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PONDEROSA STOMP REVIEWED



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The Sixth Annual PONDEROSA STOMP REVIEWED

By Ron Weinstock

The Ponderosa Stomp is a multi-genre evening of wild rock and roll put on by the non-profit, Mystic Knights of the Mau Mau, whose mission is "re-discovering and celebrating America's overlooked musical pioneers, and re-educating the community about their impact on music." Returning to New Orleans after being relocated to Memphis in 2006 after Hurricane Katrina, the Stomp was held at New Orleans' House of Blues, where music was presented with simultaneous performances in the main room, The Parish and HOB's outdoor patio.

The artists at this year's event included ex Thirteen Floor Elevator, Roky Erickson and The Explosives, master arranger Wardell Quezergue and the New Orleans Rhythm & Blues Revue with Tony Owens, Robert Parker and Jean "Mr Big Stuff" Knight, and Dave Bartholomew; vocalist Little Jimmy Scott, Deke Dickerson and the Eccofonics, Dennis Coffey, soul songwriter supreme Dan Penn, Dale Hawkins, Texas Tornado co-founder Augie Meyers, Herbert Hardesty, Barbara Lynn, Lazy Lester, Lafayette Soul Show Houseband Little Buck and the Top Cats w/ Stanley "Buckwheat Zydeco" Dural on Hammond B-3, Willie Tee, Rockie Charles, Jay Chevalier, Roy Head, Joe Clay, Al "Carnival Time" Johnson, Blues Piano Master Henry Gray, Eddie "The Hawg" Kirkland, Duo of Guitarist Kenny Brown and Bobby Rush, Ralph "Soul" Jackson, "Guitar Lightning" Lee, drummer Matt "I'm Movin On" Lucas, Little Freddie King, Skip "Hoochie Coochie Man" Easterling, Ernie "DapWalk" Vincent, and David "Funky Soul" Batiste.

There simply is too much music to be able to catch everybody that performs.

Upon arrival at the House of Blues at 5:30, I headed to the main stage where Lil Buck Sinegal and the Top Cats were holding forth- featuring Lil Buck's guitar, Stanley Dural's B-3 and a tight three-horn section. Emceeding this portion was Dallas dee-jay, soul-blues singer and songwriter Bobby Patterson, who brought on Funk Brother Dennis Coffrey after several numbers by the Top Cats. He played several fine instrumentals including reprising his solo on The Temptations' "I Wish It Would Rain." Lazy Lester followed with a set revisiting some of his Excello recordings including the instrumental that gave the shows their name "Pondarosa Stomp," (this is the spelling on the Excello single) and "Sugar Coated Love" as well as Merle Haggard's "I'm a Stranger." Lester was followed by David Batiste (of The Gladiators and father of drummer (David)



Lazy Lester

Russell Batiste Jr.) whose set had a funk flavor, although he did some strong blues. Barbara Lynn was up next with a fine set that included her hit "You'll Lose A Good Thing." (Herb Hardesty joined the horns for her set), and was followed by Texas rocker and blues shouter Roy Head who did his "Treat Her Right" and several nice renditions of Bobby Bland numbers. I ventured to the Parish Stage during some of these performances and caught Eddie Kirkland (with a trio) and Henry Gray solo on the piano, both sounding typically fine.

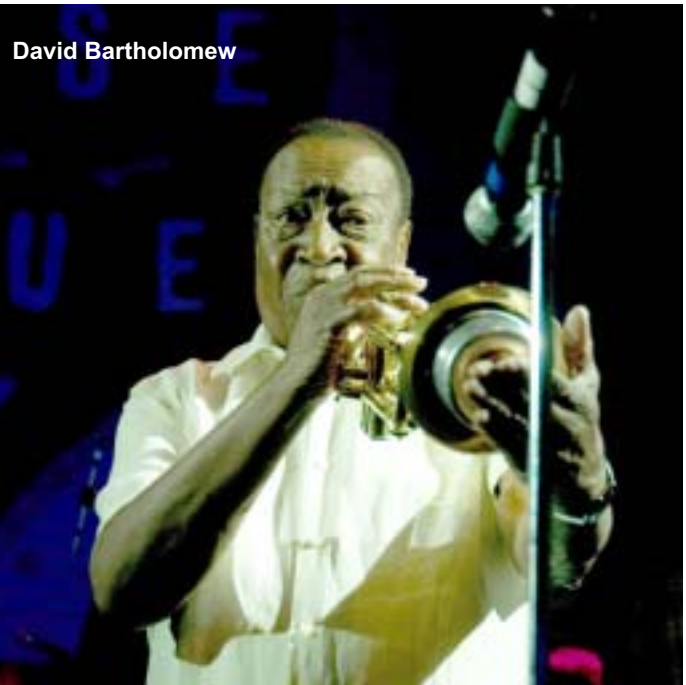
After a short break, drummer and WWOZ announcer Bob French introduced Jimmy Scott backed by piano and bass for what may have been the single finest performance of my New Orleans vacation. Scott's way with a lyric might be compared to classic Billie Holiday. His spellbinding performance was on at the same time as Bobby Rush and Kenny Brown whom I heard were excellent.

After a break the main HOB stage was set up for the Wardell Querzergue New Orleans Rhythm & Blues Revue. The legendary producer and arranger, Querzergue, lost his sight and this program was the first in several years to feature him and his arrangements. He opened with a bright, funky rendition of Smokey Johnson's "It Ain't My Fault." Up next was soul-singer Tony Owens who reworked several of the recordings Querzergue had produced for Cotillion and other labels, including "Confessin' a Feeling", and he was followed by Robert Parker who did "Barefootin'" and a couple other songs, and Jean Knight, who sang a lively "Don't Mess With My Toot Toot" and "Mr. Big Stuff." Conducting the band, Querzergue also was enjoying the performances greatly. During this portion of the Revue, Allen Toussaint got on the B-3 for a couple songs. The longest stretch of this Revue featured Dave Bartholomew whose segment included a funky rendition of "The Monkey Speaks." There was plenty of space for his trumpet to be featured along with guitarist Charles Moore and the members of the horn section including saxophonists Herb Hardesty and Amadeé Castanell.

After this revue closed I went back to the now packed Parish stage where Dale Hawkins (backed by Deke Dickerson and the Eccophonics) was winding down with "Suzy Q." Downstairs on the mainstage I caught most of Dan Penn's set, accompanied by Bobby Emmons on keyboards which concluded with a fine "The Dark End of the Street." It was after midnight and feeling the effects of traveling that day I left the Stomp had started at 5:30 and kept going for at least another two hours) although I saw Little Freddie King and a harmonica player on the Patio stage (he also had a band set), so I did not see Joe Clay, Rory Erickson, Augie Meyers, Willie Tee and Al 'Carnival' Johnson (who I also heard was outstanding).

For those seeking an evening of straight, no chaser blues, frantic rockabilly, deep funk and southern soul with a dash of psychedelia and uptown R&B, one will find no more exhilarating concert than the Ponderosa Stomp.

If the Ponderosa Stomp was not enough, Padnos and the Mystic Krewe helped produced a free "Legends of Swamp Pop" show the following evening outside the Cabildo on Jackson Square with Little Band of Gold (C.C. Adcock, Warren Storm, Steve Riley, David Egan and others) who brought on Tommy McClain, Rod Bernard and Lazy Lester (with Roy Head also singing a few numbers)



David Bartholomew

for a marvelous evening featuring this important but usually overlooked Louisiana genre. If you are thinking about attending a future edition of Ponderosa Stomp, visit www.ponderosastomp.com, Photos ©2007 Ron Weinstock. You can view more of Ron's photos at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/novaron/sets/72157600230928862/>

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Northern California Blues Festival

FAIR OAKS, CA — The organizers of the newly dubbed Northern California Blues Festival last week announced their final line-up for the June 16, fundraising event.

"The Nor Cal Blues Fest is destined to be one of the great events in the region," said Matson Breakey, organizer of the event.

Joe Louis Walker headlines the day, playing 90 minutes starting at 8:15 pm. Chris Cain, who headlined the formerly named Blues in the Park in 2005 will please the crowd with his own 90 minute set starting at 6:15 pm.

"Having Joe Louis Walker and Chris Cain on the same bill is very strong," adds Matson, "and the Blues lovers in this region are in for a treat!"

And if that were not enough, regional favorite Shane Dwight will raise the roof at 4:30 pm.

