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Festivals Winding Down

San Diego Blues Festival
Janiva Magness

jazz & blues report

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"Buffaloniou"

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

The Second Annual SAN DIEGO BLUES FESTIVAL

SAN DIEGO – It is great to see the return of last year's bluse festival in our current home base city. The second annual San Diego Blues Festival benefiting the San Diego Food Bank has announced the talent lineup for Saturday September 22nd at Embarcadero Marina Park North on the beautiful downtown waterfront.

Two stages and ten acts feature an eclectic mix of blues and roots music.

6:30 pm : Tab Benoit

5:30 pm : Kim Wilson's Blues All-stars

4:30 pm: Janiva Magness

3:30 pm: Henry Gray w/ Chris James and Patrick Rynn

2:20 pm : Zac Harmon

1:20 pm : Nathan James & the Rhythm Scratchers

12:20 pm : The Randy Oxford Band

11:40 am : Taryn Donath

11 am : Missy Anderson

9:30 am : Ben Powell

ALL proceeds benefit the Jacobs and Cushman San Diego Food Bank. Tickets are \$10, VIP is \$75. Please bring two cans of food as donation. Each \$10 ticket = 30 meals for hungry San Diegans. Children 12 and under admitted free.

For tickets and more information go to: <http://sandiegobluesfestival.com>

The festival has offered the following insight into the artists participating this year:

Henry Gray

with Chris James & Patrick Rynn

At 87, Henry Gray is living blues history. The Baton Rouge resident played piano in Howlin' Wolf's band for 12 years and was a member of the bands of Little Walter, J.B. Lenoir, and Jimmy Reed. He still plays with the same enthusiasm he had as a young man when the modern blues was taking shape in Chicago. He's joined by his frequent musical partners, Chris James & Patrick Rynn, who have been nominated four times for Blues Music Awards.

Tab Benoit

Listening to Tab Benoit's music is like pouring the whole bottle of Tabasco on your dinner: the smell tantalizes you, the spice shocks you, and your insides tingle for days. Tab's brand of Cajun-influenced blues is a special blend, one that could only come from someone who was born and raised deep in Bayou Country. The music is foot-stomping and knee-bopping infectious and often carries a special punch with it. And, it's been responsible for him winning the B.B. Entertainer of the Year twice at the annual Blues Music Awards in Memphis.

Janiva Magness

When Janiva Magness started writing blues songs, they were filled with darkness and anger. But they also carried a special message of survival, an affirmation that spirit always trumps circumstances. That's because Janiva is a true survivor. Her life is a succession of challenges and successes, all of which comes out in the music. Straight-on. That's the only way she knows. And, that's why she is considered one the best blue singers on the planet.

Kim Wilson's Blues All-Stars

Muddy Waters once had the audacity to anoint Kim Wilson as the greatest of a new generation of harmonica players. Who are we to doubt Muddy? Kim's passion is the blues and he also is a gifted songwriter and singer with the ability to attract kindred spirits to his band. Never doubt what comes off of the bandstand when he's got this crew – it will be the hard-line blues, played the right way by some of the best blues musicians anywhere. Count on it.

Zac Harmon

Zac Harmon's approach to blues is to reach out and invite the audience into his musical arms. Zac's a very talented guitar player and singer and creates a fiery passion most often reserved for tent revivals. A native of Jackson, Miss., Zac plays with a heart that grew up with the sounds of blues day by day. He knows the power of the music and how to flex it.

Ben Powell

Ben Powell has a decidedly Southern California beach look, yet his music is pure blues from the American South. Ben makes the kind of music that coaxes the weary from their seats and makes them move in ways they didn't know they could. He's got a slide guitar, a harmonica rack, a footbox and a toe-tap cymbal to complement his smooth vocals. Unadulterated joy is his goal and his master plan works to perfection.

Missy Andersen

Few people possess the charm and personality to grab the audience just by walking on stage, but Missy Andersen has that ability. And, then she begins to sing and you know you are witnessing something very special. Missy loves music and soulfulness oozes out of her in every song she tackles. She's passionate and flirtatious fronting the band led by her husband and guitarist, Heine Andersen.

Taryn Donath

Taryn Donath is one of the best-kept secrets of North County. It seems like she's been around for decades but she's still only 31 and carries a lifetime of musical knowledge with her. She is a rockin' pianist who always has swing in her music, whether she's ripping a fierce instrumental or turning in a wonderfully soulful vocal. Her stripped-down approach is bolstered by the presence of drummer Marcus Bashore.

Nathan James & the Rhythm Scratchers

Oceanside California's Nathan James is known in the international blues community for his dedication to authentic country blues and his deep repertoire of songs. He's played solo, as a duo and in bands, but recently added Rhythm Scratchers Troy Sandow (bass) and Marty Dodson (drums) to free himself to play more guitar. Oh — that washboard guitar that Nathan's playing — he made it himself.

Randy Oxford Band

Randy Oxford defies the odds. He's a trombone player who leads a blues band, and he's got the good sense to find some very talented musicians to share his vision. Randy has become a mainstay on the Legendary Rhythm & Blues Cruise, where he leads jams each night. The Seattle-based band's profile is rising rapidly with a rapidly expanding touring schedule in 2012 that takes them coast-to-coast.

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MONTEREY JAZZ FESTIVAL SINGLE DAY ARENA TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE

**Arena Artists Include Tony Bennett,
Esperanza Spalding, Pat Metheny Unity Band,
Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue, Melody
Gardot, Robert Randolph & the
Family Band, Jack DeJohnette, Bill Frisell,
Eddie Palmieri Salsa Orchestra, Gordon Goodwin's
Big Phat Band, Monterey Jazz
Festival On Tour 55th Anniversary
Celebration with Dee Dee Bridgewater, Chris-
tian McBride, Ambrose Akinmusire, Chris Potter,
Benny Green, and Lewis Nash**

MONTEREY, CA — Single Day Arena Tickets for most shows at the Monterey Jazz Festival are still available now.

Friday's Single Day Arena Tickets are \$66 and include three Arena performances and 13 additional Grounds performances and activities on seven stages. Saturday or Sunday's Single Day Arena Tickets are \$132 and include five Arena performances and more than 30 additional shows and activities on seven stages each day.

Performing in the Arena on Friday, September 21 is Eddie Palmieri Salsa Orchestra, Melody Gardot, and Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band.

Performing in the Arena on Saturday, September 22 is Tony Bennett; the Jack DeJohnette Special Trio featuring Pat Metheny & Christian McBride; Bill Frisell's Beautiful Dreamers Meets the 858 Quartet; Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue; and Robert Randolph & the Family Band.

Performing in the Arena on Sunday, September 23 is Esperanza Spalding; Pat Metheny Unity Band with Chris Potter, Antonio Sanchez, and Ben Williams; the Monterey Jazz Festival On Tour 55th Anniversary Celebration with Dee Dee Bridgewater, Christian McBride, Ambrose Akinmusire, Chris Potter, Benny Green, Lewis Nash; the Next Generation Jazz Orchestra, directed by Paul Contos with Ambrose Akinmusire; and the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts Big Band.

Single Day Arena Tickets may be purchased by phone at 888.248.6499 and on the Monterey Jazz Festival's Web site, www.montereyjazzfestival.org.

Also on sale now are Arena Package Tickets, offering a reserved seat to all 13 concerts on the Arena/Jimmy Lyons Stage (renewable annually), and access to 78 different shows and activities on seven Grounds Stages.

Full Weekend Grounds Tickets start at \$125. Daily Grounds Tickets are priced as low as \$40, and provide access to seven Grounds Stages. Grounds Tickets do not provide Arena access.

Legendary Powder Blues Band to Headline Class Axe Guitars Calabogie Blues & Ribfest

OTTAWA, Ont. – Canada's premier blues act, and Juno Award winning Powder Blues Band will be headlining Calabogie Bluesfest this year. The band has over a dozen Gold, Platinum and Double Platinum records.

Several new bands have been added to the schedule lineup in the past couple weeks, and blues fans across Ontario have given their nod of approval.

On Friday August 17th, festival goers can look forward to Terry Gillespie, Shakura S'Aida and the legendary Downchild Blues Band headlining the night. The Juno nominated Downchild is travelling the country on their Flip Flop & Fly Tour this summer.

Starting on Saturday August 18th is Rocket Rached & the Fat City 8, followed by Bill Durst, Bob Walsh, Jack de Keyser and headlining is the Powder Blues Band. Leader, Tom Lavin has written many well known blues tracks including "Doin' it Right" (On the Wrong Side of Town) & "Boppin' With the Blues". Flying in from Vancouver exclusively for this bluesfest, Powder Blues is one of Canada's most treasured blues acts.

