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DC Jazz Festival

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jazz & blues report

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



Ben Williams



Lena Seikaly

DC Jazz Festival

By Ron Weinstock

**DC JazzFest Returns With Star-Filled Lineup June 8 through 17
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 from June 8 to June 17, culminating with The Wharf as a festival destination this year on July 16 and July 17. The headliners are a stylistically diverse, global roster of top-tier jazz heavyweights 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), Terri Lynn Carrington, Jazzmeia Horn, Chucho Valdés & Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Roy Hargrove, Ivan Lins, Maceo Parker, Regina Carter, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, Ben Williams, 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.

On Saturday June 16, free music will include performances on the District Pier by the AMP Trio feat. Tahira Clayton (2017 DCJazzPrix



Fdederic Yonnet



Orrin Evans

Winner); the highly regraded DC pianist and composer Mark G. Meadows; Thelonious Monk Competition winner bassist Ben Williams, the legendary Brazilian artist Ivan Lins and the spectacular New Orleans trumpeter Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah and his group. On the Transit Pier one of DC's finest and most soulful singers, Akua Allrich closes that stage after performances by Washington Jazz Institute Ensemble, the Jazz Academy Ensemble, Michael Ventura and Batala. At Hyatt House they will hold the finals of the 2018 DC JazzPrix. While all this is free, they are asking for donations for the DC

JazzPrix finals.

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 Derrick 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.

On Sunday, June 17, the Wharf hosts the DC JazzFest International Jazz Stage with free music that includes at the District Pier Fabrizio Bosso (Italy), harmonica wizard Gregoire Maret and harpist Edmar Castañeda (Switzerland/Colombia), Thelonious Monk Competition winner on saxophone Melissa Aldana (Chile), vocalist Rochelle Rice and the Jihye Lee Orchestra (Korea). On the Transit Pier will be performances from Hess Is More (Denmark), Ancestral Memories (France), DC trombonist and composer Reginald Cyntje, and the Jose Andre Band.

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. Saturday June 2 will have performances from the Herman Burney Trio featuring students from Jazzin' After School, Lena Seikaly, David Schulman, Janelle Fill Trio, Udobi, Shannon Gunn and the Bullettes and the Paul Carr Quartet. Sunday June 3 will feature Michael Ventura, Kenny Rittenhouse Ensemble, David Schulman, Tyler Leak, Coy Fish, Origem, and The String Queens. On June 7 as part of Phillips After Dark, the Phillips Collections will host a JazzFest Preview Event featuring Los Gallos Negros, a Washington, DC based collective of musicians focused on preserving and promoting musical genres from Mexican and Latin American culture.

Then starting June 8 through the 17th 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

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



Akua Alrich

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: with Patricia Barber, Raul Midon, The Bad Plus; Pharoah Sanders, and Homge to a Master: Keter Betts featuring Ben Williams and special guests along with other performers. On June 7 they host the DC JazzFest's opening ceremony with harmonica master Frederic Yonnet with special guest Maimouna Youssef and the Washington Renaissance Orchestra Octet.

The Hamilton Live will present performances by Delfeayo Marsalis along with the Eric Byrd Trio; Regina Carter: Simply Ella along with Elijah Jamal Balbed; Terence Blanchard featuring The E-Collective along with Mark G. Meadows and Allan Harris: The Genius of Eddie Jefferson featuring Lena Seikaly. \$3.00 from every ticket from The Hamilton Live will be contributed to the DC Jazz Festival Education Program.

Sixth & I has a very special program on Thursday June 14, Terri Lyne Carrington: Feed The Fire: Celebrating Geri Allen. The DC Jazz Fest's website describes this extraordinary program "Pianist-composer Geri Allen, will be remembered on with a DCJF exclusive: ... Ms. Allen, who mentored subsequent generations of Howard University music students while achieving an

honored career as a performing and recording artist, jazz educator, passed away in 2017. Renowned drummer-bandleader-educator Terri Lyne Carrington, brings a list of stellar musicians including Bad Plus pianist Orrin Evans, rising star saxophonist Tia Fuller, swiftly emerging vocalist Charanee Wade, and DCJF's 2018 artist-in-residence Ben Williams. The evening will also highlight the special partnership Geri Allen had with the late NEA Jazz Master vocalist Betty Carter, a major touchstone in Ms. Allen's extraordinary career."

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. This 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 performances 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.

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 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, which includes a full schedule of the various performances and events.

jazz-blues.com

Telluride Jazz Festival Announces Artist Lineup August 3-5 in Telluride, CO

Telluride, Colorado - As the summer season in the world-famous mountain town of Telluride, Colorado begins to approach, the Telluride Jazz Festival reveals its 2018 artist lineup. Set on August 3-5, 2018, the festival presents a well-rounded, diverse mix of live jazz, funk, soul, and gospel performances featuring Bruce Hornsby & The Noisemakers, Irma Thomas, Soul Queen of New Orleans, Karl Denson's Tiny Universe, Jaimoe's Jasssz Band, BADBADNOTGOOD, Turkuaz and many more.

Steve Gumble, Festival Director said "Without a doubt, having legendary artists like Irma Thomas and Bruce Hornsby on the lineup is phenomenal but what really excites me for the 2018 festival are the new kids on the block. Artists like BADNADNOTGOOD, Turkuaz and Cory Henry and the Funk Apostles are changing the face of Jazz. There has been a resurgence in Jazz in the last few years, especially with younger folks, and many of the bands on this year's lineup are leading that charge" He went on to say "For me, 2018 is special because it is our second year of producing this 42-year-old festival. We learned a lot last year and are excited to be able to improve on the experience after having a year under our belt. The whole festival experience is just amazing - yoga classes, historical tours, student jazz programs, and our very eclectic, yet jazz-centric, lineup. There is something here for everyone".

Telluride Town Park is renowned as one of America's most scenic and spectacular live music venues. Nestled among the aspen trees and surrounded by 13,000 foot mountain peaks, festival artists will perform on the state-of-the-art Main Stage. A secondary stage, "Society Stage", free of admission, will host weekend programming including interactive artist and student band performances in the center of Telluride. The intimate performances on the "Society Stage" aim to further the festival's and Telluride Society for Jazz's mission of providing student education through music.

Festival tickets are on sale now. Early Bird 3-Day Passes are \$145.00 plus fees. The following passes are limited in quantities while supplies last: Early Bird 3-Day, Early Bird All That Jazz, Patron Experience, VIP Experience, "Jazz After Dark" and 4-Day Camping passes. Single day tickets are set to go on sale May 23, 2018. For festival information or to purchase tickets, visit www.telluridejazz.org/tickets.

About Telluride Jazz Festival

Located in the legendary outdoor venue in the breathtaking mountain town of Telluride, Colorado, the 42nd Telluride Jazz Festival, August 3-5, 2018, celebrates the rich tradition, modern styles and cutting edge progression of the American Jazz art form delivering an unmatched aesthetic experience. SBG Productions brings a new era to the Telluride Jazz Festival, showcasing three days and nights of world class jazz, funk, soul, folk and gospel, with a goal of

community engagement and student education. A musically-charged local culture accompanied by a wide variety of special events including interactive artist performances, children's activities, cozy late night club shows, on-site camping, outdoor recreation, jazz art walk, historical walking tours, and much more will round out the weekend celebration. The historical mining town of Telluride sits nestled in a scenic box canyon at 8,750 feet, surrounded by 13,000 foot peaks, and is a prized gem of the Rocky Mountains.

A full service event and festival production company since 1994, SBG Productions specializes in the unique, multi-faceted live music experiences of the Telluride Blues & Brews Festival, Telluride Jazz Festival, and Durango Blues Train.

