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TRANEUMENTARY

**John Coltrane:
the podcast**



Jazz & Blues Report

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TRANEUMENTARY

John Coltrane: the podcast

More Than 4,000 Subscribers, 50,000 Downloads to Date
Featuring Interviews With Jimmy Cobb, McCoy Tyner, Sonny Rollins; More New Episodes Available Tuesdays Through July 17

LOS ANGELES — Since its debut in early February, the TRANEUMENTARY podcast has become one of the most popular podcasts on iTunes. More than 4,000 subscribers (automatically receiving episode updates via iTunes) are already on board and there are over 50,000 cume episode downloads for this 34-episode series celebrating the artistry and recordings of John Coltrane. Joseph Vella, the digital documentarian who produced TRANEUMENTARY, creates an intimate, career-spanning portrait of the iconic saxophonist with episodes that shift between Coltrane playing and conversations with musicians, producers, writers and educators sharing their personal stories and insights into the artist's life and music.

Naturally Vella is pleased with the growing number of subscribers, but says he is more excited that the series is resonating with a new generation of fans discovering Coltrane's legacy for the first time. "People respond to great storytelling and great music, and we have both," he says. "This project has a lot to offer long-time fans like myself who will tune in to hear amazing, behind-the-scenes stories from the artists who played on their favorite records. But these podcasts are also a great way to reach people who are simply curious about John Coltrane. Those listeners get a rare opportunity to hear musicians explaining the music and putting it into context. It's really a great introduction not only to Coltrane, but also to jazz in general."

TRANEUMENTARY will run through July 17, with new episodes released every Tuesday. Each episode spotlights an individual person-

ality, including interviews with Jimmy Cobb, McCoy Tyner, Sonny Rollins, Steve Kuhn, Dave Liebman, Terence Blanchard, Joe Lovano, Geri Allen, Jason Moran, Dr. Billy Taylor, Anton Fig, Karrin Allyson, Michael Cuscuna, Lewis Porter, Ashley Kahn, Dave Schroeder, Lenny Pickett and many others.

Subscriptions to TRANEUMENTARY are free and available from iTunes, while you can also go to www.traneumentary.blogspot.com, which offers access to streaming episodes and additional background information. The site also features producer notes and episode soundtracks, which are linked to iTunes where the featured songs are available for preview and purchase.

TRANEUMENTARY began in the summer of 2006 when Vella was asked to create a podcast episode to commemorate the Concord John Coltrane boxed set Fearless Leader. "I didn't think a single podcast was enough to do such a profound talent justice, so I took the idea and ran with it. I started calling up my friends at Atlantic, Blue Note and Impulse and told them that I wanted to create an oral history about John Coltrane. Everyone wanted to be a part of this project and worked with me to make it happen. The idea just blossomed naturally."

Vella produced the first episode using excerpts from an interview with Coltrane that appears on the bootleg import album, Miles Davis & John Coltrane—Live in Stockholm 1960. He played the episode for the first person he interviewed for the series, pianist McCoy Tyner, who performed in Coltrane's classic quartet with bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones. "He took off the headphones and was quiet for a moment and then

said: 'It was good to hear John's voice again. I hope this will give people a chance to hear him again.' McCoy didn't know a thing about podcasting, but he understood instantly that this project was a great way to celebrate John Coltrane."

Joe Vella

TRANEUMENTARY is produced by Joseph Vella of Vella Interactive. Vella, one of the Internet's early pioneers, created the popular niche site Jazz Online and currently acts as consultant and new media strategist and producer to various artists, recording companies and businesses. As a podcast producer, he has created innovative and successful series for The Beach Boys, Yo-Yo Ma, Sony BMG Masterworks, Concord Music Group, Blue Note Records, Six Degrees Records, ARTizen Music Group, Christian McBride, Steven Mercurio, The Real Tuesday Weld and others.

Rhino Records

Formed 29 years ago in the back of a Santa Monica record store, Rhino is the world's leading pop culture label. Emphasizing flawless sound quality, bonus tracks, informative liner notes, award-winning creative packaging, an offbeat sense of humor and a strong social conscience, Rhino continues to set the standard for excellence in the reissue business it pioneered in both the physical and digital worlds. Rhino is also expanding the definition of what a catalog music company is as evidenced by the label's recent name and likeness representation deal with legendary band Grateful Dead. The vast Rhino catalog of more than 5,000 CDs, videos, and digital exclusive albums features material by Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, John Coltrane and Curtis Mayfield, among many others.

Mosaic Records Launches New Imprint, Mosaic Contemporary Label to be Spearheaded by Jazz Industry Veteran Matt Pierson

NEW YORK CITY – Mosaic Records, widely recognized as the most respected name in the jazz catalog business, is pleased to announce the launch of **Mosaic Contemporary**, a new imprint dedicated to reissuing and compiling timeless recordings from the annals of Contemporary Jazz. Mosaic Contemporary is being spearheaded by producer Matt Pierson, formerly EVP/GM-Jazz for Warner Bros. Records, and launched March 6 with the release of four titles: new comprehensive compilations titled *Ultimate Jaco Pastorius* and *Ultimate Earl Klugh* along with reissues of Freddie Hubbard's *Super Blue* and Hubert Laws' classic CTI recording *Afro-Classic*.

In addition, Mosaic will be making its first foray into the traditional retail marketplace through a recently inked distribution agreement with Caroline Distribution.

A defining attribute of Mosaic Records has been the high quality of the product, presented with a no-holds-barred approach, serving the avid jazz fan and collector. The Mosaic Contemporary line will focus on compilations and more commercially viable material, with the Mosaic attention to detail and commitment to excellence intact.

Although nearly every artist featured on Mosaic Contemporary releases will be well known to even the casual contemporary jazz listener, all decisions will be made based on an artist's contribution to the music and the specific recording's place in the pantheon of American music, thus providing the sophisticated jazz and adult music fan with a well-informed overview of a particular artist's catalog. And, unlike other labels in the catalog business, most of Mosaic Contemporary's artists are still performing and vital, affording the label a unique proactive marketing approach to complement artists' tours with retail positioning and other marketing efforts. In addition, these releases include the core repertoire of Smooth Jazz radio, one of the most successful formats in the industry.

"Our goal is to fill a significant void that exists in the jazz business. Due to the major labels either pulling back drastically in this area or leaving the business altogether, there is an opening for us to set the record straight, musically speaking," said Matt Pierson, Mosaic Contemporary Label Director, "Although we are well aware that there has been significant contraction in the marketplace, the major labels are no longer able to effectively serve what remains of the jazz and adult fan base. And no company is better suited to attack this initiative than Mosaic."

Added Michael Cuscuna, Mosaic Records President, "In working regularly with Rhino, Legacy, Blue Note, and Verve as independent producers and licensees, we at Mosaic found a lack of interest in reissuing a significant amount of important adult music, either by reissuing titles or creating fresh compilations. Since Mosaic is an independent company with independent distribution, we are in a position to give great jazz and adult music the treatment it deserves."

"I have always been a big fan of the work that Mosaic does," said Caroline Distribution CEO William Hein, "and the opportunity to bring Mosaic Contemporary to Caroline was one that we could not pass up. We are truly committed to serving the adult music marketplace, and this is a step towards doing just that with product of the absolute highest quality."

The Ultimate Collections

Nearly every important artist in Contemporary Jazz has recorded seminal material for more than one label, making most "Best Of" collections on the market incomplete. Working with the special markets divisions of the major labels, in addition to certain independents, the "Ultimate" collections will chronologically present, in the most artistic and accessible form possible, the absolute highlights of an artist's career, a definitive BEST OF THE BEST.

Straight Reissues

Mosaic Contemporary will also introduce definitive versions of many of the most important recordings in contemporary jazz and adult music. Each title will be a timeless recording with a proven sales record. Most of these recordings have not been made available in new versions since they first appeared on the CD format up to twenty years ago, and have certainly never been given the **Mosaic** treatment. Additional content will augment the original releases whenever possible; the creation of new state-of-the-art masters and new liner notes will provide a fresh historical perspective on the music.