Finally on Sunday August 19th, Jeff Rogers starts the day, followed by Trevor Finlay, JW-Jones and David Rotundo.

The event will take place at Calabogie Peaks resort. Aside from the blues stage with live music all weekend

long, there will be camping available at the foot of the beautiful Calabogie Mountain. Tents are welcome, as are trailers and RV camping.

Tickets for one day, full weekend or full weekend with camping can be purchased online at Calabogie-Blues.com.

BLUES WATCH

BY MARK SMITH

New Release Blues.... Ah, fall. Football, cool nights, hot blues: Here's the new releases- **Robert Cray-** *Nothing But Love*; **Peter Green-** *Blues Don't Change*; **Taj Mahal-** *Hidden Treasures*; **Michael Burke-** *Show of Strength*; **Joe Bonamassa-** *Beacon Theatre: Live From New York*; **Indigenous-** *Featuring Mato Nanji*; **Gary Moore-** *Blues for Jimi: Live in London*; **The Reverend Peyton's Big Damn Band-** *Between the Ditches*; **Albert Cummings-** *No Regrets*; **Muddy Waters & The Rolling Stones-** *Live at the Checkerboard Lounge Chicago 1981*; **Too Slim and the Taildraggers-** *Rock Em Dead*; **Joanne Shaw Taylor-** *Almost Always Never*; **Cee Cee James-** *Blood Red Blues*; **King Biscuit Boy-** *Hoodoo in My Soul*; **Magic Slim & the Teardrops-** *Bad Boy*; **Butch Thompson & Pat Donohue-** *Vicksburg Blues*; **Hans Theessink, Terry Evans & Ry Cooder-** *Delta Time*; **Smokin' Joe Kubek & Bnois King-** *Close To the Bone*; **Teresa James and the Rhythm Tramps-** *Come On Home*; **Jeremy Spencer-** *Bend in the Road*; **John Nemeth-** *Blues Live*; **Etta James-** *Live at Montreux*; **Hans Theessink-** *Hard Road Blues*; **Johnny Mastro and the Mamas Boys-** *Luke's Dream*; **Brownie McGhee & Sonny Terry-** *At the Bunkhouse*; **Mississippi Heat-** *Delta Bound*; **Mississippi Saxophone-** *Mississippi Saxophone*; **Bigg Robb-** *Juke Joint Music*; **Deanna Bogart-** *Pianoland*; **Darren Jay & the Delta Souls-** *Drink My Wine*; **Dorothy Morrison, Tracy Nelson, Annie Sampson and Angela Strehli-** *Blues Broads....* That's it for this month. See ya!

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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

LIVE BLUES ON THE HIGH SEAS



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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 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 squaresville.
They have no rhythm
And they wear crowns.*



Art. Ask for More.

AMERICANSFORTHEARTS.ORG

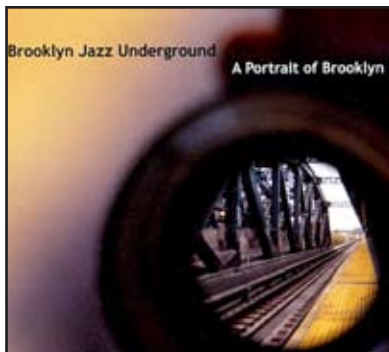


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We only bring you
the Cream of the Crop!



BROOKLYN JAZZ UNDERGROUND

A Portrait of Brooklyn
BJU RECORDS

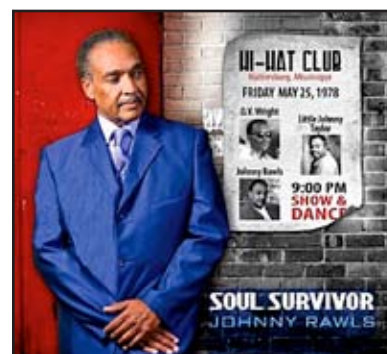
The Brooklyn Jazz Underground is a cooperative association of jazz artists who aim to build a greater awareness of original music emerging from Brooklyn, NY. Five of the members have collaborated on a new recording "A Portrait of Brooklyn" on the association's sister company, Brooklyn Jazz Underground Records. The members forming the Brooklyn Jazz Underground Ensemble are David Smith (trumpet), Adam Kolker (tenor sax, alto sax, clarinet, bass clarinet, flute), Dan Pratt (tenor sax, clarinet, flute), Anne Mette Iversen (bass) and Rob Garcia (drums). In addition to being excellent musicians, instrumentalists and bandleaders, each contributed two compositions to this recording. While the compositions are inspired by Brooklyn, this recording does not attempt to define the Borough.

Listening to the performances here, one is impressed by not simply the compositions and playing, but also the ensemble work. One might suggest several influences of the overall sound including the classic Ornette Coleman Quartet, and such post-Ornette influenced groups as Old Dreams and New Dreams. Ornette's influence perhaps is most evident on Kolker's "JV," a selection that evokes Ornette's classic groups (and Kolker's alto saxophone here echoes Coleman's blues-infused tone). Smith's trumpet provides a nice contrast while Pratt plays in a bit more gutbucket fashion. If not sounding like a previously unrecorded Coleman composition, Smith's "Starr St." is a lively original in the post-Ornette vein. Kolker is strong on alto here (not sounding like Coleman) and also adds bass clarinet to the ensemble passages. Garcia's playing is especially strong here, including during Smith's solo.

Garcia's "King" is a strong free-bop performance

with a solo from Pratt along with nice supporting riffs by the other horns. Iversen provides a firm anchor as Garcia propels the performance along. Pratt's "Buttermilk Channel" is built upon an intriguing motif stated by Kolker on bass clarinet. Garcia's other original is the lovely, wistful 1898 (the title refers to the year the City of Brooklyn became part of the City of New York), with thoughtful and lovely playing by Smith as Pratt provides embellishments under the solos.

Iversen's "Osgood in Brooklyn" has imaginative interplay between the horns while Garcia's "The Hill" is a toe-tapping performance with excellent playing by him as well as from Kolker on tenor. Pratt's "The Cyclone" (named after the famed Coney island roller coaster) closes this recording in a hard bop vein, conjuring up some of Woody Shaw's compositions and recordings. "A Portrait of Brooklyn" is an excellent collection of first-rate original compositions and terrific playing. For more information visit <http://www.bjurecords.com/artistsBJU.html>. **Ron Weinstock**



JOHNNY RAWLS

Soul Survivor

CATFOOD RECORDS/ DEEP SOUTH SOUL

Catfish Records/Deep South Soul has a new release by the veteran soul and blues performer Johnny Rawls titled "Soul Survivor." The album is aptly titled given that Rawls has been laying down his own brand of blues and soul since his days backing the legendary O.V. Wright and later as part of Rawls and Luckett, who issued a most memorable release on Rooster Blues.

Rawls has recorded and produced for a variety of labels including JSP and most recently Catfood/Deep South Soul, of which "Soul Survivor" is his most recent effort. On this new recording he is again joined by co-producer Bob Trenchard and the solid Texas studio band with the exception of the last track, which was recorded in Montana. Together with Trenchard, Rawls has come up with nine originals along with a cover of O.V. Wright's "Eight Men, Four Women."

The opening title track, penned by Trenchard and keyboardist player Dan Furguson, has a nice lyric of Rawls traveling the highways playing his old school blues and soul with his crack band. He is the last of his breed to set one free on his one night stand singing about O. V. Wright and Johnny Taylor may be gone

but he is going to keep their flame alive.

"Hands Me Downs" is some nice medium grooving, singing about tired about getting all these hand me downs whether his first guitar, used shoes, or his first wife, and he contributes a nicely shaped guitar break. He does a solid job of covering "Eight Men, Four Women," even if he can't quite vocally match Wright (like who can).

"King of Hearts" picks up the tempo with a driving groove and brassy horns, while "Long Way From Home" is a soulful ballad where Johnny sings about missing his woman and can't wait until he is home with her.

Other songs include "Drowning," a heartfelt lament about searching for his baby and drowning in a river of tears. "Don't Need a Gun To Steal" is a bit of cynical social commentary about politicians being paid off and there is a crook in every town.

"J.R.'s Groove" is a funky instrumental that allows everyone the stretch out. The closing "Yes" has a touch of country flavor in the accompaniment (in part provided by Michael Kakuk's dobro and lonesome sounding harmonica) behind Rawls' strong singing.

Anyone familiar with Rawls recent recordings will know what to expect with the clean and crisp backing, idiomatic horn playing and Rawls committed vocals.

