and performing these. Pat Thomas, sounding like his father James 'Son' Thomas, closes this album at the Highway 61 Museum (with traffic in the background) with a simple, stark and moving "Standing at the Crossroads/Dust My Broom" mashup, titled here "Highway 61."

While this won't replace the classic recordings of Fred McDowell, RL Burnside, Jesse Mae Hemphill and Junior Kimbrough, the Hypnotic Wheels has produced a fascinating, enjoyable and idiomatic recording that pays homage to their musical influences and presents the current practitioners of this tradition with emphatic backing that is so much more appropriate to the music than most efforts to modernize (or commercialize) the tradition. This is a recording that brings pleasure every-time I listen to it.

**Ron Weinstock**

**jazz-blues.com**





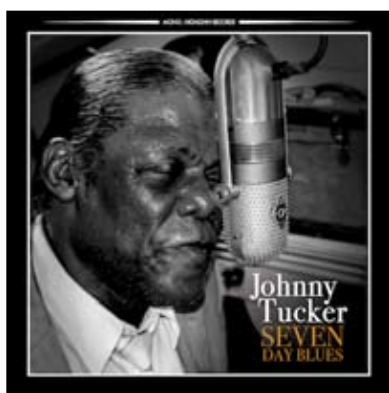
## HIRO HONSHUKU'S RACHA FORA

**Happy Fire**  
**JAZZ TOKYO**

The subtitle of Happy Fire reads “new kind of jazz” and flautist Hiro Honshuku’s quartet is certainly a jazz group at its core. But the lineup of flute or EWI, violin, electric guitar and cajon- makes for striking new sonic palettes with which to take on standards including “All The Things You Are”, “Someday My Prince Will Come” and “Summertime”, among others.

This by no means comes off gimmicky as the integrity and feel of the players reveal good improvisational sense throughout and the abundance of electronic enhancement never overtakes the personality of the play. Honshuku and violinist Rika Ikeda are a frequently precocious pair and his matchups with guitarist Andre Vasconcelos (particularly partial to expanded sonics himself) are typically high-energy affairs, especially on the coda. One gets the impression these were some fun sessions.

*Duane Verh*



## JOHNNY TUCKER

**Seven Day Blues**  
**HIGHJOHN RECORDS**

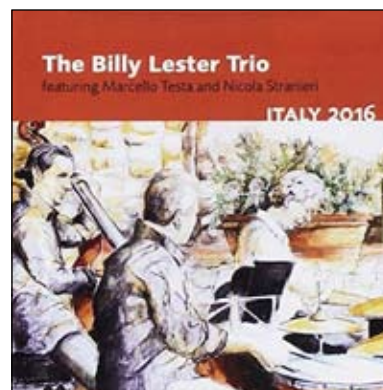
I am familiar with Johnny Tucker from the years he was drummer (and opening singer) for the late blues legend Phillip Walker. While he toured with Walker for 34 years, at first he was the opening vocalist for Walker. This is his second album for HighJohn and was recorded and produced by Big Jon Atkinson at his Big Tone studio. Atkinson on bass and guitar is among those backing Tucker (who wrote all 15

songs), and others on this include Troy Sandow, and Scott Smart, who traded off on guitars and bass (and Sandow also is on harmonica) along with drummers Malachi Johnson and Marty Dodson. Also on this on some selections are Bob Corritore on harmonica, Bob Welch on organ and Kid Ramos on guitar.

The strength of this recording is Tucker’s raspy-voiced blues shouting backed by strong idiomatic backing. There are a few places where the backing might have been filled in slightly, but when one gets Tucker getting down on a slow blues “Gonna Give You One More Chance,” with either Atkinson or Smart taking the prickly guitar lead or the funky groove of “I Wanna Do It,” with Troy Sandow’s down-home harmonica adding to the backing, one has no reason for complaints. Tucker seems especially persuasive as a vocalist on slow numbers like “One of These Days,” or the closing “You Can Leave My House,” but is more than capable elsewhere.

There is nothing fancy on “Seven Day Blues,” but a showcase of some straight-forward blues by the very capable Johnny Tucker, which benefits from the stripped-down production.

*Ron Weinstock*



## THE BILLY LESTER TRIO

**Italy 2016**

**ULTRA SOUND RECORDS**

Yonkers, NY native Billy Lester recorded this latest recording (not sure if this is his seventh or eighth over 20 years) in Italy after meeting and touring with bassist Marcello Testa and drummer Nicola Stranieri starting in 2014.

Lester grew up listening to the likes of Bud Powell, Art Tatum, Charlie Parker, Louis Armstrong and Roy Eldridge while showing an affinity for piano as a young child. He was mentored by Sal Mosca and studied with Lennie Tristano, and he cites these two as his biggest influences. While under Mosca’s tutelage, he studied and absorbed aspects of Lester Young’s style.