Mosaic Contemporary's initial slate, released March

6, includes the following titles:

Ultimate Jaco Pastorius - Renowned as the most important electric bassist in the history of jazz, Jaco Pastorius was a revolutionary figure, a true original who drastically changed the position and function of the bass in modern music. *Ultimate Jaco Pastorius* traces the highlights of Jaco's career, beginning with Charlie Parker's "Donna Lee" from his groundbreaking debut recording, through his tenure with Weather Report ("Barbary Coast," "Teen Town"), his association with Joni Mitchell ("The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines"), his classic solo recording *Word Of Mouth* ("3 Views Of A Secret", "Liberty City"), and, finally, his live tour-de-force recordings ("Domingo", "Soul Intro/The Chicken" and "Invitation"). *Ultimate Jaco Pastorius* features Herbie Hancock, Joe Zawinul, Wayne Shorter, Joni Mitchell, Toots Thielmans, Michael Brecker and others.

Ultimate Earl Klugh - Bringing together the highlights of this master guitarist's three decade 28-CD career, *Ultimate Earl Klugh* includes "Angelina" from his 1976 self-titled debut as well as collaborations with Bob James ("Movin' On") and George Benson ("Brazilian Stomp"), and numerous chart-topping contemporary jazz hits. Featured are Dave Grusin, Bob James, George Benson, Eric Gale, Steve Gadd, Patti Austin and Lee Ritenour.

Freddie Hubbard's Super Blue – Mosaic Contemporary is releasing this classic 1978 recording on CD for the first time. Featuring an all-star band of masterful players who participated in Hubbard's CTI recordings (Joe Henderson, Ron Carter, Jack DeJohnette, and special guest George Benson), this nearly forgotten classic include three previously unreleased alternate takes.

Hubert Laws' Afro Classic – The jazz world's most legendary flutist's breakthrough 1970 recording for CTI Records gets the full Mosaic Contemporary treatment. *Afro Classic* features Bob James, Ron Carter, and Airtio Moriera with arrangements by Don Sebesky, and highlights Laws' flawless interpretations of melodies by Bach, Mozart and James Taylor.

Mosaic Records was launched in 1983 by Charles Lourie and Michael Cuscuna. The company's mission was to make available the vast body of jazz recordings that existed in various record company vaults, but were unavailable to new generations of jazz listeners. In the years since, Mosaic has been able to build the most respected and successful company in the reissue business. As the first company devoted exclusively to reissuing jazz and blues recordings in limited-edition boxed sets, Mosaic's ability to assemble state-of-the-art packages, both musically and visually, is second to none. Mosaic's collections have been critically-acclaimed by the press including this publication, The New York Times, Time Magazine, The Wall St. Journal, People, and scores of others, and are the recipient of a multitude of awards and accolades including numerous Grammy Awards. Many of the limited-editions have sold-out, immediately becoming much sought-after collector's items.

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MJF Launches Golden Celebration of 50th Annual Monterey Jazz Festival Presented by Verizon September 21–23

**Diana Krall, Sonny Rollins, Ornette Coleman,
Dave Brubeck, Gerald Wilson, Jim Hall, Ernestine
Anderson, Dave Holland, John McLaughlin
and more return to Monterey**

MONTEREY CA – The Monterey Jazz Festival Presented by Verizon celebrates its 50th in grand style as the artists who have shaped both the Festival and the history of jazz reunite with the stages that have made MJF the longest running jazz festival in the world. The world-renowned event takes place September 21-23 on the familiar oak-studded and beautiful grounds of the Monterey Fairgrounds, the location of the Festival since 1958. Featuring some of the biggest living legends in the jazz world, MJF/50 promises to be the key event of 2007 in the world of live music.

Tickets went on sale March 30 and are available now on the Monterey Jazz Festival's website at www.montereyjazzfestival.org or by phone at (925) 275-9255.

A stellar list of artists will grace the Arena/Lyons Stage including Sonny Rollins, Diana Krall, Ornette Coleman, the Dave Brubeck Quartet featuring the legendary guitarist Jim Hall, John McLaughlin and the 4th Dimension, the Gerald Wilson Orchestra, Los Lobos, bluesmen Otis Taylor and James Hunter, Cuban vocalist Issac Delgado and the supergroup of Dave Holland, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Chris Potter and Eric Harland.

2007 MJF Artist-In-Residence, trumpeter Terence Blanchard, will appear with the MJF Chamber Orchestra, with his own quintet, with the Next Generation Jazz Orchestra, and also with the MJF 50th Anniversary All-Stars, featuring James Moody, Nnenna Freelon, Benny Green, Kendrick Scott, and Derrick Hodge. MJF/50 Showcase Artist, Jim Hall, will appear with his own quartet, in duo with pianist Geoff Keezer, and with Dave Brubeck's Quartet. And MJF/50 Commission Artist, Gerald Wilson, will premiere Monterey Moods, his third milestone composition for MJF.

Arena artists also appearing on the Grounds include bluesmen Otis Taylor and James Hunter, guitarist Jim Hall, trumpeter Terence Blanchard, Gerald Wilson and his Orchestra, the MJF 50th Anniversary All-Stars, featuring Terence Blanchard, James Moody, Nnenna Freelon, Benny Green, Kendrick Scott, and Derrick Hodge; and bassist Dave Holland, appearing with Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Chris Potter and Eric Harland.

MJF/50 Highlights Include:

- Return of jazz legends Sonny Rollins, Ornette Coleman, Dave Brubeck, Diana Krall, and Jim Hall
- World Premiere of Commission Artist Gerald Wilson's Monterey Moods
- Artist-In-Residence Terence Blanchard's Requiem for Katrina with the MJF Chamber Orchestra
- Dave Holland with Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Chris Potter, and Eric Harland to record live sets for MJF Records

- New venue, Lyons Lounge, featuring DJ Logic and Vinnie Esparza remixing jazz, hip-hop, and dance music
- Premiere of MJF 50th Anniversary All-Star Band with James Moody, Nnenna Freelon, Terence Blanchard, and Benny Green

- Friday's "New Grooves in New Orleans" featuring Dumpstaphunk, Bonerama, and Papa Grows Funk

- Sunday's "Hammond B-3 Blowout" featuring the Joey DeFrancesco Trio and Atsuko Hashimoto Trio (with Houston Person and Jeff Hamilton)

- Lyons Lane featuring MJF history, artist meet 'n' greets, complimentary coffee, and more in newly created area in honor of MJF/50

- Return of Sunday's "Family Day" sponsored by Macy's, with fun for all ages

- Debut of MJF coffee table art book, "The Art of Jazz: Monterey Jazz Festival/50 Years" featuring MJF images from the first Festival through the 50th

- Launch of Monterey Jazz Festival Records, featuring the release of rare and rarified recordings from the last 50 years on CD in conjunction with Concord Music Group

For more information, visit the Monterey Jazz Festival's website at www.montereyjazzfestival.org.