BLUES WATCH

BY MARK SMITH

Grammy Blues As typical, the Recording Academy proved to be a sentimental lot awarding longevity as much as anything else when it comes to categories like the blues. Surprisingly, they didn't give the gold statute to **Gregg Allman** for his final effort but they overlook a number of venerable blues artists to give a nod to the Stones for their recent detour back to their roots. The following winners were announced at the 60th annual Grammy Awards in late January: Best Traditional Blues Album- *Blue and Lonesome*- **The Rolling Stones**; Best Contemporary Blues- *TajMo*- **Taj Mahal and Keb' Mo'**. Other categories of interest to blues fans include; Best American Roots Performance: *Killer Diller Blues* - **Alabama Shakes**; Best American Roots Song- *If We Were Vampires*- **Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit**; Best America Album- *The Nashville Sound*- **Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit**. Congratulations to all of the winners. **New Release Blues**..... **Sue Foley**- *Ice Queen*; **Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters**- *The Luckiest Man*; **Carolyn Gaines**- featuring **Big Jay McNeely and Grady Gains Jr.**- *Beware of My Dog*; **Sweet Pea Atkinson**- *Get What You Deserve*; **Henry Gray & the Creole Cats**- *92*; **Ben Harper & Charlie Musselwhite**- *No Mercy In This Land*; **Johnny Tucker**- *Seven Day Blues*; **Curtis Salgado & Alan Hager**- *Rough Cut*; **Homesick James**- *Shake Your MoneyMaker*; **Vance Kelly**- *How Can I Miss You When You Won't Leave?*; **Rockwell Avenue Blues Band**- *Back to Chicago*; **Corey Dennison Band**- *Night After Night*; **Breezy Rodio**- *Sometimes the Blues Got Me*; **Hamilton Loomis**- *Basics*; **Albert Cummings**- *Live at the 62 Center*; **Tinsley Ellis**- *Winning Hand*; **Danielle Nicole**- *Cry No More*; **Markey Blue/Ric Latina Project**- *Raised in Muddy Water*; **Blue & Lonesome Duo**- *Li'I Ronnie & Gordon Harrower*- *Pacing the Floor*; **Lucky Peterson**- *Tribute to Jimmy Smith*; **Janiva Magness**- *Love Is An Army*; **Various**- *Strange Angels: In Flight With Elmore James.*; **Various Artists**- *Howlin' At Greaseland*; **James Harmon**- *fineprint*; **Kid Ramos**- *Old School*. **That's It! See ya!**

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

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

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

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



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

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

Jazz is art, you dig? Art can

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



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

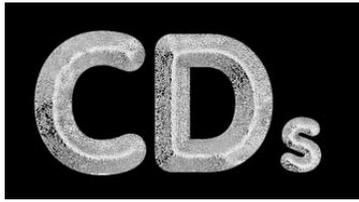


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the Cream of the Crop!



JOE GOLDMARK
Blue Steel
LO-VALL RECORDS

Goldmark is a new name to these ears, but he is a pedal steel guitarist from the San Francisco Bay area who got the bug to play the pedal steel from seeing Jerry Garcia play with the New Riders of the Purple Sage decades ago. He remained playing even after getting married and first having a pizza business and then became a partner at Amoeba Music, but all this time continued to play. There is a variety of supporting musicians with drummer Paul Rivelli being the most familiar to me. There are seven vocals here split between ex-Hoodoo Rhythm Devils lead singer Glenn Walters and chanteuse Dallis Craft, while long-time Goldmark compadre, Jim Campilongo, guests on electric guitar.

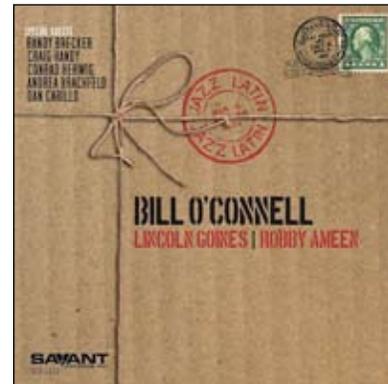
Despite the mix of roots, country, blues and soul, Goldmark's playing sounds rooted mostly in the country tradition, as compared to the more vocalized steel guitar stylings of Sacred Steel players and Bay area bluesman Freddie Roulette. This is evident on the opening "Night Flight," where he displays his clear delivery (and Gary Pullerton's twangy tremolo guitar). After the easy to listen to opening track, things heat up with Walters blue-eyed soulful vocal on a rendition of Rufus Thomas' "All Night Worker," as Jeff Ervin's baritone sax helps add to the bottom while Goldmark takes a crisp solo. Walters also is heard on a heated cover of Jimmy McCracklin's "The Wobble" with some sizzling steel guitar and also B.B. King's "Beautician Blues," with some more astonishing steel guitar to go with Walters' forceful singing.

The four vocals featuring Dallis Craft are in the vein of old-school country (think the Bakersfield School), starting with Jeffrey Lynne's honky tonk ballad, "I Want

To Be With You Forever"; Graham Parker's "Howlin' Wind," which incorporates a reggae groove; Lefty Frizell's honky tonk classic "Look What Thoughts Will Do"; and her lament "True Love Travels On a Gravel Road" that closes this recording. Among the other instrumentals, there is the lovely "Warm Rain," a calypso infused arrangement of Bob Marley's "Natty Dread," and Jim Campilongo's country waltz, "I Want To Be With You Forever."

Very easy to listen too, this is a most appealing genre-crossing release that likely will have its greatest appeal to fans of old school country and Americana, but entertaining to anyone who might sample this tasty recording.

Ron Weinstock



BILL O'CONNELL
Jazz Latin
SAVANT RECORDS

Pianist O'Connell scores with his latest release with selections from his excellent trio, with Lincoln Goines on electric bass and Bobby Ameen on drums, with whom he played with in the Dave Valentin Band. Guests here include Randy Brecker, Craig Handy and Conrad Herwig. The eleven selections include seven originals and cover a range of styles and instrumentation.

The disc opens with a celebratory salute to the 44th President, "Obama Samba," with all three soloing. There is a solid, hard swinging rendition of the Cole Porter standard "Just One of Those Things," before O'Connell switches to electric piano with Craig Handy joining in for "It's OK," followed by the trio paying respects to their late leader Valentin on winsome reflective interpretation of Wayne Shorter's "Footprints," with Goines sounding excellent here. Next is a ballad that slowly builds its tempo, "Goodbye My Friend." On this Brecker employs the lower register of his trumpet and after a very appealing piano solo and some excellent guitar from is heard from Daniel Carillo.

Flautist Andrea Brachfeld enhances "Quicksand," with its percolating groove and skittering electric piano, while "Tip Toes" is a Monk influenced original with interesting intervals and chording with some of O'Connell's most inspired playing. With Conrad Herwig adding his trombone, O'Connell provides a Latin arrangement for a dazzling reinvention of Irving Berlin's "Puttin' on the Ritz." Ameen's drumming is most

noteworthy here, along with an appropriately heated trombone solo from Herwig.

A tribute to his mother, "Mom's Song," includes some hauntingly beautiful guitar from Carillo along with O'Connell's moving piano. Carillo is also on the jazz waltz interpretation of Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Zingaro." The brief, galloping original "What Is This," brings to a close this outstanding recording.

Ron Weinstock



GUS SPENOS
It's Lovin' I Guarantee
SELF-PRODUCED

Gus Spenos is a sax-playing bluesman who plays and sings in the vein of the great blues shouters while also being a top neurologist in Indianapolis. This is his latest recording and he recorded it in Hoboken with a terrific big band that includes Wycliffe Gordon on trombone and Cecil Brooks III on drums. The rest of the rhythm section also includes Brandon McCune on keyboards and Brad Williams on guitar. Others present include Freddie Hendrix on trumpet, Bruce Williams on alto sax, and Jason Marshall on baritone sax. These gentleman along with Gordon, McCune and Williams are heard on solos throughout.

Spenos and his collaborator, Collin DeJoseph, wrote 4 originals and there are 9 covers here. DeJoseph, who also played piano, did the arrangements. This is solid jump blues that is wonderfully played with plenty of hot horn solos and tight rocking grooves. The originals, such as the title track and "Every Tic's Got a Toc," are solid originals in the jump blues tradition while the songs covered are not songs that have been covered to death.

Spenos is an adequate, if at times awkward sounding, singer who does invest a lot of spirit in his vocals although he is overshadowed by his inspirations. At the same time, the horns and band are wonderful with Gordon contributing some terrific growling trombone on Jimmy Rushing "Fool's Blues," where the leader takes one of several terrific booting tenor sax solos here. Guitarist Williams takes a fleet solo on TNT Tribble's "She Walks Right In," followed by Hendrix' blistering trumpet. On Eddie Boyd's "Hush Baby Don't You Cry," Jason Marshall's burly baritone sax is followed by Gordon's gutbucket play while McCune lays down some hot buttered fried soul on the B-3.

