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jazz
& blues report



Son Seals

1942-2004

INSIDE...

CD REVIEWS FROM THE VAULT

Jazz & Blues Report

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Son Seals

1942-2004

The blues world lost another star when W.C. Handy Award-winning and Grammy-nominated master Chicago bluesman Son Seals, 62, died Monday, December 20 in Chicago, IL of complications with diabetes. The critically acclaimed, younger generation guitarist, vocalist and songwriter – credited with redefining Chicago blues for a new audience in the 1970s – was known for his intense, razor-sharp guitar work, gruff singing style and his charismatic stage presence. According to **Guitar World**, "Seals carves guitar licks like a chain saw through solid oak and sings like a grainy-voiced avenging angel." Seals released 11 albums during his 30-year recording career and toured worldwide. Over the course of his career, Seals was hailed as one of Chicago's great bluesmen and one of the city's most powerful live performers. **Musician** stated, "Seals delivers performances of the most profound emotion – one of the genre's most soulful exorcists." His most recent recording was an Alligator Records career retrospective, "Deluxe Edition," in 2002. Among his many accolades, Seals won three W.C. Handy Blues Awards, one each in 1985, 1987 and 2001, and was nominated for a Grammy Award in 1980 for his participation in the live compilation, "Blues Deluxe."



Frank "Son" Seals was born in Osceola, Arkansas on August 14, 1942. He became an accomplished drummer by the time he was 13. By the age of 18, Son had put down the drumsticks and was leading his own band as a guitarist. He moved to Chicago in 1971 and began playing regular weekend gigs at The Expressway Lounge and other clubs on Chicago's South Side, regularly jamming with legends like Hound Dog Taylor, Junior Wells and Buddy Guy.

Son's 1973 debut recording, "The Son Seals Blues Band," on the fledgling Alligator Records label, established him as a blazing, original blues performer and composer. Son's audience base grew as he toured extensively, playing colleges, clubs and festivals throughout the country. **The New York Times** called him "the most exciting young blues guitarist and singer in years." His 1977 follow-up, "Midnight Son," received widespread acclaim from every major music publication. **Rolling Stone** called it "one of the most significant blues albums of the decade."

On the strength of "Midnight Son," Seals began touring Europe regularly, and even appeared in an Olympia beer commercial. A strong series of six more successful Alligator releases followed through the 1980s and 1990s (Seals also recorded two albums for other labels during this time), growing Seals' audience all over the world. Seals shared stages with a wide variety of blues stars, including B.B. King and Johnny Winter. Even the popular rock band Phish recognized Seals' talent and power, covering his song "Funky Bitch" on record and inviting Seals to join them on stage at many of their tour dates.

Seals played his last live performances in October 2004 in California. Survivors include a sister, Katherine Sims of Chicago, and 14 children.

Son Seals Discography:

- The Son Seals Blues Band** (1973) Alligator
- Midnight Son** (1976) Alligator
- Live And Burning** (1978) Alligator
- Chicago Fire** (1980) Alligator
- Bad Axe** (1984) Alligator
- Living In The Danger Zone** (1991) Alligator
- Nothing But The Truth** (1994) Alligator
- Live-Spontaneous Combustion** (1996) Alligator
- Deluxe Edition** (2002) Alligator
- Lettin' Go** (2002) Telarc

CJO Plays Kenny Wheeler's Music for Large Ensembles

The Cleveland Jazz Orchestra, Cleveland's highly-acclaimed big band, performs composer Kenny Wheeler's creative and challenging Music for Large Ensembles Saturday night, January 29, at 8 p.m. at the Fairmount Temple Auditorium, 23737 Fairmount Boulevard, Beachwood. It will be the fourth concert in the CJO's 2004-2005 World Class subscription series.

Born in Toronto 75 years ago, Wheeler has been composing and playing in England for the past 52 years. His compositions, which some critics have hailed as "amazing," feature complex harmonies, changing times and rhythms, and vary in style from straight-head swing to totally free. As a trumpeter, Wheeler has recorded with such artists as Anthony Braxton, Dave Holland, George Russell, Keith Jarrett and Michael Brecker. As both a performer and a composer, his work has been described as "unpredictable and dynamic."

The CJO will play compositions from Wheeler's 1990 recording Music for Large Ensembles. Featuring nuance, depth and color, Wheeler's music is not the traditional big band sound of Count Basie and Woody Herman; it is more closely related to the pioneering works of Gil Evans and Maria Schneider. The concert is part of what Cleveland Jazz Orchestra Music Director Jack Schantz calls the CJO's efforts to "present the entire spectrum of the big band idiom."

On March 26 the CJO will perform George Russell's New York, New York and "Jazz for the Space Age. On May 14 the Cleveland band plays Bob Curnow's big band arrangements of the music of Pat Metheny and Lyle Mays. Both concerts will also be at the Fairmount Temple Auditorium

Tickets for individual concerts are available by phone at (440) 9429525, online at www.ClevelandJazz.org, and by mail at Cleveland Jazz Orchestra, P.O. Box 810, Willoughby, Ohio 44096. Tickets at the door are \$28 for adults, \$25 for seniors and \$5 for students. There is a \$2 discount for tickets purchased prior to the concert.

The Cleveland Jazz Orchestra receives financial support from the Ohio Arts Council, the George Gund Foundation, the Kulas Foundation, McDonald Hopkins Co., and many individuals, plus promotional support from WCPN/90.3 and WKHR/91.5.



Wilbert's Celebrates Mardi Gras during February Cajun Music and Cajun Food Highlight the Month

Wilbert's Food and Music in downtown Cleveland announced that it will be celebrating Mardi Gras during the month of February with New Orleans style music, as well as menu specials.

Nathan and the Zydeco Cha Chas kick things off on February 3, followed by Lil Brian and the Zydeco Travelers on February 10 and C.J. Chenier and his Red Hot Louisiana Band on February 11.

About the Food:

The daily menu specials throughout the entire month are:

Monday-smotheredpork chops w/ red beans and rice, Tuesday-cajun shepherd's Pie, Wednesday-jambalaya, Thursday-chicken and andouille gumbo, and Friday-shrimpetouffee.

About the Music:

Thurs., Feb 3: Nathan & the Zydeco Cha Chas - \$10/\$12, 8:30 p.m.-Nathan Williams is different. While the rest of the Zydeco nation wrestles over who will be crowned the next king— or prince or duke — of Zydeco, Nathan has given himself the decidedly unroyal sounding moniker, "The Zydeco Hog," and continued to focus on the music for which he is renowned.

Thurs., Feb 10: Lil Brian & the Zydeco Traveler - \$10, 9 p.m. - "Lil' Brian — a trailblazer in the spirit of Clifton Chenier and Buckwheat Zydeco — revs up his mighty sound on FUNKY NATION. This is great music, hard-driving and irresistible." — Michael Tisserand, author of The Kingdom of Zydeco and Editor of New Orleans Gambit Weekly

Fri., Feb. 11: C. J. Chenier and the Red Hot Louisiana Band-\$12, 9:30 p.m. - "Whether he and his band of red hots burn on rocking contemporary or simmer on -traditional country waltzes, C. J. Chenier is poised to be Zydeco's new torch bearer."—Blues Revue

All shows are all ages, and doors open two hours before showtime. Dinnerreservations are suggested after tickets have been purchased.

For more information or to purchase tickets, please visit www.wilbertsmusic.com.

BLUES WATCH

By Mark Smith

Happy New Year!!!.... Here's a few new discs to start out your year.