One can certainly hear Tristano’s influence in how Lester plays and develops his solos and the arhythmic sense of the rhythm section at times on this program of six originals, but his technique and drive in his playing also evokes Bud Powell’s at times. This is a fascinating set of terrific piano trio music. “To Julia,” is a contrafact of the standard “Body and Soul,” on which bassist Testa

also solos while Stranieri keeps a fluid pulse going on the lengthiest of the performances here. The driving "Consolidation" is another strong effort by Lester and his trio, but all the music here is of a consistently high level on a superlative CD. **Ron Weinstock**



**JOHN MAYALL**  
**Three For The Road**  
**FORTY BELOW RECORDS**

Despite showing him with a guitar, this latest album by the veteran blues stylist has him leading a trio (the Three in the title) on piano and harmonica backed by bassist Greg Rzaab and drummer Jay Davenport. It is surprising given his association with so many guitarists in the past, but this live 2017 German recording is surprising in focusing solely on his effective piano and harmonica and appealing, gravelly, if occasionally stilted, vocals.

There is nothing fancy or contrived about the performances that include 7 covers and two Mayall numbers opening with a relaxed shuffle treatment of the Little Johnny Jones/Eddie Taylor "Big Town Playboy," that is followed by a medium, choppy, groove for Chuck Willis' "I Feel So Bad," credited to Lightnin' Hopkins. His piano playing comes off better than his limited rack harmonica playing. There is an infectious quality to his piano playing and the backing on Curtis Salgado's "The Sum of Something," with a nice drum solo. Mayall switches to organ for his train blues, "Streamline," with a nice groove and one of his better vocals here. Rzaab and Davenport are strong in supporting his bouncy solo.

I believe it was Walter Davis who did the original of Henry Townsend's "Tears Came Rollin' Down," and Mayall's somewhat gloomy piano sets the somber mood of his vocal on a lengthy rendition of this blues. An unexpected cover is of a Lionel Hampton song, "Ridin' on the L&N," followed by a rendition of Jerry Lynn Williams' "Don't Deny Me," with more greasy organ. After a lengthy rendition of his own "Lonely Feelings," he opens Sonny Landreth's "Conga Square" on harmonica before his rhythm joins in for a lengthy jam although his vocal suffers compared to others who have done this number.

Certainly a diverting hour or so of music, generally well-played (and again praise to Rzaab and Davenport),

and credibly sung. In this age of blues-tinged rock, this solidly played set of straight blues has definite charm and appeal. **Ron Weinstock**



**ORI DAGAN**  
**Nathaniel: A Tribute To Nat King Cole**  
**SCATCAT RECORDS**

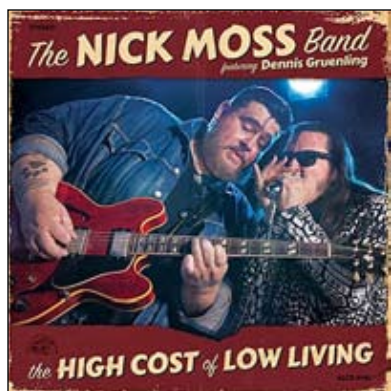
Unlike Gregory Porter's superb recent Nat King Cole tribute album, singer Dagan's homage takes a different tact; he's not simply singing songs from Cole's repertoire but also 5 original songs inspired by facets of Cole's life, music and legacy with highly esteemed special guests Sheila Jordan, Alex Pangman and Jane Bunnett. He is also doing this as the first visual album in the jazz genre: a collection of 12 music videos. Backing Dagan are, Mark Kieswetter - piano, Nathan Hiltz - guitar, and Ross MacIntyre - bass. Mark Kelso is on drums on five songs, Jane Bunnett adds soprano sax to two and flute on one, Magdelys Savigne adds percussion to two and Sheila Jordan and Alex Pangman each add vocals to one song.

Dagan is an interesting vocalist readily ranging from straight reading of the lyrics to his horn-like scatting flights, and the band swings nicely as on the opening "Linette," with Hiltz's guitar sparkling in backing. It is followed by the brisk, "Sting of the Cactus," with more strong guitar (both lead and Freddie Greene like chording) and piano. There is a latin tinge (with effective use of stop-time breaks) given to one of the songs Cole helped make a standard, "Nature Boy," with more excellent piano and guitar.

Other delights include a duet with Sheila Jordan on "Straighten Up and Fly Right," where they trade fours scatting; the ballad "Pretend," a charming vocal duet with Alex Pangman, and Dagan's lively original "Keep Simple" with James Bunnett on soprano, with Dagan scatting trading fours with Kieswetter, and Hiltz, and Kelso takes a short drum solo on this as well. Jane Bunnett adds flute to "El Bodeguero," one of the jaunty Cuban songs Cole recorded before the recording closes with the quick tempoed "Unforgettable" that opens with just MacIntyre's bass accompaniment before Hiltz and then Kieswetter join in.

Ori Dagan's vocals, and the excellent small group backing, provide much to entertain listeners with the delightful music here. **Ron Weinstock**





**THE NICK MOSS BAND**  
**FEAT. DENNIS GRUENLING**  
**The High Cost Of Low Living**  
**ALLIGATOR RECORDS**

As Tom Hyslop observes in his liner notes to this new Nick Moss recording, it marks Moss' return "to traditional Chicago and jump blues and old school rock'n'roll after his recent explorations into bluesy rock and jam blues stylings." Moss apprenticed with the likes of Jimmy Dawkins, The Legendary Blues Band and Jimmy Rogers before his own solo career. He has recorded 12 albums on his own Blue Bella label before this Alligator Records debut. Moss' influences include B.B. King, Freddie King, Earl Hooker, Magic Slim and other groundbreaking players.