Lara Price, a rising Sacramento area star who recently competed on behalf of the Sacramento Blues Society at the International Blues Festival in Memphis, will treat the crowds starting at 3 pm.

Returning favorites Strictly for Kick and new addition Steve Foster Band will round off the second and opening spots, respectively.

The festival will be Saturday, June 16 at Fair Oaks Park in Fair Oaks, California, a small community outside Sacramento. For more information, visit www.matsonian.com/blues/index.htm.

For information on a host of blues festivals nationwide, be sure to visit www.bluesfestivalguide.com.

Washington, DC's Duke Ellington Jazz Festival Announces Third Year All-Star Lineup for September 9-17

Annual Festival Will Celebrate Dizzy Gillespie's 90th Birthday

Washington DC – In recognition of Duke Ellington's birthday on April 29 and Jazz Appreciation month, Founder/Producer Charlie Fishman announced the third year lineup for the Duke Ellington Jazz Festival (DEJF) Friday, April 27, 2007, at the Dianne Reeves concert co-presented by the DEJF and the Washington Performing Arts Society.

Running September 9-17 in Washington, DC, the 2007 Duke Ellington Jazz Festival (DEJF) will pay homage to the musical genius of jazz legend John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie (1917-1993) by bringing in top jazz musicians who performed with the "world statesman of jazz," as he was known. The festival program will honor Gillespie's exploration of musical styles and rhythms from around the world – particularly his role in incorporating Latin rhythms into traditional jazz – his creation of bebop and his impact as an artist who revolutionized 20th century music.

Fishman, who was Gillespie's personal manager and producer, commented:

Dizzy, like Duke, is a jazz icon whose influence on jazz and other music forms is remarkable. Dizzy was the first musician to integrate Latin American, African and Caribbean musical influences into traditional jazz, and his im-

pact can be heard in contemporary rhythm and blues, hip hop, salsa, rap and world music. Our program this fall pays tribute to Dizzy's incredible contributions to music with performances and artists that highlight his genius, traditions and legacy. We also continue to serve Duke's – and Dizzy's – vision that music breaks down barriers and brings people together. It is an ongoing mission of the Duke Ellington Jazz Festival to bring people to DC in that spirit.

Now in its third year, the DEJF is becoming an anticipated event in the nation's capital for its impressive mix of local, national and international artists and its presentation of over 100 programs and performances at diverse venues in different neighborhoods of Washington, DC. Another hallmark of the DEJF is the all-day free concert on the National Mall to be held September 16.

Artist Line-Up 2007

Among the line-up of artists for September 9-17 are five National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Jazz Masters and multiple Grammy Award winners, most of whom played with – and in many cases – were mentored by Gillespie.

Paquito D'Rivera, who led Gillespie's United Nation Orchestra, is DEJF's artistic advisor for 2007.

"In the Footsteps of Dizzy" – September 14 - "In the Footsteps of Dizzy" is a concert at the historic Lincoln Theatre on September 14 that will feature many Dizzy proteges: Panamanian pianist **Danilo Perez**, Brazilian trumpeter **Claudio Roditi**, Puerto Rican saxophonist **David Sanchez** and **Steve Turre**, trombonist from the United States. **Roy Hargrove** and his Grammy Award-winning band **RH Factor** will perform music that incorporates jazz with hip hop.

Annual NEA Jazz Masters Concert – September 15 - **Jimmy Heath, James Moody, Clark Terry** and **Slide Hampton**, each of whom played with Gillespie, will perform in this all-star event at the Lincoln Theater at which NEA announces its selection of Jazz Masters.

FREE All-Day Jazz on The Mall – September 16 - This flagship event of the Duke Ellington Jazz Festival will reunite nine of the 12 artists whose careers were advanced when Gillespie hired them to play in the Grammy Award-winning United Nation Orchestra from 1988-1992. They include: Grammy Award winners **Paquito D'Rivera & The United Nation Orchestra** and Brazilian jazz couple, **Airto Moreira** and **Flora Purim**; **Sibusiso Victor Masondo** and **Lalela**; and the **Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Orchestra**, which will highlight Gillespie's international impact and role as a musical ambassador.

Other Artists & Events – September 9-17 - Other artists coming to Washington, DC, for DEJF include: international vocalists **Roberta Gambarini** (Italy), **Somi** (Africa); Grammy-Award winning American vocalist, **Nnenna Freelon** and local bands, **Step Afrika** and **Afro Blue**. Special events include an international jazz stage at the Kennedy Center; concerts for families; a feature film on Dizzy at Library of Congress; and an opening gala concert led by D'Rivera.

Duke Ellington Jazz Festival Overview

On September 28, 2005, with the support of the Government of the District of Columbia, Congressional resolution HR-501 and numerous national and local sponsors, the Duke Ellington Jazz Festival debuted in honor of one of the 20th century's most celebrated musical geniuses and an honored native son of Washington, DC. In two years,

the festival has established itself as a major festival nationally and as a key event on Washington, DC's annual cultural calendar. The DEJF's mission is to make jazz accessible to the broadest demographic; use jazz as a form of arts education; honor jazz greats; and add to the city's rich jazz history by entertaining thousands with local and world-class jazz talent.

The festival presents major artists from around the country, from around the world and also introduces emerging artists.

In addition to the grand free jazz showcase on The National Mall, prominent featured locations for festival events include the historic Lincoln Theatre, The Kennedy Center, the Library of Congress, National Gallery of Art and neighborhood spots in the famed "U Street Corridor" – also known as the "Black Broadway" – like Busboys & Poets, the historic Bohemian Caverns and Twins Jazz Club.

The Duke Ellington Jazz Festival is a project of Festivals DC Ltd., a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) cultural organization and is supported in part with a grant from the Government of the District of Columbia, as well as corporate and foundation sponsorships.

For more information about the Duke Ellington Jazz Festival and a preliminary schedule, please visit www.dejazzfest.org.

Atlantic Records celebrates 60th Anniversary With The Blues

Rhino Handmade Marks the Occasion With the First of Three Limited-Edition, Four-Disc Boxed Sets Spotlighting Atlantic Records' Influential Sounds

Los Angeles – Rhino Handmade will celebrate the 60th anniversary of Atlantic Records, one of the most influential independent music companies of all time, with a trio of limited-edition boxed sets honoring genres championed by the label. The series begins June 12 with the release of ATLANTIC BLUES (1949-1970). The next title in the series, *Atlantic Soul (1959-1975)*, is due in August, with the third installment, *Atlantic Vocal Groups (1951-1963)*, expected later in the fall. For each, Rhino Handmade will limit production to 3,000 individually numbered boxed sets. All three will be presented in a vintage-looking 12 x 12 box that includes a booklet filled with extensive liner notes and rare photos. ATLANTIC BLUES will be available June 12 exclusively from www.rhinohandmade.com for a list price of \$79.98.

Ahmet Ertegun moved to New York and, together with Herb Abramson, started Atlantic Records in 1947 with a \$10,000 loan from his dentist. By the mid 1950s, Atlantic had become the country's preeminent R&B label. The "Atlantic Sound" – a boogie-based, sax-led band arrangement that became an integral part of rhythm and blues – grew into a phenomenon that swept across the nation and the world.


Produced by Billy Vera, ATLANTIC BLUES features 80 tracks culled from the label's first two decades highlighting the wide variety of blues that found a home at Atlantic. From the gutbucket down-home blues of Blind Willie McTell to the jumping blues of Joe Morris, from the piano blues of Jimmy Yancey and Floyd Dixon to the guitar blues of T-

Bone Walker and Otis Rush, from male shouters Joe Turner and Jimmy Witherspoon to female blues-icians like LaVern Baker and Esther Phillips – ATLANTIC BLUES has any kind of blues you can imagine.

The set opens with Atlantic's first hit, "Drinkin' Wine Spo-Dee-O-Dee" by Stick McGhee and His Buddies followed by a procession of influential artists and songs including Professor Longhair's Carnival classic "Mardi Gras In New Orleans"; Joe Morris Blues Cavalcade performing Atlantic's first #1 single, "Anytime, Any Place, Anywhere"; seven songs from "Big" Joe Turner including the smash "Chains Of Love"; three cuts from Aretha Franklin, "Going Down Slow," "Today I Sing The Blues" and "River's Invitation"; plus four feelin'-lowdown tracks from Ray Charles, "Worried Life Blues," "Losing Hand," "Feeling Sad" and a masterful performance of Percy Mayfield's "Two Years Of Torture." Other well-known artists that appear on ATLANTIC BLUES are Leadbelly, T-Bone Walker, Guitar Slim, Jimmy Witherspoon, LaVern Baker, Freddy King and Otis Rush.