"Soul Survivor" is another substantial recording by Rawls on Catfood/Deep South Soul. **Ron Weinstock**



BOBBY SANABRIA BIG BAND

**Multiverse
JAZZHEADS**

NYC-bred drummer/percussionist Sanabria's ensemble might be described as "eclectic Latino".

Primarily driven, as might be expected, by supercharged rhythm and "hot" horn sections, their sound thrives also on the distinctive cultural crosstalk of the leader's home town as well as classic jazz values. Engaging charts and unexpected turns abound on tracks including "Que Viva Candido!", Wayne Shorter's "Speak No Evil" and a splendid "Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite For Ellington".

And while the charts and the rhythm claim most of the spotlight, solos from all sections are solid throughout.

Duane Verh



THE BLUES BREADS

**The Blues Breads
DELTA GROOVE**

The Blues Breads is a musical revue that brings four strong voices together with a tight backing band that began as a collaboration between Tracy Nelson who would join Angela Strehli on West Coast gigs. Later they added various vocalists for an annual BBQ event, "The Blues Breads" before Dorothy Morrison (best known for "Oh Happy Day" as part of the Edwin Hawkins Singers) and Annie Sampson (of a Bay area band Stoneground) became part of what was now a regular group that took the name of the BBQ Event.

Delta Groove has just issued a eponymously titled CD/DVD package of The Blues Breads, recorded and filmed live at the 142 Throckmorton Theatre in Mill Valley California. They are backed by a band that includes Steve Ehrmann on bass, Paul Revelli on drums, Gary Vogensen on drums and Mike Emerson on keyboards. Deanna Bogart is a special guest on keyboards, saxophone and vocals. The CD has ten songs, which are all on the DVD along with Annie Sampson singing Bob Dylan's "It's All Over Now/Baby Blue." The sequencing of the songs differs on the DVD from the CD.

There is some marvelous singing to be heard and seen here. Several songs allow the ladies to share verses, such as the Tracy Nelson and Gary Nicholson penned "Livin' The Blues," which opens both the performances up. The material mixes blues, classic R&B, and some contemporary blues-rooted roots. Tracy Nelson's vocal on Oliver Sain's "Walk Away" is simply a great performance full of both subtlety and power. Annie Sampson certainly has people taking notice of her on "Bring Me Your Love," but even more so on her fervent re-imagination of Dylan's "It's All Over Now/ Baby Blue."

Strehli's "Two Bit Texas Town" is a tough performance that has her remember how she used to listen to Jimmy Reed, Muddy Waters and more growing up in her two-bit Texas town. Deanna Bogart gets showcased on "It Won't Be Long," which is a centerpiece of her live shows. Its brave of Dorothy Morrison to cover Tina Turner on "River Deep, Mountain High," and it's an enjoyable performance but doesn't really grab the listener or viewer as does the closing gospel numbers "Jesus, I'll Never Forget," and "Oh Happy Day," with

her taking everyone to the Church.

This must have been quite an event for those who attended the performance where this was recorded/filmed. The filming is pretty straight-forward with little if any of distracting gimmicks some others might have inserted. While there perhaps only are a few exceptional performances, the level of the performances still is quite high and certainly this will rightfully appeal to a wide range of listeners who simply enjoy good music.

Ron Weinstock



RALPH LALAMA BOPJUICE

Live at Smalls
SMALLSLIVE

A recent release by the SmallsLive label in its Live at Smalls series of recordings is one by the trio of tenor saxophonist Ralph Lalama, Bopjuice. Lalama, a veteran of the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, is joined by Joel Forbes on bass and Clifford Barbaro on drums for six performances recorded live at Smalls Jazz Club in Greenwich Village that last about an hour.

An obvious point of comparison to this might be Sonny Rollins' classic Live at the Village Vanguard recordings on Blue Note. From the opening take on Wayne Shorter's "Lester Left Town," through the closing moments of "Wonderful, Wonderful," one is impressed by Lalama's robust tone, as well as his lengthy thematic and melodic improvisations and the support he receives from Forbes and Barbaro, who both get their own spotlight. "On the lively original "Da-Lamma's Da-Lemma," Lalama and Barbaro engage in a spirited musical dialogue. A ballad like Thad Jones "Mean What you Say" displays a different side of his playing and sound.

Victor Young's classic ballad "Love Letters" is taken at a brisker tempo and the tone and thematic development might be the strongest here, but the level of Bopjuice's music and this entire recording is first-rate. This is another excellent addition to the SmallsLive catalog.

Ron Weinstock

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BARBARA CARR

Keep The Fire Burning
CATFOOD RECORDS

The veteran soul-blues vocalist Barbara Carr has a new release on Catfood Records, "Keep The Fire Burning." This was recorded in Texas and produced by Johnny Rawls and Bob Trenchard with backing by The Rays, Trenchard's fine studio band. Carr has, for the past 15 or so years, been recording primarily for Echo whose recordings sometimes had a mechanical backing, although that did not dampen her strong singing.

This new album with backing by The Rays has a more spontaneous feel throughout, although there is a sameness to the backing compared with other recent Catfood releases indicating the label has a definite studio sound. The opening "Hanging On a Thread" displays this and the song is one that could have easily been sung by Rawls. A similar flavor characterizes "Come On Home," where Barbara still does not believe her man has left and pleads for him to return home. The performance also suffers from the use of synthesized horns. I should emphasize that there is nothing wrong with these performances other than they sound like Rawls' recent Catfood albums and her vocals are more understated here than on the Echo recordings I have heard.

"I Got The Blues" has Carr singing about her background and being raised in St. Louis where she heard Albert King and Little Milton. When she sings the blues, she knows what she is talking about. The title track has a nice piece of southern soul advice that she delivers in an easy, natural fashion. "Moment of Weakness" is a strong lyric by Trenchard about replacing the man she never should have as she notes in a moment of weakness she threw their love away. The mood contrasts with that of "Back Together Again," which celebrates two coming together after many years.

"Hold On To What You Got" is a nicely executed duet between Carr and Rawls with a message of a good woman/man is hard to find so hold on to what you got. There are more synthesized horns on Rawls' southern soul original. "You Give Me The Blues," about her man gives her the 'low down dirty blues." The remainder of the album is in a similar vein and contrasts with the more extroverted approach displayed

in her Echo recordings, which at times could be a bit more lyrically raunchy. It certainly is nice to have a new release by Carr, which hopefully will expose a new audience to this singer who really should be much better known. She certainly doesn't sound like someone who is 71.

Ron Weinstock



GRÉGOIRE MARET

Grégoire Maret
ENTERTAINMENT ONE

Grégoire Maret has emerged as new voice in modern jazz world specializing in the harmonica. He has developed an approach that has him enlisted by the likes of Herbie Hancock, Pat Metheny, Cassandra Wilson, and Marcus Miller for their projects. He has also guested with the likes of George Benson, Jimmy Scott, John Ellis, Jacky Terrasson, Richard Bona, Sean Jones, Terri Lyne Carrington, Johnathan Blake, Kurt Elling, Robert Glasper, Lionel Loueke, and Jeff "Tain" Watts, Mike Stern along with some of pop music's biggest names including Sting and Prince.

Raised in Switzerland, he went to the Conservatory in Geneva and then to pursue jazz studies he went to New York City's New School. While After years as one of the most in-demand sidemen and guests in jazz (and beyond), Maret finally has made an eponymously titled debut recording for Entertainment One. On most of this he is backed by pianist Federico Gonzalez Peña (a longtime collaborator with Maret), along with bassist James Genus and drummer Clarence Penn. Cassandra Wilson and Marcus Miller both make guest appearances and the final track is a duet with jazz harmonica legend Toots Thielemans. Included are originals by Maret along with compositions by Pat Metheny, Stevie Wonder and Brazilian composers Ivan Lins and Milton Nascimento. There are also two suites that he and Peña collaborated on.

Maret brings a dreamy, lyrical and melodic approach to the harmonica displaying his obvious technical command, but more importantly his ability to develop intriguing and captivating musical statements starting with his "Lucilla's Dream," that opens the CD followed by his lovely interpretation of Stevie Wonder's "The Secret Life of Plants," on which the acoustic guitars of Brandon Ross and Jean-Christophe Maillard are

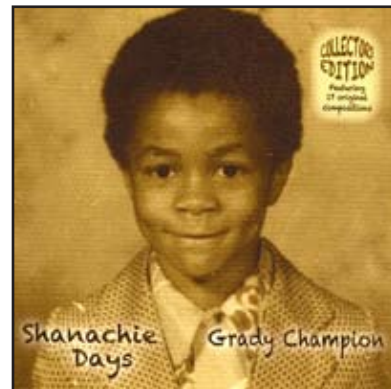
prominent in the accompaniment. Cassandra Wilson and Jeff 'Tain' Watts guest on the rendition of "The Man I Love" with a haunting vocal by Wilson and on which strings (arranged by Maret) are added.