Brad Williams opens "Livin' is a Crime" with some T-Bone Walker styled chords and then chords under Spe-

nos tough tenor sax opening on a solid slow original with Gordon's growling obligatos adding plenty to the feel of this performance. It is followed by Buddy Johnson's "Lil Dog," a wonderful instrumental that showcases Spenos tenor sax as well as Gordon's gutbucket trombone, Bruce Williams' alto sax and Hendrix' sizzling trumpet. Another solid number here, Eddie Mack's "King Loving Daddy," is a nice jump blues by a lesser known shouter.

The only reservation about this recording is that Spenos is not a compelling singer. However, the excellence of the musical performances here certainly merit attention from fans of jump blues and classic rhythm'n'blues.

Ron Weinstock



ANDREAS VARADY
The Quest
RESONANCE RECORDS

One of a number of younger artists Quincy Jones is currently championing, he discovered the Slovak Varady when introduced to him at the 2012 Montreux Jazz Festival when he was 12. In the liner booklet Jones states, "It's not every day that you see a 15 year old playing like George Benson! There was something about him, and he had the same type of spark that I had seen in some of the musical greats I previously worked with." Varady produced this recording and did all the composing and led this ensemble that includes his brother Adrian on drums, father Bandi on bass, fellow Slovak Radiska on saxophone and the brilliant Venezuelan-born pianist, Benito Gonzalez.

Maybe a prodigy when Quincy Jones first encountered Varady, who is of Hungarian Roma descent, he displays not simply formidable chops in what now might he considered the traditional guitar vein of Montgomery, Burrell, Grant Green and the like, but also as a composer leading a terrific band. The brief "Lost memories" introduces this ensemble with a dynamic groove as the leader's fleet runs are matched by the band. "Radio Joint" opens with Varady and Radiska playing the main theme over a repeated piano line before Varady generates a lot of heat in his solo before Radiska barrels forth in an energized post Coltrane-mode with Gonzalez comping and soloing in a akin to McCoy Tyner, but, like Radiska, showing his own musical personality. There is subtle electronic effects employed at the closing portion of this performance.

Gonzalez lovely opening “Follow Me” provides a tranquil beginning before the full band adds a bit of energy with 15 year old Adrian displaying a dynamic attack before playing more gently under the lyrical solo from Gonzalez. This is followed by the two brothers playing explosively together.

“The Time is Now” displays Varady’s fleet and fluid attack along with his finesse in negotiating the changes, while the brief interlude “Patience” involves some evocative use of effects. The album gets its title from “The Quest to Dopeness” that opens with Gonzalez playing inside the piano with the two brothers especially adding texture and colors before Varady and Radiska stating the theme and negotiating the shifting tempos and melodic lines before the leader takes a crisp, fleet solo followed by the saxophonists husky solo (even briefly quoting Coltrane) set against the pianist’s block chord and explosive drumming with the younger Varady soloing with the band riffing in support.

“Story” is a beautiful composition with Varady and Radiska playing wonderfully in a more lyrical manner. “Radiska” finds the group again in a post-Coltrane vein with magic from Gonzalez who again channels Tyner along with Varady’s own scintillating solo and Radiska’s strong sax here. One cannot lose sight of the superb work of Bandi and Adrian in providing a strong foundation. More electronic effects mix with a serene melody for the concluding “Outro.”

This is the third recording from Andreas Varady, and it showcases his considerable talents along with an excellent band resulting in this superb recording.

Ron Weinstock



BIG SHOES

Step On It!

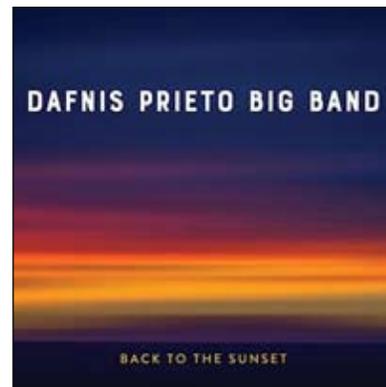
BIGLITTLE RECORDS

Big Shoes is a seven-piece outfit that calls Nashville home but has influences that include the deep groove of Muscle Shoals and the second line bounce of New Orleans. With a cast that has seen service with the likes of Van Morrison, Bonnie Raitt, Levon Helm and Bobby “Blue” Bland, the band has the chops to entertain all day long. On this, their national debut, they tackle 11 original tunes that cover everything from the drag of living in tight quarters, “Duplex Blues,” to

the willingness to hang onto the slightest possibility of making a late night connection, “The Last One to Leave,” the unquenchable desire for the woman that is just out of reach, “Bad For You,” and the desire for respect in the moment, not just in the morning, “Give It To Me Now.”

In addition to covering a broad array of topics, the band covers a fair amount of musical territory. “Don’t You Do Me That Way” has a funky, Little Feat style groove with Keyboardist Mark T. Jordan leading the charge while “Too Early For the Blues” is a mid-tempo B. B. King style guitar showcase, “Dixie Melody” is a rag-time piano showcase that segues into a mid-tempo rocker, “Walked Out the Front Door,” and “Ain’t Nobby Loves You Like Me” channels Levon Helm in his prime. Little Feat appears again on the closing track, “Honey Pie,” which channels that band’s classic Dixie Chicken with its slinky guitar and bouncing piano. A good listen from beginning to end. You should take a walk in these Big Shoes!

Mark Smith



DAFNIS PRIETO BIG BAND

Back to the Sunset

DAFNISON MUSIC

This new release debuts the big band of Dafnis Prieto, a Cuban-born drummer, composer, bandleader, and 2011 MacArthur “Genius” Fellow. This recording is a collaboration with Grammy and Latin Grammy-winning producer Eric Oberstein, heralded for his work producing large ensemble recordings.

Besides Musical Director Prieto on drums, the Dafnis Prieto Big Band (DFBB) is comprised of Mike Rodríguez, Trumpet, Flugelhorn; Nathan Eklund, Trumpet, Flugelhorn; Alex Sipiagin, Trumpet, Flugelhorn; Josh Deutsch, Trumpet, Flugelhorn; Román Filiú, Alto Sax, Soprano Sax, Flute, Clarinet; Michael Thomas, Alto Sax, Soprano Sax, Flute, Piccolo; Peter Apfelbaum, Tenor Sax, Soprano Sax, Melodica; Joel Frahm, Tenor Sax, Soprano Sax; Chris Cheek, Bari Sax; Tim Albright, Trombone; Alan Ferber, Trombone; Jacob Garchik, Trombone; Jeff Nelson, Bass Trombone; Manuel Valera, Piano; Ricky Rodríguez, Acoustic & Electric Bass and Roberto Quintero, Congas, Bongos, Percussion.

After the DPBB debuted at New York’s Jazz Standard, they recorded at Systems Two Recording Studios in Brooklyn August 28–29, 2017, joined by special guests

Henry Threadgill, Steve Coleman, and Brian Lynch. For this, his seventh recording as a leader, Prieto composed and arranged the nine works, displaying his talents while honoring his musical heroes and mentors including Eddie Palmieri, Chico O’Farrill, Bebo Valdés, Jane Bunnett, and Michel Camilo (in addition to Threadgill, Coleman, and Lynch, among others).

Lynch burns brightly on the opening “Una Vez Mas,” dedicated to Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri and him, with its insistent Latin grooves along and Prieto’s wonderful scoring of the horns along with Valero’s piano, both intricate and insistent, and Lynch’s mix of lyricism and fire. In contrast, the temperature is cooler for “The Sooner The Better,” dedicated to Egberto Gismonti & Jerry González, opening with a repeated piano riff and mellifluous scoring of flutes and muted brass before a full-toned solo from Frahm on tenor sax with the percussionists adding accents followed by mellow brass solos with shifts in tempos and volume displayed here.

Chris Cheek’s unaccompanied brawny baritone sax opens “Out of the Bone,” dedicated to Steve Coleman and Michel Camilo sets the mood for this performance with Prieto’s marvelous scoring of the horn sections with a growling trombone solo. The title track, a lovely composition dedicated to Henry Threadgill and Andrew Hill, features Threadgill’s angular and razor-edged alto sax. Steve Coleman is featured on “Song For Chico,” dedicated to the legends of AfroCuban jazz, Chico O’Farrill, Arturo O’Farrill & Mario Bauzá, with its rich sonorous scoring with its relaxed tropical flavor.