In August, Rhino Handmade will continue the celebration of Atlantic's 60th anniversary with the release of *Atlantic Soul (1959-1975)*. The four-disc set will have a similar look and feel to ATLANTIC SOUL and will feature classic Atlantic artists such as Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, and The Spinners.


Later in the fall, the final installment in this series will arrive with the four-disc set, *Atlantic Vocal Groups (1951-1963)*, celebrating such classic performers as The Coasters, The Drifters, and The Clovers




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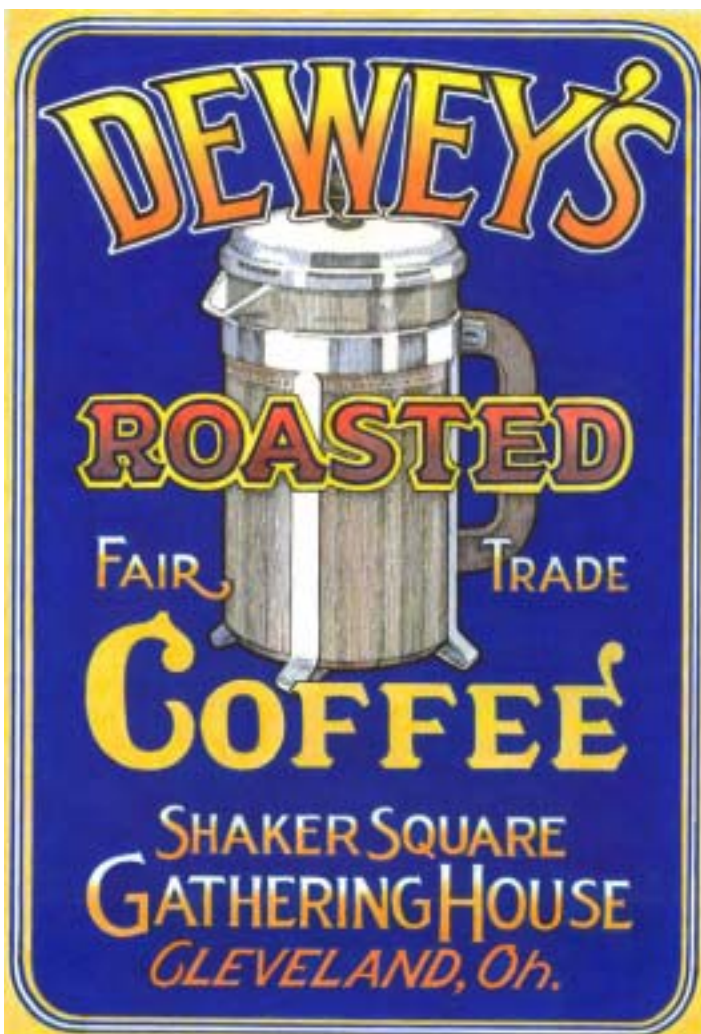
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BLUES WATCH

By Mark Smith

New Release Blues.... Maria Muldaur-*Naughty, Bawdy & Blue*; **John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers**- *In the Palace of the King*; **Various Artists**- *Crucial Rockin' Blues*; **Various Artists**- *Crucial Acoustic Blues*; **Chris Whitley & Jeff Lang**- *Dislocation Blues*; **James Blood Ulmer**- *Bad Blood in the City*; *The Piety Street Sessions*; **Joe Cocker**- *Hymn for My Soul*; **George Thorogood**- *Taking Care of Business*; **Carey & Lurrie Bell**- *Getting' Up: Live at Buddy Guy's Legends, Rosa's and Lurrie's Home*; **Rick Holmstrom**- *Late in the Night*; **Shuggie Otis**- *In Session Information*; **Deniece Williams**- *Love, Niecy Style*; **Gary Moore**- *Close as you Get*; **Candy Kane**- *Guitar'd and Feathered*; **Lucky Peterson & Andy Aledort**- *Tete a Tete*; **Deborah Coleman, Roxanne Potvin & Sue Foley**- *Time Bomb*; **Denise LaSalle** - *Pay Before You Pump*; **Dave Hole**- *Rough Diamond*; **Savoy Brown**- *Steel*; **Muddy Waters, Johnny Winter & James Cotton**- *Breakin' It Up, Breakin' It Down*; **Chris Caffery**- *Pins and Needles*; **Bo Diddley**- *Bo's the Man*; **Delbert McClinton**- *Rockin' Blues*; **Peter Green**- *The Supernatural*; **Teresa James & the Rhythm Tramps**- *The Bottom Line*; **Jimmy Thackery**- *Solid Ice*; **Rusty Zinn**- *Reggaeblue*; **Mannish Boys**- *Big Plans*; **Hamilton Loomis**- *Ain't Just Temporary*; **Paul Reddick**- *Revue: Best of Paul Reddick*; **Bobby Rush**- *Raw*; **Various Artists**- *Roots of Ry Cooder*; **Fruteland Jackson**- *Tell me What You Say*; **The Twisters**- *After the Storm*; **Harper**- *Day by Day*; **Kara Maguire**- *Nobody's Girl*; **Jorma Kaukonen**- *Stars in my Crown*; **Ryan Shaw**- *This is Ryan Shaw*; **Hans Theessink**- *Slow Train*; **Robert Charels**- *Three Leg Dogs & Old School Cats*; **James Day & The Fish Fry**- *Blue Latitudes*; **Danny Gatton**- *Redneck Jazz Explosion, Volumes 1 & 2*; **The Alexis P. Suter Band**- *Live at the Midnight Ramble....* **Blues Awards...** The annual Blues Foundation Awards were handed out in Memphis on May 17th. The big winner of the night was **Charlie Musselwhite** who took home four awards on the strength of his *Delta Hardware* CD. The other multiple winners were **Irma Thomas** for her Soul Blues album *After the Rain* and **Tab Benoit** as Contemporary Blues Male of the Year and Entertainer of the Year awards. The complete list follows:

- Comeback Album of the Year: Jerry Lee Lewis - *Last Man Standing*
- Traditional Blues Male Artist of the Year: Robert Lockwood, Jr.
- Traditional Blues Female Artist of the Year: Etta James
- Acoustic Artist of the Year: David "Honeyboy" Edwards
- Acoustic Album of the Year: Rory Block - *The Lady and Mr. Johnson*
- Pinetop Perkins Piano Player of the Year: Marcia Ball
- Instrumentalist-Guitar: Hubert Sumlin
- Soul Blues Male Artist of the Year: Bobby Rush



EXQUISITE NEW RELEASES FROM BLUE NOTE!



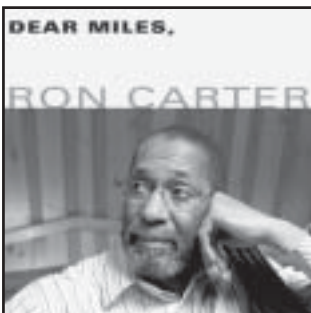
Kids: Live at Dizzy's Club, Hank Jones & Joe Lovano



Live At The Village Vanguard, Bill Charlap Trio



75th Birthday Bash LIVE!, Kenny Burrell



Dear Miles, Ron Carter



From The Plantation To The Penitentiary, Wynton Marsalis



In My Element, Robert Glasper



THE RUDY VAN GELDER EDITIONS

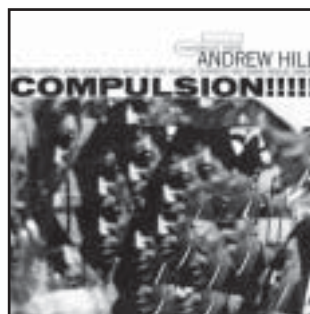
From 1953 to 1967, Alfred Lion produced a body of work that ranks as the most innovative series of recordings in modern jazz. Almost all of these masterpieces were documented by the extraordinary Rudy Van Gelder; a self-taught engineer who more than set a new standard. Devoid of caution or timidity, 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.