New Release blues... Hubert Sumlin (with special guests including Eric Clapton, Keith Richards, David Johansen, James Cotton, Bob Margolin,, Levon Hlem , Paul Oscher, David Maxwell)- *About Them Shoes*; **Sean Costello-** *Sean Costello*; **Precious Bryant-** *The Truth*; **Junior Kimbrough-Sunday Nights:** *The Songs of Junior Kimbrough*; **Roscoe Gordon-** *No Dark in America*; **John Hammond-** *In Your Arms Again*; **The Bluerunners-** *Honey Slides*; **Downchild-** *Come On In*; **Roomful of Blues-** *Standing Room Only*; **Corky Siegel-** *Traveling Chamber Blues*; **Sonny Landreth-** *Grant Street*; **The Five Blind Boys from Alabama-The Legacy**; **Elmore James-** *Best of the Modern Years*; **Etta James-** *Best of the Modern Years*; **Johnny "Guitar" Watson-** *Best of the Modern Years*; **T-Bone Walker-** *Best of the Black & White Years*; **Ann Rabson** (Saffire, the Uppity Blueswomen)- *In a Family Way*; **Willie King-** *Jukin' At Betty's...* **New Pig Blues....** **Blind Pig Records** has announced the signing of its first international artist, Australian harmonica virtuoso/didgeridoo performer/singer **Harper**. The first CD under the three record pact is scheduled to be released in May, 2005. The multi-award winning artist plans to re-locate to Michigan in early 2005 and begin a six month tour of the US after the release of the new album. Harper is currently recording his new CD in Melbourne, Australia. According to Blinds Pig's press release, Harper has been the recipient of a number of awards recently, including "Male Vocalist of the Year" and "Song of the Year" from the 2004 Australian Blues Music Awards. He also received an Australian College Campus award for "Acoustic Act of the Year." He won three awards from the leading American harmonica magazine, *Guide to The Best of The Blues Harmonicas & Beyond*: "Album of the Year" for his 2003 release *Way Down Deep Inside*, "The Sweet Harmonica Award" and "The

Nasty Harmonica Award.” **KBA blues**.... In other Pig related news, The Blues Foundation has announced that Blind Pig Records will receive the **2005 Keeping the Blues Alive Award** in the record label category. The Keeping the Blues Alive (KBA) awards honor the men, women and organizations who preserve, celebrate and support blues music. Presented in 17 categories, the KBAs are awarded to non-performers strictly on the basis of merit by a select panel of Blues professionals. Noted educator, author, journalist, and KBA Chairman Art Tipaldi notes, “The KBA is awarded for the recipient’s lifetime body of work; we don’t view the recipient as the winner of a “best of the year” category.” Blind Pig Records, one of the leading independent blues labels in the world, got its start in 1977 in the basement blues club of the Blind Pig Cafe in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The Blues Foundation said in its announcement of the award, “What co-founders Edward Chmielewski and Jerry Del Giudice began in 1977 has grown into one of the most well known blues labels in the world. From the very first Blind Pig artist, Boogie Woogie Red, to first generation blues men like Johnny Shines and Jimmy Rogers to the most recent recordings by Rod Piazza and Magic Slim, consumers will never go wrong with any Blind Pig product.” The Keeping the Blues Alive (KBA) Awards ceremony will take place Saturday, February 5 in Memphis, Tennessee, held in conjunction with the International Blues Challenge (IBC)....**Handy Blues**.... The Blues Foundation has also recently announced this year’s W.C. Handy nominees. The Handy awards — the most prestigious in the blues business — will be presented May 5 at the Cook Convention Center in Memphis. Blues Foundation members vote on the winners. The New York-bred trio **the Holmes Brothers** lead the nominees for the 2005 Awards with six group and individual nominations. Harmonica player **Paul Oscher**, a veteran of Muddy Waters’ band, received four nominations. Soul blues legend **Bobby Rush**, pianist **Pinetop Perkins**, singer-guitarist **W.C. Clark**, harp players **Rod Piazza**, **James Harman**, **Kim Wilson** and **Charlie Musselwhite** and vocalist **Mavis Staples** received three nominations each. Singer/guitarist **B.B. King**, **Bobby Rush**, **Kim Wilson**, **Pinetop Perkins** and vocalist **Solomon Burke** are in the running for blues entertainer of the year. A full list of the nominees is included elsewhere in this newsletter.... **RIP BLUES**.... We end this

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month on a sad note with the report of the passing of legendary guitarist **Son Seals** on Monday, December 20th in Chicago, Ill at the age of 62. The critically acclaimed, younger generation guitarist, vocalist and songwriter - credited with redefining Chicago blues for a new audience in the 1970s — was known for his intense, razor-sharp guitar work, gruff singing style and his charismatic stage presence. According to “Guitar World,” “Seals carves guitar licks like a chain saw through solid oak and sings like a rainy-voiced avenging angel.” Seals released 11 albums during his 30-year recording career and toured worldwide. His most recent recording was an Alligator Records career retrospective, “Deluxe Edition,” in 2002. Among his many accolades, Seals won three W.C. Handy Blues Awards, one each in 1985, 1987 and 2001, and was nominated for a Grammy Award in 1980 for his participation in the live compilation, “Blues Deluxe.” Seals played his last live performances in October 2004 in California. Survivors include a sister, Katherine Sims of Chicago, and 14 children.... Also of sad note is the fact that **Lyn Dykes**, wife of Omar “Kent” Dykes (Omar & The Howlers) † passed away December 13, 2004 at the Austin Hospice Christopher House. † The family requests, in lieu of flowers that donations be made to the Jake Dykes trust fund c/o at any Bank One and the Lyn Dykes Foundation to help defer the medical expenses. That’s it for this month. See ya!

Ponderosa Stomp Root Romp is April 26-27 in New Orleans

Unsung creators of rock’n’roll, r&b, rockabilly, blues and swamp pop — ones who made influential vintage recordings, perhaps scored a hit, and have been long forgotten by today’s pop mainstream — will be once again celebrated as Ponderosa Stomp announces the lineup for its fourth annual music festival.

The two-night music festival, scheduled for April 26-27, 2005, again will take place on two stages at the legendary Mid City Rock’N’Bowl Lanes in New Orleans from 5 p.m. until 2 a.m. each night. Tickets sell for \$35 per night through the festival’s web site, <http://www.ponderosastomp.com> <<http://www.ponderosastomp.com/>> and at the door. Prospective attendees are advised to purchase tickets well in advance as both nights are expected to sell out. The two nights of Ponderosa Stomp are book-

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ended by the two weekends of JazzFest so thousands of music fans will fill the Crescent City.

This year’s lineup represents Ponderosa Stomp’s most ambitious assemblage of American roots legends yet. Scheduled to appear are The Bad Roads, Classic Ballou, Archie Bell, Eddie Bo, Blowfly, Lonnie Brooks as Guitar Junior, The Carter Brothers, Jay Chevalier, Joe Clay, Larry De Rioux, Deke Dickerson & the Eccofonics, Skip Easterling, Nokie Edwards (of the Ventures), Johnny Farina (of Santo & Johnny), H Bomb Ferguson, Henry Gray, Betty Harris, Dale Hawkins, Roy Head, Al Johnson, Johnny Jones, Little Freddy King, Eddie Kirkland, Lady Bo, Lazy Lester, Robert Jr. Lockwood, Matt Lucas, Barbara Lynn, Mando & the Chili Peppers, Nathaniel Mayer, Scotty Moore, Phil Phillips, Freddie Roulette, Lil’ Buck Senegal & the Top Cats with Stanley “Buckwheat Zydeco” Dural on Hammond B3 organ, Ray Sharpe, Warren Storm, Willie Tee, Travis Wammack, Barrence Whitfield, Brenton Wood and Link Wray.

Ponderosa Stomp is presented by the Mystic Knights of the Mau-Mau, a group of rock’n’roll fanatics who are obsessed with celebrating the overlooked pioneers of blues, country, swamp pop, jazz, soul and New Orleans r&b. In the past three years, the Mystic Knights have presented more than 40 shows featuring a combined roster of more than 200 musical legends which reads like an impossible dream lineup of American roots music.

Ponderosa Stomp has won numerous citations in the media. The New York Times’ Jon Pareles wrote, “The Ponderosa Stomp plunges into the obscure byways of rock’n’roll past...regional hits and eclectic combinations...a dream!” Added Gambit magazine, “For roots aficionados, the Stomp was nirvana; you almost had to pinch yourself to make sure it wasn’t a dream.” And CNN, advancing the event, proclaimed, “History will be in the making at the Stomp.” In addition, the festival has been covered by MSNBC, Associated Press, Mojo, Christian Science Monitor, Offbeat, Living Blues, High Times and more.

Where else can you shake and groove for over 24 hours of pure rock’n’roll insanity in the land in rock’n’roll was born. Throw in the fact that it takes place in a 1950s bowling alley. Nowhere else could this take place other than New Orleans. Grab your back cat bone and monkey paws, throw your goofer dust on the floor and do whatever’s necessary to get here!”

JAZZ, THE AUCTION

A Remarkable Collection of Extraordinary Items from Legendary Names in Jazz

On Sunday, February 20th at New York City's fabulous Frederick P. Rose Hall (the new home of Jazz at Lincoln Center), Guernsey's will be conducting the most momentous auction ever held focusing on the great names of Jazz. Not a sale of simple memorabilia, this auction will contain such important objects as the saxophones of Charlie Parker, John Coltrane and Gerry Mulligan, Dizzy Gillespie's and Clark Terry's trumpets, J.J. Johnson's trombones and Benny Goodman's clarinet. Imagine the opportunity of owning handwritten compositions and arrangements by Coltrane or Thelonious Monk, or the unreleased tape recordings of Bird (tapes of music no one has heard in half a century) and one begins to get a sense of the magnitude of this auction.