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BLUES WATCH

By Mark Smith

New Release Blues... The release schedule is starting to pick up steam as our favorite blues artists are getting ready to crawl from the dim lights of studios around the country into the bright daylight of the blues festivals. Here's a few of notable releases to power up your spring break.... **Ry Cooder-** *My Name is Buddy*; **JJ Grey & Mofro-** *Country Ghetto*; **Albert Hammond Jr.-** *Yours to Keep*; **Otis Taylor-** *Definition of a Circle*; **Marc Ford-Weary & Wired**; **Corey Stevens-** *Albertville*; **Eric Gales-** *Psychedelic Underground*; **Robert Cray-** *Definitive Collection*; **Papa Mali-** *Do Your Thing*; **Johnny Winter-** *Rasin' Cain*; **Koko Taylor-** *Old School*; **Elliot Sharp's Terraplane-** *Secret Life*; **Ry Cooder-** *Roots of Ry Cooder*; **Barbara Blue and the Phantom Blues Band-** *By Popular Demand*; **Zachary Richard-** *Lumiere Dans Le Noir*; **Rory Gallagher-** *Fresh Evidence*; **Canned Heat-** *The Boogie Assault: Live in Australia*; **Teddy Morgan & the Pistolas-** *Crashing Down*; **Wild T & the Spirit-** *True Bliss*; **Tad Robinson-** *New Point of View*; **Big Pete Pearson-** *I'm Here Baby*; **Dave Hole-** *Rough Diamond*; **EG Kight-**

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JIMMY WITHERSPOON Goin' to Kansas City Blues MOSAIC RECORDS

Among the most recent releases in the Mosaic Singles series this classic 1957 recording by Jimmy Witherspoon with Jay McShann and His Band. Originally on RCA, I believe this has been on CD but undoubtedly deleted. Mosaic has made available the entire album with three other recordings from the sessions that had been issued on a French vinyl reissue.

Opening up with *Jumpin' the Blues* from the pen of McShann and Charlie Parker, Witherspoon handles other McShann classics as *Hootie Blues* and *Confessin' the Blues*, along with *Until the Real Thing Comes Along*, the classic ballad made famous by Andy Kirk's *Clouds of Joy* along with the Joe Turner-Pete Johnson *Piney Brown Blues*. Witherspoon contributed a couple of originals, *Rain is Such a Lonesome Sound* and *Blue Monday*. He shines throughout backed by the swinging big little band McShann led. Others on the session included Kenny Burrell on guitar, Hilton Jefferson on alto sax, Seldon Powell on tenor sax, Al Sears or Hayward Henry on baritone sax, Emmett Berry or Ray Copeland on trumpet, J.C. Higginbotham on trombone, Gene Ramey on bass and Mousey Alexander on drums. Stereo masters were found for all but two of the thirteen songs heard here.

This is a most welcome reissue and available directly from mosaic at <http://www.mosaicrecords.com/>.

Ron Weinstock

DOUG COX & SALIL BHATT Slide to Freedom NORTHERN BLUES

On this disc, Canadian Doug Cox melds his Mississippi Delta resophonic guitar grooves with the other worldly sounding Mohan Veena (a 19 string guitar like instrument) and Satvik Veena (featuring 20 strings- 3 for the main melody, 5 for drone and 12 sympathetic strings) played by the father and son team of Vishwa Mohan Bhatt and Salil Bhatt. Add Ramkumar Mishra on Tabla (a percussion instrument) and you have a fully realized fusion of East and West.

While there's nary a boogie, shuffle or blues rock lick to be found, traditional blues fans who relish deft acoustic picking and slides burning up the strings will find plenty to like here. Those who want to ease slowly into the fusion of sounds should first check out the somewhat straight forward takes on Blind Willie Johnson's *Soul of a Man*, Mississippi John Hurt's *Pay Day* and Cox's own, *Beware*

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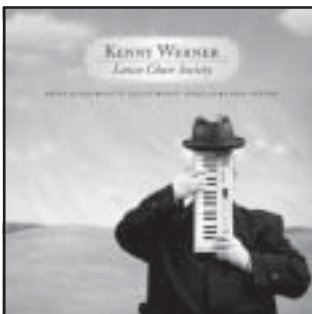
With Love, Charles Tolliver Big Band



Billy Strayhorn: Lush Life, Soundtrack



Live At Birdland, Steve Kuhn Trio



Lawn Chair Society, Kenny Werner



From The Plantation To The Penitentiary, Wynton Marsalis



In My Element, Robert Glasper



THE RUDY VAN GELDER EDITIONS

From 1953 to 1967, Alfred Lion produced a body of work that ranks as the most innovative series of recordings in modern jazz. Almost all of these masterpieces were documented by the extraordinary Rudy Van Gelder; a self-taught engineer who more than set a new standard. Devoid of caution or timidity, he captured the full power and rich sound of jazz ensembles with dazzling clarity. His contribution to the focused approach that Blue Note took at every stage of any album was immeasurable. Decades later, Rudy agreed to take a second look at the original recordings, bringing them into the digital domain with the same skill and focus. Six more RVG Editions have just been released. If you think you've heard these gems before, listen again.



Lush Life, Lou Donaldson



Undercurrent, Kenny Drew



Introducing, Johnny Griffin



The Right Touch, Duke Pearson



You Gotta Take A Little Love, Horace Silver Quintet



The Spoiler, Stanley Turrentine

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of the Man (who calls you Bro) which feature Cox's soulful vocals and a more prominent place for his resonator licks. While these cuts certainly feature some Eastern sounds they are accents instead of being the primary sonic palette.

Those willing to jump straight into the mystical sounds of the East should light the incense, crank up the stereo and get ready for the hypnotic interplay amongst the musicians on the 10 minute plus *Bhoopali Dance*, which reveals the many facets of the Satvik Veena by starting with an unhurried delicate trance inducing groove before igniting into a string sizzling, note bending delight.

Keeping the Eastern mood intact, *Arabian Night* transports you to a far away desert scene that is as sweltering as the dense heat of the Delta that is at the core of so much of the traditional blues while the quieter, more reflective, *Fish Pond*, suggests an easy afternoon with a cane pole.

The oddly named *Meeting by the Liver* conjures up a sinister movie plot made all the more menacing by Cox's wild attack on his guitar while a modal groove is percolating in the background.

Adventuresome blues fans will have something to chew on with this interesting release. Those stuck in the Delta will be wondering who stuck the sound track to the curry joint down the street in their disc player.

Mark Smith

JOEY DEFRANCESCO Live: The Authorized Bootleg CONCORD

Recorded live during a week-long gig in April 2006 at Yoshi's in Oakland, California, HB-3 organist Joey DeFrancesco spotlights special guest saxophonist George Coleman, a player that DeFrancesco felt had been passed over.

Playing six standards, the group comprising DeFrancesco, Coleman, drummer Byron Landham and guitarist Jake Langley burns through Ray Noble's "Cherokee" for the opener.

They deliver a plush mid-tempo reading (nearly 14 minutes) of Lee Morgan's "Ceora." The band refreshes "Green Dolphin Street," expands on the Rodgers-Hart tune "Little Girl Blue" and closes the set with a rousing uptempo take on the chestnut "Autumn Leaves."

Each of those tunes lasts about 11 minutes. Because you get into Coleman's playing and want more, the track that seems out of place is the 6-1/2 minute romantic ballad, "I'm in the Mood For Love, featuring singer Colleen McNab without Coleman.

Inspired by Charlie Parker, Coleman (b. 1935 in Memphis, TN) can unleash a torrent of swirling sound and improvise at a fast clip with idea-rich lines. He covers the range here, from smoky and sultry to fierce and fast. Coleman, who played with Miles Davis for a year beginning in 1963, has been leading and (infrequently) recording his own groups since the late 1960s. It's a pleasure to hear him.

Coleman's clear, rich, deep-toned sound stands out as DeFrancesco and crew generate inspired performances behind (and with) him.

Nancy Ann Lee

JOHNNIE TAYLOR Live at the Summit Club STAX RECORDS

Johnnie Taylor was originally supposed to appear at the Watts Summer Festival that was memorialized in *WattStax: The Living Word*, but was not there. He was recorded a couple days later at a Los Angeles club that has been just issued on

Stax, *Live at the Summit Club*. While three of the performances had been previously issued, there are six previously unissued selections. As Lee Hillebrand notes, Taylor had put much of his blues repertoire in mothballs after the 1968 success of *Who's Making Love*, but as Rufus Thomas notes in his intro of Taylor, "When you speak of blues, this is a man who knows 'em from the letter A to the Letter Z." And, despite band miscues at the start and plenty of ragged edges, Taylor opens with a storming rendition of *Take Care of Your Homework*, where he advises men to take care of things at home 'before your good thing is gone,' followed by one of Taylor's two classic Stax blues, *Little Bluebird*, where Taylor demonstrates what a great blues singer he was, and followed by a ragged intro of the great blues ballad, *Steal Away*, as Taylor says "we're gonna set this groove here."