Pat Metheny's "Travels" displays how able Maret is able to develop a mood with his precise playing and his tones and Brandon Ross' guitar serves as a counterpoint. One of the two suites here, "Crepuscule Suite" opens with Brazilian flavor and vocals before the second movement with Marcus Miller on fretless bass in a conversation with Maret and with Peña on piano with Watts on drums adding to the heat of Maret's playing on the middle section.

Wordless vocals by members of Take 6 are heard on the ruminative "Prayer" with Peña adding some percussive accents in addition to his piano. Ivan Lin's "Lembra De Mim" also again brings a Brazilian flavor to this charming interpretation. "Children's Suite" is the other extended original contributed by Maret and Peña that is centered on "Children's Song," the middle section of the suite. Also delightful is the duet with Thielemans, "O Amor E O Meu Pais" which is also from the repertoire of the great Ivan Lins.

Maret's playing is delightful and captivating. This is music that should have a wide appeal given the wonderful playing as well as the lyricism evident throughout this recording. Wonderfully recorded, Grégoire Maret's self-titled debut should bring him well-deserved recognition.

Ron Weinstock



GRADY CHAMPION

Shanachie Days
GSM MUSIC GROUP

Grady Champion has certainly seen his star rise in recent years after his winning of the International Blues Challenge. His success comes after he had recorded several albums for Shanachie, which unfortunately at the time did not have the commercial success they were hoping for. In fact, Dennis Walker, with Bruce Bromberg, who had produced Robert Cray and Joe Louis walker amongst others, did some of the production of these recordings. Now Grady has compiled and released a selection of 17 songs from these recordings, "Shanachie Days" (GSM Music Group).

A number of these songs will be familiar to those

who have seen Grady or his recent Live album, such as his anthemic “My Rooster Is King,” “Dreamin’,” or “Policeman’s Blues,” the latter dealing with him suffering police brutality. Other songs, like “Lady Luck,” about his misfortune at the casino as he asks where did you go are supported by a hard-hitting backing band and sound fresh today.

Mixed in with his fervent singing is some nice harmonica playing which is particularly well displayed on the country-flavored “Roberta,” with nice dobro, as well as mandolin, set against a lazy groove. There is more of an urban rhythm and blues flavor with the brass and backing vocals “Love Is My Middle Name,” where he tells his girl that when she is tired of the games others play, she can count on him to make her happy. It is followed here by the crisp shuffle groove of “Let Me Be,” as he tells his woman that they have had this conversation one too many times.

This had heard some of the Shanachie recordings when they came out, but it is nice to have my memory refreshed as well as listening to other sides I was not familiar with. The music certainly will please Grady’s fans and may be as good an introduction to his music as his most recent recordings, but I do wish they had included the original discographical information (what were the original albums and personnel). Other than that, there is not music to complain about on Grady Champion’s “Shanachie Days.” **Ron Weinstock**



JOEY DEFRANCESCO Wonderful! Wonderful! HIGH NOTE

If one hasn’t sampled any organ jazz in a while, the new set from this one-time wunderkind and- according to many- savior of the Hammond B3 may provide the necessary flashback to rekindle the taste for the sound. *Wonderful! Wonderful!* stands out for its sheer workmanlike grace and style. DeFrancesco frequently and deftly dazzles as might be expected but he does so never losing touch with the most critical aspect of the organ subgenre- the groove. His trio partners, guitarist Larry Coryell and drummer Jimmy Cobb, deliver veteran support and Coryell is an ideal second voice, spelling the leader with suitably smart, underplayed choruses.

PAGE TEN

Ballads of various tempi rule here, from the upbeat title track to the mid-tempo “Love Letters” and the slow feature “Solitude”. Nice work. **Duane Verh**



THE BLASTERS Fun On A Saturday Night RIP CAT

Long after they hit the scene in 1980 with the rocking American Music, the Blasters continue to display their encyclopedic command of roots music on the 12 cuts collected here.

With the original lineup nearly intact (save for the substitution of Keith Wyatt for Dave Alvin on guitar) the band lays down rocking jump blues on Tiny Bradshaw’s *Well Oh Well*, doo wop on the double dealer’s plea for undeserved mercy, *Breath of My Love*, scorching Sun Records style rock, *Fun on a Saturday Night* and *Rock My Blues Away*, straight blues, *No More Nights By Myself* and *I Don’t Want Cha*, electrified Chicago blues featuring Wyatt’s guitar histrionics on Magic Sam’s *Love Me with a Feeling*, early Johnny Cash on the duet with Exene Cervenka, *Jackson*, an odd-ball yodel number, *The Yodeling Mountaineer*, and even a south of the border reading of the band’s classic, *Marie, Marie*, which is recast here as *Maria, Maria*.

Throughout the many genre twists, the band reveals the musical tightness it has developed over the years crammed on tiny bandstands all around the world. The bass/drum duo of John Bazz and Bill Bateman lay down a hard edged bottom that gives Wyatt plenty of room to flex his guitar muscles and, more importantly, anchors Phil Alvin’s powerhouse vocals which he molds into different shapes from song to song- low down and dirty on tracks like *Penny*, light and energetic on *The Yodeling Mountaineer* and oozing with rockabilly fervor on the title track.

Featuring more straight out blues than on its previous releases, but with enough other rocking tunes to keeps its fan base happy, this disc has something for everyone who is a fan of American roots music.

Mark Smith

jazz-blues.com



ARTHUR KELL QUARTET

Jester
BJU RECORDS

Bassist-composer Arthur Kell has a new recording by his Quartet on Brooklyn Jazz Underground Records, "Jester." Kell has performed with a variety of contemporary jazz artists including Thomas Chapin, Bobbie Previte, Marc Ribot, Billy Bang, Bill McHenry, Guillermo Klein, Christian Howes, Art Baron, and Bruce Barth, and since 1997 has led his own groups. "Jester" was recorded with his working group of Loren Stillman (alto saxophone); Brad Shepik (guitar) and Mark Ferber (drums) and is a follow-up to his prior BJU Records release "Victoria - Live In Germany." Kell has noted that most of the touring with his group has been in Europe, and he is pleased to have an-

other recording "that captures the amazing spirit of all those tours."

The album's theme (evident from its title) explores jesters and their link to modern day artists and activists. Kell explains that "the jesters became essential in society because they used any skill they had - physical, verbal, musical and political - to educate and illuminate. ... The jester as a silly man wearing bells is just a stereotype, a caricature that isn't even representative of most European jesters, much less of those in other cultures. Jestors came in all shapes and sizes and characters. Foolishness could be just the vehicle a jester used to convey an important message to a ruler. They were the wild card, which kept a leader thinking clearly, often wielding vast influence. But more broadly, they were a trickster, that vital character at the heart and dawn of human society that crossed boundaries to open the imagination." And the centrality of the theme is not simply reflected by the title but also the cover, which is "one of a series of jester finials on an iron fence around a bank in Bucharest."

The seven performances here are wonderfully recorded (well worth listening to on headphones) and Kell's compositions sound fresh and the band plays wonderfully together. The leader sets the tone on the opening "Quarter Sawn" with a playful bass figure that Ferber adds a parade-like groove to before Stillman

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Listening to “Jester,” one can appreciate the enthusiasm the performances received when they were recorded in concert. This is an excellent group that displays humor, imagination, and passion in the varied, intriguing compositions performed here. It will appeal to a diverse body of jazz lovers.

DEBBIE DAVIES
After The Fall
MC-RECORDS

It's been nearly two decades since Debbie Davies debuted on Blind Pig Records after leaving Albert Collins' Band. Over the ensuing period she has toured the world and established herself as a significant talent. She has her first new CD in several years on MC-Records, "After The Fall" and it displays the strengths her prior recordings and her performances

"True Blue Fool" is a lovely ballad wistfully sung, while the mood shifts with the hot shuffle groove of "Done Sold Everything," about times being tough and having sold everything and got no more and has got no more. Other standout tracks include "All of My Forgiveness," where if her man doesn't say he is sorry, all of her forgiveness will be gone, and "Goin' To A Gaggie," with a rollicking second-line groove about partying all night with friends. "I'll Feel Much

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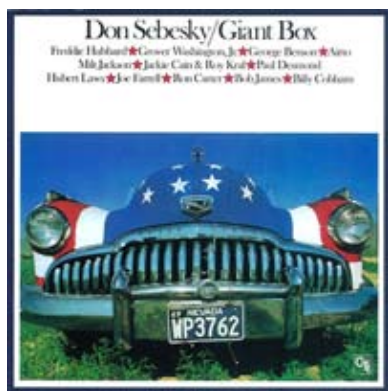
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Better When You Cry” is a nice blues about her pain felt when her man left and hoping he feels that pain when someone walks out on him. “R.R. Boogie,” dedicated to the late Robin Rogers, is an imaginative instrumental with a tight groove and some sizzling single note runs.