Although obviously the hundreds of auction items can't all be listed here, consider the colorful(!) language used by Louis Armstrong in an uproarious twenty-seven page letter as just one of many documents relating to Satchmo's landmark career. Given early recognition as a Jazz vocalist, the auction even includes material from the beginning of Barbra Streisand's career. The Jazz Murals of Franz Kline, paintings of Miles Davis and original Hirschfeld caricatures depict Jazz in art while the smoking jacket of Monk and the tails of Benny add style. Indeed, among the many discoveries this event is bringing to light are John Coltrane's early writings leading to his masterpiece A Love Supreme.

Working directly with the families of these wonderful artists, the vast major-

ity of items in the auction will be sold without minimum reserve while substantial portions of the proceeds will be going to several worthy Jazz-related foundations. February 18th and 19th are public preview days at the stunning new Rose Hall on NYC's revamped Columbus Circle. Guernsey's has produced a comprehensive auction catalogue with hundreds of images of the objects being sold along with historic Jazz photos. In its effort to produce the finest book possible, the auction house has enlisted the aide of several Jazz historians including Phil Schaap and Barry Kernfeld. Catalogues are available from Guernsey's (\$36 in U.S., \$50 int'l... 212-794-2280, www.guernseys.com or auctions@guernseys.com). For those unable to attend what certainly will be a memorable event in person, absentee bidding will be available by telephone or through eBay Live Auctions.

Auction highlights

CHARLIE PARKER - saxophone
JOHN COLTRANE - tenor saxophone

JOHN COLTRANE - original music of "A Love Supreme", considered to be Coltrane's masterpiece work (and approximately 75 other hand-written sheets of music)

BENNY GOODMAN - clarinet, and his tails too

LOUIS ARMSTRONG - hand-written 27-page letter

DIZZY GILLESPIE - trumpet

THELONIOUS MONK - signature stage-worn smoking jacket, and high school essays

CHARLIE PARKER - audio tape of largely unknown unissued performance at the Symphony Ballroom in Boston c. 1951, believed to be the original recording (one of approximately 20 lots of Parker tapes many of which have unissued material)

G E R R Y MULLIGAN - baritone saxophone

PEGGY LEE - stage-worn ("Fever") gown

CLARK TERRY - trumpet

FRANZ KLINE - "The Jazz Murals", a series of 5 early paintings on wood panels by one of the most important artists of the 20th century



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TUE FEB 8 7 PM \$15
ERIC BIBB
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WED FEB 16 7 PM \$10
JEN CHAPIN TRIO
Unique vocalist plays selections from her new CD "Linger."

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10-piece All-Star Modern Jazz Ensemble from Toronto.

SUN FEB 20 7 PM \$15
JACOB FRED JAZZ ODYSSEY
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THUR MAR 3 8 PM \$20
RACHEL Z TRIO
Dynamic Pianist from the bands of Wayne Shorter and Peter Gabriel.

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APR 1 KEVIN MAHOGANY
APR 5 & 6 JOHN PIZZARELLI



REVIEWS FROM THE VAULT

Since very little in terms of new releases comes out at this time of year, we have decided to do some cleaning in our vault. Well over 100 CD reviews which have never been published were found. We thank Tim Murrett, left, who ventured underground into our vault in Buffalo, N.Y. to dust off and send us the reviews. The year of the release is listed after the record company in the heading. Enjoy your winter!

DEBBIE DAVIES

Love the Game
SHANACHIE 2001

Debbie Davies has certainly developed as a singer-guitarist since her days working with the late Albert Collins. The proof is on this album, which shows her to be a splendid guitarist, more than able to keep her on line with Coco Montoya and producer Duke Robillard in the instrumental *Fired Up*. She has also developed into a strong, confident singer and is backed by a brawny studio group that includes guitarists Montoya and Robillard on several tracks, and also Bruce Katz on keyboards, who plays superbly and really helps fill out the sound. Several tracks also include Sax Beadle and Doug James on horns.

Comprised entirely of new material penned by either Davies or drummer Dom Castagno, the material runs the gamut of lyrical themes ranging from "one should love life and live it that way" on the title track, to a cautionary lyric to the mistreating man that *She's Taking Notes*. *Was Ya Blue* is an acoustic number with Katz pounding away on the piano, and Davies takes a nice short solo, with a melody line slightly evocative of *Key to the Highway*, and the full group gets into a New Orleans groove on *Funky Little Teapot*, with a silly lyric about finding this teapot and making the acquaintance of Mr. Earl Gray.

This disc shows Debbie Davies has certainly matured as a performer becoming more than a guitar slinger.

Ron Weinstock

GARY BURTON

For Hamp, Red, Bags and Cal
CONCORD 2001

Introduced in the U.S. around 1916 as a "steel marimba," the vibraphone became popular as a jazz instrument in the early 1930s after written accounts had been documenting attempts to electrify a xylophone as early as 1925. Thus, this date by vibraphonist Gary Burton celebrates roughly the 75th anniversary of the invention of the vibes and features tunes by some of Burton's favorite players: Lionel Hampton, Red Norvo, Milt ("Bags") Jackson and Cal Tjader.

Burton's at his scintillating best on the 12 tracks, working with three different all-star teams including a quartet with pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Lewis Nash; a quintet with pianist Danilo Perez, bassist John Patitucci, drummer Horatio Hernandez, and percussionist Luis Quintero; and another trio on three tracks with guitarist Russell Malone and McBride. The final two tracks feature Burton and long-time associate, pianist Makoto Ozone.

Burton's versatility allows him to fully feature the instrument. Expressive at any tempo, with two mallets or four, Burton's artistry radiates through as he (and his crews) interpret all-time favorites. The quartet polishes off a bluesy version of "Bag's Groove," a hard-swinging take on "Flying Home," an uptempo "Django," and Hamp's "Midnight Sun." The Latin-jazz quintet makes easy work of the bluesy

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"Afro Blue," a swaying take on "Body and Soul," and the perky "Joao." With Malone and McBride, Burton races with precision through "Move" (a tune Norvo's trio played), and Burton's soft approach, McBride's arco playing and Malone's chops make delightful fare of the swinging "Back Home Again In Indiana."

Burton plays his way through the history of the vibraphone on this respectful, varicolored tribute to his predecessors. This is a benchmark CD that shows how well the vibes fit into any jazz style or group setting.

Nancy Ann Lee

JOHN WESTON

I Tried To Hide From The Blues
FEDORA RECORDS 2001

The simplicity of John Weston's approach to the blues is in his solo performance. Sitting there ready to play his acoustic guitar, with the harmonica racked and hanging from his neck, is reminiscent of old Delta street performers. Weston was born in rural Arkansas, where he grew up in his grandmother's home listening to country, jazz, and big band music that was newly popular during his upbringing John watched and listened as he grew to appreciate the music of Memphis Minnie, Junior Parker, and Big Arthur Crudup. He traveled widely spending short stints in California, Ohio, and Arizona, as well, before settling in Chicago.

Learning to play the blues in Chi-

ago, John soon returned to Arkansas where he ran a small jute joint into the seventies when he joined a country band. Soon thereafter he was concentrating on harp accompaniment when he was helped out by harpist Willie Combs. Since then, Weston has been charming audiences and record execs with his own solitary retreat to the blues. On this release John is joined by Dave Riley on bass guitar, and Carla Robinson on the drums and vocals. John takes on a myriad of chores as he covers the acoustic axe, harmonica, bass drum, and lead vocals.

Weston's smooth brand of blues draws its strength from the acoustic Delta tradition, with active gospel, Appalachian, and country music leanings. Check out "Blinded Fool" and Big Bill Broonzy's "Key To The Highway" to realize his church-filled childhood. He puts his subtle folk/blue hat on for tunes like "Monkey On My Back", "I'm Not Your Junkman", and the late boogying "A Man Down There". You can additionally find John's lyricism just as honestly revealing on slabs like "You're The Same", "Phony Woman", and "Mama, I Love Her".

Thirteen tunes on this platter are penned by Weston, along with the aforementioned cover, you get a strong and long set of slow and easy Weston blues. Weston blows a fine harp, portrays his veteran vocals proudly, and is found here supported simply and superbly. 'Less is more' surely applies to the down-home avenue where you may find John Weston. His music comes forth without frills, electronic gadgetry, or commercialization; contained herein you'll find little short of straight-forward solid acoustic blues material.

Mark A. Cole

JOHN PIZZARELLI WITH THE GEORGE SHEARING QUINTET

The Rare Delight of You
TELARC 2003

Vocalist John Pizzarelli fronts the historic-sounding George Shearing Quintet for a 15-tune mixture of mid-tempo swingers and ballads. Pianist Shearing's crew—Ted Piltzecker (vibraphone), Reg Schwager (rhythm guitar), Neil Swainson (bass) and Dennis Mackrel (drums)—tidily backs the singer and contributes tip-top collective

and solo moments.