I Don't Want to Lose You is a terrific love ballad, followed by *Who's Making Love*, where he gets the audience involved in a call and refrain. *Hurry Sundown* is another signature Taylor slow blues with great lyrics and is followed by a stronger rendition of *Steal Away*. The album closes with Taylor's hot soul workout on *Jody's Got Your Girl and Gone*, ending over an hour of hot buttered soul-blues.

A very welcome disc that is part of the celebration of Stax's 50th Anniversary and the labels reactivation.

Ron Weinstock

PATTI AUSTIN Avant-Gershwin RENDEZVOUS ENTERTAINMENT

Though known primarily as an R&B singer, Patti Austin has been crossing over genres recently with releases such as her Grammy-nominated *For Ella* and her work on some smooth jazz projects, including contributions on a Luther Vandross tribute and the George Benson/Al Jarreau disc.

Her new CD is on the smooth jazz label Rendezvous Entertainment, but is not at all in the typical smooth format. In fact, Austin is joined by the German WDR Big Band for a set of eight Gershwin classics. The band often screams and Austin proves she can swing hard and lend her powerful, clear voice to selections from the Great American Songbook in a high class fashion, as well as skillfully handle sweet ballads and gentle swingers. She sounds so good with this material one would think she'd been performing it steadily for many moons. WDR has in fact been performing this type of material for a long time and they blend very well with Austin for a most successful project. Some of what you'll hear is "Overture/Gershwin Medley," "Funny Face," "Porgy & Bess Medley," "Swanee" and "Lady Be Good."

The fact that this music was performed live at two

concerts in 2006 is further testament to Austin's considerable talents. No takes 4, 5 or 9 in the studio here...what she sang is what you get.

A fine release at a time when we are flooded with way too many singers attempting the same type of thing, who, simply put, need *way* more experience. Patti Austin is quite a versatile singer with all the chops and experience needed to pull it off.

Bill Wahl

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NASHVILLE R&B LABEL COMPILATIONS

BLUE LABEL/SPV (GERMANY)

The German Blue Label (a subsidiary of SPV Gmbh) has issued a plethora of releases covering a wide spectrum of music.

One is a double disc by the legendary **Fats Domino** titled **Sentimental Journey**. Recorded in 1987, Fats is accompanied by his working band for what is a solid live recording at the University of New Orleans as he revisits so many classics including *I'm Gonna be a Big Wheel Someday*, *I'm Walking*, *Ain't It a Shame*, *The Fat Man*, *Walking to New Orleans*, *Blueberry Hill*, *My Girl Josephine*,

Let the Four Winds Blow, *I'm in Love Again* and Professor Longhair's *Mardi Gras in New Orleans*. This is an enjoyable performance, although there is much live Domino available including a hot European concert with trumpeter Dave Bartholomew present and his Austin City Limits TV show (also available on DVD). Still the band is in solid form and the Fat Man rocks and one gets to hear plenty of his piano in addition to his warm, ingratiating vocals. Unfortunately no band personnel are listed though there is plenty of fine sax, muted trumpet and guitar (featured with Fats on the closing instrumental rendition of *Sentimental Journey*).

Trader John's Crawfish Soiree is a two disc compilation of recordings by Mac "Dr. John" Rebennack, that predate his Dr. John The Night Tripper persona for Atlantic's *Gris Gris*. The set contains some of the songs that he would have on *Zu Zu Man*; a 1965 release that was more rooted in the classic New Orleans R&B and rock and roll sound of that era. This is stuff that has been reissued a number of times over the years and is an R&B and rock mix that includes a variety of grooves. There is even a derivation remake of the pop hit *New Orleans* to go with a renditions of several Professor Longhair numbers, *Tipitina*, *In the Night*, and *Bald Head*. *Zu Zu Man* is a track that looks ahead to the *Gris Gris* album of a few years later. Some interesting stuff but hardly the good doctor at his most essential.

Screamin' Jay Hawkins' release **I Shake My Stick At You** makes available a 1993 recording made during an Australian tour that is new to these ears. Hawkins, who passed away a few years ago, is best known for the origi-

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nal recording of *I Put a Spell on You* and for his outrageous, oft scatological songs (*Feast of the Mau Mau*, *Alligator Wine* and *Constipation Blues*) and hysterical performances that included a persona of him carrying a shrunken head Henry and dressed wildly. Initially he had aspirations to be an opera singer but developed his frenzied R&B style working with R&B bands of the time such Leroy Kirkland and Tiny Grimes and His Rockin' Highlanders. Musically this has him with a tight backing quartet with plenty of space to display his solid piano as well as his over the top vocals (occasionally handling the songs in a more restrained fashion). This is music that frankly can get you rolling on the floor as well as shake your booty. Solid blues shuffles with lyrics that make one wonder what they were imbibing prepping for this session. There was only one Jalacy Hawkins and this set of blues & rock and roll demonstrates that fact so well.

Nashville R&B Label Compilations

Fred James has been championing the history of Nashville Rhythm and Blues over the years and helped revive the careers of a number of folks including Earl Gaines, Johnny Jones, Roscoe Shelton, and Charles Walker who have had recordings on several different labels. Blue Label has a bunch of releases that James has produced including several compilations from small Nashville labels that include some shots of the rare 45s and an informative booklet on the label and artists by James.

The Bullet and Sur-Speed Records Story, The R&B and Soul Sessions brings together 23 recordings by the likes of Larry Birdsong, Johnny Bragg (of The Prisonaires), and Shy Guy Douglas with nine tracks from the Buford Majors Band. This, like other releases in this series, was originally marketed for the local area. If a record would become too big, then it would be licensed to a major label for distribution. There is some nice stuff here. Bragg's two selections, including a remake of *Just Walkin' in the Rain*, are nice as is the Larry Birdsong's selections. There are some fine female singers on the selections under saxophonist's Buford Majors name. Shy Guy Douglas' two downhome features are less inspired.

The legendary Nashville songwriter and producer was the major force behind the Ref-o-ree label which is documented in **The Ref-o-ree Records Story, Southern Soul**. This compilation of 25 recordings from the late sixties to early seventies is typical R&B and soul of the period and highlights include Freddie Waters (check out his back to church delivery on *It's Almost Sundown* with perhaps Johnny Jones on guitar), Larry Birdsong with a bit of a funky groove, Roscoe Shelton (with a solid soul ballad, *What Is It Baby*), Gene Allison (also with a terrific rendition of *It's Almost Sundown* among his three performances), and a couple instrumentals by the Tempo Rhythms. There is some nice material here.

The Champion Records Story, Volume 1 Blues & Rhythm, compiles 20 selections from another label associated with Ted Jarrett (along with Champion's sister labels, Cherokee, Kit and Calvert). Performers here include Gene Allison – Jarrett produced Allison's classic *You Can Make It If you Try* which was licensed to Vee-Jay and his *Somebody Somewhere* ably shows off his high pitched crying singing against a Rosco Gordon type groove while

You're My Baby is a tough blues ballad; Larry Birdsong (*Let's Try It Again* is a nice soulfully sung slow walking tempo number); Earl Gaines takes us to church on three more soulful performances (*Sittin' Here Drinkin'* is a fine slow blues); Christine Kittrell on two strong blues (*I'm Just What You're Looking For* being very nice); a nice moody instrumental *Blue Night* by Jimmy Beck; two jumping sides by Ted Jarrett himself and Clenest Gant & Don Q for two solid classic R&B performances. This perhaps has the most direct blues content and of these four, the one most easily to recommend to the more casual listener.