Certainly anyone who has been a fan of Debbie Davies will not be disappointed by this release. “After the Fall” will be welcome by blues lovers of a diverse range of tastes. Recommended. **Ron Weinstock**



DON SEBESKY

Giant Box

CTI MASTERWORKS

Don Sebesky’s “Giant Box” is part of the CTI Masterworks reissues of classic CTI albums marking the label’s 40th Anniversary. Originally issued as a double album, the single CD here makes available the music that Sebesky contributed arrangements/orchestrations to along with some original compositions from him. While it might seem this was a tribute to him from the label’s artists, in fact it was his attempt to showcase some of the label’s soloists he had worked with, and while writing the material he had a feeling who should play specific solos. Sebesky himself notes the arrangements and compositions here were amongst the most ambitious he had written at that time.

Among those featured on the performances on this recording are Sebesky and Bob James on keyboards; Ron Carter on acoustic, electric and piccolo bass; Billy Cobham and Jack DeJohnette on drums; George Benson and Harry Leahy on guitar; Airtio, Dave Friedman and Ralph McDonald on percussion; Paul Desmond, Joe Farrell; and Grover Washington, Jr. on saxophones; Milt Jackson on vibes; Freddie Hubbard on trumpet and flugelhorn; Hubert Laws on flute; and Jackie Cain and Roy Kral on vocals.

The liner notes to the original release are included, and while there is considerable classical influence (including his full use of strings, horns and woodwinds) in how Sebesky approaches some of the performances, he affirmatively answers that the ultimate result is jazz. He uses Stravinsky’s “Firebird” to frame his orchestral arrangement for John McLaughlin’s “Birds of Fire” that is one of the showcases for Hubert

Laws’ flute along with Freddie Hubbard’s trumpet and Harry Leahy’s guitar. Paul Desmond’s dry martini alto saxophone is showcased on the interpretation of Joni Mitchell’s “Song to a Seagull,” on which Sebesky is heard on electric piano.

Sebesky’s electric piano opens his original “Free As a Bird” with soaring horns has outstanding solos that take flight from James on piano, Hubbard on flugelhorn, and Washington on soprano sax (note how he really digs in on this). James is on organ for the arrangement of Jimmy Webb’s setting for “Psalm 150,” with Jackie Cain and Roy Kral singing praise for the Lord with Hubbard’s trumpet and Carter’s bass adding to the joyful sounds. Desmond opens the interpretation of Rachmaninoff’s “Vocalise,” which is followed by some vibes-piano interplay between Milt Jackson and Bob James along with more Desmond on a lovely performance with some flamenco tinges and lovely use of horns in the orchestration.

Sebesky invokes us with his vocal to fly high as we could if we only could try opening his original medley “Fly/Circle.” This performance opens somewhat dreamingly and has both Laws and Farrell displaying a fair amount of reverb in their flute and soprano sax respectively before an interlude with DeJohnette and Carter followed by Farrell’s serpentine solo and a skitter solo from Laws. The closing original “Semi-Tough” has a funky groove, some skittering piano from Sebesky, a gospel rooted vocal chorus, some gritty alto saxophone from Washington, and George Benson making judicious use of pedal effects in his driving guitar.

The performances on Don Sebesky’s “Giant Box” show how his ambitious synthesis of classical, jazz and popular music was so realized in the recordings here. His orchestrations frame the featured players here and enhance the solos that exhibit the skill and imagination of some of the greatest jazz musicians of four decades ago with more than a few spectacular moments. **Ron Weinstock**

OTIS SPANN

Someday

SILK CITY

An album of previously unissued Otis Spann performances, “Someday” (Silk City), is welcome, but alas the cheap packaging does not match the quality of the music. This is a collection of band and solo performances by the piano blues legend. Unfortunately the sparse packaging lacks any discographical information and the biography of Spann appears like it was copied from a second rate on-line website and incompletely discusses his recording career (the notes totally omit his Bluesway and BluesTime albums as well the terrific “Super Black Blues” recording with T-Bone Walker and Big Joe Turner). The cover graphics are simple and hardly stand out.

Compensating for the mediocrity of the packaging

is the music, which is very good. It opens with Spann leading an unidentified band through “Chicken Shack,” followed by terrific solo renditions of “Country Boy,” and “Worried Life Blues,” mistitled as “Someday.” I find it hard to believe the producer of this disc did not know the correct song title. Also appealing is the solo rendition of Walter Davis’ classic “Come Back, Baby,” and a nice slow blues “Blind Man.”

In addition to “Chicken Shack,” band selections include the congenially rocking “Meet Me In The Bottom,” a solid rendition of “Worried Life Blues” and a cover of T-Bone walker’s “Cold, Cold Feeling.” These also have nice harmonica and guitar in addition to Spann’s piano. There is also a rollicking instrumental, “Back Bay Shuffle.” “Spann Blues,” with sparse rhythmic backing is a lively boogie based track, while the closing “Blues Don’y Love Nobody” is a medium tempo blues though the recording makes Spann’s vocal sound a bit muffled.

There is some very fine music on “Someday,” and many fans of Otis Spann will likely want the music here, which is represented as previously unissued. There is only about 37 minutes of music on this and as stated, the presentation of the material is pretty shoddy. This is not an essential release, but the music here deserved better packaging than it received. **Ron Weinstock**



RETURN TO FOREVER

The Mothership Returns
EAGLE RECORDS

This 2-cd plus DVD set, released earlier this summer, is culled from live performances ostensibly from 2011 tour dates though no specifics are offered. What’s undeniable is the sense of communication between this pioneer fusion outfit’s three veterans, Messrs. Corea, Clarke and White. While violin wizard Jean-Luc Ponty and guitarist Frank Gambale are not exactly peripheral to the proceedings, their feature segments, by design or otherwise, tend to work as setups for the displays of the principal trio’s chemistry, which is the prevalent force here.

Breaks in the action are rare, on Disc One particularly, and familiar RTF themes (Senor Mouse, The Romantic Warrior, Spain) are the order of the day. Clarke, at long last, gets a signature “lead” bass fea-

ture, “School Days” towards the end of Disc Two. An hour-long band documentary and performance footage comprise the DVD.

While musicianship is unsurprisingly sterling throughout, it is curious, if not outright ironic, that the most impressive work on *Mothership* continually comes from Corea’s acoustic piano. A true fusion fan’s feast. **Duane Verh**



MICHAEL “IRON MAN” BURKS

Show of Strength
ALLIGATOR

If the celebration of the new Alligator release by Michael ‘Iron Man’ Burks, “Show of Strength,” is subdued, it is not because of any fault of the music but rather that this is his final studio album as he died suddenly of a heart attack on May 6, 2012, as he was returning from performances in Europe. This album had been finished before his passing and Alligator’s Bruce Iglauer has said the only thing that had not been finished when Burks passed was the sequencing of the songs. On this he is backed by the keyboards of Wayne Sharp, the bass of Terrence Grayson and the drums Chuck ‘Popcorn Loudon, with appearances by Roosevelt Purifoy on keyboards and Scott Dirks on harmonica.

There is plenty of fire in his muscular guitar throughout that contrasts with the more deliberate and mellow vocals. Burks’ approach might be viewed as an extension of the legendary Albert King in his recognition that what one does not play can be as expressive as the hot bursts of single note runs. The material is also quite strong with the irony of the opening “Count on You,” on which he tells his lady that he can always count on her to let him down. “Take a Chance On Me, Baby” is a nice lyrical plea with the melody evoking Johnny “Guitar” Watson’s similar “I Wanna Ta-Ta You Baby.”

The backing on “Cross Eyed Woman” is a bit too dense and the performance comes off a bit too heavy for my ears. In contrast, there is the appealing shuffle groove of “Little Juke Joint,” on which Burks celebrates the small jukes he honed his music playing in. Then, on “Valley of Tears” he sings about the raining and it can’t wash away the years and he is lost in this valley, while his guitar blazes. On a slow blues, “Since I Been

Loving You,” he sings about hearing all of his woman’s lies and he is about to lose his mind as his guitar accents his heartfelt singing. A nice change of pace is provided by “What Does It Take To Please You.” This is an old-fashioned shuffle that suggests classic fifties and sixties B.B. King with outstanding piano from Sharp.