Moss' new band includes the vocals and harmonica of Dennis Gruenling, whose full throated harmonica reflects the inspiration of James Cotton, Little Walter and George "Harmonica" Smith, and saxophonists including Lester Young and Red Prysock. Like Moss, he has seven fine solo recordings to his credit. Others heard on this recording are Taylor Streiff on piano, Nick Fane on bass and Patrick Seals on drums. Also present on several selections are Kid Andersen (who engineered this and co-produced this with Moss) on guitar and shakers; Jim Pugh on organ; Eric Spaulding on tenor sax and Jack Sanford on baritone sax. Moss contributed eight songs, Gruenling two, and there are three covers.

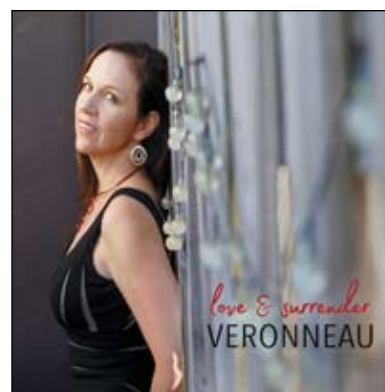
This return to straight, real deal Chicago blues by Moss is superb. The original material is first-rate (full of wit and pathos), Moss and Gruenling are solid vocalists, and playing (leads and backing) is top-notch. With horns in the background, Moss kicks off this recording with some Johnny Guitar Watson sounding guitar on "Crazy Mixed Up Baby," with Gruenling coming in for the first solo break before Moss explodes on the second break on a crisp West Coast blues. It is followed by an amusing shuffle "Get Right Before You Get Left," with a groove updating Howlin' Wolf's Memphis boogie recordings. It has more terrific harp and Moss sounds like he's channeling Willie Johnson. Some tough Elmore James flavored slide and rollicking piano help propel the driving title track with its ironic lyrics. Gruenling's "Count on Me," is a bit of classic rock and roll led by

his full-toned harmonica and more strong piano.

There is a solid cover of Otis Spann's "Get Your Hands Out Of My Pockets" that has Gruenling evoking vintage James Cotton. "Tight Grip On Your Leash" is a rollicking shuffle about this 'cool little number." The title "He Walked With Giants (Ode To Barrelhouse Chuck)" says it all with an affectionate lyric delivered with plenty of heart by Moss with Streiff again standing out. These ears detect Jimmy Dawkins' influence on Moss' guitar here, while Gruenling just kills it on chromatic harmonica. "All Night Diner" is a hot instrumental feature for Gruenling, with organist Pugh and Moss playing in a jazzy vein.

A bouncy rendition of Boyd Gilmore's recording "Rambling On My Mind" strongly closes this recording. As stated, there is strong and varied material (including choice songs to cover), very good singing, and excellent playing. This is also wonderfully recorded resulting in a superb straight-no-chaser Chicago blues recording.

**Ron Weinstock**



**VERONNEAU**  
**Love And Surrender**  
**VERONNEAU MUSIC**

The acoustic trio Veronneau are back with a new album (their fourth) that builds on their critically acclaimed and popular world-jazz repertoire. French Canadian vocalist Lynn Veronneau, with guitarists Ken Avis and David Rosenblatt take the listener around the globe, blending samba, French chanson, bossa nova and swing into a genre-defying musical feast. On this they are joined by long-time collaborator British violinist Dave Kline; their regular touring percussionist from Brazil, Bruno Lucini; and other guest musicians from Senegal, Nigeria, the UK and US on a program of five originals along with five intriguing interpretations.

Lynn Veronneau is an enchanting vocalist with her honey-toned singing and phrasing well supported by the two guitarists. Kline's violin adds to the funky, samba feel of the opening "Song of Love," with a wonderful solo (by Rosenblatt I believe) which is followed by the title track, a lovely ballad sung with a touch of heartbreak, with the kora of Amadou Kouyate adding some delightful musical coloring. There is the charm of a lovely French waltz, Serge Gainsbourg's "La Javan-

ise,” with Kline’s violin and Tom King’s accordion filling out the backing here. I believe Rosenblatt composed “September Moon,” a winsome instrumental with the sound of the guitars embellished by Avis’ harmonica and Lynn’s whistling.

The rendition of Alberto Domínguez’s “Perfida,” a song of love and betrayal sung in Spanish, has flamenco-accented guitar trading lines with violin, with a melody that will be familiar to many. It is followed by Lynn’s haunting vocals on the standard “Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most,” with exquisite backing and then Jim Webb’s “The Moon’s A Harsh Mistress,” both of which display her interpretative skills with a lyric. Brazilian 7-string guitarist JP Silva joins Lynn for an appealing vocal duet on the French-Portuguese mashup “Voce Abusou/Fais Comme L’Oiseau,” before “Waltz For Youssef,” another marvelous original, that closes a thoroughly enchanting recording full of charm, lyricism and superb performances. **Ron Weinstock**



**SUE FOLEY**  
**The Ice Queen**  
**STONY PLAIN**

Sue Foley’s early recordings left me cold in part because her vocals came off flat to these ears, despite her undeniable strengths as a guitarist. What is striking on her latest recording on Stony Plain is how her vocals have dramatically improved.