The Ponce Records Story, Tennessee R&B, is the last of these releases. Ponce dates from 1960 and bridges the Champion recordings and the Ref-o-ree ones. It opens up with two stunning urban blues by Arthur K. Adams before he moved to Los Angeles and displays some sizzling guitar and strong vocals. Others here include Gene Allison's brother Levert (a highlight being a funky rendition of *Please Send Me Someone to Love*), Earl Gaines (*You Are My Sunshine* shows plenty of Ray Charles influence), Alpha Zoe (with a copy cat rendition of The Shirelles' *Everybody Loves a Lover*), Herbert Hunter (handling Ray Charles' rendition of *Hide 'nor Hair* and four other songs), The Tempo Rockers (on three funky instrumentals), and Gene Allison doing a somewhat lyrically disjointed reworking of Sam Cook's *We're Having a Party*, to close this entertaining and varied compilation.

Nashville R&B Legends

Among the artists in Nashville's R&B scene whose careers Fred James helped to revive was **Roscoe Shelton** who passed away in 2002. Originally Shelton was on the Excello label for which he made many fine blues and soul recordings, many of which were his own songs. Later he recorded for Sound Stage 7 where he had two national hits, appeared on the legendary The !!!! Beat TV show and then found himself burned out. He did record some for local labels and performed in local clubs and then semi-retired from music, working at a medical hospital.

Fred James had recorded fellow Excello artist Clifford Curry in 1992 for an Italian label, and Curry told him many of his label mates were still around, leading to Shelton's career being revived which led to albums on Blue Moon, Appaloosa, Black Top and Cannonball (with Earl Gaines). **Save Me**, the present set, is comprised of recordings from a variety of dates. A duet with Mary Ann Brandon is from her album on R.O.A.D., while a track with Gaines is an alternate of what appeared on Cannonball. A terrific singer that grew up on the Church (he was once a member of the Fairfield Four), he was a terrific singer very much at home with the blues. Highlights include the terrific title track, the cover of Ivory Joe Hunter's *Blues at Midnight*, the shuffle, *Why Didn't You Yell Me (For So Long)*, and the belly-bumping blues, *Think It Over*. There is not a bad track here as Shelton never received the recognition his talents and music deserved. This is highly recommended.

Johnny Jones was a central part of the Nashville R&B scene for the past half century. Originally from Memphis, he became part of Ted Jarrett's traveling revue and eventually settled in Nashville where he was studio guitarist for many of Jarrett's productions and also part of the studio band for The !!!! Beat TV show and led his band The

King Casuals with bassist Billy Cox (Jimi Hendrix would join Jones in this band, and Jones would give Hendrix some pointers). His career was revived with James' help and like Shelton was highly acclaimed overseas with albums on Black Magic and Northern Blues before the present live recording, **Can I Get An Amen**, from Bern, Switzerland. It's a terrific performance with Jones straightforward vocals and guitar playing which suggests to these ears the late Son Seals. Albert King is an obvious influence with the fine opening, funky interpretation of *Don't Throw Your Love on Me So Strong*, followed by William Bell's *Chip Off the Old Block*. The title track opens with some down-in-the alley guitar before he launches into an intense vocal. *Herb Stuffing* is a funky instrumental with plenty of searing guitar and commentary from Jones. Friend Charles Walker joins on a fervent take on Don Covay's *Ain't Nothin' a Young Girl Can Do*.

This is another fine set of contemporary urban blues, sung with heart and played with plenty of fire which is easy to recommend.

The last of these discs is from **Earl Gaines**, who first attracted notice with Louis Brooks & the Hi-Toppers as a vocalist and a drummer (he played on Arthur Gunther's *Baby Let's Play House*). Gaines' did the vocal on Louis Brooks' recording of Ted Jarrett's *It's Love Baby (24 Hours a Day)*, and when Brooks was reluctant to tour, Gaines hit the road, working with the likes of Bill Doggett. While other Excello recordings did not chart, he continued recording for Ted Jarrett's labels before hooking up with DJ Hoss Allen in the mid-sixties and recorded for a variety of labels including King, Hollywood and Sound Stage 7. Working as a log haul truck driver, he only performed occasionally until the late 1980s and made a comeback album for the Atlanta Meltone label in 1989. Eventually he was part of the Excello legends and thrilled audiences at Blues Estaffe in Holland. He recorded for a variety of labels including Appaloosa, Blue Moon, Black Top and Cannonball and in 2005 was reunited with Jarrett for his Blue-Fye label.

The new album, **Crankshaft Blues**, is a collection of out-takes and rarities that certainly will be of considerable interest. Perhaps not as gifted a singer as Shelton, he is more than able with his heartfelt passion evident on a nice mix of material. The title track is a really solid slow blues while Roscoe Shelton joins him for *Someday Things Are Gonna Change*, a bluesy piece of soul, while *Baby What's Wrong With You*, is a solid shuffle penned by Gaines on which Dennis Taylor rips off a strong tenor solo. James is first rate on guitar here as on the other discs, supporting the vocals and adding crisp, stinging solos while Gaines grainy vocal has particular appeal on the ballad, *I Believe in Your Love* whose melody evokes the classic Toussaint McCall recording, *Nothing Takes the Place of You*. There is a credible, if unexceptional treatment of *Further on Up the Road*, although the album closes on a strong note with his live rendition of the song that started it all, *It's Love Baby (24 Hours a Day)*. Gaines is not quite as strong a vocalist as Shelton, but he does provide a more downhome flavor with his singing. Perhaps not as strong as the Shelton or Jones discs, this is still quite and entertaining releases and if unfamiliar with Gaines, this is a nice introduction to this gentleman who is still performing. **Ron Weinstock**

OSCAR PETERSON, RAY BROWN, MILT JACKSON

What's Up? The Very Tall Band
TELARC

Pianist Oscar Peterson, bassist Ray Brown and vibist Milt Jackson are captured in a 1998 live-recorded performance at the Blue Note in New York City, with drummer Karriem Riggins (from Brown's trio) setting the tempos.

The first recording of that Thanksgiving weekend gig, titled "The Very Tall Band," was released on Telarc the following year. Lots of material didn't make the final cut and, from the vaults comes the seven additional tunes on this release: "Squatty Roo," "Salt Peanuts," "Ad Lib Blues," "If I Should Leave You," "Limehouse Blues," "Soft Winds," and "The More I See You." Total playing time is about 59 minutes.

This team of jazz statesmen swings with deep grooves, aptly captures the heart of the blues, and interprets ballads with grace and understatement that comes only with decades of experience. In the notes of the original liner notes, Peterson is quoted as saying the band has no established library together and that their performance was "a very dedicated jam session." That's hard to believe since the unit sounds so tight and smartly interactive.

It's particularly satisfying to hear this rare, late-career performance of them together since Jackson died in 1999 and Brown in 2002. If you missed their first Telarc release (CD-83443), you'll want to own both recordings.

Nancy Ann Lee

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PHILIP WALKER

Going Back Home DELTA GROOVE

It's been way too long since Philip Walker had a new studio album. Delta Groove has just issued **Going Back Home** that finds the Gulf Coast native and longtime West Coast bluesman in solid form.

The strength of the disc is Walker's characteristically strong vocals (with just a hint of sandpaper in his voice) and his guitar playing which rock and swing at the same time. Producer Randy Chortkoff has selected a solid backing band that includes guitarist Rusty Zinn, Jeff Turmes on bass (and sax for a few tracks) and Richard Innes on drums. He also provided Walker with a diverse range of material from the pens of Percy Mayfield (the opening *Lying Woman*), Lowell Fulson (*Mama Bring Your Clothes Back Home*), Lightnin' Hopkins (*Don't Think 'Cause Your Pretty*), his old friend Cornelius Greene aka Lonesome Sundown (*Leave My Money Alone* and *If You See My Baby*), Ray Charles (*Blackjack*), Champion Jack Dupree (*Bad Blood*), and Frankie Lee Sims (*Walking With Frankie*) along with several originals from Chortkoff (although *Honey Stew* is suggestive of a Lightnin Hopkins recording). Eddie Snow's *Mean Mean Woman* features an accompaniment derived from Junior Parker's *Mystery Train*.