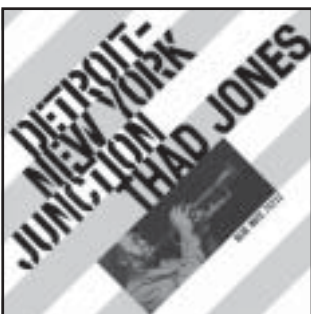
The Cat Walk, Donald Byrd



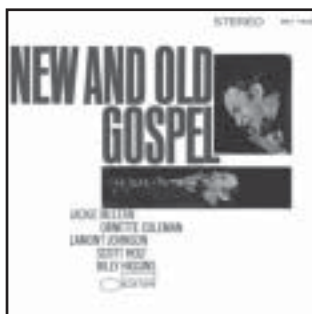
Clubhouse, Dexter Gordon



Compulsion, Andrew Hill



Detroit-New York Junction, Thad Jones



New And Old Gospel, Jackie McLean



A.T.'s Delight, Art Taylor

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- Soul Blues Female Artist of the Year: Irma Thomas
 - Soul Blues Album of the Year: Irma Thomas - After the Rain
 - Historical Album of the Year: Shout! Factory - Hooker - John Lee Hooker
 - Contemporary Blues Album of the Year: Guitar Shorty - We the People
 - Contemporary Blues Female Artist of the Year: Janiva Magness
 - Contemporary Blues Male Artist of the Year: Tab Benoit
 - Instrumentalist-Harmonica: Charlie Musselwhite
 - Instrumentalist-Bass: Mookie Brill
 - Instrumentalist-Drums: Willie "Big Eyes" Smith
 - Instrumentalist-Horn: Eddie Shaw
 - Instrumentalist-Other: Robert Randolph
 - Best New Artist Debut: Slick Ballinger- Mississippi Soul
 - Song of the Year: "Church is Out" - Charlie Musselwhite
 - Traditional Blues Album of the Year: Charlie Musselwhite - Delta Hardware
 - Album of the Year: Charlie Musselwhite - Delta Hardware
 - Band of the Year: Lil' Ed & the Blues Imperials
 - B.B. King Entertainer of the Year: Tab Benoit
- Congratulations to all the winners. That's it for this month. See ya! Mark

Starz InBlack recognizes Black Music Month with a slate of Films featuring Jazz, Hip Hop & R&B Musicians

**Herbie Hancock – Possibilities – to be featured
on June 2 and again on June 30**

Englewood, Colo., – Starz InBlack, the first and only premium movie channel dedicated to meet the entertainment choices of African Americans, will celebrate Black Music Month with a month-long tribute to African American musicians beginning on Saturday, June 2 at 8 p.m. (ET/PT). Every Saturday night in June Starz InBlack will present a double feature of music films including Starz InBlack premieres like Herbie Hancock: Possibilities, Tupac: Live at the House of Blues, Snoop Dogg's Puff Puff Pass Tour, and Wyclef Jean's All Star Jam at Carnegie Hall and the Starz InBlack Original New Orleans Music in Exile.

"To commemorate Black Music Month, we have created a month-long tribute, recognizing the rich history of African American musicians with a double feature every Saturday night at 8 p.m.," said Jonathan Shair, vice president of planning and scheduling, Starz Entertainment. "The featured films include a look at celebrated musicians from the jazz, hip hop and blues genres."

The Saturday Music Double Features will be hosted by Marcus Woodswelch, the winner of the Starz Original micro-series "Looking for Stars," from the New Orleans Jazz Festival. Films airing as part of the Saturday Music Double Features include (all times are ET/PT):

Saturday, June 2

- 8 p.m. – The Roots Present – Concert showcase includes performances from some of the most exciting, hottest hip-hop acts at work today, including Young Gunz, Mobb

Deep, Jean Grae, Martin Luther, Skillz and The Roots.

- 9:30 p.m. – Herbie Hancock: Possibilities – An intimate documentary about Jazz pianist Herbie Hancock and his in-studio collaborations with a dozen formidable pop recording artists, collaborations that explore the unexpected like jazz improvisations. Features interviews with artists including Christina Aguilera, Annie Lenox, Carlos Santana, Sting, Paul Simon, and more.

Saturday, June 9

- 8 p.m. – A Night of Ferocious Joy – Captures a concert produced by the Artists Network of Refuse & Resist at the historic Palace Theater in Hollywood – the first act of defiance against America's "War on Terrorism." Featured artists include Saul Williams, Blackalicious, Ozomatli, Dilated Peoples and Mystic.

- 9:10 p.m. – Diplomats: The Book of Hip Hop: Chapter One – This documentary, hosted by Doug E. Fresh, was shot at a concert in Harlem. The special features the performances of many hip hop artists including Cam'ron, Juelz Santana and Jim Jones of the Harlem Diplomats, plus interview segments with Damon Dash, DJ Clue and Tony Touch.

Saturday, June 16

- 8 p.m. – Tupac Live at the House of Blues – Hip hop legend Tupac Shakur's final live performance on July 4, 1996.

- 9:35 p.m. – Snoop Dogg's Puff Puff Pass Tour – Documentary following Snoop Dogg on his tour through 29 cities.

Saturday, June 23

- 8 p.m. – Make it Funky! ...It All Began in New Orleans – Salute to the music of New Orleans features musicians including The Neville Brothers, Bonnie Raitt, Alan Toussaint, Keith Richards and Walter "Wolfman" Washington.

- 9:50 p.m. – New Orleans Music in Exile – A Starz InBlack Original documentary following the plight of displaced musicians, forced to flee from their home city as a result of the deadly assault by Hurricane Katrina.

Saturday, June 30

- 8 p.m. – Wyclef Jean's All Star Jam at Carnegie Hall – Multi-platinum award-winning superstar Wyclef Jean welcomes an all-star gathering to legendary Carnegie Hall in New York City for the first annual "Clef's Kids" concert. Features performances by Jean, Stevie Wonder, Macy Gray and Mary J. Blige.

- 9:05 p.m. – Herbie Hancock: Possibilities
Starz InBlack is culturally connected. The source for the biggest, coolest movies and urban entertainment.

Starz Entertainment, LLC, is a premium movie service provider operating in the United States. It offers 16 movie channels including the flagship Starz® and Encore® brands with approximately 15.8 million and 28.2 million subscribers respectively. Starz Entertainment airs more than 1,000 movies per month across its pay TV channels and offers advanced services including Starz HD, Starz On Demand and VongoSM. Starz Entertainment (www.starz.com <<http://www.starz.com/>>) is an operating unit of Starz, LLC, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Liberty Media Corporation that is attributed to Liberty Capital Group.

www.jazz-blues.com

New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival

The Forty Eight Hour Adventure

By Mark Smith

This year marked my sixth time attending the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. I arrived in New Orleans on Wednesday, May 2nd and departed on Sunday the 6th. As has been the case every time I have attended, the event became a marathon. The following is a forty eight hour slice out of this year's adventure:

Dateline: New Orleans, May 4, 2007, 2:00 a.m.: The warm up round. An explosion went off approximately 2 inches from my ear in the form of a crazed drunk shouting "do you want peace and love?" I tried to ignore him. He shouted again with even more volume "Do you want peace and love?" and this time gathered me into an intense bear hug that was about to propel the contents of my overstuffed stomach onto the crowd that surrounded us. As the fetid smell of garlic, old booze and pot that crept from his breath and clothes enveloped the space between us and my eyes started to water I quickly calculated whether saying "yes" would end the matter or take it into directions that I didn't want to contemplate.

How could wanting peace and love possibly be a bad call? After all, this delightful encounter was taking place in a crush of people standing stage side at the House of Blues waiting for Michael Franti and Spearhead to take the stage. Besides, this was no ordinary night. I was 18 hours into a day that had started at 8:00 a.m. and had already been to a bar with a dog (the four legged variety!) sitting on a barstool being served alongside everyone else including a 600 pound man, a one armed lady dancer and a host of other characters that suggested Barnum and Bailey was in town all the while being entertained by a female folk singer intent on sharing every intimate detail of her failed relationships with the crowd.

I had also discovered that while the Mississippi River is only a half mile or so wide, missing the Ferry back into the French Quarter can cost you a good couple of hours waiting for a cab willing to eat the long journey over the bridge to grab a one way fare back. After that pleasant revelation which caused me to miss Toots and the Maytells, I had at least been able to salvage a portion of the evening by catching Marcia Ball and her band laying down a hot set of piano infused blues and boogie.

The evening had then headed south again as we were blessed with a downpour while waiting in a long line for the doors to open for the Franti and Spearhead show. This is great, 2:00 am, wet clothes and a three hour concert on the way. Which brings me back to the drunk. "Yes", I shouted back. "Peace and Love!" Luckily, I made the right call and he immediately turned his attention to converting the other skeptical bystanders to his cause.