Pizzarelli's boy-next-door style (and tender Chet Baker vocal sound) graces chestnuts such as "Everything Happens To Me," "Lulu's Back In Town," "Something To Remember You By," "The Rare Delight of You," "September In the Rain," and more. His sense of swing has been documented on previous recordings but, with Shearing's musicians, he outshines earlier sessions with soft, subtle expressiveness that leaves plenty of space for musician interplay.

Shearing's quintet, an elegant swinging unit, makes delights of mid-tempo swingers such as the catchy Bobby Troupe tune, "Lemon Twist" and Jay Leonhart's "Problem" and brings out the beauty of romantic ballads, making this an enjoyable, relaxed listen from start to finish.

Nancy Ann Lee

BLUES HARP MELTDOWN

MOUNTAIN TOP RECORDS 2001

Mountain Top has issued this double cd of performances from a tour of harp players that Mark Hummel organizes each year. In addition to Hummel himself, there are two or three performances by RJ Mischio, Gary Smith, Billy Branch, James Harman, Rick Estrin and Kim Wilson. They are provided with a solid backing group anchored by Jr. Watson on guitar, with Wilson's guitarist Kirk Fletcher joining in on Wilson's two tracks. Many of the performances are classic

harmonica blues or other classic blues. Mischio does a take of Sam Myers' *Sleepin' in the Ground*, while Gary Smith handles Sonny Boy Williamson I's *Elevate Me Mama* and Little Walter's *You're So Fine* and Mark Hummel translates Buddy Johnson's *They Don't Want Me to Rock* into a harmonica blues. The repertoire of Rice Miller (Sonny Boy Williamson II) is mined by Branch (*Eye-sight to the Blind*), Rick Estrin (*Work With Me*) and Kim Wilson (*Don't Lose Your Eye*).

There are some strong vocals, particularly from Wilson, Harman and Hummel, and consistently strong harmonica playing by all. The band swings and Watson gets plenty of space to showcase his chops. It is hard to consider any blues harp fan not digging this collection of performances.

Ron Weinstock

ANDY NARELL

Live In South Africa

HEADS UP 2001

Steel pan virtuoso Andy Narell has released several studio recordings that establish his talents as performer and composer, but quite none so appealing as this two-disc (enhanced CD) set. Captured at his first ever live-recorded performance, Narell collaborates with South African musicians at a two-night Blues Room gig in Johannesburg during his second visit to South Africa in 18

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months. Narell had initially thrilled a mass of South African fans (estimated at between 60-80 thousand) in concert at a September 1999 government-sponsored Arts Alive festival.

On six lengthy tracks of each disc, Narell delivers inspired, energetic performances exploring multi-cultural grooves heightened by his talented side musicians: guitarist Louis Malanga (Zimbabwe); keyboardist Andile Yenana (eastern Cape); bassist Denny Lalouette (island of Mauritius); drummer Rob Watson (Bloemfontein); and percussionist Basi Mahlasela (Soweto). Musicians have plenty of space to improvise on Narell's attractive original melodies.

Underpinned with lively rhythms, best tunes on disc one include the funky, upbeat "Out of the Blue," a 10-minute tour-de-force. But there's plenty of ear-appeal in the mid-tempo pretty melody of "Coffee Street," the briskly-paced percussive delight, "Hannibal's Revenge," and others. Disc two kicks off with the perky "Sugar Street," followed by other tunes featuring popular South African rhythms and funky American themes.

Laced with attractive melodies, modern beats and comfortable, liberated improvisations, **Live In South Africa** may be Narell's best-to-date recording, further expanding Narell's global influence. *Nancy Ann Lee*

HAMILTON LOOMIS

**Kickin' It
BLIND PIG 2003**

On his Blind Pig Records debut, guitarist/vocalist Hamilton Loomis treads between the twangy roadhouse blues of Delbert McClinton and the blooze rock of the Black Crowes with a pinch of Tower of Power thrown in for spice. The McClinton side of his personality shows up on the sultry soul blues of

Get My Blues On and *No, No, No* while the Black Crowes side of things is evident in the harmonica fueled *99 Miles* and the low key lament about tough times and the hope of better days ahead, *Something's Gonna Come My Way*. Elsewhere, Loomis digs into horn heavy funk blues, *Be Mine Anyway* and jazzy grooves, *Better Man* and the biting *Take a Number (stand in line)* where he realizes that he's not the first to get burned by the woman who just gave him the kiss off. With a voice that often recalls Tommy Castro as much as it does

McClinton and the Black Crowes' Chris Robinson, Loomis can handle a broad range of vocal material. His guitar chops are equally versatile evoking Santana one moment and Albert King the next. As befitting his Texan roots, Loomis follows Jimmie Vaughan's less is more approach with economical fills and leads. While his press kit is heavy with raves about him being the next guitar god, I'm not sure there's anything unique enough here to merit such accolades. That being said, this is nevertheless an enjoyable effort that deserves some attention. *Mark Smith*

VARIOUS ARTISTS

**Norman Granz's J.A.T.P./
Carnegie Hall, 1949
PABLO 2001**

From its start in 1946, Norman Granz's Jazz At The Philharmonic has come to be revered for some of the best spontaneous live-recorded jazz and this previously unreleased collection captures top innovators in characteristic concert-stage jam sessions.

Featured in eight colossal jams recorded at New York City's Carnegie Hall on November 2, 1949 are two groups. Group one includes alto saxophonists Charlie Parker and Sonny Criss, tenor saxophonist Flip Phillips, trumpeter Fats Navarro, trombonist Tommy Turk, pianist Hank Jones, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne. Group two features tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins, Navarro, and the same rhythm team. This is the only J.A.T.P. recording featuring Navarro and Manne.

The Parker-Criss led group navigates lengthy, fulfilling jams (11-15 minutes) on the Nat King Cole's "Leap Here" and the classics "Indiana (Back Home Again In)," and "Lover Come Back to Me." To the quintet he fronts with Navarro, Coleman contributes two lively originals, "Rifftide" and "Stuffy." Best tracks, however, are their ballad renderings of Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady" featuring Coleman's smoky solo, and the Styne-Cahn classic "The Things We Did Last Summer" spotlighting Navarro's elegant elliptical-toned melody head and solo.

With sound quality that's been enhanced by 24-bit technology, performances on this CD rank right up there with previous J.A.T.P. recordings, making you wish you'd been there.

Nancy Ann

ETTA JAMES

**Love Songs
MCA RECORDS 2001**

Blues and R & B diva, Etta James; is well respected for the amassed hits under her career belts. She has and continues to flatten audiences with her sultry, snappy, and self-respecting stage and vocal presences. While stacking volumes of works, she has also become one of the most noted of romantic ballad singers. With work culled from early Argo and Chess sides, and even later work from the seventies; this compilation brings out her most well-known love songs along with a lately, and hitherto, released "Never My Love" from the recently released Etta box set on the same label.

With the Riley Hampton Orchestra, Etta's hits "At Last", "A Sunday Kind Of Love", "My Dearest Darling", "Trust In Me", "If I Can't Have You", "Someone To Watch Over Me", "I Want To Be Loved (But Only By You)" are here. On a couple other selections, "How Do You Speak To An Angel" and "Again", she was backed by the orchestra of Al Poskonka on. Under other producers and other studios she also came up with "Lovin' Arms", "Lovin' You More Every Day", "The Love Of My Man", and "t Must Be Your Love". They don't get any better; a compiler's dream—you can't go wrong!

Better have the table set, drinks poured, and be ready for some lovin' after ploppin' this down. There is nothin' more intense, few singers so soothing, and the literal wall-to-wall romance spilling from this platter! Those with weak hearts may want to avoid this.

Mark A. Cole

OSCAR BROWN JR.

**Live Every Minute
MINOR MUSIC 2003**

This may be one of the best releases for vocalist Oscar Brown Jr. (born 1926 in Chicago) since the 1960s and 1970s when he recorded several classic albums for Columbia and Atlantic. Backed here by both the NDR-Big Band (arrangements by Steve Gray) and smaller groups, Brown proves he's still in top form.

A dramatic singer-composer-lyricist who can croon ballads ("It's October," "World Full of Gray"), sing baby talk ("Dat Dere") or deliver kicking, upbeat performances ("Mr. Kicks," "The Snake"), Brown is the everlasting enter-

tainer on this 11-tune session featuring illustrious guest artists Stanley Turrentine (tenor sax), Pee Wee Ellis (tenor & soprano saxes), and Aaron Graves (piano). His original "Haven't I Loved You Somewhere," given a nice samba treatment, gets high marks for romanticism and a style that brings to mind hints of Billy Eckstine and Joe Williams. You should get a kick out his naughty (though hilarious) lyrics on the head-nodding, blues band number with the big beat, "Hazel's Hips" and his equally risqué interpretation of Charlie Parker's "Billie's Bounce," a tune enhanced by Ellis' creative tenor saxisms.