The backing is a bit too upfront at times and the music loses some of its regional flavor with the somewhat anonymous groove. One wishes the rhythm section was

not right on the beat at times such as on the two Lonesome Sundown blues where more of the laconic Excello groove would have been beneficial. The band might also have limbered up on some of the grooves of Lightnin' Hopkins' Jewel Recordings at times.

These are still very good recordings, with Walker first rate throughout and his take on *Blackjack*, *Leave My Money Alone*, *Bad Blood* and *Walking With Frankie* are particularly outstanding, and if not a perfect date, there is still plenty here to enjoy.

Ron Weinstock

GLADYS KNIGHT

Before Me

VERVE MUSIC GROUP

Singer Gladys Knight shows jazzy verve, launching her 12-tune orchestra-backed session of standards with a classy uptempo take on "Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me."

Produced by Tommy LiPuma (tracks 1, 3, 4, 6, 11, 12) and Phil Ramone (2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10) this is a first-rate recording that captures Knight at her best from a jazz standpoint, singing treasured favorites such as "The Man I Love," "Good Morning Heartache," "Since I Fell For You," "God Bless the Child," "Someone To Watch Over Me," "I'll Be Seeing You," "Stormy Weather," "Come Sunday," and more. The Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra provides plenty of punch on mid-tempo numbers and is lushly augmented on by two different strings sections, with arrangements by John Clayton or Billy Childs. Soloists, including tenor saxophonist David "Fathead" Newman, who's spotlighted on a couple of tracks, add to the listening enjoyment.

This album puts Knight in the same class as Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Sarah Vaughan, and other top-rated jazz divas. Knight has perfect control over her voice and packs each song with passion and meaning, enough to give you goose bumps or nudge your foot a-tapping and head nodding. Knight's been around for five decades, setting her musical earmarks in the soul-pop realm. But this album should make jazz fans world-wide sit up and take notice.

Nancy Ann Lee

CDs - Continued on page 17



THE WAY THINGS GO is a fresh take on traditional Blues from the veteran Bluesman. **CLEVELAND FATS** once again shows that he is a master singer, guitarist, and songwriter highlighting his talents on nine originals and three covers. This recording includes the re-teaming with his former boss and mentor **ROBERT LOCKWOOD, JR.** and special guest **BILLY BRANCH** on harmonica.



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DVDs

CHICK COREA

The Ultimate Adventure: Live in Barcelona CHICK COREA PROD./CONCORD MUSIC GROUP (DVD)

Playing piano and keyboards, Chick Corea showcases Touchstone, his new multi-national band featuring Tom Brechtlein (drums), Rubem Dantas (percussion), Jorge Pardo (C flute, soprano sax, alto flute), and Carles Benavent (bass) performing in a lavish stage setting at the historic Palau de Musica in Barcelona, Spain during the 2005 Barcelona Jazz Festival.

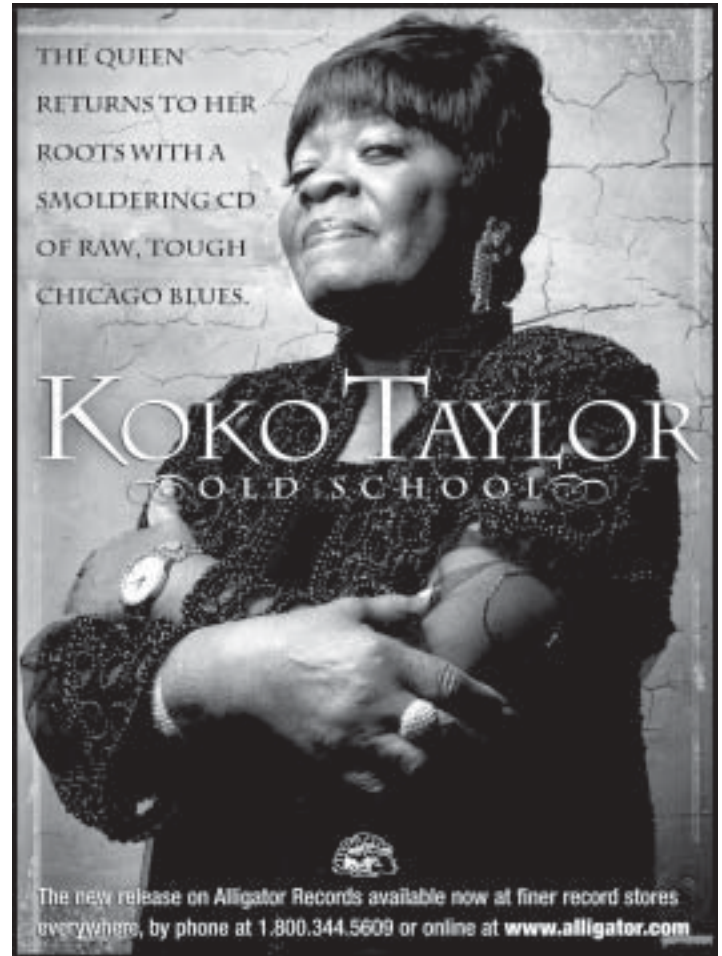
Corea describes the nine tunes as a collective tone poem, inspired by the classic fantasy story, "The Ultimate Adventure," by his favorite author, L. Ron Hubbard. Modern and inventive, the pieces titled "North Africa," "Moseb the Executioner," "Queen Tedmur," "Three Ghouls," "King & Queen," "City of Brass," "Planes of Existence," "Kalimba," and "Concierto de Aranjuez/Spain," range from Latinate beat-driven numbers to edgy fusion to lovely ballads to free jazz. Flamenco dancers add visual oomph to a couple of tunes and guest Hossam Ramzy (Egyptian tabla) is spotlighted on "City of Brass."

The tunes are full of energy, color and excitement, inspiring splendid improvisations. Capably blending the rhythms of flamenco, North Africa and the Middle East with American jazz, this band might be Corea's best to date. He appears relaxed and comfortable with this band. A true entertainer, when he's not playing with passion and creativity, he might roam over to the percussionist to pick up and play an instrument or playfully rattle a six-foot paper composition chart before spreading it out across his piano or kid around with the audience.

Several cameras aptly and expertly capture the aqueous, stimulating nature of their music, as well as a bit of

the players' personalities. Director Xavier Atance deserves accolades for such a fine production. Running time is about 121 minutes. Extra features on this widescreen DVD include behind-the-scenes footage of concert preparations and a bonus promotional film, "The Making of Ultimate Adventure," which contains interviews with some players from the 2006 CD, *The Ultimate Adventure*.

Compared with Corea's earlier bands, this new band



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is more adventurous, fluid, airy and imaginative. It's exhilarating to hear and see these veteran players spontaneously creating such a high-level of jazz.

This DVD is a MUST-add to your collection and you'll want to own the CD, too, because, although it features the same tunes, top-name musicians such as Airto, Hubert Laws, Steve Gadd, and others join in. *Nancy Ann Lee*

ETHNIC HERITAGE ENSEMBLE

Hot 'N' Heavy: Live at the Ascension Loft DELMARK (DVD)

This band led by Kahil El'Zabar emanated from his oddly-instrumented trio with him starring as the rhythm section and two horns up front. The front line has changed over the years and, on this performance recorded on July 30, 2006 at the Ascension Loft in Chicago, El'Zabar (earth drums, kalimba, drums, percussion, vocals) is joined by Corey Wilkes (trumpet, flugelhorn), Ernest "Khabeer" Dawkins (alto and tenor sax) and Fareed Haque (electric and acoustic guitar).

The group plays only five tunes—all originals by El'Zabar—totaling more than 66 minutes. Each tune lasts 10 or more minutes and incorporates the hypnotic rhythms and simple song structures that traditionally leave plenty of space for soloists. El'Zabar is always fascinating to

hear and watch, and six cameramen expertly capture the excitement. Visuals are occasionally varied with slow-

motion overlays for extra splash, movement and color.