Lots of bear hugs. Lots of people moving out of his path. Once the show started, Mr. peace and love turned into Mr. pogo stick and bashed into everyone within a five body radius. As is often the case with firecrackers, he soon blew up and was gone. Me, well I made it to the 5:00 am end of the show and did the zombie walk back to the hotel.

Four hours later, the sun has found its way through the

cracks of the curtains. While my body calls for more sleep my mind will have nothing to do with it. The siren call of Jazz Fest tugs me into the shower where I test the wisdom of one of my travel companions who claims that a hot shower is worth at least two hours of sleep. Yeah, right. And pigs can fly. In any event I soon find myself in line at the nearby Starbucks where a Venti dark roast brings things into focus. This isn't just any day, it's a Jazz Fest day in New Orleans!! I'm now fully immersed in the process of picking which of the nearly 70 musical acts I'm going to try to catch in the mere eight hours ahead of me. Here's a sample of the dilemma: Tony Joe White, The Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Martha Redbone Luther Kent and Trick Bag and Better than Ezra are all on different stages at roughly the same time. Or how about passing up ZZ Top to see Counting Crows or George Benson? Every choice means passing up something else that you would pay cash money to see as a single act at a home town stage.

The Main Event: Jazz Fest Day One. After a quick bus ride to the fairgrounds and a run through the gauntlet of food booths featuring boiled crawfish, softshell crab po' boys, red beans and rice and countless other Louisiana delicacies, I decide to start out the day at the Fais Do Do Stage with some traditional Cajun music by the Lost Bayou Ramblers. Their rousing fiddle work coupled with the heap of food helps me shake off the last vestiges of spark knock from the late night adventures with Mr. peace and love. And then things got strange again. The skies that had been ominously dark all morning opened up with a rain of nearly

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biblical proportions. I'm talking 5 inches in less than two hours. I'm talking sheets of rain that immediately filled every low spot and soon turned the fairgrounds into a series of rivers, lakes and mud bogs. We quickly abandoned the stage front and high tailed it to the nearest tent for shelter where we were quickly joined by dozens of other jazz festers. As is almost always the case, the group was friendly and chatty and we all shared wisdom as to which acts simply couldn't be missed. Musician Paul Cebal, who had lured us to the bar with the dog and one armed lady the night before, ended up in the same tent.

He told us that of all the acts coming up over the weekend, the one not to be missed was Elder Edward Babbs and the Madison Bumble Bees, a gospel group from North Carolina featuring a dozen trombones. We laughed at the thought of spending precious time fest time on gospel and trombones. Almost on cue, the rain came harder and we soon found ourselves with water running over our feet even while standing on level ground inside a tent. Hmm. Didn't I read that the levees still in tough shape and that the bypass pumps are still failing with some regularity? Is this going to be our own mini-Katrina? As we realized that we had had the good fortune of picking a tent that featured construction of native Louisiana flat boats which we could use to paddle out if the water got much deeper we all realized that we now had no choice but to put the good Elder Babbs and his Madison Bumble Bees into the musical mix. Once that commitment was made, the rains soon came to an end. We ventured out of the tent and found folks joyfully reenacting every "hippie in the mud" scene ever committed to film.

Back to the fest!! Ivan Neville's Dumpstaphunk rocked the Gentilly Stage as soon as the rain tarps were removed from the equipment. They were followed by New Orleans rockers, Better than Ezra, who had the crowd rocking with a version of the Stone's "Miss You" which segued into the band's own "Juicy." As is almost always the case when so many choices of bands are available, we bailed early on the BTE show to catch the end of 16 year old Cajun fiddle queen Amanda Shaw who captivated the Fais do do crowd with her thoroughly reworked version of the Clash classic, "Should I Stay or Should I Go?" Now in the rock mood, we soon found ourselves at the Acura stage with 20,000 or so other senior citizens watching the boys of ZZ Top going

through their creaky dance steps to all their classic rock hits. Not wanting to end the day with "Cheap Sunglasses" we stopped by the Congo Square stage on the way out to catch some of George Benson's impeccable jazz riffs.

Back to the room. A splash and dash shower. (No it didn't count for two hours). Dinner at the Court of Two Sisters. Fantastic as always. On to the Parish at the House of Blues for Jon Cleary and the Absolute Monster Gentlemen.

Dateline. New Orleans, May 5, 2007, 1:00 am. - I'm looking around at the crowd and catching the buzz of conversation. Everyone agrees they have just seen something special. Jon Cleary was absolutely on fire. Chuck Leavell, who plays keyboards for the Rolling Stones and countless other high profile bands has been standing off to the side of the stage all night and is clearly impressed. As Cleary leaves the stage, Leavell bows repeatedly to show his admiration. While still buzzing from the show, I know that without sleep real soon this party is going to come to an ugly ending. So, in a rare bit of restraint, we head back to the room for an early (by Jazz Fest Standards) lights out by 2:00 a.m.

Round Two: Jazz Fest day two - The gap in the pesky curtains has once again ushered the sun into the room all too soon after the lights were turned out. A quick jog down St. Charles street to blow out the carbon and then Jazz Fest calls once again. A warm, sunny day greets us. From the time we board the bus at 10:30 it is evident that everyone is in a great mood with lots of "how ya' doin's" being exchanged amongst total strangers in the various lines around the fairgrounds. Today's planned musical menu: Henry Gray & the Cats and Jumpin' Johnny Sansone at the Southern Comfort Blues Tent, Johnny Angel & the Swinging Demons at the Acura Stage, Brian Jack & the Zydeco Gamblers, Willis Purdomme & Zydeco Express and The Iguanas at the Fais do do Stage, Stephen Marley at Congo Square and the Allman Brothers at the Gentilly Stage make the cut. Buckwheat Zydeco, John Mayer, John Legend and countless others do not. The crowd is enormous and moving from stage to stage is tricky at best. Lots of great music to accompany the great vibe running through the crowd. Oh, and Elder Babb & the Madison Bumble Bees. What can I say? They chased the devil away from all of those who had spent the rain hours yesterday offering their soul for some sunshine and music. Wow!! Catch them if you ever get the chance. They had the gospel tent crowd on its feet and clapping in rhythm to the blast of the trombones and the sanctified sermonizing of the good Elder Babbs. Even our group of rhythm challenged white boys could find the groove to this stuff.

The Knock out punch. - Back to the room. Another splash and dash. Dinner at K-Paul's Louisiana Kitchen (yes it's as good as all the hype). On to the Mid-City Lanes Rock and Bowl for some classic New Orleans jazz from Kermit Ruffins and the BBQ Swingers. Hot, hot, hot! Kermit downs several beers in the course of his all too short show and isn't shy about the major spliff that had served as his warm up act. His exuberance is contagious and the crowd goes nuts. And then, well, the Dixie Cups took the stage and pummeled us with ancient doo-wop tunes. We couldn't get out of there fast enough. Since it was now too late to hit another club show (one 2:00 a.m. concert in 48 hours is enough!) we did the traditional lap up and down Bourbon Street after fortifying ourselves with a hand grenade- a

LIVE BLUES ON THE HIGH SEAS



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wicked concoction reputed to be the strongest drink in New Orleans. None of us could choke it down. This is clearly something that is consumed for the impact not the taste. We let the grenades explode into the gutter and substituted one of the "big ass" beers available for a couple of bucks. After taking in a couple of tunes from the rock and blues bands trying to eke out a living at the Bourbon Street clubs we finally called an end to the adventure. Lights out 2:30 a.m.

The wrap up. - As a music fan, if there's a much better way to spend forty eight hours please let me know. Until then, I can only declare once again that the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival is the world series of musical events. It's not only the Festival itself, it's the food and culture of New Orleans and the thriving post fest bar scene that make it so special. It happens every year on the last weekend of April and First Weekend of May. Put it on your calendar.



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CAROLINA CHOCOLATE DROPS

Dona Got a Ramblin' Mind

JOHN DEE HOLEMAN & THE WAIFS BAND

MUSIC MAKER RELIEF FOUNDATION

As one who has been a fan and supporter of the Music Maker Relief Foundation for a number of years, I have enjoyed many of their recordings that help further MMRF's mission of providing support and assistance to needy musicians working in older southern music traditions. Not all of its releases are by older blues, gospel or old-time country performers. Among its most recent releases is a CD by a young African-American string band, the Carolina Chocolate Drops, *Dona Got a Ramblin' Mind*.