Joining her as special guests is a trio of legendary Texas guitar slingers – Jimmie Vaughan, Z.Z. Top’s Billy F Gibbons and Charlie Sexton – along with other Lone Star State all-stars, including Chris “Whipper” Layton (bass) (and George Rains (drums), Derek O’Brien (guitar), Chris Maresh and Billy Horton (bass) and The Texas Horns: John Mills, Al Gomez, Jimmy Shortell, Randy Zimmerman and Mark “Kaz” Kazanoff. Producer Mike Flanigan adds his keyboards to the striking backing on a set of blues and roots songs.

With two exceptions (from the Bessie Smith and Carter Family songbooks), Foley wrote all the songs (one being a collaboration with Flanigan). The music ranges from blues to blues-infused rock and roots. The performances are solid and Foley’s fluid guitar playing displays her virtuosity, but also her musical intelligence and ability to craft marvelous solos with wonderful support. As indicated her singing has certainly improved

as heard on her opening “Come To Me,” with the restraint in her delivery of slightly nasal singing. Charlie Sexton’s slide guitar and backing vocal is noteworthy besides her own smoldering playing. Like the opening track, “81” is more of a blues-infused rock number with her brooding vocal and stinging guitar.

The title track is a nice slow blues with just Billy Horton’s bass and George Rains’ drums with a choice lyric (“all the men agree that I’m too slippery to catch”), and a terrific guitar solo. It is followed by a buoyant duet with Jimmy Vaughan on the shuffle “The Lucky Ones,” with them trading vocal lines as well as guitar solos. Another strong track is “Gaslight,” with a gusty tenor sax solo from Elias Haslanger along with Foley’s own crisp solo against the amusing lyric. Billy Gibbons adds his gravelly vocal, guitar and harmonica to Fool’s Gold,” with a lazy shuffle groove and some greasy organ from co-composer Flanigan, before another terrific Foley solo.

“If I Have Forsaken You” is a wonderful song which will evoke the classic Bobby Bland Duke recordings in part due to John Mills’ arrangement for the Texas Horns. While Foley will never be viewed as a singer on the level of the late Bland, she sings with quiet conviction here, and certainly this is a song one might expect to hear others cover as well. In contrast, her updating of Bessie Smith’s “Send Me To The ‘Lectric Chair” is more interesting musically than vocally. Much more appealing is the wistful “Death of a Dream,” with her on acoustic guitar with standup bass and drums backing. The final two tracks have her on solo acoustic guitar. The flamenco-rooted “The Dance” is a striking original followed by an adept rendition of the Carter Family’s classic “Cannonball Blues.”

Overall, this was a delightful surprise to this listener. Sue Foley is an exceptional guitarist, writes intriguing originals, and is now a capable singer with charm and conviction. If there are a couple of imperfect performances, the “The Ice Queen” still is a first-rate album of blues and roots. **Ron Weinstock**



**CECILE MCLORIN SALVANT**  
**Dreams and Daggers**  
**MACK AVENUE RECORDS 2-CD SET**

About her new album, recorded partly live at the Village Vanguard and part in the studio, Cecile McLorin



Salvant says, “The songs on this album are of dreams and daggers. The daggers have been used at times to attack, at times to defend. For power, no doubt, to take it, to keep it. The dreams are the ones I caught looking out a window, or from the light sleep before the deep. I don’t always know what they mean, but they are the ones I was able to keep. And yet dreams can be desires too. I wrote them down to make them true. That we may bring our wildness into view. That we may be unruly and unruly.” On most of this, she is supported by her trio of Aaron Diehl on piano, Paul Sikivie on double bass, and Lawrence Leathers on drums, with a string quartet joining the trio for four selections and provide the accompaniment on two songs. On one selection she is just accompanied by Sullivan Fortner’s piano.

The mix of original material from her along with interpretations of songs that range from classic blues to American songbook standards here are simply superbly performed and supported. The brief “And Yet” backed by her trio and strings opens followed by her rendition of “Devil May Care,” with solos from the trio, but it is McLorin Salvant who stars with sonorous, singing marked by her enunciation, timing, pitch, horn-like phrasing as well as dynamics reflected in the variation in timber as well as volume. This is followed by her take on “Mad About the Boy,” where she caresses the lyric. She revives a lesser known Bessie Smith recording, “Sam Jones Blues,” singing with considerable wit about this rascal who leaves his wife to step around and discovers she was his wife no more and she said “You ain’t talking to Missus Jones, you speaking to Missus Wilson now.” Her vocal owes more to Billie Holiday than Bessie perhaps, but with Diehl’s jaunty piano, she clearly delighted the audience.