The other four performances are equally as spirited and enthralling as those specifically enumerated. This is a superb big band, not simply a Latin jazz band, and Prieto shows himself as a composer and big band leader of significance. There have been many excellent recent Latin big band recordings, and this is one of the best of these.

Ron Weinstock

on guitar, Matt Moulton on bass, either John Shafer or Roman Rivera on drums and Bartek Szopinski on piano or B-3.

The program is some choice covers and interesting originals. Clifton impresses as a vocalist in the straightforward manner suggestive of Phil Alvin of The Blasters opening with a hot take of Charlie Musselwhite’s “Strange Land,” as well as the hot rock and roll of his original “Brand New Way To Walk,” with guitarist Abeyta impressing with his slashing rockabilly-tinged, playing.

A cover of Little Walter’s “Long As I Have You,” is a solid performance full of some explosive harmonica with Szopinski outstanding with his accompaniment. Muddy Waters’ “Still a Fool” is treated to a solid rendition with a slight distortion of his vocal contributing to Clifton’s moody version. It should be noted that Clifton has played and toured with Muddy’s son, Big Bill Morganfield, and played on Morganfield’s recording “Blood Stains On The Wall.” The title track is a brief rocker that is not the familiar Willie Nelson classic. There also is a solid interpretation of Leiber, Stoller and Otis’ “Last Clean Shirt.”

A moody instrumental, “Swamp Dump,” has some nice understated, well thought out guitar and harmonica solos. Some spicy chromatic harmonica opens another instrumental, “How About That,” that finds Clifton in a Little Walter mode with a sizzling jazzy single note solo and a brief drum solo. “Wild Ride” is a spry duet between Clifton’s acoustic harmonica playing and Szopinski’s piano.

The album closes with its longest performance, a terrific slow blues, “Every Now and Then.” It has a heartfelt vocal and strong playing from all. The rhythm section, whether Shafer or Rivera on drums, bassist Moulton, and pianist Szopinski, is splendid throughout this strong recording.

Ron Weinstock



JOHN CLIFTON
Nightlife
 RIP CAT RECORDS

California based Harmonica player and singer (and sometimes guitarist) John Clifton brings together a solid blues-rockabilly mix with touches of rockabilly and soul on “Nightlife.” He is backed by Scott Abeyta



THE DIVA JAZZ ORCHESTRA
25th Anniversary Project
 ARTISTSHARE

Sherrie Muncie was playing drums in a band that Stanley Kay, one-time manager and relief drummer for Buddy Rich, was conducting. Struck by her extraordinary talent, he began to wonder if there were other women players who could perform at the same level.

The search was on and through nationwide auditions, the foundation for DIVA was poured in June 1992, with its first performance on March 30, 1993 at New York University. Since their premiere performance, DIVA has toured the world to critical and popular acclaim and long ago transcended whatever novelty some may have initially viewed them.

In the subsequent quarter century they have become one of the most respected jazz big bands as Diva exudes the excitement and force found in the tradition of the historic big bands but with an eye towards today's progressive sound and originality, performing all over the world at clubs and festivals in such cities as New York City, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Chicago, Montreal, Paris, Rome, Zagreb and Bern. They have shared stages with some of the most revered performers including Nancy Wilson, Joe Williams, Diane Schuur, Carmen Bradford, Marlena Shaw, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Rosemary Clooney, Clark Terry, Dr. Billy Taylor, Tommy Newsom, Randy Brecker, Dave Brubeck and many more.

The personnel on this celebration of a quarter century of music is Sherrie Maricle - Music Director/drummer; Noriko Ueda - bass; Tomoko Ohno - piano; Leslie Havens - bass trombone; Sara Jacovino - trombone; Jennifer Krupa - trombone; Rachel Therrien - trumpet, flugelhorn; Barbara Laronga - trumpet, flugelhorn; Jami Dauber - trumpet, flugelhorn, manager; Liesl Whitaker - trumpet, flugelhorn; Leigh Pilzer - baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Erica von Kleist - tenor saxophone; Janelle Reichman - tenor saxophone, clarinet; Mercedes Beckman - alto saxophone, flute, clarinet; and Alexa Tarantino - alto saxophone, soprano saxophone. Not only are these outstanding musicians, but twelve of them are composers and arrangers with nine of them contributing the twelve originals here.

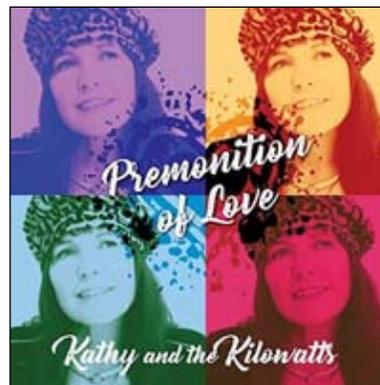
Certain things should be taken for granted about this recording including the excellent playing, ensemble work, and a first rate rhythm section, along with marvelous arrangements and orchestrations resulting in a terrific modern big band recording. Just to touch on a few of the ten tracks this disc opens with the driving, swinging swagger of Leigh Pilzer's "East Coast Andy," that has searing trumpet from trumpeter Jami Dauber along with Pilzer's husky baritone.

This listener detects a middle-eastern flavor to Janelle Reichman's hauntingly lovely "Middleground," with a neat, short electric piano solo from Tomoko Ohno before Reichman's clarinet solo. Reichman and Ohno's arrangement handsomely frames her twisting, inventive solo which is full of warmth. There is a retro tinge to Barbara Laronga's "Jami's Tune," with nicely played muted brass before the reeds blast in leading into Liesl Whitaker's muted trumpet solo with Marcie's crisp drums leading to some nice middle register trumpet and then trading lines between the two featured players. Tomoko Ohno's "La Americana" has a Latin flavor with the composer soloing along with drummer Marcie, clarinetist Reichman, and guest soloist, Marcia

Callas on congas.

Trombonist Jennifer Krupa says that what she values most about DIVA is "collaboration, camaraderie, and creativity. I hope when the listeners hear "A Quarter Past the Last Minute," they will feel as joyful, optimistic, resilient, and determined as DIVA!" Those feelings likely are also felt about the entirety of The The Diva Jazz Orchestra's remarkable "25th Anniversary Project."

Ron Weinstock



KATHY AND THE KILOWATTS

Premonition of Love
NOLA BLUE RECORDS

This This is the fourth album by the Texas singer, and the first in a new partnership with Nola Blue Records. Kathy Murray has written ten songs and there are three interpretations of previously recorded material. The Kilowatts include her husband, Billy "Monster" Jones, on guitars (and accordion on one track), either Dylan Cavaliere or Jeff Botta on bass and Nina Singh on drums or percussion. Benny Turner plays bass on four tracks while Floyd Domino and Matt Farrell are heard on keyboards, with Dan Torosian and Eric Johnson adding horns.

Murray has been part of the Austin Texas scene since the 1980s and apparently her singing has been described as "the love child of Jimmy Reed and Wanda Jackson." She shares with Reed a laconic attack, and while her vocals have a slight nasal quality, her diction and articulation of the lyrics are removed from Reed's sometimes mush-mouth singing. She sings in a straightforward manner, and if she may not invest her version of "Black Nights," with the authority of Lowell Fulson, her heartfelt vocals certainly have more than a little appeal.

The backing here enhances her vocals greatly whether the West Side Chicago setting for "Beggars Can't Be Choosers," with a horn arrangement that will evoke Otis Rush's "Right Place, Wrong Time," or the boogaloo shuffle groove of "Always Fooling Me," which she invests with a wry humor singing about her "hocus focus baby." There is her atmospheric title track with Murray's strong guitar support, and the rollicking reworking of Cleveland Crochet's cajun rocker "Sugar Bee," with Murray's idiomatic accordion solo. There is an able cover of Magic Sam's "What Have I Done

Wrong," and the moody, Muddy Waters' styled "Final Verdict" with Kim Field's harmonica as well as Murray's deep down guitar.