There is a southern soul feel (with a bit of church in Sharp’s piano) on a terrific interpretation of Charlie Rich’s “Feel Like Going Home.” The warmth and expressiveness of Burks’ singing on this especially is one thing that sets him apart from many guitar slingers. This final track perhaps best displays this. “Show of Strength,” is a superb recording that unfortunately represents the final studio album by Michael Burks.

Ron Weinstock



JANINE GILBERT-CARTER

Inside a Silent Tear SELF-PRODUCED

One of the many fine singers around the Washington DC area, Janine Gilbert-Carter “lives at the intersection where jazz, blues and gospel all come together,” according to Jeff Gruber, who engineered Janine’s most recent recording, “Inside a Silent Tear.” Recorded at the Historic Blair mansion, she is backed by a terrific quartet comprised of Eric Byrd on keyboards, Wes ‘Sugar’ Biles on bass, Jeff Neal on drums and Brian Lee Settles on tenor sax on a set of some well known standards mixed with less familiar items to showcase her soulful singing.

A solid “Ain’t Misbehavin’” opens this performance up with Eric Byrd’s piano providing the proper foil before taking a nice solo showing his touch, technique and restraint. I was not familiar with Bill Withers’ “Grandma’s Hands,” with its gospel-funk groove set by Wes Biles on an electric bass and Byrd on electronic keyboards showcases another side of Carter’s vocals on this gem of a song. The title song, from Blossom Dearie’s songbook, features some nice tenor sax from Brian Settles caressing Carter’s vocal that displays the wonderful control and tone of her wistful interpretation here. The tempo picks up for a relaxed, swinging “All of Me,” with a brief section, which is almost a duet with bassist Biles. Carter, matched by the gospel-laced piano of Byrd, is quite impassioned here on a solid interpretation of Sam

Cooke’s “A Change is Gonna Come.”

“Everything Must Change” is perhaps her finest performance of the many excellent ones here finding her on a reflective mood and followed by a swinging “How High the Moon,” with some nice scatting before another fine solo from pianist Bryd. There are nice accents in his playing and the arrangement here brings freshness to her wonderful take on this. “Don’t Touch Me,” another of the highlights, allows Carter to show her bluesy side, and Byrd’s solo here reminds me of the great Charles Brown. “Nice and Easy” is enlivened by its light Latin groov

e. Carter gives this classic a more intimate feel than the well-known Sinatra recording. There are some understated tenor sax embellishments on this by Brian Settles. Settles solos with a feathery tone on both “Our Love Is Here to Stay,” and the closing “Teach me Tonight,” in addition to Carter’s heartfelt vocals.

“Inside a Silent Tear” shows why so many in the Washington DC area regard Janine Gilbert-Carter as a ‘local’ treasure. Her vocals are honey-toned, yet full of personality and soulfulness and the backing provided by her band is marvelous. Her website is <http://www.janinecarter.com/index.php> from which this can be purchased and it is also available at cdbaby.com. For those in Washington DC area, she is regularly at LaPorta’s in Alexandria, Virginia. **Ron Weinstock**

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TAJ MAHAL

Hidden Treasures of Taj Mahal 1969-1973
COLUMBIA/LEGACY

Throughout his recording career Henry Fredericks Jr., a/k/a Taj Mahal has displayed a connection to traditional country blues more personal than expected from a NYC-born kid growing up well past that music's prime.

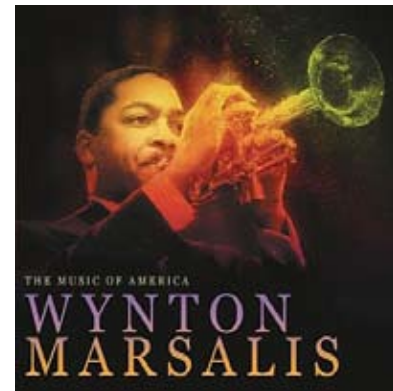
His personal sound, backed with age-appropriate amplification and rhythm for the 60's & 70's, garnered the singer/songwriter/guitarist/harmonica player a unique identity in that era's blues revival. No doubt, it further served to inspire the young African-Americans who personified the blues renaissance of the mid-90's (Alvin Youngblood Hart, Keb Mo', Corey Harris, et al).

This two-disc set of previously unreleased material includes alternate takes of some interest and a 1970 concert performance at the Royal Albert Hall. Listeners familiar with "Ain't Gwine Whistle Dixie (Any Mo')" or "Good Morning Little Schoolgirl" may enjoy the decidedly funky sounding brass section added on the former and the laid-back, extended version of the latter. Other tracks of interest include a cover of Dylan's "I Pity The Poor Immigrant" and dual takes of "Sweet Mama Janisse".

Appearing on a bill with Santana, Mahal's Royal Albert Hall set is possessed of a peculiar charm that may be credited to the venue itself. The primal core of the band's sound, featuring guitarist Jesse Edwin Davis and pianist John Simon, is encased in an almost Modern Jazz Quartet-like reserve. Not quite gentrified on tracks "Checkin' Up On My Baby" and "Diving Duck Blues", but perhaps playing "up" a bit to the room. Whatever the case, Mahal and company were in fine form, he played the ideal MC, and it all worked.

This interesting set figures to precede re-release of Taj Mahal's entire catalog for the Columbia label.

Duane Verh



WYNTON MARSALIS

The Music of America
SONY/MASTERWORKS JAZZ

Wynton Marsalis may at times be a figure of controversy, but there can be little doubt that he is one of the few performers in jazz today whose name would be recognized by members of the general public. Though still relatively young, he's had a performing and recording career that extends back 30 years. He has in this time distinguished himself as a virtuoso of great technique and imagination as well as a composer. Like one of his musical inspirations, he is not simply beyond categories but established himself not simply in the world of jazz but also Western classical music.

Masterworks Jazz has just issued a two-disc compilation "The Music of America" that emphasizes as much the rich legacy of his composing as it does his playing. In the liner booklet, Greg Thomas states that Wynton's "achievement as a composer for large and small groups has not been given due consideration by so-called serious music critics." This anthology in part would serve to display that, and also perhaps answer another question raised by Thomas, "Who has the depth to plumb the entire American jazz tradition as if its all good and new, and then connect it with music from Africa, Spain, France as well as the spicy flavors of the Mediterranean?"

Thomas' last question ignores Wynton's dismissal at times of significant parts of the American jazz tradition, which is one reason he has been a controversial figure. And if his approach has been a classicist towards the jazz tradition, it has been one of distilling from the past to create fresh and vibrant works. Marsalis himself has self-curated this collection of 24 tracks from a variety of compositions and recordings with over 2 1/2 hours of music.

Several of the selections, including the opening "Jazz: 6 1/2 Syncopated Movements: Express Crossing (Astride Iron Horses)," evoke the romance of trains (a theme found in several Ellington numbers) with spirited playing (nice use of mutes in the trumpets). "Jazz: 6 1/2 Syncopated Movements: "D" in the Key of "F" (Now the Blues)," also displays Ellington's inspiration in how the performance builds around Wes

Anderson's alto sax (whose playing suggests Johnny Hodges). These selections with the driving swing of "Jump Start - The Mastery of Melancholy: Jump," a feature for the great Harry 'Sweets' Edison, are from "Jump Start & Jazz," a recording that will likely garner my attention. More of Marsalis' evocation of trains can be heard on a couple selections from the album "Big Train," with the Jazz At Lincoln Center Orchestra (JALC Orchestra).

The full range of Marsalis' compositions is evidenced by "Go, Possum, Go," a brief banjo-fiddle duet between Mark O'Connor and Mark Schatz that suggests old-time strong bands with a modern sensibility, his string quartet "At the Octoroon Balls - String Quartet No. 1 *: Hellbound Highball," while "The Fiddler's March" from "A Fiddler's Tale Suite," brings Marsalis together with the Chamber Society of Lincoln Center with Marsalis playing in the vein of a concert trumpeter. Also fascinating is the two movements (one edited) from "All Rise," with the use of a choir and LA Philharmonic in addition to the JALC Orchestra and transitions from orchestra to improvised big band segments.

This hopefully will provide an idea of the breadth and depth of the oeuvre of Wynton Marsalis compiled here. The performances in "The Music of America; Wynton Marsalis," transcends genres and musical categories, and the sampling here evidences Marsalis' significant and substantial achievements.

Ron Weinstock



MUDDY WATERS BLUES BAND

Mud In Your Ear
DOUGLAS

Douglas Records has made available on compact disc, "Mud In Your Ear", 15 selections by the Muddy Waters Blues Band originally issued on two vinyl albums over forty years ago on what was then Alan Douglas' new label. Muddy Waters is on the session, but limited to backing guitar although taking a few recognizable slide solos.