The remainder of the material is equally stimulating as she sings about being born to wander on “Never Will I Marry,” along with the similar mood on the brief “Runnin’ Wild” (with superb backing from Sikivie and Leathers using brushes). There is the charm of “I Didn’t Know What Time It Was,” the bawdiness of another classic Bessie Smith song, “You Got to Give Me Some” (backed solely by the stately Sullivan Fortner, channeling James P. Johnson), and the jubilant, swinging rendition of “Let’s Face the Music and Dance,” with fabulous Diehl piano to match her superb singing.

After her fresh, and sassy, interpretation of Ida Cox’s “Wild Women Don’t Have the Blues,” this recording closes with another fabulous vocal, “You’re Getting To Be a Habit With Me.” It is another exceptional recording from her.

**Ron Weinstock**



## **BACKTRACK BLUES BAND**

### **Make My Home In Florida**

**HARPO/SELECT-O-HITS**

The Backtrack Blues Band is like the 800 pound gorilla in that they are so big, they can sit wherever they want. This is a CD/DVD release of a January 6, 2017 concert they did at the Palladium Theatre in St. Petersburg, Florida, using their last release, “Way Back Home,” as a jumping off point (see my review of that disc in issue #370, January/February 2017). The band is a combination of Chicago and Texas styles swirled into a new kind of shade. As far as I know, four of the five musicians are Florida natives with lead guitarist Kid Royal having emigrated down from Canada.

Bassist Jeff “Stick” Davis and drummer Joe Bencomo make a solid bottom for lead guitarist Royal and lead singer/harmonica man Sonny Charles to fight over the solo spotlight. One funny thing I noted on the DVD is rhythm guitarist Little Johnny Walter seems to be having the time of his life, clapping along with the audience at the end of some of the tunes. On the DVD, the stage is bathed in blue light, with solo white on each performer, to help set the mood.

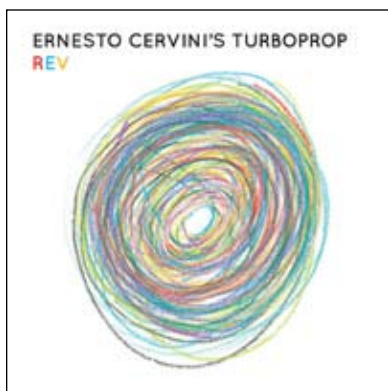
More covers than originals here, B.B. King’s “Woke Up This Morning” has Royal and Charles both getting a little of that solo spotlight as Kid Royal takes over the lead microphone on T Bone Walker’s “T Bone Shuffle.” On the original side is “Heavy Built Woman,” for all the chunky women in the audience and “Shoot My Rooster,” a tale of a constantly crowing fowl that Sonny Charles ran into in St. John’s, the Virgin Islands, that he was tempted to off, but didn’t and got a song out of it anyway.

“Make My Home In Florida” is a solid effort. It almost tempts me to go visit my demented friends down in St. Petersburg.

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## ERNESTO CERVINI'S TURBOPROP REV ANZIC RECORDS

Drummer Ernesto Cervini wears several hats including being a bandleader, composer, a musician and a publicist for jazz recordings (mostly Canadian). This is the second disc by Turboprop which is composed of significant players on the Toronto and New York jazz scenes. I regretfully never got around to writing about the earlier, eponymously titled album as it was a superb one. The group on this new release consists of Tara Davidson on Alto and Soprano Saxophones (Toronto), Joel Frahm on Tenor Saxophone (New York), William Carn on Trombone (Toronto), Adrean Farrugia on Piano (Toronto), Dan Loomis on Bass (New York) and Cervini on Drums (Toronto).

Cervini says about Turboprop that, "although I am the band-leader, Turboprop truly feels like a collective due to the passion, commitment and love everybody brings to each performance." This can readily be heard on the pianist Farrugia's "The Libertine," that opens this recording. It opens with a brisk solo from Cervini and has an intriguing melodic line with an evocative horn arrangement set over a percolating groove before Farrugia's lyrical, propulsive solo, with his driving right hand set off against his left hand's bass lines and followed by Frahm's soaring, twisting robust tenor sax. The mood changes with Cervini's animated "Granada Bus," inspired by the energy of a Spanish bus stop. Davidson's serpentine soprano sax weaving around this and the other horns opens followed by Farrugia's superb dynamic improvisation with Frahm again tearing into the music. The first of the covers is the charming interpretation of Blind Melon's "No Rain," with a restrained march-like groove (and Cervini shows his touch and taste in swinging this performance) and more lovely horn playing with Cam taking a swinging, raspy, woolly toned solo followed by some exquisite Davidson, again on soprano sax (with Cervini being more prominent as she heats up her solo).

On the Cervini penned title track, the three horns are spiritedly playing accompanied only by the leader's rambunctious drumming with him taking a crisp drum solo. Radiohead is the source for "The Daily Mail," which is a showcase for Loomis' emphatic playing fol-

lowed by Frahm in a reflective mode segueing into a rowdy horns section before Frahm calms things down at the close. Loomis' walking bass sets the groove for a warm take on "Pennies From Heaven" with Frahm playing with warmth. There is wonderful scoring of the horns throughout, including several unison choruses before some more propulsive tenor sax, followed by some energetic, gruff trombone and another strong bass solo. The ensemble playing here as elsewhere is exemplary.