Add the rollicking rock and roll of "All These Questions," with Floyd Domino's boogie inflected piano and the relaxed shuffle groove of "I Got This," and one has a varied and entertaining, well-produced set of blues with a couple of roots rocker added for spice.

Ron Weinstock



VINNY RANIOLA
Air Guitar: Songs of Flight
 SELF-PRODUCED

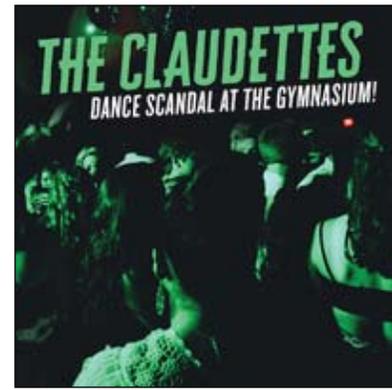
Guitarist Vinny Raniolo has collaborated with many folks including Tommy Emmanuel, Bucky Pizzarelli, Leon Redbone and Vince Giordano to name a few. He also has been the long-time partner of Frank Vignola with whom he has performed thousands of concerts. "Air Guitar" is his first album under his own name and finds him in duets with bassist Elias Bailey. Heard are classic songs from Jimmy Van Heusen, Hoagy Carmichael, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Django Reinhardt and others that show his love of flying through performance of songs.

There is plenty to enjoy in the 15 selections on this from the brisk, lively opening "Come Fly With Me," through the lovely, lyrical rendering of "Skylark." Raniolo's deft touch and lovely tone supported by Bailey's bass. There is a lively "Flying Down To Rio," as well as a charming "Blue Skies." Raniolo crafts melodic solos throughout as on "Stardust" and John Denver's "Leaving on a Jet Plane." Then there are the sparkingly played "Airmail Special," as well as another Benny Goodman small group classic "Flying Home." The interplay between Raniolo and Bailey on the former number is noteworthy, as is his horn like lines on the latter tune. There is also an exquisite interpretation of Django Reinhardt's "Nuages."

Raniolo and Bailey have provided listeners here with a superb album of jazz guitar-bass duets to captivate listeners.

Ron Weinstock

jazz-blues.com



THE CLAUDETTES
Dance Scandal At The Gymnasium
 YELLOW DOG RECORDS

Over the course of their three-disc career The Claudettes have evolved from a piano and drum instrumental duo to a four-piece featuring piano, drums, bass, guitar and vocals from three members.

While the instrumentation is still spare with a blues punk foundation the fuller sound gives the band room to explore more territory. With singer Berit Ulseth channeling Exene Cervenka of X or Natalie Merchant and the male vocalists (Johnny Iguana and Zach Verdoorn) adding lower register grit, the band powers through art-rock, "November," rock, "Don't Stay With Me" and "Naked On the Internet" and pop, "Pull Closer To Me" and "Give It All Up For Good." The title track is a rocking instrumental while "Bill Played Saxophone" recalls mid-60's Brit-pop with its soaring harmonies, and "Influential Farmers" and "Utterly Absurd" each venture into psychobilly territory with their stop/go rhythms and mash-up of vocals and instruments.

No scandal here. This is great stuff. *Mark Smith*



JARED GOLD
Reemergence
 STRIKEZONE

Organist Gold has been a significant part of guitarist Dave Stryker's organ trio along with drummer McClenty Hunter. Among the more recent group of jazz organists, Gold has become a significant part of the NY jazz scene playing with such heavyweights as Oliver Lake and the late John Abercrombie along with Stryker. He has recorded 8 albums, although it

has been three years since his last as a leader. On this recording, produced by Stryker, legendary drummer Billy Hart joins the pair (and it is a working trio), with trumpeter Jeremy Pelt adding his brass to three of the nine selections. Gold contributed two originals to this recording with others coming from Gershwin, Stevie Wonder, Ornette Coleman, Doris Akers and Lennon and McCartney.

From Jared's opening title track to the closing "Nomad" by Stryker, Gold and his organ trio certainly delight organ jazz fans, starting with the unusual blues as Pelt's vibrant trumpet adds fire to the unusual burning blues line. Gershwin's "It Ain't Necessarily So" displays his melodicism as well as orchestral sound while providing a strong setting for Stryker's dazzling playing. There is a wistful reading of The Beatles' "She's Leaving Home" and Pelt is present on "Looking For Another Pure Love," contrasting with the solid funk of "One For John A," where Pelt adds his trumpet to Gold's chicken shack grease. Hart provides a light Brazilian groove to "How Long Has This Been Getting On," which is followed by a slowed down rendition of Ornette Coleman's "Blues Connotation," where Gold's use of dynamics adds to the impressiveness of the trio's performance.

While organ jazz might be viewed by some as jazz comfort food, one cannot deny how outstanding Jared Gold and trio are on this superb recording.

Ron Weinstock



WILLIE JACKSON

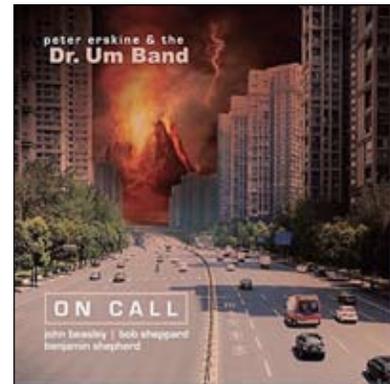
**Chosen By the Blues
SELF-PRODUCED**

Savannah, Georgia based Willie Jackson is a full-throated blues shouter backed by a solid, efficient band. On this self-produced release he is backed by Jon Willis on bass, Dillon Young on guitar, Paxton Eugene on drums and Ace Anderson on harmonica. This is an EP with 6 straight-forward originals with a definite down-home flavor from Jackson's brawny baritone that is full of humor, his fine lyrics and the simple backing, especially Anderson's atmospheric harmonica.

He can be a clever lyricist as in his use of a fishing metaphor on "I'll Throw You Back," as he tells his woman she may think she's hot but wait till Willie gets her in his frying pan. Then when his woman isn't fulfill-

ing her duties, he starts looking for someone else as she got caught "Sleepin' on the Job," and don't work here anymore. Guitarist Young takes perhaps his best solo here. Nothing earth-shattering perhaps, but Jackson does bring much passion to his performances.

Ron Weinstock



PETER ERSKINE & THE DR. UM BAND

**On Call
FUZZY MUSIC**

Weather Report alum drummer Peter Erskine's current outfit shows much of that seminal fusion group's mojo on this double-disc offering. WR's sense of swing and sophisticated funk distinguished it from the pack of early fusionists and appears to inform tracks here as keyboardist John Beasley's "If So Then" and saxophonist Bob Sheppard's "Might As Well Be". This is not to short-sell the band's own character which frequently shows up on the smarter end of the "smooth" spectrum, such as on Erskine's lilting ballad "Uncle Don".

The tight, tasty character of the studio disc gives way to an understandably wider open posture on the "live" set. Not to belabor comparisons but it's hard not to hear early Joe Zawinul from the get-go on Erskine's soulful "Hipnotherapy". Standing out on disc two also is a dreamy, airplay-friendly take on Henry Mancini's "Dreamville".

Duane Verh



TERESA JAMES AND THE RHYTHM TRAMPS

**Here in Babylon
JESII-LU RECORDS**

This is the tenth album by the Houston born blues and roots singer Teresa James. Reviewing her last recording I stated that she had "a slight bit of sandpaper

in her voice that adds to its grit and character,” and that “she is a singer, not a shouter.” Her performances on this new recording lead me to repeat my praises of her. On this her vocals and keyboards are backed by her longtime partner, Terry Wilson, on bass and Billy Watts on guitars along with drummer Jay Bellerose. Mike Finnigan’s organ and the horns of Darrell Leonard’s trumpet and Joe Sublett’s sax are also on several tracks.

The songs are all originals with Terry Wilson involved with eleven of the twelve songs and they are marvelously performed. There is the slinky sexiness of the opening “I Know I Ain’t Been Perfect,” the evocative title track with Bellerose’s drums and Wilson’s echoey, stinging guitar; the second line in molasses groove of “Give Me a Holler”; the sweet, soulful “Hold On,” and the driving rock and roll of “I Got To Roll.” With this group of strongly performed material, one highpoint may be the superb tribute to the late Gregg Allman, “The Day The Blues Came To Call,” with a simple, evocative backing where she displays her vocal and dynamic range.