Inspired by elderly African-American fiddler Joe Thompson, the group of Rhiannon Giddens, Justin Robinson and Dom Flemons have brought new life to an almost extinct form of African-American music which is not far removed from older country music string band traditions as evidenced through renditions of such songs as

Dixie, *Tom Dula* (better known as *Tom Dooley*), *Little Sadie*, and *Another Man Done Gone*. A revivalist band perhaps, but reviving and playing this older musical style for festivals and schools they bring musical history to life in this engaging, lively recording.

Another new disc is the eponymously named album by John Dee Holeman & The Waifs Band. The traditional Piedmont blues singer-guitarist, Holeman learned from musicians that played with Blind Boy Fuller, while The Waifs Band are an Australian folk/rock band that have been touring world-wide for years. The result is an enjoyable disc of performances. What's most interesting about

this is there are songs performed which are traditional numbers like *John Henry*, to covers of Otis Spann's *Country Gal*, a couple of songs associated with Lightnin' Hopkins, *Mojo Hand* and *Gimme Back My Wig*, Elmore James' *Dust My Broom* and Chuck Berry's *Lil Queenie*. Holeman is a capable guitarist and credible, if not compelling vocalist and The Waifs Band provides understated sympathetic accompaniment here.

For more information on these releases, check out www.musicmaker.org.
Ron Weinstock

WAVERLY SEVEN

Yo! Bobby: Live at the Jazz Standard

ANZIC RECORDS

The New York jazz septet, Waverly Seven, pays faithful tribute to the "original hipster," Bobby Darin, delivering attractive instrumental versions of his biggest hits and other songs he recorded. All tunes on this two-disc set are given jazz flair by the team of talented musicians: Anat Cohen (clarinet, bass clarinet, tenor sax), Avishai Cohen (trumpet), Joel Frahm (tenor, soprano, alto saxes), Manuel Valera (piano), Jason Lindner (piano, Hammond B3, Moog, Wurlitzer), Barak Mori (bass), and Daniel Freedman (drums). Guesting are Scott Robinson (baritone sax) and Vic Juris (electric guitar). As the only female in the group, Anat delivers some sparkling solo moments.

The pleasurable collection of 24 tunes (each from three

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to six-plus minutes in duration) includes ballads and swingers arranged by Valera, Lindner, Avishai and Anat Cohen and undoubtedly written to capture the talents of the soloists. Highlights of the smartly packaged red, black & white four-fold set include a rockin' version on Disc One of "Splish Splash"; a drawling ballad take on "I Guess I'm Good For Nothing But the Blues" (featuring Anat's bass clarinet, Juris's guitar, Avishai's trumpet); a lightly swinging reading of "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," featuring melody head and solos by Anat with flowing clarinet lines; and a wonderful sax-driven "Artificial Flowers" that will take you back to 1960 when Darin recorded it. Disc Two includes gems such as a rousing "Work Song," arranged for blended horns head, a bari sax solo, and the B3; Robinson's sexy bari-sax led version of "Black Coffee" where he trades off with Juris; and a novel version of Darin's trademark, "Mack the Knife," led by Avishai's trumpet with and brassy-layered like a swinging New Orleans-style tune. The tracks not mentioned here are equally enjoyable and provide plenty of foot-pumping listening.

Recorded with impeccable finesse that features stereo speaker separation for soloists and rhythm section, this often retro-sounding studio project serves up an extremely satisfying listen that will leave you reminiscing (if you're old enough to recall music of the 1950s) and/or desirous of more such high-quality straight-ahead jazz. If the Waverly Seven continues along this same path with their music, they should attract hordes of fans around the globe. For more info on this band formed in November 2006, go to www.waverlyseven.com. *Nancy Ann Lee*

PINETOP PERKINS

Born in the Honey, The Pinetop Perkins Story SAGEBRUSH PRODUCTIONS DVD

Pianist Joe Willie 'Pinetop' Perkins keeps going, seemingly as musically vigorous in his nineties as much younger blues acts. **Born in the Honey, The Pinetop Perkins Story** is an hour-long bio-documentary due out May 15 produced by Peter Carlson who put together **Don't Start Me Talking: The Junior Wells Story**.

A narrative provides the details on Pinetop's life including the circumstances of his youth and later emergence as a star on the blues circuit. Blended in are some stock still pictures of southern plantation, town and juke scenes, some acting to recreate Pinetop's youth, with interviews of Pinetop along with his admirers. There are some performance clips from a variety of shows including King Biscuit Festival, the Legendary Rhythm & Blues Cruise and some footage of him with The Nighthawks.

Admirers include his colleagues with Muddy's band such as Paul Oscher, who recalled when Pinetop replaced Otis Spann in Muddy's band, and guitarist Bob Margolin and drummer Willie Smith. Others talking about Pinetop include Lonnie Brooks, Bobby Rush who tells a hilarious story about Pinetop who had some wisdom for men out on the town, Ike Turner recalling Pinetop's influence and stature as a pianist, and Kim Wilson.

The DVD does not have any extras and does not seem divided into chapters, for those who that matters. It does come with a CD of live performances, mostly Chicago, with one studio track from a Bob Corritore that covers the same ground as his available recordings with versions of *Chicken Shack*, *Mojo*, *How Long Blues*, *Ida B* and the rollicking *Down in Mississippi*. Pinetop affably handles the material backed by Little Frank Krokowski on guitar, Bob Stroger on bass and Willie Smith on drums. The packaging erroneously credits Pinetop for Memphis Slim's *Grinder Man Blues*, and Magic Sam for Rosco Gordon's *Just a Little Bit*, titled here *Little Bit of Your Love*.

Certainly a documentary that fans of the blues, especially Pinetop's fans, will certainly enjoy. *Ron Weinstock*



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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CHICK COREA AND BELA FLECK

The Enchantment CONCORD

Performing as a duet, pianist Chick Corea and banjo player Bela Fleck deliver an 11-tune set featuring four originals from Corea and six from Fleck, and the tune, "Brazil," by Ary Barroso and Sidney Russell.

The pairing of a jazz pianist and a progressive bluegrass banjoist might seem to be an unusual idea, but they colorfully intertwine their improvisations in a painterly set that can, at times, sounds like Classical, Baroque, World, or Folk music. Corea sometimes injects right-hand jazz phrasing while Fleck is strumming bluegrass. Other times, Corea will echo with left-hand bass lines a riff that Fleck is playing. For Corea, this seems to fit in with his recent explorations into World music (see my previous review of his DVD, *The Ultimate Adventure*). Like that project, this one is equally adventurous, fluid, airy and imaginative. Corea contributes "Senorita," "Joban Dna Nopia,"

“Children’s Song #6,” and “The Enchantment.” Fleck’s tunes are “Spectacle,” “Mountain,” “A Strange Romance,” “Menagerie,” “Waltse for Abby,” and “Sunset Road.”

Throughout, the lively interactions between these Grammy-winning artists grab your interest for their musicality, clarity and precision. There may not be anything here to hum to, but they make such divine music together!

Nancy Ann Lee

TAD ROBINSON
A New Point Of View
SEVERN RECORDS

A New Point of View is Tad Robinson’s stunning new soulful disc on Severn Records. With his old pal Alex Schultz on guitar and Willie Henderson bringing horn and string arrangements, this album evokes some of the classic Chicago and Philly soul recordings by the likes of Tyrone Davis and the Chi-Lites.

There are two covers and nine originals as Robinson opens with the soulful lament, *Long Way Home*, because Tad is in no rush to get home because “At my house there is no one waiting for me.”

What is amazing is how much Robinson has developed as a vocalist and really is terrific here, and his remake of the Johnny Taylor hit ballad, *Ain’t That Loving you (For More Reasons Than One)*, is almost as impressive with the string and horn arrangements caressing Robinson’s delivery of the songs.

I believe Bobby Bland had the original of *Up and Down World*, which perhaps does not reach the same level (it’s one of two numbers that Henderson did not arrange), as I am more partial to the late Johnny Adam’s interpretation. It’s one of several tracks with some nice harp by Robinson and piano from Kevin Anker. Another original, *You Get the Keep the Love*, hits a groove akin to Tyrone Davis’ classic recordings, while *He’s Moving In*, is a strong bluesy lament.

Two of a Kind Blues is more of a straight blues theme with having one woman at home and one with who he cheats, but Henderson’s arrangements take it do a dif-

ferent level.

This is a really surprising disc from Severn because it is a soul recording with blues tinges, even though its being marketed as blues. This is not to diminish the fact that it is simply a marvelous recording that showcases just how superb a performer Tad Robinson has become.