The sparkling Loomis original "Ranthem" with shifting rhythms and colors has some outstanding playing from Cam with his last extended note leading into Frahm's spiraling playing. Cam's "Arc of Instability" quietly builds in intensity from a restrained, reflective opening into a fiery, swinging shuffle with again strong solo voices and first-rate ensemble work (Cam being especially impressive).

**Ron Weinstock**



## SUGARAY RAYFORD FEAT. THE ITALIAN ROYAL FAMILY The World That We Live In BLIND FAITH RECORDS

This new release, which I came across on bandcamp.com, features one of the finest blues and soul singers to emerge in the past few years. I assume The Italian Royal Family is the backing band on this terrific new Sugaray Rayford recording that places him more in a straight deep soul vein than his previous recordings. I make this observation as a descriptive comment, not an evaluative as I doubt anyone who has enjoyed Sugaray's 'blues' recordings will be disappointed by this release that finds him singing very strongly and backed by a really excellent band.

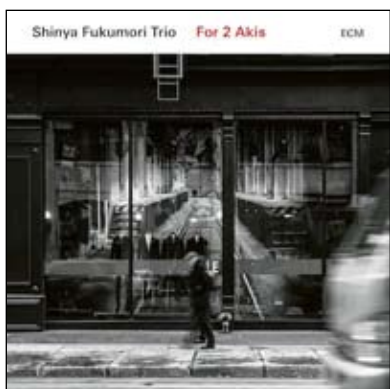
There is the Memphis funky groove and strong brassy horns on the opening "Take Me Back," where he sings about not missing his water until his well ran dry, and can't sleep no more because his woman is gone and pleads for her to take him back. The mood shifts to the cooler topical lyrics of the title track where his dynamics, vocal and expressive range come to fore. Then there is "Don't Regret a Mile," that sounds like a vintage Curtis Mayfield (and it may be since I purchased this as a download and have no composer credits or specific personnel information including the wonderful vocal chorus heard on several selections.)



"Keep Moving" is a lovely soul ballad, while "Ain't Got No Business To Die" is another topical number about a poor man having no business to die with a driving groove and punchy horns.

Rather than praise each of the ten tracks, let me simply state that Sugaray Rayford sings fabulously and the backing band superbly provides idiomatic backing (terrific horn arrangements) on first-rate material. Kudos to Italian soul ambassador, Luca Sapio, for making this exceptional recording happen. It has been available as a CD and on vinyl but postal costs from Europe make this very expensive. It is now available on Transistor Sound in the US and the vinyl LP may be easier to find than the CD. For more information on this visit the Bandcamp page, <https://sugarayrayford.bandcamp.com/album/the-world-that-we-live-in>.

*Ron Weinstock*



## SHINYA FUKUMORI TRIO

For 2 Akis  
ECM

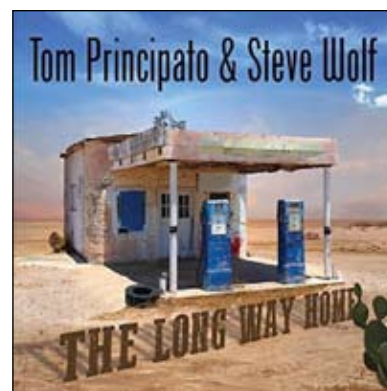
Absent a bass player, drummer Shinya Fukumori's trio format affords the leader a vast range of space in which to operate. The most notable characteristic of this set, however, is his consistently sparing use of it. Crescendos, as such, are a rare occurrence, as Fukumori most often opts for delicate touches of cymbals and brushes and concise, punctuated work across his drum kit.

His trio mates, pianist Walter Lang and tenor saxophonist Matthieu Bordenave, are ideal matches for the drummer's touch, typically providing a dialogue under which Fukumori alternates between joining in and creating an intriguing counter-narrative; the latter providing the most interesting moments on this engaging and most enjoyable set.

*Duane Verh*

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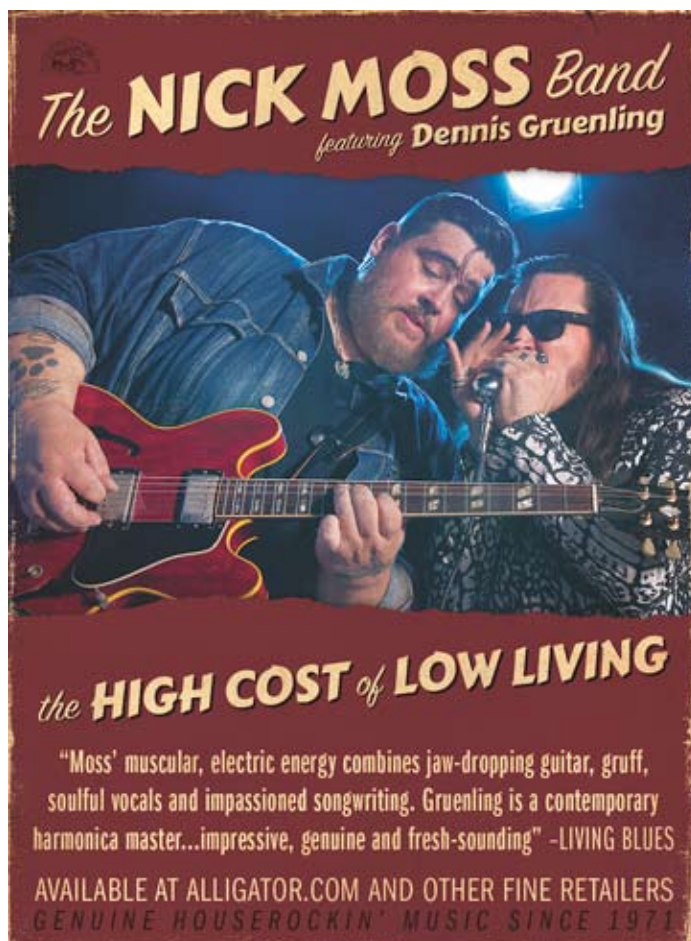
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## TOM PRINCIPATO AND STEVE WOLF