Mixing intriguing originals with terrific singing and backing along with solid production, Teresa James and the Rhythm Tramps score again with this terrific blues and roots release.

Ron Weinstock



McCLENTY HUNTER JR.

The Groove Hunter
STRIKEZONE

Familiar to this writer as a member of Dave Stryker’s organ trio, drummer McCleanty Hunter Jr. studied at Howard University with Grady Tate and Juilliard with Carl Allen. He was a member of Kenny Garrett’s Quintet and has played with Lou Donaldson, Eric Reed, Curtis Fuller, Javon Jackson and others in addition to Stryker. I believe “The Groove Hunter” is his first recording as a leader. Produced by Stryker and Hunter, there are some serious players to be heard here including pianists Eric Reed and Christian Sands; bassists Corcoran Holt and Eric Wheeler; guitarist Stryker; trumpeter Eddie Henderson; alto saxophonist Donald Harrison; and tenor saxophonist Stacy Dillard. They collaborate in various combinations on the four Hunter compositions and five interpretations heard here.

There is plenty of fire with Eric Reed dazzling

on piano for a driving, fiery trip on a take of Herbie Nichols’ “Blue Chopsticks,” with Holt anchoring the performance with Hunter pushing the heated groove. In contrast, Reed is exquisite on Hunter’s, “My Love,” shifting from a lovely ballad mode to comping behind Dillard’s robust, burning tenor sax and then soloing in a Tyner-esque fashion. Wayne Shorter’s “The Big Push” has all three of the horns along with Reed and Holt. Dillard’s robust tenor sax is impressive while Dr. Henderson delights with his attack. There are also strong statements from Reed and Harrison who plays in a turbulent manner. Stryker is featured on the rendition of Stevie Wonder’s “That Girl,” with Sands also outstanding on this bouncy performance. Gary McFarland’s “Sack Full of Dreams” is a feature for some lovely, deliberate playing from pianist Sands and guitarist Stryker, with Hunter employing a light touch. Hunter’s drums kick off a brisk version of John Coltrane’s “Countdown,” with Harrison’s riveting alto sax with a good portion of the performance being a duet with Hunter before Reed and Holt join in.

Dillard’s soprano sax is supported by Reed, Holt and Hunter on the leader’s composition, “Give Thanks,” on a lovely spiritually rooted performance. It is the close of a fascinating and enthralling recording by Hunter, who shows himself to be a composer of note as well as a marvelous musician who is joined by a superb cast of supporting musicians.

Ron Weinstock



LAURIE MORVAN

Gravity
SCREAMING LIZARD RECORDS

Laurie Morvan is a triple threat performer writing and singing her own songs and leading her band on lead guitar. This, her sixth disc, mostly leaves her road band behind in favor of studio aces such as Tony Braunagel on drums, Mike Finnigan on B3, Jim Pugh on keys and Bob Glaub on bass.

The disc kicks into high speed right away with the thumping intro to the clever “My Moderation” where Morvan notes that even moderation needs to be done in moderation. While “Twice the Trouble” walks down the well-worn path of lovers who aren’t worth the investment, “Money Talks” finds Morvan alone and musing that even though money talks she can’t even start a conversation, and “Stay With Me” features her pitch to

a lover who isn't quite sure they are a match.

The title track finds her trying to pull away from someone so self-centered that it is fair to observe that "Gravity was nothing/'til you gave it a piece of your mind" and "Too Dumb to Quit" mines the same "under your thumb" sentiment. Morvan moves beyond romantic entanglement and plays the role of counselor on "The Extra Mile" where she gives a pep talk to someone feeling the pull of negativity, on "Dance In the Rain" where she proclaims you need to stand tall against hurricanes of trouble and on "Gotta Dig Deep" where she proclaims excuses have to be ditched in favor of inner strength. The wrenching "The Man Who Left Me" isn't an homage to a lost lover but, instead, is her attempt to sort through her feelings about her emotionally absent father.

Throughout, Morvan plays stinging leads that sometimes recall B.B. King or even Santana with clean, lyrical phrasing. Elsewhere she gets down and dirty and trades grungy riffs with the rich B3 grooves laid down by Finnigan and Pugh. Solid, original blues that leave the typical boogies and shuffles behind in favor of modern blues rock.

Mark Smith



ELIANE ELIAS

Music from Man of La Mancha
CONCORD RECORDS

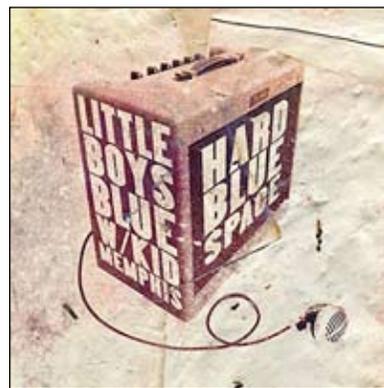
This new release from Elias was a actually 1995 recording which resulted from the request of Mitch Leigh, composer of the Music for the legendary musical, who loved her album playing the music of Antonio Carlos Jobim and wanted her to similarly arrange and produce a recording of the musical's music. This led to the present recording, originally produced for Leigh's private enjoyment and now with the cooperation of his family finally made available to the public on Concord.

There are two sessions represented. One with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Jack DeJohnette and the other with bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Satoshi Takeishi with percussionist Manolo Badrena on all but one of the nine songs heard on this instrumental piano jazz album. Most will be more familiar with Elias as a singer, but starting with the opening "To Each His Dulcinea," she displays a crisp, fluid and imaginative attack with the adept accompaniment provided. There

is the reflectiveness of "Dulcinea" with some superb playing by Gomez and DeJohnette's use of brushes and the lively swing of "What Does He Want of Me," with her romanticism matched by the light, complementary backing. Elias' touch is more emphatic on "I'm Only Thinking of Him," while DeJohnette opens "Man of La Mancha (I, Don Quixote)," with a crisp rhythmic figure, echoed by Gomez before Elias enters ruminatively. With Johnson and Takeishi, she provides a Brazilian flavor for a memorable, driving interpretation of the musical's most famous song, "The Impossible Dream."

Concord is to be thanked for helping arrange for the release of this superb piano jazz recording that allows us to appreciate a side of Eliane Elias talent that gets overshadowed by her fine vocal jazz recordings.

Ron Weinstock



LITTLE BOYS BLUE WITH KID MEMPHIS Hard Blue Space VIZZTONE

Nothing fancy but some straight-ahead blues performances from the Memphis based Little Boys Blue. Guitarist John Holiday (aka Kid Memphis) played Carl Perkins in the 2005 movie "Walk The Line," while vocalist and harmonica player, JD Taylor, actually played gigs with the rockabilly legend. In addition to these two, Little Boys Blue includes guitarist Alex Taylor, drummer Mark Brooks and bassist Dave Mallard. Also present are the keyboards of Dave Thomas and the slide guitar of Andrew White, Brad Webb and Wes Henley.

JD Taylor wrote all 11 songs, with assists from Holiday on two and Alex Taylor on one. Also, the songs are all blues with a variety of moods and tempos ranging from the opening "Six Foot Down" with its incorporation of the "Rollin' and Tumblin'" riff (and fine slide guitar) to the closing Jimmy Reed flavored shuffle "Going Back To Memphis," with his harp in the vein of the second Sonny Boy Williamson. JD is a very good singer who delivers his gritty vocals with a straight-forward honest and unmannered style. He plays strong, effective harp while ably backed by the band here and the material is solid stuff.

Other noteworthy songs include, but are not limited to, the easy-rocking shuffle "Loving Kind," with some nifty guitar lines in the vocal backing; the atmospheric

title track with nice slide guitar in addition to the haunting harp; and the late evening slow blues “If the Blues Start Calling.” Strong originals, strong vocals and harp from Taylor and solid backing make “Hard Blue Space” a release worth the attention of blues enthusiasts.

Ron Weinstock



GEORGE COTSIRILOS

Mostly in Blue
OA2 RECORDS

Originally from Chicago, San Francisco Bay Area guitarist George Cotsirilos has been a member of the area’s jazz community for many years.