Life has taken Brown in many directions. In addition to his career as a professional songwriter who's written tunes recorded by others, Brown has written plays, acted on a regular network radio soap opera, appeared as MC on the tv series *Jazz Scene USA*, and undertaken a wide variety of careers (real estate, public relations and advertising). He took a long hiatus from recording between 1975 and 1994, when he returned with the Weasel release, "Then & Now."

His style and delivery on this disc

are reminiscent of his exhilarating live concerts. A 12-page liner booklet includes lyrics so you can see how clever are his words and social commentary.

Nancy Ann Lee

STEVE FREUND

Ill Be Your Mule
DELMARK 2001

This follow up to his successful 1999 Delmark release, *C For Chicago*, finds guitarist Steve Freund working the same Chicago blues vein that yielded so many gems last time around. This is good old fashioned Chicago blues with straight forward shuffles and upbeat boogies that give the musicians plenty of room to throw their chops around. Which is a good thing when you have the likes of Mr. B manning the piano, Bob Stroger on bass, Kenny Smith on drums and a host of horn players adding punch here and there. Freund is a B.B. King style guitarist with an easy vocal delivery. While a few covers found their way onto the disc, Freund wrote more than half of the songs including *You Were A Good Old Ride*, a politically incorrect ode to high maintenance mates, *A Dollar A Mile*, a shuffle blues about the drag of

driving long distances to gigs, and *My Life Is Changing*, a lowdown blues that is as mournful musically as it is optimistic in its sentiment. A solid disc.

Mark Smith

RICHIE BEIRACH, GREGOR HUEBNER, GEORGE MRAZ

Round About Monteverdi
ACT MUSIC 2004

Pianist Richie Beirach, violinist Gregor Huebner and bassist George Mraz collaborate on music from the early Baroque. Composer Claudio Monteverdi is the main focus among the 13 pieces, but other composers are featured. This album is part of the trio's series that includes ACT albums "Round About Bartok" and "Round About Federico Mompou."

Both potent jazz expressionists, Beirach and Mraz have frequently teetered on the edge of European Classical in their jazz recordings as leaders. Huebner shows talent but seems more entrenched in Classical. The trio takes each piece, usually states as originally written, then delivers jazz improvisations

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on the melody before returning to the main theme. One of the jazzier tunes is the trio's swinging interpretation of "Eja mater fons amoris" from "Stabat Mater" by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi.

There aren't a lot of high points. While these musicians make pretty music together, the somber fare may not suit your tastes if you're hankering for purely Third Stream or straight-ahead jazz or even a better blend of the two genres. Many of the tunes are so similar in tone and tempo, you may not notice when one ends and the next begins. Despite the appealing concept of improvisation on Baroque, there's just not enough jazz embraced to enliven things. It's more likely this album would appeal to Contemporary Classical fans.

Nancy Ann Lee

JOHN KAY

Heretics and Privateers

CANNONBALL RECORDS 2001

Known as the singer and leader of the sixties rock band Steppenwolf, John Kay was actually a country blues performer before first running into some of the singer-songwriters of the time. Shortly thereafter he emerged with the popular rock band.

His new Cannonball album in some sense marks his return to his blues and folk roots. Kay may not be as extravagant a singer as on his Steppenwolf recordings, but he still sings powerfully, with just a bit of rasp. More importantly, he writes some very strong songs. Several make direct use of country blues melodies like *Don't Waste My Time*, set to the

melody of *Walking Blues*, with Kay playing strong percussive slide guitar with his lyric about all the meaningless things that keep us waiting.

The Ice Age is another acoustic blues with Jimmy Hall contributing some tasty harmonica behind Kay's powerful lyric about the increasingly cold relationships in our daily lives. Kay sings about those who have been tossed aside by society as the millworker who gets laid off or the dutiful wife who yearns for a life of her own in the title track on the title track about a woman who gave her teacher private lessons more than once and who men found amazing on the bluesy, *She's Got The Goods*. *For the Women in My Life* is a marvelous song (suggestive of some of John Mellancamp's recordings) about how the women in his life made him a better man, even if he was not all he should have been for them. The closing *The Back Page*, with some nicely played resophonic guitar, has a wistful flavor reminiscent of Bob Dylan.

The album grows on one with repeated listening. It is by no means a pure blues record, but Kay mixes in blues themes and melodies along with other roots music with some very telling and perceptive observations of the human condition today. His perspective is one that many will be able to identify with.

Ron Weinstock

ROSARIO GIULIANI

Luggage

DREYFUS JAZZ 2001

One of Italy's hidden treasures, 34-year old alto saxophonist **Rosario Giuliani** leads a vibrant quartet on **Luggage**, a CD that demonstrates his prowess on 10 tunes, half of them originals. Giuliani has done his woodshedding and is expressive at any tempo, even on ballads such as the standard "Portrait of Jenny" and his original "Love for My Mother." But he seems best at explosive pace on his bopping originals, such as "Luggage" and "Dear Tucci." A versatile, lyrical player who's been both sideman and leader on the stages and in the studios of Italy and has recorded previously for small labels, the inspired saxophonist is poised for widest exposure with this international release.

Nancy Ann Lee

ERVIN CHARLES

Greyhound Blues

DIALTONE 2001

Those who have Alligator's collaboration of Lonnie Brooks, Long John Hunter and Phillip Walker may be aware of two tracks with Ervin Charles, the longtime mentor of the Port Arthur, Texas blues scene. Charles passed away last year, but not after finally recording his only album, *Greyhound Blues*, on Dialtone. In addition to his gritty guitar playing Charles shares the vocal spotlight with Richard Earl whose more soul-inflected style contrasts with Charles' somewhat raspy vocal styling. Nothing particularly fancy about the music here as the walking tempo shuffle, *Jumpin' With Ervin* displays his controlled instrumental style with just a touch of tremolo as drummer Uncle John Turner keeps the nice groove going. *So Mean to Me* is a nice rendition of *I Wonder Why*, and Parl Orta adds some very nice harp here. Charles' stinging guitar behind Earl's pleading vocal on the *My Love is Real* is made more effective by his mixing bursts of notes with some breaks of silence. The title track is a nicely delivered slow blues with a bit of down home flavor. He reworks *Everyday I Have the*



Blues into the slow blues that the tune was when recorded by Memphis Slim and Lowell Fulson, and Orta wails on his solo before Charles' crackling solo and delivery of the final verse. A nice performance and I guess someone else might play it flashier or with more pyrotechnics, but miss the feeling that Charles brings here and throughout the disc. Ervin Charles left his mark on a number of blues artists, and fortunately was able to record this gem of an album that serves as his recorded legacy, which probably only hints what he was capable of. This will be available at better stores or you might try the mail order places that specialize in blues. *Ron Weinstock*

DEREK SMITH
HIGH ENERGY
ARBORS JAZZ 2003

London-born pianist Derek Smith leads a sparkling trio set with bassist Nicki Parrott and drummer Joe Ascione.

Smith got his start in jazz with John Dankworth's famed British big band and came to the USA in 1957 at age 26. Two weeks later he recorded with the Modern Jazz Quartet. After gigging around New York awhile, he landed a spot with Doc Severinson's Tonight Show band for seven years. Among many others, he's also performed, toured and recorded with Benny Goodman.

Leading his own trio here, Smith shows off his versatility, inventiveness, lyricism and pristine technique at any tempo. Before proceeding his attack on "Fools Rush In" with racing nimbleness, his dreamy intro is characteristic of his passion and depth. Irving Berlin's "How Deep Is the Ocean?" is given a mid-tempo trio reading full of swinging sensibility. Smith and crew also raise the notch with their classy takes on standards such as "On Green Dolphin Street," "Alone Together," "Here's That Rainy Day," "Let's Fall In Love," "Teach Me Tonight," and more. Parrott freely supports and imaginatively solos but it's Ascione's smartly crafted timekeeping that adds listener-appeal to this outstanding piano trio album.

Nancy Ann Lee

ERIC CLAPTON
Me & Mr. Johnson
WARNER BROS. 2004

With all the hoopla this CD has received, one is astonished by the absolute nonsense of some of the rock critics who rave about it. Much of this collection of performances of songs that Robert Johnson recorded is on the level of a bar band doing Robert Johnson. None of Clapton's renditions of these songs match those by Robert Lockwood, Johnny Shines, Honeyboy Edwards, Big

Joe Williams, Junior Wells, Eddie Taylor, Boyd Gilmore, Muddy Waters and others who have taken Johnson's songs and produced recordings that are more passionately and personally performed. Clapton is too reverent to these songs and the lyrics, which is strange for an homage to Johnson. Check out Leroy Carr's "In the Evening" before listening to Robert Johnson's "Love in Vain," which Clapton reworks here. Clapton's rendition even suffers compared to the Stones' cover of it three decades ago. Both Junior Wells and Eddie Taylor had standout recordings of "Stop Breakin' Down" that makes Clapton's rendition here sound not very distinguished.