Highly recommended.

Ron Weinstock

PAUL CARLON OCTET
Other Tongues
DEEP TONE RECORDS

Paul Carlon plays tenor saxophone, flute, Mbira and composes and arranges tunes on this debut CD. A native of rural central New York, Carlon has been active on the New York City jazz scene for 15 years, performing with (or composing for) an array of jazz and Latin-jazz bands, as well as leading his own groups. He currently teaches at the College of Staten Island.

Proven by the nine original tunes on this disc, Carlon might be one of the City’s best kept secrets. Not only can he lead and write/arrange exciting tunes, but he plays tenor sax with imagination and verve. The “tongues” he blends are swing, Afro-Cuban timba, rumba and New York City jazz. Performing in his octet are Anton Denner (alto sax, flute), Dave Smith (trumpet), Ryan Keberle and Mike Fahie (trombones), John Stenger (piano), Dave Ambrosio (bass) and William “Beaver” Baush (drums). Their expert solos and section work enhance each tune.

Guest artists include rumbatap artist Max Pollak, tenor saxophonist Buddy Terry (on “Street Beat”) and vocalist Ileana Santamaria (the youngest daughter of the legendary Cuban percussion master “Mongo” Santamaria) who sings on the catchy “Rumbatapestry,” the Billy Strayhorn number “Smada,” and the exhilarating Carlon tune, “The Spirit Calls.”

Swinging, melodious, beat-driven tunes and suspenseful, fascinating arrangements (many with stirring Latin beats) make this CD a fully engaging listen. Carlon has crafted a very promising debut recording!

Nancy Ann Lee

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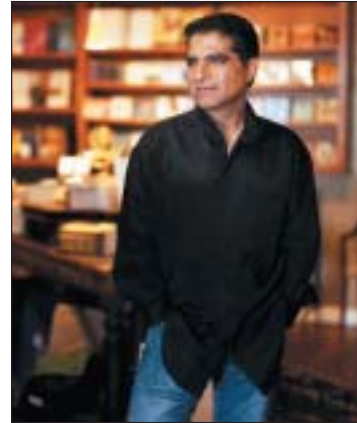


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FILLMORE SLIM

The Legend Of Fillmore Slim MOUNTAIN TOP PRODUCTIONS

The blues by its very nature attracts a host of colorful characters who inhabit the shadowy margins between good and evil, love and hate and night and day.

Fillmore Slim has made a life in this intersection of extremes having spent years as not only a hard working blues man but as a high end pimp in San Francisco who had his ladies working the streets as he worked the stages. After the Feds treated him to a vacation from the streets he claims to have quit "the life" and now focuses his efforts on the blues.

Joined here by Rick Estrin (Little Charlie & the Nightcats) on harmonica, and hotshot guitarists Paris Slim and Joe Louis Walker, Fillmore weaves tales about his notorious past on the harmonica fueled *The Legend of Fillmore Slim* and reflecting his taste in women on the funky *Love For the Third Time*.

While Fillmore takes a stab at combining rap and the blues on a duet with his son, *Hey Little Brother*, he fares better with slower traditional blues cuts such as *Trapped by the Devil* and *My Friend Blue*.

While his view of women is, shall we say, traditional, as revealed by his declaration of independence from his woman on *Jack You Up* he is savvy enough to balance the scales with a taste of his own medicine on *She Don't Love Me* where his woman manages to keep busy while he's on the road.

Other notable cuts include *Blues from the Heart*, which is Fillmore's shout out to all the blues guitar legends that inspired his entry into the blues and *Tired of My Old Lady* which features some smoking slide work from Joe Louis Walker.

Mark Smith

CHRIS BYARS

Photos in Black, White and Grey

SMALLS RECORDS

Captured in live performance at Joe's Pub in New York City, saxophonist-composer Chris Byars and his band with pianist Sacha Perry, bassist Ari Roland and drummer Andy Watson polish off eight originals. This disc follows Byars' 2006 debut with his octet, Night Owls, and is his first small group recording.

Byars (born in New York City, 11-2-1970) comes from a family of Juilliard-trained musicians and has devoted himself to jazz since he was age 14.

He holds undergrad and graduate degrees from Manhattan School of Music and performs regularly at Small's in Greenwich Village.

On this outing, Byars plays alto, tenor and soprano saxes and his approach is pretty much straight-ahead. He shows imagination and skill at both performing and composing. The band bops through "Milton," "Acoustic Phenomenon," and "A.T.." They cozy up to the ballad "Safe At Home," sashay to the Latinate "Manhattan Valley" and do justice to the remaining numbers.

Not much new is being expressed on this ear-pleasing recording, but Byars and crew are solid players who work tightly together and serve up plenty of sparkling spotlighted moments.

Nancy Ann Lee

STAX 50TH ANNIVERSARY

CELEBRATION

STAX RECORDS

Having acquired Fantasy Records last year, the Concord Music Group has been reissuing some of the classics of various labels Fantasy owned including Stax Records. Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Stax, Concord has put together this two CD set to celebrate the pioneering musical legacy of the label as well as starting to release new rhythm and blues recordings under the Stax imprint. This set collects many of the biggest hits for that famed label including Carla Thomas' *Gee Whiz*, Otis Redding's *Respect* and *(Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay*, Rufus Thomas' *Do The Funky Chicken*, Carla and Otis' *Tramp*, Albert King's *Born On a Bad Sign*, Issac Hayes' *Walk on Bye* and *Theme From Shaft*, Johnny Taylor's *Who's Making Love* and *Cheaper to Keep Her*, William Bell's *You Don't Miss Your Water*, Jean Knight's *Mr. Big Stuff*, Mel & Tim's *Starting All Over*, The Staple Singers' *Respect Yourself*, Booker T & the MG's *Soul Limbo*, Mabel John's *Your Good Thing (Is About To End)*, and other similarly classic soul and blues gems.

My advance CD lacked the booklet by Stax historian Rob Bowman which certainly will have much about the artists and the songs. This is definitely one for fans of classic southern soul with a sprinkling of classic blues recordings from Albert King, Little Milton Mabel John and Johnny Taylor.

Ron Weinstock

KURT ELLING

Nightmoves

CONCORD

Vocalist Kurt Elling releases his first disc for Concord after signing an exclusive record deal. This is his seventh recording overall and features the singer's rich baritone on an alluring collection of 11 romancers with backing in various configurations from pianist Laurence Hobgood or Rob Mounsey, bassist Christian McBride or Rob Amster, drummer Willie Jones, III and others, including saxophonist Bob Mintzer and The Escher String Quartet on a couple of tracks.

Elling has selected an array of mostly lesser-known tunes by Michael Franks, Alan Pasqua, Betty Carter, and others. Although there may not be many familiar titles, with the exception of "In the Wee Small Hours" which is part of a medley, there isn't a dull tune in the bunch. In his usual inventive style, Elling delivers a novel take on "She's Come Undone," remade as "Undun" on an arrangement by Mounsey and interwoven with Mintzer's sax lines.

Elling has frequently relied on literary sources for tunes and on this outing makes over Fred Hersch's "The Sleepers," from a Walt Whitman poem and, done as a bass-voice duet, "Change Partners/If You Never Come to Me," set to Theodore Roethke's 1953 poem and enhanced with Howard Levy's harmonica solos and Guilherme Monteiro's guitar.

The Downbeat Critics Poll winner for Male Vocalist of the Year, consecutively from 2000-2006, continues his extraordinary legacy that prompted the *San Francisco Chronicle* to tag him as "the most flamboyantly creative jazz singer to emerge in the last decade." Elling has outdone himself with this gorgeous set of diverse songs.

Nancy Ann Lee

DAROL ANGER & MIKE MARSHALL

Woodshop
ADVENTURE MUSIC AMERICA

Darol Anger (violins) and Mike Marshall (mandolin, guitars) team up again, with support from Phil Aaberg (piano), Todd Sickafoose (acoustic bass) and Aaron Johnston (percussion) for a fetching 14 tune session of originals (seven by each co-leader).

Much of the music on this recording updates and progresses from their masterpiece, *Chiaroscuro*. Recorded on Windham Hill in 1985, it sold 65,000 during a five-year period. On this recording, they have collaborated to create "highly structured orchestral works" that showcase their musicianship on various stringed instruments. Tunes include "Peter Pan," "Slip and Slide," "Borealis," "Bach, Up," "Hearts Wait," and more.