His band at that time included Luther 'Georgia Snake Boy' Johnson on vocals and guitar; George 'Mojo' Buford on harmonica and vocals; Otis Spann on piano; Sammy Lawhorn on guitar; Lawrence 'Sonny' Wimberly on bass and Francis Clay on drums.

Johnson and Mojo, along with Spann, would have been featured on the Band's opening selections before Muddy would be brought up.

This recording allows Johnson and Buford to have more of the spotlight than they would live as well as allows us to hear this edition of Waters Band upfront. Johnson takes the bulk of the vocals including a nice rendition of Washboard Sam's "Diggin' My Potatoes," and Muddy's "Long Distance Call," with his take on the "another mule kicking in my stall" climax.

The title track, heard in a lengthy version and a brief reprise, is a rocking instrumental rendition of "Got My Mojo Working." There are also solid renditions of "Coming Home Baby" and Jimmy Smith's "Chicken Shack," songs that were typical opening numbers.

Johnson's "I'm So Glad" is a pretty strong original with Muddy adding some stinging slide. Also nice are his interpretations of a couple lesser known Waters numbers, the brooding "Remember Me," and Waters' "Evil," where he sings that when you see him coming, better run and hide.

Spann is particularly superb on these and Buford adds some nice harp. Buford comes across well on the first-rate "I'm So Glad," and "Watch Dog." The latter number is a slow blues with a clever lyric about needing a watch dog to look after things when he goes away on business.

This was a tight band and these are solid perfor-

LET'S GO

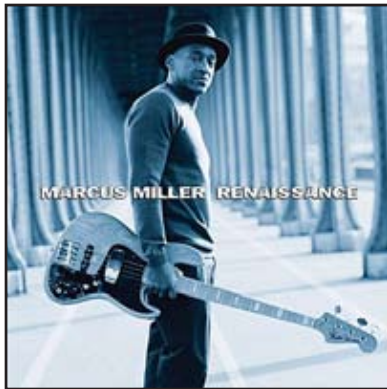
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mances. Johnson did record overseas after leaving Muddy Waters but died much too young, and Buford made several albums until his passing a few years back. This is a good document of the Muddy Waters band of the time before Spann left, and while this is not an essential reissue, it is a welcome one.

Ron Weinstock



MARCUS MILLER

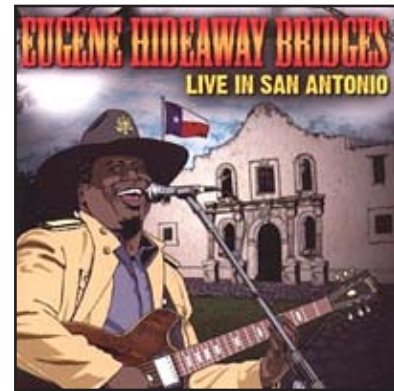
**Renaissance
CONCORD JAZZ**

When not slapping and strutting his way through some very stylish jazz-funk, electric bass master Miller here takes some very compelling side trips. With his youthful touring band, equal parts punch and polish, in tow, the accomplished fusion veteran jumps a few decades and charges up some classic sounds with here-and-now voltage. The 70's War hit "Slippin' Into Darkness" is taken into jazzy regions hinted at on the original thanks to the solo work of trumpeter Sean Jones and pianist Kris Powers. That decade is further celebrated with Miller's tribute to the emblematic jazz label of those days, "Cee Tee Eye" and his disarmingly delicate take on the Jackson Five ballad hit, "I'll Be There".

Miller provides all the "pop" required of the genre and a good measure of melodic play besides as evidenced on the breezy, minor-keyed "Redemption". That track further benefits from the atmospherics of guest pianist Federico Gonzales Pena. Guesting elsewhere are vocalists Ruben Blades and Dr. John. Other departures from funk turf include "Setembro (Brazilian Wedding Song)" and Miller's bass clarinet feature "Goree". A solid offering. *Duane Verh*

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EUGENE 'HIDEAWAY' BRIDGES

**Live in San Antonio
ARMADILLO MUSIC**

For me, one of the highlights of the 2012 Pennsylvania Blues Festival was seeing Eugene 'Hideaway' Bridges for the first time in a few years. He was backed by a tight band that included Eric 'Lollipop' King on bass, Justine M. Miller on trumpet and Seth Kibel on tenor saxophone. It was a strong set filled with his fluid guitar runs and soulful vocals. For those who have never heard this gentlemen perform, I might suggest that he is a cross between Sam Cooke and sixties B.B. King.

At the Festival I purchased "Live in San Antonio" (Armadillo Music) that was recorded at Chango's Havana Club in San Antonio. King, Miller and Kibel are present on this 2009 CD release along with David Webb on keyboards. Many of the songs performed in the Pennsylvania Blues Festival are on this recording and the feel of the performances are very similar although Webb's keyboards and the presence of a percussionist in addition to drums give a slightly different sound.

From the opening "I Got the Blues," through the closing "Jump the Joint," Bridges' natural, unforced vocals are complemented by his flowing playing and the brassy backing provided by Kibel's horn arrangements. These sound like a larger horn section than just two players. Bridges vocals recall Sam Cooke as is readily apparent on "Movin' and Groovin'" which Cooke wrote with Lou Rawls as well as "Rome Wasn't Built in A Day," that Johnnie Taylor originally recorded for Cooke's SAR label. It is not a matter of imitating Cooke as the fact his voice is similar.

The album provides a nice and representative overview of Bridges' blues including the hot "Giving Up On Love;" his homage to the working folk on "Real Hero" with its "Hootchie Kootchie Man" based melody; "Bluesman" with its incorporation of the Isley Brothers' "Fight The Power" groove; the James Brown influenced funk of "I Know That You Love Me" on which Miller and Kibel solo; and the closing "Jump the Joint," that concludes this superb live recording of a considerably underrated blues artist.

Ron Weinstock



PROJECT GRAND SLAM

Spring Dance
CAKEWALK RECORDS

Project Grand Slam, named after the plot to break into Fort Knox in the James Bond thriller “Goldfinger,” is a contemporary jazz-fusion group led by bassist Robert Miller, with saxophones and flute from Gilad Ronen and drums from Ron Thaler. On their new Cakewalk Records release “Spring Dance,” they are joined by Mike Eckroth on keyboards’ Joye Hennessey on vocals; Danny Lerman on alto saxophone and Justin Smith on strings.

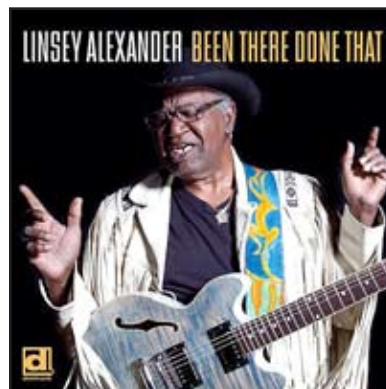
The nine selections are mostly originals by either Miller or Ronen with the exception of a cover of the Hollies “He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Brother.” There is nothing fancy here, just very melodic and bouncy performances with definite appeal to fans of such artists as Bob James, Grover Washington, The Crusaders, and Spyro Gyra. As a disclosure, I remember seeing Sypro Gyra regularly on Thursday Nights at Buffalo’s Tralfamadore Cafe in the mid-seventies when they played a variety of originals and always closed the night out with Sonny Rollins’ “St. Thomas.”

This listener heard some echoes of the theme from the TV show “Taxi,” on the title track, while “Ma Petite Fleur,” is a slow ballad with Ronen’s soprano stating the theme and establishing the winsome mood before Eckroth’s R&B flavored piano solo. Vocalist Hennessey is showcased on the soulful “Remember,” with some nice playing by the rhythm, with an attractive tenor sax solo from Ronen and nice support from Miller and Thaler. After the bouncy “Catch You later,” Ronen’s “The Turn” displays a bit more reflective mood. Hennessey returns for the funky interpretation of The Hollies hit recording.

The album closes with an instrumental version of “Remember,” which seems like filler. Even including it, the nine tracks on “Spring Dance” are a little over a half hour. This is nicely performed and recorded. While little deep or profound on this, it certainly is an entertaining recording that will have definite appeal.

Ron Weinstock

jazz-blues.com



LINSEY ALEXANDER

Been There Done That
DELMARK

There are several songs on Linsey Alexander’s Delmark debut “Been There Done That,” which if were recorded thirty years ago would be viewed as blues classics. Mississippi born and growing up in Memphis, he has been part of the Chicago blues scene and even produced some independent CDs, and finally has this CD for an established label.