Call Clapton a rock guitar god all you want and a great popularizer of the blues, but for those who have listened to not only Johnson's music but also the other great bluesmen of the past fifty years, one questions the qualifications of various rock writers who rave about this disc as a 'blues' recording.

One other point was that I was not enamored by the studio band. There are some great players (and Mr. Portnoy is a great harp player), but the rhythm section does not swing and the band comes off as second-rate compared to the classic Chicago bands of the sixties and seventies.

Ron Weinstock

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JOE LOUIS WALKER

Ridin' High—Live

HIGHTONE RECORDS 2003

Joe Louis Walker is ridin' high; a inter-generational blues artist. He is too young to Muddy Waters generation, yet too old for Johnny Lang's.

Walker and Bruce Bromberg produced the disc, which has three unpublished ballads; 'Alligator', 'Prove Your Love', and 'Personal Baby'. Angela Strehli belts a duet on 'Don't Mess Up A Good Thing,' and Huey Lewis blows the harp on 'Bit By Bit (Little By Little)'.

The band is comprised of Walker (axe, slide axe, and vox), Carl Schumacher (piano, organ, and vocals), Henry Oden (bass), Paul Revelli (drums and vox), Tim Devine (alto & tenor sax, percussion, and vocals), and Jeff Lewis (trumpet, percussion, and vox). Walker is a devine songster and a dynamite six-stringer.

Eleven songs and blue cries to moan and bedazzle you. This is a volume of the Heritage of the Blues series, put out by Hightone Records. **Mark A. Cole**

RICHARD GALLIANO

Gallianissimo!: The Best of Richard Galliano

DREYFUS JAZZ 2001

On this compilation, accordionist Richard Galliano performs in the "new musette" style forged by Astor Piazzolla. The album launches with "New York Tango" (from the album of the same name) featuring guitarist Bireli Lagrene, drum-

mer Al Foster and bassist George Mraz. Toots Thielemans and others join the accordionist on the title tune from the album *Laurita*. Various other players are featured on the remaining 13 tunes extracted from seven albums, including tangos, bossas, straight-ahead jazz, jazz waltzes and more. Equally skilled as composer and performer, Galliano's abundant musical gifts glitter on these tunes and his creativity, expressiveness, and technical virtuosity will make you want to search for and own his other recordings. **Nancy Ann Lee**

LOUISIANA RED

Driftin'

EARWIG MUSIC 2001

This is the third release on the Earwig label for Louisiana Red (Iverson Minter). His previous outings have been tremendously successful following his casual repatriation to the American blues scene. Touring Europe while also living abroad, Red gained a huge international following, that is only excited to hear of his new issue. By playing his solitaire brand of acoustic blues at festivals and gigs here and there, Red became a hot commodity in the newly-found blues appreciation that is so rampant today. On this release he reassembled the cardinal cast of Chicago's finest sidemen.

Red is backed by the same band that supported his last Earwig effort, *Millennium Blues*. Dave Jefferson is pounding the skins, and Willie Kent is fingering the bass strings. Allen Batts is working the ivories on the piano, and Willie 'Big Eyes' Smith turns in the harmonica chores. Brian Bisesi supports on the rhythm axe chair, as Red weaves his lead guitar patterns and digs deeply for his vocal responses.

Minter is a performer who relives his experiences in song. Tunes like "In The Garden", "Getting Weaker By The Day", "Hard Hard Time", and many of the others speak of Red's life and times, and often of the injustices he has passed along the way. With his heads-up Chicago crew though, Red is much more concerned with the essences of his music as you hear from the opening title tune, "Driftin'". Loaded with Chicago flavorings, Red still reaches within to pull out exemplary singin' and stringin'. Get loaded on Red's slide activity on "Hard Hard Time", his economy on Lightnin' Hopkins "Bring Me Some Water", or his boogied attack on "Leaving Grandma". "Powder Room Blues" can't be beat, either!

Whatever way you look at or listen to it, Louisiana Red measures up; with dues paid long ago. Red's chameleonic understanding finds him at his electric, rockin' best on "The Day I Met B.B. King", championing work song remains in "Keep Your Hands On The Plow", or issuing a reverent point on the traditional "He Will See You Through". Louisiana Red's body of work here is varied, versatile, and vibrant; check the movin' "Chankity Chank Chank" with Red's haunting guitar licks and seering vox. Hard finding anything to complain about here; well, suppose we jump up and down for more. Would that work? **Mark A. Cole**



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MARTIN SIMPSON
Righteousness & Humidity
 RED HOUSE RECORDS 2003

Some musicians see each new recording as the opportunity to stake new stylistic ground. But Martin Simpson isn't interested in going further. His mission is to go *deeper*.

Although his musical vocabulary – whether finger-style or bottleneck, sacred or secular, African-American or Anglo-Irish – has been with him from the outset, the British-born guitarist has sharpened his craft and vision to the point where his music reaches an almost unbearable intensity. **Righteousness & Humidity** is a jaw-dropping display of chops, but this is the kind of virtuosity that laughs in the face of the countless slingers for whom the blues has become a vehicle for pyrotechnics.

The controlled fury of “John Hardy,” the taut resignation of “Georgie,” ancient melodies both, draw in equal measure from Son House and Doc Boggs, yet Simpson takes us way back. Though inspired by the plight of North-American natives, his “Ghost in The Pines,” performed on banjo, evokes the legacy of Malian griots, an apt reminder of the instrument's African origins.

By invoking the ghosts of the Delta in the context of his own heritage, the guitarist offers an idiosyncratic take on Greil Marcus' “old, weird America”. He's not the first to do so, of course, as the success of *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* has sent many a musician on the quest for ancestral truths. But there again, Simpson beats them to the punch. “Maybe it's the weather”, he muses in the words of his friend Gallivan Burwell, “But the Devil is partial to the South”. It would be hard to find a better explanation for all the murder, mystery and music that keep drawing us in its vortex.

Dominique Denis

HENRY GRAY
Plays Chicago Blues
 HIGHTONE 2001

Since he moved back to Louisiana a few decades ago, former Howlin' Wolf pianist Henry Gray has kept playing but has never enjoyed the level of recognition that contemporaries, such as Pinetop Perkins, have received. Besides being in Wolf's band for an extended period, Gray did a fair amount of session work, recording with Jimmy Rogers, Little Walter, Billy Boy Arnold and Jimmy Reed, as well as making his own recording for Chess. The biggest influence on Gray's style is Big Maceo, and like that great master, he is a strong, two-handed player and he certainly sings with a definite sense of urgency. Gray did record some swamp-blues flavored sides for an Arhoolie anthology, and some singles for small Louisiana labels, an album for Antone's which I believe is long out-of-print, and a live album for Lucky Cat.

His new Hightone CD has him backed by guitarists Bob Margolin and Kid Ramos, fellow Wolf alumni Chico Chism on drums and Bob Corritore on harmonica. My promo cd does not provide any more detailed information, but these are from various sessions that Corritore produced over several years. It's a nice mix of material including covers of classic Chicago blues including a couple of songs associated with Elmore James, *It Hurts Me Too* and *I Held My Baby Last Night*, as well as Wolf's *How Many More Years*. The Maceo influence is quite evident on the slow moody *Trouble Blues* and *It Hurts Me Too*, while *Henry's Houserocker* is a strong, rollicking instrumental.

There is nothing fancy about this music but it strikes this writer as the best currently available disc of Henry Gray's music.

Ron Weinstock

DON COVAY & FRIENDS
 AdLib

CANNONBALL RECORDS 1999

Surely one of America's premier soulsters and songwriters, Don Covay has enough real hits to be considered a heavyweight in the songwriting business.

Songs like “Long Tall Shorty”, “Chain of Fools”, “Mercy Mercy”, “Come Back & Take This Hurt Off Me” and “Three Time Loser” punctuate his career. On the cover testifying to the importance of Covay on their respec-

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**Thursday, Feb. 3:
 NATHAN & THE ZYDECO
 CHA CHAS \$10/\$12**

Nathan Williams is different. While the rest of the zydeco nation wrestles over who will be crowned the next king— or prince or duke — of zydeco, Nathan has given himself the decidedly unroyal sounding moniker, “The Zydeco Hog,” and continued to focus on the music for which he is renowned.