Each of these musicians has racked up a solo career yet they work so well together and know their instruments so well, you'll wonder why they waited so long to pair up again. Their forte is definitely improvised World music and their playing is richly envisioned, intricate and expressive.

There's never a dull moment. *Nancy Ann Lee*

FRANKIE LEE SIMS

Walking With Frankie
AIM RECORDS

Texas bluesman Frankie Lee Sims was a traditionally based performer who was perhaps less skilled than Lightning Hopkins, but had success with juke joint combo recordings like *Lucy Mae Blues* and *Walkin' With Frankie* (the latter most recently revived by Philip Walker on his fine Delta Groove album).

Sims first recorded for Specialty, and then for Johnny Vincent's Ace label. AIM Records out of Australia has just issued *Walking With Frankie*, 14 tracks recorded by legendary New York record man Bobby Robinson in 1960 which were first issued in England in 1975 – 5 years after Sims had passed away.

A cousin of Lightnin' Hopkins, Sims was a downhome Texas country bluesman whose finest recordings were tough Texas juke joint combo blues such as his two most celebrated songs. The liner notes claim that by the late 1950s Sims had shifted his music more in the mode of the great Guitar Slim, but this is not supported by the rough house vocal and sometimes chaotic instrumental delivery of *Send My Soul to the Devil*, his slightly chaotic rendition of Hopkins' *Short Haired Woman*, and the lively *Going Back to the River*, with a couple of effective short rocking guitar breaks, showing Sims remained a down home juke performer. The timing of the performances is sometimes erratic as the backing band occasionally can be heard catching up or holding the performance together.

Sims was not as strong and consistent as a bluesman as his celebrated cousin and did not record as frequently. He also did not benefit from the blues revival of the sixties but invested passion into his performances and while I would recommend Sims' Specialty recordings first, this will be of interest to anyone wanting to hear some real downhome Texas blues. *Ron Weinstock*

BENNIE WALLACE

Disorder At The Border
ENJA/JUSTINTIME

Tenor saxophonist Bennie Wallace has had a most intriguing career playing with blues and gospel artists as well as serving as the musical director for several films including *Blaze* and *Bull Durham*. His own recordings have included sidemen as diverse as Tommy Flanagan, Dr. John, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Dave Holland, Elvin Jones, Chick Corea, Oliver Lake and Ray Anderson.

Viewed as among the most original saxophonists, he has a deep reverence for classic saxophonists as Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Lester Young and Don Byas. His latest disc is a tribute to Coleman Hawkins that was recorded at a German concert in 2004, the year of the Hawkins Centenary. With a superb nine-piece big little band, they run through a program of songs associated with Hawkins in swinging arrangements that hint at Jazz at the Philharmonic and similar type gigs, but with wonderful arrangements by Anthony Wilson (except for Wallace on *Honeysuckle Rose*) that provide a bit of a more modern ambiance than the simple riffs of those swinging groups of years gone by.

Others present are Terell Stafford on trumpet, Ray Anderson on trombone, Jesse Davis and Brad Leali on alto saxophone, Adam Schroeder on baritone saxophone, Donald Vega on piano, Danton Boller on bass and Alvin Queen on drums. It opens with Hawkins' title track, a blues-based number that Wallace gets right into.

Stafford and Schroeder certainly get noticed with some hot playing on *Bean & the Boys*, the other Hawkins original. Wilson's arrangement over Vega's piano provides just the right setting for Wallace's ballad playing which suggests a bit of Ben Webster with his heavy vibrato.

Wallace's arrangement of *Honeysuckle Rose* is inspired by Benny Carter's arrangement of the song with Vega's thoughtful piano being to the fore before the horns dig in and the tempo kicks up a notch in a playful mode. Both Davis and Leali are featured as they each take several choruses before they start trading off each other, before Schroeder takes the front stage and a gruff chorus by Anderson. On *Body and Soul*, the spare arrangement almost provides a feeling to the performance that Wallace is unaccompanied on his remarkable homage to Hawkins on what was perhaps his biggest hit. It is an entrancing performance. The rousing *Joshua Fit The Battle Of Jericho*, is the longest performance, which takes this marvelous disc to a strong conclusion. *Ron Weinstock*

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BOB STROGER

Bob's Back In Town
AIRWAY RECORDS

Veteran bass player Bob Stroger is one of the steadiest and most solid players on the blues circuit having graced countless sessions with his rock-solid approach. Saxophonist Sam Burckhardt's association with Stroger dates back to the 13 years they spent together in Sunnyland Slim's Band and later the two with guitarist Steve Freund and the late drummer/vocalist Robert Covington as The Big Four. Burckhardt has brought in Freund, keyboard whiz Kenny Barker, drummer Kenny Smith and legendary Willie 'Big Eyes' Smith on harp for one track for a nicely produced session of blues, **Bob is Back in Town** (Airway Records).

Stroger obviously has a fondness for Junior Parker as he handles Parker's *What Goes On in the Dark*, and *Stranded in St. Louis* along with Tampa Red's *Don't You Lie To Me* (for some reason credited to Albert King), and Eddie Taylor's *Bad Boy*. While Stroger is credited with a number of songs, the title track sounds like Lieber & Stoller's *Ruby, Ruby* (even with a backing vocal chanting softly "Ruby, Ruby," while *I'm a Busy Man* employs a swamp blues rhythm in the manner of Slim Harpo, although not with the macho lyrics. *Blind Man Blues* has a melody similar to Albert King's *Pretty Woman*, and opens with a searing guitar solo from Freund before Stroger starts his soft-spoken vocal. *I Got to Move* is a slowed down rendition of the traditional blues associated with Fred McDowell, but probably Stroger picked it up from Elmore James, and Burckhardt adds some nice tenor behind the vocal. Freund adds guitar fills along with a jazzy solo which anticipates the easy going swing of *Jazz Man Blues* with its line "Jazz ain't nothing but a bluesman blowing his home." *Indigo Bunting* is a tasty instrumental from Burckhardt.

This is a wonderfully played album, with Burckhardt contributing atmospheric arrangements. Stroger is a low-key, amiable singer although somewhat anonymous, and not commanding, as a singer, which is not surprising given his long tenure as a sideman as part of many first-rate bands, which include the marvelous aggregation here†—which makes this an engaging and easy to listen to disc, though not an essential one. *Ron Weinstock*

TRIBALJAZZ

Tribaljazz
HIDDEN BEACH

With respect to the world music ambience and overtures to universality in the jacket notes, the most prominent feel on this set is West Coast jazz in the best sense of that term. Breezy, open grooves and a flair for the eclectic that always seemed more at home on the Left Coast are found in abundance on this very tasty set.

One-time Doors drummer John Densmore and reedman Art Ellis head up Tribaljazz and it's Ellis's work that serves as the prime focus. Not an "edgy" player by any means, Ellis's freshness, and the "real" jazz sense of the ensemble—particularly Densmore and pianist Quinn Johnson—make this set a refreshing replacement for "smooth jazz" in one's diet. Smarter programmers should pick up on this. *Duane Verh*

RICK HOLMSTROM

Late in the Night
M.C. RECORDS

After tearing up the band stand from coast to coast during his long stint as the guitarist for Rod Piazza & The Mighty Flyers, Rick Holmstrom embarked on a solo career that has given him the chance to stretch in directions only hinted at in the context of that band's sound.

His 2002 release, *Hydraulic Groove*, confounded some blues fans with its tape loops and sonic experiments but was hailed by many as the most interesting thing to hit the blues racks in some time.

This release is a return to more traditional fare. Playing in a stripped down trio format, Holmstrom visits familiar T-Bone Walker style territory on the sting scorching instrumental *Peculiar Hop* and on the rip roaring *On the Vine* which could have dropped straight off a Mighty Flyers disc.

From there he moves on to everything from muscular rock, *Tutwiler*, to atmospheric Doors-like groovers, *77 Red V8*, to loping shuffles, *Better Way*, to moody instrumentals straight from a gritty Western, *Descanso*, and a track that channels Warren Zevon, *Hey Johnny*.

He even takes a shot at Dylan's oft covered classic *Rainy Day Women #12 & 35* and reinvents it with Jeff Turmes' wailing saxophone doing the heavy lifting. While he isn't the strongest vocalist in the world he has improved considerably over the years and sounds most comfortable when he follows the lead of fellow West Coast artist, James Harman, and semi-talks his way through tunes as on *Dig Myself a Hole*.

Overall, while straight blues are hard to come by here, this is an inventive, fun disc that reaffirms Holmstrom's decision to strike out on his own. *Mark Smith*

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