The Long Way Home  
POWERHOUSE

Longtime friends and musical associates, guitarist Tom Principato and bassist Steve Wolf, come together for a set of mostly musical duets. Principato is best known as for his blues and roots rock performances with his straight-forward parched singing and nuanced, yet high energy guitar that can run from James Burton styled rockabilly to B.B. King styled blues to electrified gypsy guitar. Wolf has been his long-time bassist but also a familiar anchor to a number of Washington DC based groups. There are others heard on several of the eight songs (six composed by Principato and two by Wolf), but they stay mostly in the background.



The performances have an intimate, conversational feel starting with the opening “I Thought Of You,” and then followed with Principato displaying his fluid, jazz chops on “Midnight Groove,” with Josh Howell’s congas helping propel this sparkling performance with Wolf talking a strong solo as Principato lightly chords behind him. Wolf’s “Tres Dias Mas,” is a charming Tex-Mex flavored ballad, while Principato’s “Very Blue” is a low-key, early in the morning instrumental with Principato playing in a jazzy vein. There is a Flamenco tinge to the lovely “Mi Solea,” while “Back Again & Gone” is a relaxed, country-jazz flavored instrumental with Joe Wells’ on drums.

There is plenty of wonderful music on “The Long Way Home,” which finds Principato and Wolf playing with restraint, but still showing considerable imagination as well as their considerable musical command.

**Ron Weinstock**



## IRA B. LISS BIG BAND

**Jazz Machine**  
**TASTY TUNES**

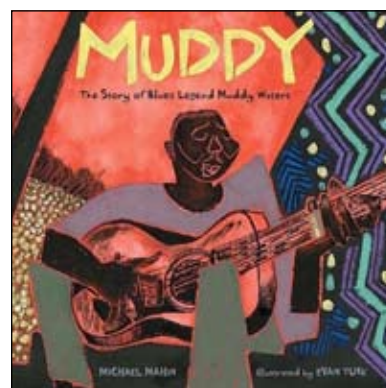
Wow. A fixture in the Southern California scene for 38 years, when this Big Band kicks off with a volcanic “You Don’t Know What Love Is,” one simply goes along for the equivalent of a Formula One ride with this Big Bad Band with Eric Richards’ heated arrangement, a full speed ahead alto sax solo from Christopher Hollyday, and blistering trumpet from Peter Green, before pianist Steve Sibley’s reflective piano break. Pianist Sibley leads a terrific rhythm section with bassist Lance Jeppersen, guitarist Alex Ciavarelli, drummer Charlie McGhee and percussionist Mark Lamson.

I am not going to recite all the players in this superb band but simply highlight some of the high-points on this exceptional recording. Guest Eric Marienthal’s alto sax is featured on Woody Herman-Ralph Burns composition “Early Autumn,” which starts sedately before altering into a more heated temp that displays Marienthal’s fluid, bop-rooted playing framed by Tom Kubis’ brassy arrangement. The band’s vocalist, Janet Hammer, provides a nice treatment of “I Didn’t Know What Time It Was,” followed the strutting “When the Lady Dances.” Composer Bob Mintzer (another guest here) takes a full-bodied tenor sax solo followed by Sibley’s piano and Ciavarelli’s fluid guitar.

Mike Crotty’s arrangement of Sonny Rollins’ “Oleo,” kicked off by drummer McGhee, makes this a feature for the saxophone section each of whom takes a chorus or two with baritone saxophonist Ross Rizzo, Jr. standing out amongst these exceptional players. They also trade fours at the end. Janet Hammer’s vocal on “Nature Boy,” and the alto flute solo from guest Holly Hofmann is enlivened by Carl Murr’s arrangement. Ciavarelli’s jazz-rock guitar set the mood on “Manhattan Burns” with Peter Green’s fiery, high register trumpet followed by similarly heated guitar. Dave Grusin’s ebullient “Mountain Dance” opens with sparkling piano, muted trumpets and flute from David Castel De Oro setting a festive feel before a jaunty guitar solo, full of dazzling single note runs and Sibley’s deft piano.