**Thursday 10
 LIL BRIAN & THE ZYDECO
 TRAVELERS \$10 9pm**

“Lil' Brian — a trailblazer in the spirit of Clifton Chenier and Buckwheat Zydeco — revs up his mighty sound on *FUNKY NATION*. This is great music, hard-driving and irresistible.”
 — Michael Tisserand, author of *The Kingdom of Zydeco* and Editor of *New Orleans Gambit Weekly*

**Friday 11
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“Whether he and his band of red hots burn on rocking contemporary or simmer on -traditional country waltzes, C. J. Chenier is poised to be Zydeco's new torch bearer.”—Blues Revue

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STOP!

Readers who have interest in jazz only may stop here. We had more blues than jazz in this first batch from the vault. So our normal alternating blues and jazz reviews has ended. For blues readers, and those into both...by all means continue on!

tive careers are Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Van Morrison, and Bonnie Raitt. Teamed with friend, songwriter, and producer of this disc, Jon Tiven, Covay has gathered a star-studded array of friends to help him with this now, well-regarded tribute to the songs and songwriter.

Helping out is the bare-bones support of Jon Tiven on guitar and organ; Jon's wife Sally Tiven on the bass; Paul Shaffer (Dave Letterman Show) on piano, organ, and synthesizer; and the rockin' Anton Fig on the drum kit. Guest instrumentalists are Simon Kirke on electric piano and Robert 'Butch' Johnson sharing the axe on "Victims"; Lee Konitz and his alto sax helping out on "Chill Factory"; Mason Casey on the harp for four tracks, Paul Brown adding his Hammond B-3 lines to "Chain Of Fools" and Kim Simmonds offering to lay out the guitar action on "Don Covay Boogie [Slight Reprise]". Background vocalists are Kirke, Casey, Ptah Brown, Audley Freed, Yuko Ichioka, Ellis Hooks, and Julia Schell.

Guest vocalists include soul partner Wilson Pickett singing "Nine Times A Man" and "Three Time Loser"; Huey Lewis and Frederick Knight teaming up on the newly composed "Red Comb Song"; Paul Rodgers putting his vocal touch to "Mercy Mercy"; Ann Peebles putting it on "Chain Of Fools", Syl Johnson chanting on "Victims", Otis Clay giving up the soul-packed voice on "He Don't Know", and Memphis songwriter Dan Penn with Shaffer adding a spoken intro to "Hall Of Fame".

Few albums can boast such an illustrious crew or such an impressive songlist. Even the newer tunes co-written with the likes of both Tivens, Spooner Oldham, Pickett, and Ronnie Miler shine like new stars in Covay's firmament. Covay's legendary presence on the songwriting front continues as he strikes out on the way to mining more gold and/or platinum.

Catch Don's contemporary adlibs, his carved accultured vocal character, and his near-godly writing abilities. His friends and band members surely also contribute to the talent pool on this release.

Deep soul, rockin' renditions, and more involved compositions mark this obvious tribute compilation.

Mark A. Cole

JOHNNY WINTER

The Best of Johnny Winter COLUMBIA/LEGACY 2002

This collection dates to Winter's material culled from his Columbia Records and Blue Sky Records eras, respectively 1969-74 and 1974-79. You find early material with his trio format, collaborations with Rick Derringer, and recorded efforts including his brother Edgar helping on various instruments. This time represented Johnny's mature blues rooted evolution into the blues and rock phenom that was and remains respected across both genres. Johnny cut five critical albums for Columbia; all are represented here.

You'll find Johnny blazing on all guitar tracks with overdubbing and some help from friends like Rick Derringer, who also co-produced some of this original material. Tommy Shannon is here laying down the fervent bass lines (before Double Trouble days) with some exceptions, and Uncle John Turner handles most of the percussive duties, also with noticeable help all around. Noted help comes from brother Edgar Winter on the piano, organ, alto sax, and harpsichord. Jeremy Steig also provides a daunting flute interaction with Johnny on Robert Johnson's "Come On In My Kitchen". A host of other musicians including numerous horn players helped to give Johnny the tremendous breath of styles shown in this collection.

Two fired up Derringer compositions, including the opening "Rock And Roll, Hoochie Koo", and the later visited "Still Alive And Well" grace this set. The former sounds cleanly Johnny with blistering slide and lead guitar lines dubbed atop each other. Edgar plays strong keyboard lines alongside Johnny's axe on Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode" and the Ray Charles hit "I'll Drown In My Own Tears" (written by Henry Glover). The rippin' delivery of "Rollin' And Tumblin'" additionally steams with an undaunting pace into Dylan's "Highway 61 Revisited", a version which still ranks high in rock history charts.

With other choice cuts like Little Richard's "Miss Ann", and B.B.'s "It's My Own Fault" (the only live cut) and "Be Careful With A Fool", allows Winter to set the blues alight with incendiary guitar, be it fast or slow! His slide talents abound throughout this platter, and the careful studio layering of axe tracks

takes on a beautiful sculptured effect, much more noticeable with remastering found on this plate. Resounding horns lay a firm bedrock response to Johnny's cutting. All and all, it's hard to find any faults here; making this truly a best-of-collection. Johnny's fretwork and finger manipulations are always excitingly fresh and reactive; and his scratchy vocal character shines through as well. This is power-packed music that never sounded so clean and fresh; and it's a startling retake on the blues roots of a classic rocker.

Mark A. Cole

MICROWAVE DAVE

Wouldn't Lay My Guitar Down DUCK TAPE 2001

Taking a brief break from his gig as band leader of the Nukes, Microwave Dave Gallaher rips and slashes his way through 12 cuts of high voltage electric blues. Even though he can slow things down as evidenced by Bobby "Blue" Bland's *Soon As The Weather Breaks*, this disc mostly features hot-wired electric guitar blues.

While many three piece blues bands sweeten up their discs with horns and keys, Dave lays down the same stuff in the studio as he features in his show: guitar, bass and drums plugged in and locked into a tight groove. Avoiding the easy temptation of blues-rock, Gallaher sticks pretty close to the blues and doesn't visit Stevie Ray Vaughan boulevard.

With a sense of humor as evidenced by *I Want My Rib Back* mixed with a bit of social commentary as reflected by *Don't Throw My Baby Away*, and even a stab at the big band classic, *Sentimental Journey*, Gallaher mostly steers clear of blues cliché land. Overall, an enjoyable disc.

Mark Smith

STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN & DOUBLE TROUBLE

Live At Montreaux 1982 & 1985 EPIC RECORDS 2002

Two career-building performances at Switzerland's renown Montreaux Jazz and International Music Festival in 1982 and 1985 by Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble are found on this double-CD release. Bits and pieces of this material have been previously released, most notably five tracks from *Live Alive*, but there are eleven heretofore unreleased songs. The nine-

teen slabs here include the entire eight song 1982 set that was raucously booed by an under interested audience; and the remaining eleven making up most of their victoriously sold-out and more appreciated return in '85.

Stevie's incomparable rock-toned blues guitar was backed by Tommy Shannon on the bass and Chris Layton on the drumkit. They played both sets, joined in 1985 by organist Reese Wynans. Johnny Copeland also joined Stevie at the '85 show for the stroll down the thirteen-minute "Tin Pan Alley" (previously issued on *Blues At Sunrise*), with complementary guitar and his intriguing vocal profile.

This set is fluent and complete in presenting comments from Layton and Shannon, along with timely quotes from Stevie and David Bowie, who was amongst the audience and few admirers at the '82 gig. The show led to Vaughan touring with Bowie and a recording opportunity at Jackson Browne's (another floored fan at the '82 show) studio later on. Photos and comments from Darrell Pitt (official festival photographer and friend to SRV) are also included.

From the SRV songbook are: "Rude Mood", "Pride And Joy" (two versions), "Love Struck Baby", "Dirty Pool", "Collins' Shuffle", "Scuttle Buttin'", "Say What", "Ain't Gone N' Give Up On Love", "Life Without You", and "Couldn't Stand The Weather". Others include Hendrix' "Voodoo Child", Buddy Guy's "Mary Had A Little Lamb", Hound Dog Taylor's "Give Me Back My Wig", and Stevie's anthem "Texas Flood" (two versions also) written by Davis and Scott.

Mighty blues rock throughout this biscuit with exciting rootsy digs into stone blues material. Vaughan and Double Trouble were on top of their free form amalgamation of the two genre, and that attitude is heard straight through these two performances. The gritty, gutsy phrasings and tones sound good on this remastered double-CD live retrospective; don't miss this ultimately awesome SRV material. **Mark A. Cole**

ROBERT CRAY Shoulda Been Home RYKODISC 2001

This release for R & B king Robert Cray comes in a decidedly different feel. The overall musical sensibility here is soul balladry. In a manner much more reserved than his previous rockin' R & B stylings, Cray and company exercise with an older Memphis and Motown heaviness and a deep blues fever. While there is little lack of his usual guitar emphasis, Robert Cray also decidedly works out a new vocal character for this release.