He has performed with a wide variety of artists including jazz fixtures like Eddie Marshall, Mel Martin, Pharaoh Sanders and Mark Levine as well as soul and blues singer Etta James and Bill Evans bassist Chuck Israels. This is his new quartet CD with a band that includes pianist Keith Saunders, former Cal Tjader bassist Robb Fisher and drummer Ron Marabuto.

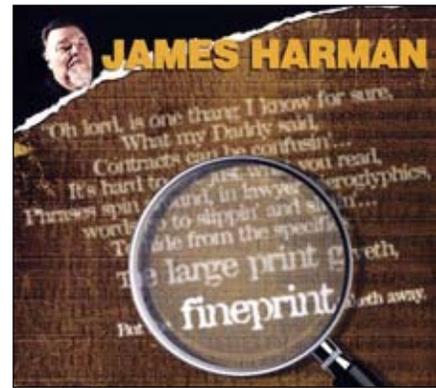
This is a strong, straight-ahead set of mostly blues-tinged performances with Cotsirilos having contributed six of the eight numbers. Cotsirilos is a marvelous guitarist in the vein of Wes Montgomery, Grant Green, Kenny Burrell and the like and his swinging, fluid, inventive, single note inventions are complemented by the backing rhythm section with pianist Saunders also outstanding.

Highlights include the lively title track that opens the CD; the tribute to Wes Montgomery “Wes Side Blues,” where he evokes the guitar legend; a lovely Brazilian-tinged performance on the standard “I Wish I Knew” that has a brief unaccompanied guitar opening; a peppy rendition of the Benny Harris bebop classic “Crazeology”; and the late evening mood engendered on “Lights Out.”

Cotsirilos notes that the idea was “to present the music much as one would hear it in live performance” The performances were recorded at a single session in first or second takes, and on the evidence of the superior performances here, Cotsirilos and his band is a group I would love to hear live if I have the chance.

If you visit www.georgecotsirilos.com and click music, you can hear 5 full tracks, including two from this album (the quartet tracks).

Ron Weinstock



JAMES HARMAN

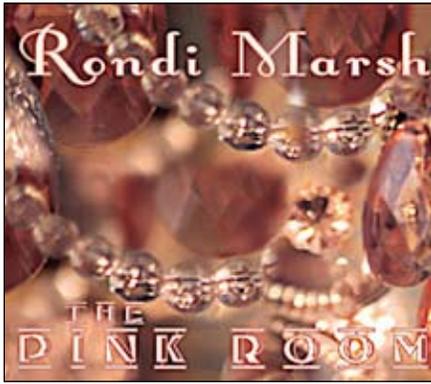
Fineprint
ELECTRO- FI

Harmonica master James Harman returns with another sideways look at life. The 13 tracks here are all originals and feature Harman singing and laying down greasy harmonica riffs over a rotating cast of musicians including Nathan James on guitar, Jeff Turmes on bass, Marty Dodson on percussion and Gene Taylor and Sonny Leyland on piano.

The sound here is raw and loose without a lot of studio fussiness. In fact, many of the tracks were recorded live in the studio with Harman providing little more than his arms in the air for direction to the band. That said, there is nothing sloppy about this given the talent of the collected crew. Befitting the fact that the disc wasn’t recorded as a single piece but instead is assembled from numerous sessions in numerous places, there is a lot of territory covered here. “Fineprint” is a boogie-laden homage to John Lee Hooker while “Come On and Dance With Me” has a south of the border flare. “At the Flophouse” and “A Busy Man When This Old World Turns It’s Back On You” are a slow-grinders that sandwich two different takes on the rumba groove of “What ‘cha Gonna Do ‘Bout Me #1 (and #2!)” where Harman outlines the trauma of hearing gossip about your woman’s gossip about your relationship.

“Memory Foam Mattress” finds Harman pawing, junking and otherwise disposing of every reminder of his lady who left him for greener pastures. Nathan James’ guitar work is particularly tasty on this track. “Fruit of the Poisoned Tree” serves as a reminder that sometimes you need look no further than someone’s parents to know what to expect from a prospective mate. “Familiarity Breeds Contempt but Absence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder” features ample doses of Sonny Leyland’s piano over a loping groove and Harman’s rumination on the built-in tension in relationships. “Glide” is a sinewy slice of blues suitable for late night cruising and “Ticket to The Circus” is an upbeat jump blues that serves as a nice change of pace to the mid-tempo material that makes up much of this collection. No need to read the fine print to understand this disc. It’s vintage Harman from start to finish.

Mark Smith



RONDI MARSH

The Pink Room
SELF-RELEASED

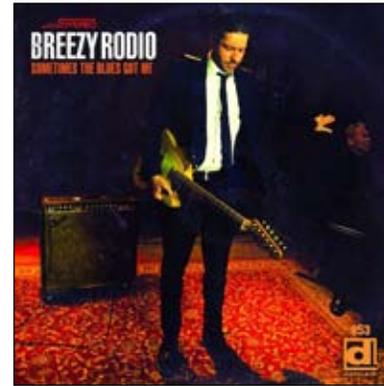
This is the fourth CD from the Pacific Northwest vocalist Rondi Marsh and the second as a jazz, (as opposed to pop-rock) singer. On this she is accompanied by several members of the Seattle-based Gypsy jazz group, Pearl Django, including David Lange on accordion, Michael Gray on violin, Neil Anderson on guitars and Ryan Donnelly on bass. A variety of other musicians (piano, horns, drums, mandolin) are heard on various selections, which include gems from the classic days of the American songbook to more recent song gems from James Hiatt and Danny O'Keefe, along with one original.

This is a delightful recording that with its mix of gypsy swing and Brazilian accents opening with a delightful opening interpretation of "Flamingo," that this listener is familiar with from Duke Ellington's recording that featured vocalist Herb Jeffries. Wouter Kellerman adds his flute to the marvelous violin of Gray and wonderful playing all around. Similarly Erroll Garner's "Misty" is reworked with a delightful samba rhythm as Marsh charms with her vocal. Lange's accordion is a significant part of these performances with his orchestral settings as well as melodic solos. Ben Lange's mandolin joins in the backing for her vocal on the wistful "Boy on a Dolphin."

Other performances include the spirited "The Bass Song (Slap That Bass/All About the Bass)," a mash-up of songs from George and Ira Gershwin, and Meghan Trainor and Kevin Kadish. Jeff Lange's alto sax solo adds to her heartfelt vocal on Henry Mancini's lugubrious ballad "Slow Hot Wind," while Vince Beard's trumpet adds to the mood of the delightfully tacky "Mambo Italiano." Michael Wansley joins for a high octane vocal duet on Leiber & Stoller's "Black Denim Trousers," a song recorded in 1955 by the Cheers and later reworked by Sha Na Na among others. The vocals by Marsh and Wansley are more striking than the Bells on the original.

Danny O'Keefe's atmospheric lament "Last Call" (with a marvelous accordion solo) provides an apt conclusion to this recording. Rondi Marsh captivates throughout with her tunefulness, phrasing and use of dynamics with the wonderful backing provided on this most appealing CD.

Ron Weinstock



BREEZY RODIO

Sometimes The Blues Got Me
DELMARK RECORDS

Coming to the US as a young immigrant, Breezy Rodio became part of the Chicago blues scene and in fact spent ten years in Linsey Alexander's band. This is his third album, although the first I have heard and his Delmark debut. There is a generous 17 tracks, of which six are interpretations and eleven are his originals. I am not familiar with most of the backing musicians with the exception of organist Chris Foreman. Billy Branch appears on two selections and there is a four piece horn section on which trumpeter Art Davis and saxophonist Ian "The Chief" McGarrie each get to solo.

Musically this is a post-war urban blues recording with B.B. King and Albert King being obvious influences and the horns provide a feel to these selections that evokes the classic B.B. King and Albert King sides of the the fifties and early sixties. Certainly this is evident in renditions of Lee Hazelwood's "Don't Look Now, But I Got the Blues," that B.B. recorded as well as Albert King's "Wrapped Up in Love Again." Rodio's vocals has a pinched vibrato sound at times, similar to that of roots-blues stylist Si Cranstoun, that some might find an acquired taste. Similarly, his originals vary in quality with a few focused on playing the blues, although the title track has its self-evident hook.