El'Zabar's side players are influential leaders and educators in their own jazz bands. Dawkins leads his New Horizons Ensemble and other bands. Haque has performed and recorded with an array of top jazz, classical and world music giants and leads his funky band Garaj Mahal. Wilkes, the youngest and newest of the group, tours with the famous Art Ensemble of Chicago and leads his own band.

DVD extras include an interesting and informative commentary track by El'Zabar over the featured performances and a trailer from the Deep Blue Organ Trio DVD, *Goin' To Town.* Recorded at Chicago's Green Mill on May 2 & 3, 2005, the organ trio features guitarist Bobby Broom, organist Chris Foreman and drummer Greg Rockingham.

El'Zabar's bands are engaging, especially for fans of free-jazz influenced by the AACM. Their stellar performance on this DVD is no exception. A compact disc of the performance is also available. *Nancy Ann Lee*

JOHNNY O'NEAL TRIO

Tight

BOJAZZ PRODUCTIONS (DVD)

Johnny O'Neal, who played Art Tatum in the 2004 film "Ray," leads his trio in a live-recorded concert at the Diana Wortham Theatre in Asheville, NC, presented by the Western North Carolina Jazz Society in 2006.

O'Neal, born October 10, 1956, is mostly self-taught and inspired largely by Oscar Peterson, Art Tatum and Bud Powell. He's played with a host of greats including Ray Brown, Milt Jackson, Sonny Stitt, Clark Terry and, from 1982-83, Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. Since then, he's led his own groups.

On this DVD, O'Neal performs with bassist Zack Pride and drummer Kermit Walker, the latter who spent some time in Cleveland before stopping in Detroit, O'Neal's home town. Tunes include a lightly swinging "Just You, Just Me," a flowery rendition of Erroll Garner's "Dreamy" (performed solo by O'Neal), a waltzing "Saving All My Love For You," another solo performance on the ballad "I Concentrate On You," and more. Occasionally, O'Neal sings/scats along as he does on the title tune by Betty Carter.

Four cameras were used, but not always intelligently. One camera captures O'Neal from behind but from an odd upper angle that blocks his left hand. Close-ups are rare, especially on Pride and Walker, and often camera angles seem inappropriate for what's happening on stage, especially on "Honeysuckle Rose," which starts with the bass playing the melody head while the cameras jump all around, never once focusing on the bassist's right (plucking) hand or showing both hands during his solos. Yet, the band swings the hardest on this tune, sounding a lot like the Ray Brown trio. Walker, nephew of singer Jimmy Scott, was one of my favorite drummers when he was working in Cleveland and he tastefully serves this trio, especially with his tidy brushes. He can kick it up, too. His website says he's living in Atlanta.

O'Neal's trio can swing with energy and style, although performance tracks are annoyingly separated with brief interviews with O'Neal. This approach is not advantageous for the ultimate listening experience and makes it harder



Tina Fabrique stars as **Ella Fitzgerald** in The **Cleveland Play House** production of **Ella**, through April 22 in the Bolton Theatre.

to absorb the music. (I found myself hitting the “Next” button on my remote to get back to the music.) It would have been desirable to extend the interviews, get O’Neal talking about his early development and recent years, and devote a separate section on the DVD for interviews. Extras on the DVD include bios on the players, a list of the tunes with composers, and a page of contact information. *Nancy Ann Lee*

caught live

ELLA

Cleveland Play House
Cleveland, Ohio
March 28

RUNS THROUGH APRIL 22

Having reviewed thousands of LPs, CDs, DVDs and live performances over the past three decades, I still feel “unauthorized,” so to speak, when it comes to tackling a play. Though outside my arena, there have been some that simply had to be covered. One was the Cleveland performance of *Janis!* just last year, based on the life of Janis Joplin. *Ella*, based on Ella Fitzgerald is definitely another. Since both are musicals - and more like a concert than a play in many respects - it makes it much easier for sure.

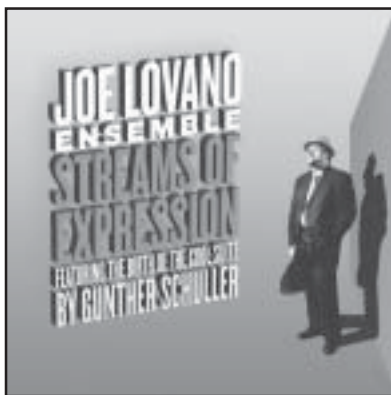
While singers like Billie Holiday, Joplin and others led well-known, storied lives along with their music careers, most people - myself included - know very little of Ella’s off stage life. She didn’t smoke, drink or party



See Blind Pig Records recording artist **Deanna Bogart** at **The Savannah** in Westlake on Wednesday, April 11.

(which is pointed out in this performance) and was not the subject of tall tales in newspapers or tabloids. All that most knew about her was her crystal clear voice and the fact that she could effortlessly hit any note she chose to...and she was all class rather

Joe Lovano, Dianne Reeves, Hank Jones & Norah Jones on Blue Note Records



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Music For Lovers, Dianne Reeves

See Dianne Reeves at Tri-C JazzFest Saturday, April 28

Allen Theatre, Playhouse Square



Not Too Late, Norah Jones

See Norah Jones at State Theatre Wednesday, May 9

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than show. And yes...that she was one of the finest female singers who ever graced a stage.

Tina Fabrique has had a good deal of Broadway experience, and also worked as featured soloist with the Duke Ellington Orchestra (under the direction of Mercer Ellington) for several years throughout Europe and the U.S., and has starred with the Harlem Gospel Singers. Tina has also appeared in a number of television shows. Her portrayal of Ella is first class both in the singing and scattling as well as acting roles. She obviously knows there is only one Ella and does not even try to be a carbon copy, but she is a fantastic singer and performs in a style which fits the bill here close enough to easily satisfy the audience.

She is accompanied by a quartet which is also up to the challenge. George Caldwell/piano & conductor, Brian Sledge/trumpet, Clifton Kelleem/bass and Rodney Harper/drums have not only had plenty of experience in musicals, between them they have performed with such jazz names as Sonny Stitt, Jimmy McGriff, Hank Crawford, Billy Eckstein, George Benson, Wynton Marsalis, Lionel Hampton Big Band, Illinois Jacquet, the Duke Ellington Orchestra (under Mercer) and the Count Basie Orchestra under the direction of Frank Foster...to name a few. Perhaps the most notable bandmember in this performance was Sledge, who did a fine portrayal of Louis Armstrong on one number. Sledge is part of a musical family which includes soul singer Percy Sledge ("When A Man Loves A Woman") and the R&B group Sister Sledge. The other bandmembers had speaking parts as well – playing some of the men in various stages of Ella's career...such as Kelleem as Ray Brown, and Harper as Chick Webb.

The other vital acting part was played by George Roth as Norman Granz, the founder of Jazz at the Philharmonic (JATP) and Verve Records who was Ella's manager for many years.

Ella takes place in Nice France in the mid-sixties where she is rehearsing for a concert shortly after her sister died. She has reserved a seat up front for her son, Ray Jr., but he has not yet arrived and she doesn't know if he will. Here she reminisces about her life and career as we get a look into the Ella few of us are aware of. The first set is a rehearsal for the concert, the second the concert itself. If I tell you any more like most play reviewers do, it will spoil your experience. I know it would have spoiled mine if someone spilled the beans beforehand. So I won't. But anyone into jazz, and especially those into Ella, should certainly enjoy this highly-recommended performance.

The dresses Tina wears are very Ella-like and the art deco stage looks like a high class venue of the era. She covers some two dozen songs throughout the two hours, including "How High The Moon," "They Can't Take That Away From Me." "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," "Night And Day," "That Old Black Magic," "Cheek to Cheek," "Let's Call The Whole Thing Off," "The Man I Love" and "Blue Skies."

As said above, I am not a movie or play reviewer, so the acting parts are out of my territory. But Fabrique did a believable enough job in her role as the First Lady of Song to make this performance work out very well. Add that to the fact that the music was very well performed and that is all that's needed for music fans. And, since this is a music magazine...I guess I am done!