The Robert Cray band is Robert Cray on vocals and guitars, Jim Pugh on the keyboards, Karl Severeid on bass, and Kevin Hayes on the drums. They are joined by guests Andrew Love on tenor sax, Jack Hale on trombone, and Ben Cauley on trumpet for two tracks each. Willie Weeks provides the bass on one track, and multi-instrumentalist Steve Jordan contributes on seven tunes playing guitar, drums, or percussion, and adds his background vocals as well. Jordan can also be found at the production seat on this flight.

Cray has self-penned five new tunes for this release. Pugh contributes two selections including the brilliant nine-minute plus "Out Of Eden"; and the band carries out blues justice with two covers from M.R. London: "Cry For Me Baby" (an Elmore James Stax classic) and "The 12 Year Old Boy".

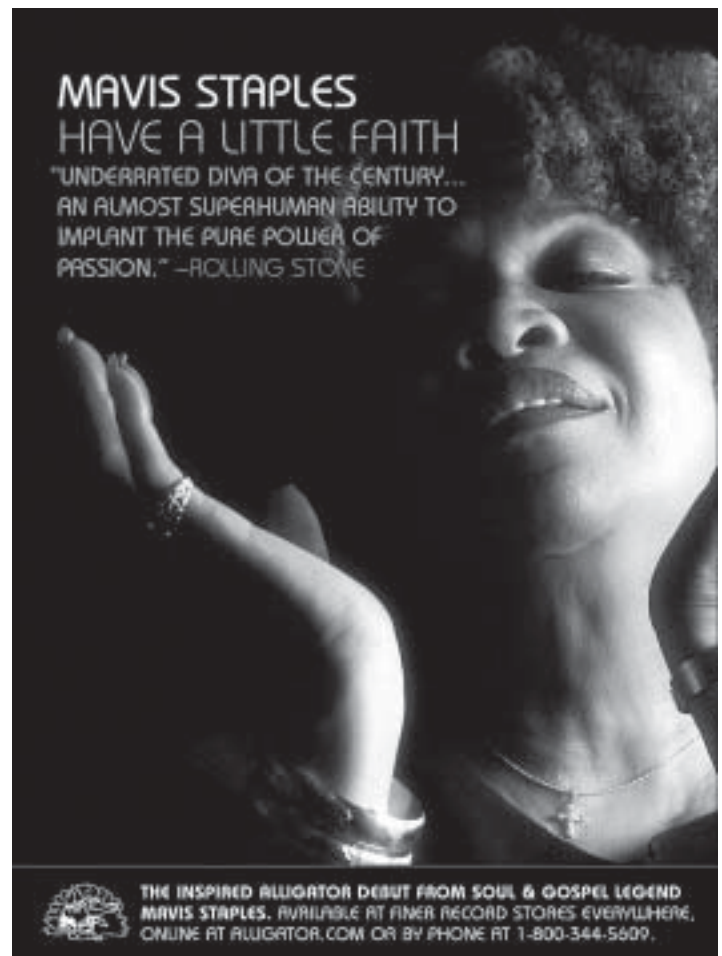
Cray has been a very prolific writer, performer, and stylist. With this effort he takes a strong step into soul-based blues and establishes yet another facet of his multi-talented skills. His vo-

calls lift each composition into the soulful realm he's after, and his reserved guitar action helps to support such. He finds favorably-souffilled company with his squeaky tight rhythm section and the keyboard work of Pugh. **Mark A. Cole**

SAVOY BROWN STRANGE DREAMS BLIND PIG 2003

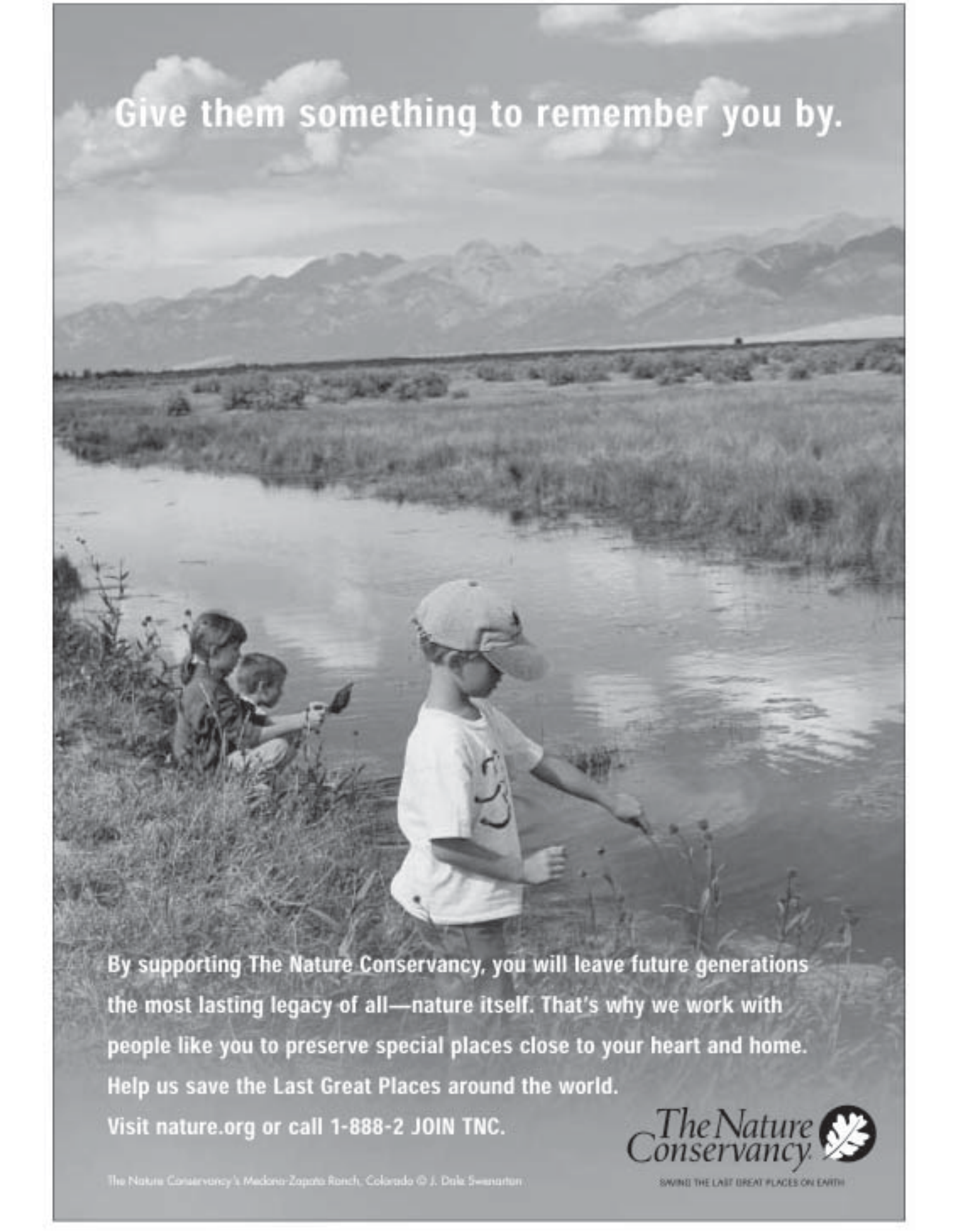
On the thirty discs it has cut since it turned heads as a British blues band in the late 60s, Savoy Brown has covered everything from acoustic blues to straight out rock and roll. With countless changes in direction and personnel, the band has been able to keep things fresh without finding itself mired on the oldies circuit rehashing its dusty hits (and it has had plenty including *I'm Tired*, *Tell Mama*, *Street Corner Talking* and *All I Can do Is Cry*) for glaze-eyed fans looking to recapture youthful glory.

On this, its debut on the Blind Pig label, the band lays down a 70s era blues-rock groove that focuses on atmosphere more than pyrotechnics. Leader Kim Simmonds' earthy vocals and light, almost jazzy, touch on the guitar keep the 10 cuts collected here from straying too close to the blooze and boogie graveyard where most blues rock tunes are mercifully buried. Think Robert Cray on guitar and Dave Mason on vocals and you'll be in the right ballpark as to how this sounds. The only real shortcoming with this disc is the pacing of the songs. With nearly all of the cuts locking into an unhurried, mid-tempo pace they tend to run together over the course of the disc. A couple of real change ups in tempo or style would have made this a more compelling listen. Overall, though, a solid effort. **Mark Smith**



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