There are other selections of note including the jump blues flavored "I Walked Away," with terrific horns including McGarrie's booting tenor sax solo to go with his jazzier guitar playing here and the instrumental "A Cool Breeze in Hell," with some impressive Albert King styled guitar. Also, he does a fine take of B.B. King's "Make Me Blue." Then he remakes the Delmore Brothers' "Blues Stay Away From Me" into a fervent

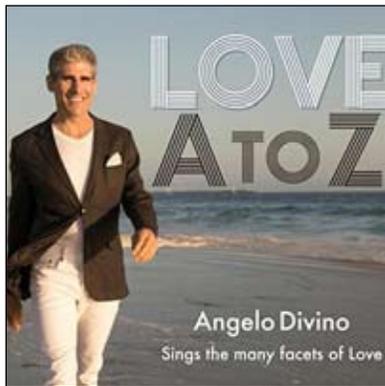
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urban blues, while Billy Branch channels the second Sonny Boy Williamson to enliven a relaxed shuffle, Doctor From the Hood.” “Fall in British Columbia” is an atmospheric, wistful ballad with a lovely trumpet solo, while set against Foreman’s greasy organ, Rodio conjures up Albert Collins on a strong original, “One of a Kind.” Branch adds some strong harmonica and shares the vocal with Rodio on the closing “Chicago Is Loaded With the Blues.”

Some may find Breezy Rodio’s vocals a bit harsh and the original songs are uneven, but he performs with passion and is a terrific guitarist. He is handsomely supported on wonderfully played, if perhaps imperfect performances.

Ron Weinstock



ANGELO DIVINO

Love A To Z
SELF PRODUCED

A veteran of the jazz and cabaret scene which included performing with the Duke Ellington Legacy Band, writing and performing in a show devoted to the Ellington legacy and later did the same with respect to the Frank Sinatra legacy. In Los Angeles he began an association with the very fine Barbara Morrison. The present album has all original songs from A to Z, overall that relate to the many facets of love. Backing Divino are Rich Eames on piano and keyboards; Adrian Rosen on bass; Michael Rosen on drums and harmonica; Doug Webb on saxophone; and Jonathan Dane on trumpet, cornet and flugelhorn.

While I am not enamored with the songs, I do find plenty in charm with Divino’s singing. His relaxed delivery, intonation, pitch, phrasing and the clarity of his enunciation have an engaging quality as does the backing band. There’s Webb’s tenor on the opening “Hey Life,” while pianist Eames shines in his light accompaniment on the lament, “About Last Night,” with Dane’s lovely flugelhorn solo. There is the playful “Fun and Games,” and his plaintive vocal on “Strangers Again” with Dane’s fine muted trumpet.

Other songs include the amusing, and buoyant “Flying Saucers,” with Eames featured on keyboards, and another wistful song, “I Love You, Goodbye,” the lovely reflective “I Remember” with Michael Rosen’s atmospheric harmonica, and “Love Is a Place To Stay,”

with a light, Brazilian groove.

There is much to enjoy here in Divino’s warm, relaxed singing and the solid, supportive backing Angelo Divino receives. The only fault I might point to is (what I find to be) uninspiring originals, that he so ably performs. Angelo Divino is a singer I hope to hear from again.

Ron Weinstock



ROCKWELL AVENUE BLUES BAND

Back to Chicago
DELMARK RECORDS

As keyboardist and vocalist Ken Saydak observes that the title of this album is a fitting title for veterans of the Windy City’s blues scene who came together for this project. The title of the band is also a nod to Delmark Records North Rockwell address.

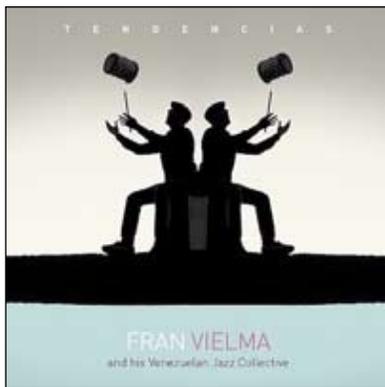
Saydak was joined by guitarist and vocalist Steve Freund, harmonica player and vocalist Tad Robinson, bassist Harlan Terson and drummer Marty Binder. Collectively they have played with and recorded with Chicago legends like Big Walter Horton, Sunnyland Slim, Otis Rush, Lonnie Brooks, Albert Collins, Junior Wells, Koko Taylor and Buddy Guy. Saydak, Freund and Robinson also have established well regarded solo careers and each are featured on five vocals and they, along with bassist Terson, contribute to the originals here, with one song a collaboration between Mary-Ann Brandon, Fred James and Saydak, and there is one Elmore James cover.

One should be not surprised by the strong music heard here. This is one terrific band with the three frontmen all getting plenty of solo space. Robinson is particularly impressive with his harmonica playing here, such as his sax-like backing between Saydak’s vocal on “That Face,” a performance that featured Saydak’s strong singing that has tonal qualities (but not the country drawl) of Elvin Bishop. At the same time, Robinson plays more in a Junior Parker vein on the soulful “Free To Love Again,” Freund channels Robert Nighthawk on his terrific slow blues “Lonesome Flight.” In addition to his strong singing and guitar, the band is superb with Saydak pounding the ivories while one cannot praise Terson and Binder enough as they anchor this and the entire recording.

Saydak’s “Chariot Gate” evokes early James Cot-

ton, while Freund's "Stranger Blues" has a fresh arrangement, and not a cover of Elmore James' original recording, with Binder superb here, and then it is followed by a rootsy rocker by Saydak, "For a Reason." Other notable tracks include Robinson's "Hey Big Bill," with a spirited guitar solo and Robinson's fine harp as he calls on Big Bill to help lift him up from his blues. Terson, Saydak and Robinson collaborated on the title track, a nice West Side Chicago styled blues that, like the entire album, is wonderfully played with marvelous interplay between the band members.

The Rockwell Avenue Blues Band may have been assembled for this recording, but they come off as one terrific band. With solid vocals, strong solos, and choice material, "Back to Chicago" is a most welcome musical delight for Chicago blues lovers. **Ron Weinstock**



FRAN VIELMA AND HIS VENEZUELAN JAZZ COLLECTIVE

Tendencias
PAPELON RECORDS

Vielma, is a Venezuelan composer, arranger, educator and a multi-percussionist specializing in Venezuelan rhythms and drums. Vielma also leads the 'Venezuelan Jazz Orchestra,' and is a producer/teacher of a biannual jazz seminar at The Andes University in his home country. On this recording he is joined by his Venezuelan Jazz Collective that features some of the most important Venezuelan and Latin American players of the NY jazz scene like Luis Perdomo, Michael Rodriguez, Miguel Zenon, and Pablo Bencid.

Fran Vielma says about his music, "As a percussionist, I am drawn to the rhythmic elements of Venezuelan and Caribbean music that are full of African heritage. The nuance and variety of classical and world music styles, as well as the freedom of jazz, have constantly nurtured my performance, making me think as a real-time orchestrator, improviser, and an active seeker of sonic textures. These elements allow me to accompany and interact with other players, and to highlight passages or sections that a piece of music entails."

This opens with the invigorating "Monk En Aragua," as one gets impressed by the clean, spicy horn lines as

well as the thunderous percussion. There is a terrific bass solo from Roberto Koch as well as superb piano (Either from Luis Perdomo or Cesar Orozco) followed by Miguel Zenon's alto sax and then a percussion solo from Vielma.

"Cereal De Bobures" may be a bit mellower as the horns are heard over the Rhodes piano with Michael Rodriguez's trumpet featured on a relaxed, tuneful solo that floats over the rhythm before a vocal chorus takes this performance out. The title track has a brisk tempo as well as featuring Angel Subero's woolly trombone set against a clever horn arrangement before a percussion solo set against a repeated piano riff. Jeremy Bosch's vocal is at the center of "Pasaje Del Olvido," while Koch's bass solo opens and sets the table for "Hubbardengue," with its airy Rhodes piano and Rodriguez's melodic trumpet.

The percussive heavy, "A Modo Patanemeño," places the spotlight on pianist Orozco, while the closing "Miel De Cayena," is a duet between Vielma and pianist Perdomo with interesting shifts in tempos and dynamics in this engaging musical conversation. It concludes a superb recording with an excellent band, superior compositions and superb soloing. **Ron Weinstock**

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