Check out *Ella* if you can. Originally scheduled

through April 15, Ella has been extended through April 22 at Cleveland Play House.

Visit www.clevelandplayhouse.com for more information.

Bill Wahl

Before the Cleveland run, *Ella* played in Florida and San Diego, and then in Tucson, Phoenix and Mesa Arizona. The following are the remaining dates for 2007, as of this writing.

• **Now through April 22 - Cleveland Play House, Cleveland OH - www.clevelandplayhouse.com**

• **May 9-June 3 - Asolo Theatre, Sarasota FL - www.asolo.org**

• **June 23-July 22 - San Jose Rep, San Jose, CA - www.sjrep.com**

• ***August 9-27 - Barrington Stage Co., MA - *This engagement has been postponed until next season as work is being done at the theatre. Visit www.barringtonstage.org for more information.**

**ERIC CLAPTON
ROBERT CRAY
ipayOne Center
San Diego, California
March 15**

Eric Clapton's World Tour began in Europe in May of 2006. On March 15, 2007, a good show turned to great at ipayOne Center in San Diego, California.

San Diego is a laid back kind of place. No one seems to be in much of a rush and the arena was only half full by the time the opening act started its set.

The Robert Cray Band opened the show with a six song set beginning with their hit, "Phone Booth." The third song was a standout performance of "Twelve Year Old Boy" that would have many blues purists smiling and the rest of the audience on its feet in appreciation of the band's musicianship and Cray's luscious blues vocal.

An intermission allowed the rest of the arena to fill while equipment was changed out. Someone in the crowd held up the now obligatory "Clapton is God" placard. Slow Hand made his entrance without much fanfare and eased his way in to the show.

Following the fourth song in the set, a chrome stool was carried on to the stage; three other chairs were positioned with it in semi-circular fashion. Clapton, Trucks and Bramhall took their seats while a thin and gnarly white-haired man made his way on to stage to join them.

J.J. Cale! The crowd roared with thunderous applause for this reclusive songwriter and performer. Most everyone recognized the import of the moment. Those who did not were quickly educated by their neighbors. The quartet treated a grateful audience to a five song acoustic set that included the Cale-penned hits "After Midnight" and "Cocaine" as well as "Anyway the Wind Blows," "Don't Cry Sister" and "Who Am I Telling You?" off the recent Clapton and Cale joint effort, *The Road to Escondido*.

Cale's appearance seemed to throw the rest of the concert in to high gear. From that point on, Clapton's guitar playing ratcheted up and every riff became stellar. Ever generous, Clapton showcased Doyle Bramhall II's guitar work and stepped aside for a time to feature the marvelous technique of Derek Trucks as he pushed the envelope with his sizzling slide guitar. Only the February

28 to March 18 audiences enjoyed this goodie as Trucks was a temporary addition to the tour, having to leave to fulfill his own schedule.

All the stops were pulled out on "Further On Up The Road" and a breather was provided in the form of "You Look Wonderful Tonight" followed by Clapton's signature song, "Layla." The show ended with an encore of "Crossroads" for which Robert Cray joined in and sang lead.

This was a great show and a true music moment. Those in attendance were certainly in the right place at the right time. The performance was filmed for DVD.

J.J. Cale's appearance was exclusive to the San Diego show.

Clapton's long career and body of work have afforded him the status that allows him to assemble the creme de la creme of bands. This tour band is made up of Doyle Bramhall II - guitar, Chris Stainton - keyboards, Tim Carmon - keyboards, Willie Weeks - bass, Steve Jordan - drums, Michelle John and Sharon White were featured on background vocals and, for part of the tour, Derek Trucks - guitar.

Wanda Simpson

REMAINING U.S. TOUR DATES

- April 2 - Kansas City, MA - Kemper Arena
- April 3 - Moline, IL - Mark of the Quad Cities
- April 5 - Detroit, MI - The Palace
- April 6 - Columbus, OH - Schottenstein Center

CDs - Continued from page 12

OTIS TAYLOR

Definition Of A Circle

TELARC

Like his label-mate Eric Bibb, Otis Taylor is a mature African-American singer/songwriter/guitarist. Also like Bibb, Taylor skillfully uses basic blues elements as core ingredients to his very individual, creative song crafting. While Bibb (whose most recent recorded effort, *Diamond Days*, was reviewed in the previous issue of JBR) weaves a strong jazz influence into his work, Taylor stays closer to a deep blues foundation. While Bibb is primarily "up" in his mood & outlook, Taylor takes things to darker emotional regions. His latest is nothing if not heavy in atmosphere- smoldering, brooding and very engaging.

With backup talent including blues-rock guitarist Gary Moore and blues harp ace Charlie Musselwhite and a deep, minimal vocal delivery, Taylor comes on like the hoodoo man turned poet- a presence both menacing and delicate. His observation on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, "They Wore Blue" is a potent mix of compassion and rage. The tragic hero of "My Name Is General Jackson" is Tom Waits-like in his vivid characterization. In the decade and a half in which African American artists in numbers have reclaimed their blues heritage, Taylor has emerged as one of that movement's more creative souls.

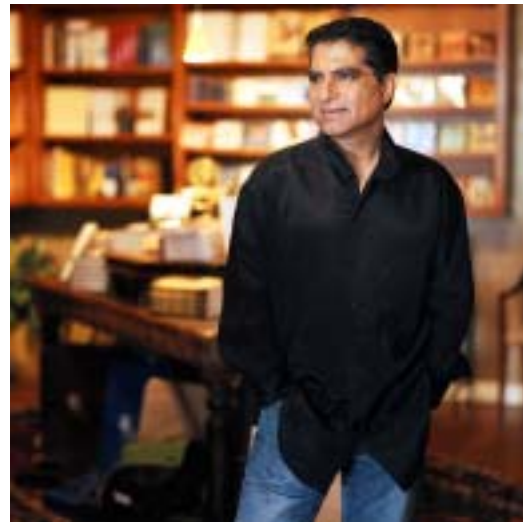
Duane Verh



THE JOURNEY
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Deepak Chopra



Sunday, September 9
at 1 PM

Advance tickets are \$40 before June 15 and \$50 after. Seating is limited. Premium seating package which includes private reception with Deepak, a copy of his new movie, upfront seating and 3 day pass for the Expo is \$175. Tickets can be ordered by calling 440-867-4166, by mail The Journey, 9557 Tamarin Ct., Mentor, Ohio 44060 or email journeyexpo@gmail.com
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The 2007 Expo will be held September 7, 8 & 9 at
LAKELAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
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**TRI-C
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April 19-29, 2007
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Art: Cynthia Hudson

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Rich Tradition, Great Lineup

2007 Schedule

April 19
5 pm
Parade and Kick-Off Party

April 20
8 pm
An Evening with Tony Bennett

April 21
10 am & 1 pm
Jazz for Kids

April 21
1 pm
Women in Jazz

April 21
8 pm
Chris Botti with Steve Tyrell

April 21
11 pm
Jazz Meets Hip-Hop, Part 5
featuring Bill Ransom, Sekou
Sundiata & DJ Mr. RourKe

April 22
4 pm
Debut Series with Helen
Sung Trio & Barber Brothers

April 22
8:00 pm
Bop Stop Jazz Showcase

April 24
8 pm
Eddie Baccus, Sr.

April 25
8 pm
The Marty Ehrlich Quartet

April 26
8 pm
Thelonious Monk Tribute with
Jazz All-Stars Joe Lovano,
Hank Jones, Lewis Nash,
George Mraz, and
Kenny Barron

April 27
8 pm
Charles Mingus' *Epitaph*
conducted by
Gunther Schuller

April 28
8 pm
Dianne Reeves and
George Duke

April 29
11 am
Jazz Brunch with
Frank Morgan

April 29
4 pm
The Winard Harper
Sextet

28TH ANNUAL
TRI-C JAZZ FEST
CLEVELAND