He and his guitar is backed by a terrific band of Roosevelt Purifoy on keyboards, Breezy Rodio and Mike Wheeler on guitar, Greg McDaniel on bass and James Wilson on drums. Several tracks have Ryan Nyther on trumpet and Bryan Fritz on tenor saxophone, while Billy Branch adds his harmonica to three tracks. Alexander wrote (or co-wrote) all but one of the twelve songs, the exception being a Willie Kent number.

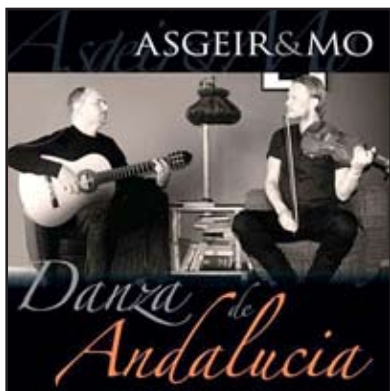
Listening to this recording I recall some of the Willie Kent Delmark albums as well as some by Kent, Big Moose Walker and Willie James Lyons from the seventies. “Raffle Ticket” opens with some strong harp in the backing as Alexander asks his baby, “what is the name of that game you playing on me” as she came back Wednesday night with a diamond ring which she claimed she won with a lottery. This is a terrific classic Chicago blues performance with Branch wailing on the harmonica and the band just hitting that groove while Alexander tells his woman when she goes out Saturday night to get her raffle ticket wet. His singing is so natural and full of feeling, although his buzz-tone guitar solo is a bit generic. The next track “Bad Man” has a crisp, funky groove and riffing horns as he sings about smoking his “pipe till I go to hell,” with some nice guitar from Rodio and himself here. “I Had a Dream” is a straight, slow blues that he delivers in a very intense manner.

The title track is more in a soulful vein (suggestive of Tyrone Davis) and he sings as naturally in this vein as on the straight blues. If he is looking down from Heaven, Willie Kent has to be smiling at Alexander’s cover of “Look’s Like It’s Going To Rain,” while it’s back to the traditional Chicago blues sound on “My Mama Gave Me The Blues,” which he opens singing

about his elders telling him when you sing the blues when you die you will go straight to hell, but Linsey is still on earth and has his story to tell. Billy Branch channels Little Walter on chromatic harmonica with his terrific playing here. Branch also is present on the excellent “The Same Time I Could Tell Myself,” with its lyrics about how he doesn’t want a woman to tell him things he already knows or will go wrong cheating and lying.

On the closing “Saving Robert Johnson,” he sings about going to Highway 61 where it runs into 49 where Robert Johnson sold his soul and Linsey said email the devil or poke him on Facebook so Linsey can meet the Devil at the Crossroads to free Robert Johnson’s soul. It has perhaps a silly lyric although the performance is solid. It may be the weakest track on the album, but that does not diminish the fact that this is a most impressive blues recording which is one of the better blues albums I have heard this year. He is a voice I want to hear more from.

Ron Weinstock



ASGEIR & MO

Danza de Andalucia

WEST AUDIO PRODUCTIONS AS

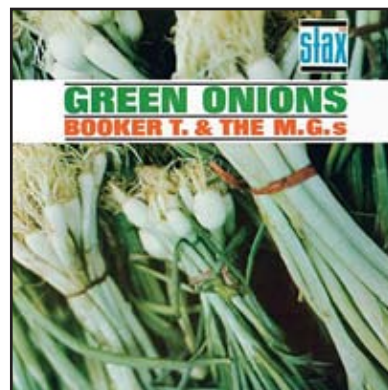
I received an email a couple of months ago from Norwegian guitarist Asgeir Aaroen who mentioned that he had a new CD out with his partner violinist Bjarte Mo and wanted to know if he could send us one. As is the general policy here, I checked out some tunes on Amazon and was extremely impressed. I told him by all means – shoot one over.

Asgeir plays a wonderful flamenco guitar throughout this mostly instrumental blend of flamenco, jazz, classical, Latin, Spanish, East European and world music...and more. They also have jazz bassist Magnus Rod Haughland, Latin percussionist Gabriel Chicaiza who hails from Colombia, Saska Cvijanovic – a classical flautist from Serbia and experimental percussionist Eddie Andersen. A special guest is Noelia Sabarea, a flamenco dancer from Algeciras, Spain. The final track features a beautiful vocal by Aina Schold. The musicians appear in various groupings on the different tracks.

Their blend of worldly influences has resulted in an album of music that is all their own, rather than

sounding like somebody else. Most of the songs have sweet melodies at various tempos. A few of them are more energetic such as “Arabian Samba” and “Tango” to break up the program nicely. Three of the songs also include the Stavanger String Section (from Stavanger, Norway where this music was recorded), which includes two violins, a viola and a cello.

I must admit I have played this disc many times since it arrived and its appeal does not diminish at all. If it sounds interesting, do as I did and check out the tracks at Amazon.com. A *very* fine release. *Bill Wahl*



BOOKER T. & THE M.G.S

Green Onions

CONCORD/STAX

A recent release in the Stax Remasters series of reissues from Concord is “Green Onions” by Booker T. & the M.G.s. It includes 24 bit remastering of the 12 selections from the original 1962 sessions along with a couple of 1965 selections from Los Angeles’ 5/4 Ballroom. This is, of course, one of the great instrumental bands of all time with Booker T. Jones on organ; Steve Cropper on guitar; Al Jackson drums and Lewis Steinberg on bass (who would be replaced by Donald ‘Duck’ Dunn by the time they played the 5/4 Ballroom).

The album exhibits the crisp, clean playing that was particularly a virtue as they served as the house rhythm section on so many classic Stax recordings. The title track was an instrumental hit for the band and served as the basis for Sonny boy Williamson’s recording of “Help Me.” If the organ Jones played could sound “Rinky Dink” to cite the title of a track, he effectively took the lead with Cropper laying down crisp chords and single note runs with Steinberg and Jackson providing the bottom. The cover of Ray Charles’ “I Got a Woman” sounds stronger than that of “Twist & Shout,” while “Mo’ Onions” is a greasy instrumental that has some of the same feel as the title track.

The soul of this time was not that far removed from the blues as Jones’ late night playing displays on “Behave Yourself,” while Acker Bilk’s “Stranger On The Shore” is a bit more schmaltzy. There is a cover of Doc Pomus’ “Lonely Avenue,” played with

a bit of restraint, while Dee Clark's raver "I Can't Sit Down" might have benefited from a bit fuller sound in performance. This is not to say it's a poor performance, but rather not as explosive as it could have been. The closing selection on the original release is a moody rendition of the instrumental "Comin' Home, Baby," that Herbie Mann had a hit with.

Added to the original release are live renditions of "Green Onions" and "I Can't Sit Down." The latter number includes Paxxy Axton's saxophone. Both performances exhibit considerably more fire than the studio recordings and are more than welcome additions to the original album. The booklet with this reissue reproduces Bob Altschuler's original notes along with Stax Historian Rob Bowman's cogent comments.

Ron Weinstock

books

JOHN PHILIP SOUSA'S AMERICA: THE PATRIOT'S LIFE IN IMAGES AND SONGS by John Philip Sousa IV with Loras John Schissel GIA PUBLICATIONS

The America of John Philip Sousa was a far different, and perhaps simpler time than now, but there is little doubt that John Philip Sousa, as the Director of the United States Marine Band, as a composer of marches (leading him to become known as "The March King") and then leader of the Sousa Band, became one of the best-known Americans of his time and his music became a part of

the fabric of the United States and still performed today including "The Stars and Stripes Forever."

"John Philip Sousa's America" is a look at his life, mostly through a wealth of unpublished and rare photographs, newspaper clippings, caricatures, publicity stills, and other archival material that accompany the reflections of Sousa's great-grandson on the March King's life, from his upbringing in Washington DC through the Civil War, his marriage, his initial forays into march music and the remarkable career that ended with his death in 1932. It was a career that included tours across the United States and through Europe and Asia. He was also a recording star in the early days of musical recordings and alumni of his band included Arthur Pryor who had a successful career leading a similar band to Sousa's, and Meredith Willson, who brought us the classic Broadway musical, "The Music Man." Today, his music is played world-wide, and not simply for Presidents.

In this narrative, Sousa's great-grandson is assisted by Lora John Schissel a senior musicologist at the Library of Congress. This is not a full scholarly biography of Sousa, but rather an affectionate look back at his remarkable life. This profusely illustrated book (hundreds of photos and illustrations) is a visual feast. Also included is a CD comprised mostly of performances of Sousa's music by the United States Marine Band with a brief spoken recording of Sousa, and there is a recording by the Sousa Band performing "The Stars and Stripes Forever." It is an invaluable addition to the literature on the music of the post-Civil War to World War I era, and part of musical environment from which jazz and modern popular music emerged out of. *Ron Weinstock*



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