Ira B. Liss has one high energy big band marked by superior ensemble and solo playing and wonderfully crafted arrangements resulting in an album of exhilarating and compelling performances. **Ron Weinstock**

## books



## MUDDY: THE STORY OF BLUES LEGEND MUDDY WATERS

BY MICHAEL MAHIN, EVAN TURK (ILLUSTRATOR)  
NEW YORK: ATHENEUM BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS  
2017: 48 PAGES: 11.10(W) X 11.20(H) X 0.50(D)

“Muddy” is a marvelously illustrated children’s book in which author Mahin tells the story of an indomitable Muddy Waters beginning with “McKinley Morganfield was never good at doing what he was told. Especially when it came to playing in the Mud. His mamma should’ve been mad. But she couldn’t help but laugh. ‘Ah, my muddy baby. My sweet muddy baby.’ McKinley’s mamma gave him a life. And a laugh. And then she was gone. Forever.”

Mahin tells Muddy’s story in the manner of singing lyrics with an oft-repeated refrain, that Muddy never was good atmosphere doing what he was told. And while his loving Grandma Della loved him, and took him to church, young Muddy preferred the Fish-Fry music. After all, “To have the blues was to feel bad. But to play the blues, was to take that low-down skunk-funk,



deep stomach hurt and turn it into something else." Grandma Della had no place for the blues and said "No child of mine is gonna waste his time with music." Mahin simply responds "But Muddy was never good at doing what he was told."

It is a story of his determination to make music and dance, then seeing Son House play with a bottle-neck, and make the sound of the Mississippi Delta that "Muddy heard in his heart." Mahin sketches Muddy saving pennies to buy a Stella and playing weekend frolics, while still sharecropping, the back-busting, soul-breaking work and how he finally could not take abuse from his boss, walked away and headed to Chicago, taking that train and heading to the city of electrified guitars and jazz horns jumping all over town. And when Muddy started playing his country style, club owners told him he had to jazz it up "But Muddy was never good at doing what he was told," so he plugged in but played the deep-feeling gut-bucket music of the delta.

Mahin even tells how Muddy made his first records, even sweetening them with the Bluebird beat, but they did not use his name, how he recorded for Columbia but they did not release anything and then he records with Chess, who originally wanted him in a jazzy context, but Muddy rebels until Chess allows him to perform his own way in this imagined account that ends with a limited initial pressing selling out quickly,

leading Chess to press many more copies. "One day the Beatles would be shaking Muddy's hand. One day the President of the United States would be tapping his toes. One day the whole world would know the name Muddy waters. One day was on its way."

Of course, this brief imaginative telling of Muddy's life is only a sketch but it serves to make its point about Muddy, the blues legend. This text is accompanied by Evan Turk's striking illustrations. The cover of "Muddy" is suggestive of his art helps contribute to the text, providing picturesque graphic embellishment to the text. If one cannot find this in a local bookstore, one might visit the websites of Barnes & Noble or amazon to see sample pages. This wonderful book is directed at children of the ages 4-8 and one that music loving parents might read to (and later read with) their children. It would also make a marvelous gift to such parents and their children.

**Ron Weinstock**

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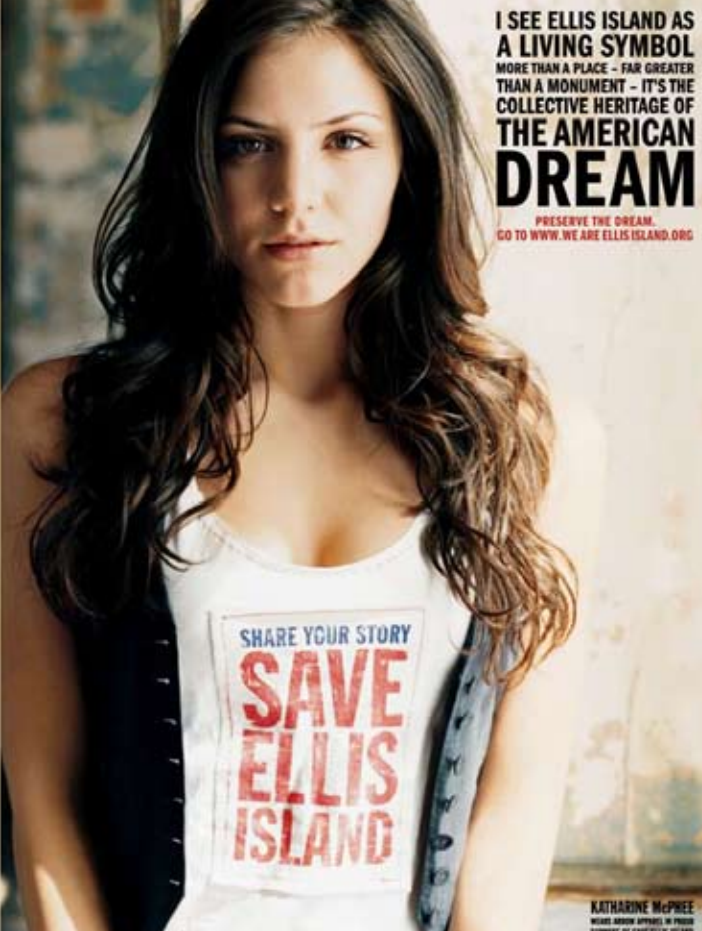


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