

now in our 42nd year
March / April 2016
Issue 365

jazz
& blues
report

Verve Records Turns Sixty!



jazz &blues

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Founded in Buffalo New York in March of 1974; began our Cleveland edition in April of 1978. Now based in San Diego, this global e-zine edition is posted online bimonthly at www.jazz-blues.com

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"Buffalonious"

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



Verve Records Celebrates 60 Years

Verve will Celebrate Landmark Anniversary with Releases Throughout the Year

One of the most prestigious labels in the history of jazz, Verve Records will celebrate its 60th anniversary throughout 2016 with a trove of historic reissues and stunning new collections from its legendary archives. The release schedule constitutes a who's-who of jazz legends, including such pioneers as *Charlie Parker, Billie Holiday, Count Basie, Oscar Peterson, Bill Evans, Wes Montgomery, Louis Armstrong, Jimmy Smith, Stan Getz*, and the label's heart and soul, *Ella Fitzgerald*.

Fitzgerald will be honored with the release of *Jazz at the Philharmonic: The Ella Fitzgerald Set*, a new compilation bringing together all of her Jazz at the Philharmonic performances previously issued by Verve on various albums, on a single collection for the first time ever. The collection—which includes concerts from 1949, 1953 and 1954 and features appearances by Parker, Lester Young, and Hank Jones among others—will feature newly remastered music and an essay by author Will Friedwald.

The first set of releases, due out this month, March 2016, is also highlighted by the new digital collection *Verve 60*, featuring 60 stellar tracks by 60 different artists from throughout the label's history, spanning from Ella and Oscar through Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock to Diana Krall and Christian McBride. In addition, five favorites from the Verve catalogue will be reissued on vinyl, including *Ella & Louis*, the first pairing for the label of Fitzgerald and Armstrong; Billie Holiday's *Lady Sings the Blues*; Charlie "Bird" Parker's innovative *Charlie Parker with Strings*; Oscar Peterson's *Night Train*; and Count Basie's *April in Paris*.

Several classics will also make their debuts in HD digital audio and iTunes, including titles by Fitzgerald, Evans, Parker, Wynton Kelly, and Stan Getz. Organ master Jimmy Smith's classic singles for the label will be compiled into a digital box set.

The release schedule continues in May and June with more vinyl and digital reissues, including Getz/Gilberto and albums by Wes Montgomery, Blossom Dearie, Coleman Hawkins, and Anita O'Day. A new CD collection will compile unreleased music by Charlie Parker, while Louis Armstrong's complete studio recordings for the label will be collected onto one multi-disc set.

Verve was founded in 1956 by Norman Granz, the forward-thinking impresario responsible for the hugely popular Jazz at the Philharmonic concerts, which brought the music to new audiences and garnered jazz an unprecedented level of respect in the popular culture. Granz also managed

Ella Fitzgerald and launched the label in large part to create new opportunities worthy of the singer's immense talent, including her landmark series of Songbook recordings.

Under the visionary leadership of Granz and later Creed Taylor (after MGM purchased the imprint in 1961), Verve continued to set new trends. The label sparked the Bossa Nova craze with the 1964 release of the GRAMMY® Award-winning *Getz/Gilberto* and brought a lush, elegant new sound to jazz with the arrangements of Claus Ogerman and Oliver Nelson. Its focus also encompassed groundbreaking comedy, and later widened to embrace folk and rock recordings, including now-iconic releases by The Velvet Underground, Richie Havens, Frank Zappa & The Mothers of Invention and Janis Ian.

It was its jazz legacy that cemented Verve's place in the popular imagination however, and after a fallow period in the '70s and '80s Verve was revived in the mid-1990s, again signing many of the biggest names in the music: Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, John Scofield, Betty Carter, Abbey Lincoln, Jeff Lorber, Chris Botti and Incognito all recorded for Verve during this period. Its diverse and distinguished lineage continues today through the work of artists like Diana Krall, Sarah McLachlan and Third Story.

Over the course of its six-decade history, Verve has

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

become synonymous with the very best in jazz, venerating the music while charting its course and helping to break down racial and stylistic barriers. There's no better way to celebrate that legacy than with the music itself, and 2016 will allow listeners to revisit the breathtaking sounds of Verve in new and exhilarating ways.

For more information, please visit: VerveMusicGroup.com



**Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour 2016
All-Star Band Features Raul Midón,
Ravi Coltrane, Nicholas Payton,
Gerald Clayton, Joe Sanders,
Gregory Hutchinson
& Kendrick Scott**



Photo: R.R. Jones

Midway Through Tour Now. Tour Kicked Off January 14 with 28 Shows in 17 Cities in 10 States, Ending March 13

Monterey, Calif - Monterey Jazz Festival, world-renowned for its artistic excellence, sophisticated informality, and longstanding mission to create and support year-round jazz education and performance programs in local, regional, national, and international venues, continues this commitment in 2016 with its fourth North American Tour, featuring critically-acclaimed, GRAMMY®-winning jazz artists.

The Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour 2016 features Raul Midón on guitar and vocals; Ravi Coltrane on tenor and soprano saxophones; Nicholas Payton on trumpet; musical director Gerald Clayton on piano; Joe Sanders

on bass; with Gregory Hutchinson (January and February dates) and Kendrick Scott (March dates) on drums. They are currently midway through a tour that will have them perform 28 shows and with stops in 17 cities in 10 states. It began January 14 and will run through March 13, 2016.

Highlights of the tour include a five-night run at Birdland in New York City, with appearances at major performing arts centers and colleges in Arkansas, Arizona, California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Texas, and Virginia.

Information about tour dates and times is available on www.montereyjazzfestival.org. Each of the shows will feature an assortment of classic jazz repertoire and original compositions by band members.

Members of Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour 2016 have deep relationships with Monterey Jazz Festival and have a commitment to the cultivation of jazz audiences worldwide. Raul Midón has appeared at Monterey three times, in 2009, 2011 and 2015. Ravi Coltrane first appeared at Monterey in 2001, nearly 41 years to the day after his own father, John Coltrane, made his debut at Monterey in 1960. Ravi also appeared at the Festival in 2013 and 2015. Nicholas Payton was the Festival's Artist-In-Residence in 2000, and appeared again in 2015. Gerald Clayton, Joe Sanders, Gregory Hutchinson and Kendrick Scott, some of the rising stars in the jazz world, have been recent performers on Monterey stages, both at the Monterey Jazz Festival itself, and as high school students at the Festival's 45-year old student competition, the Next Generation Jazz Festival.

Clayton, a scholarship and soloist award winner at Monterey's 2000 and 2001 springtime Next Generation Jazz Festival with the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts, made trio appearances at MJF in 2010 and 2012 with Joe Sanders, and recently performed in 2014 in duo with Charles Lloyd.

Gregory Hutchinson and Kendrick Scott split the drum position on the tour: Hutchinson plays the January and February dates, and Scott plays the March dates. Both drummers have a long history with the Festival: Hutchinson's first of three appearances at MJF was in 1992, and Kendrick Scott, a three-time Berklee/Monterey group drummer from 1999-2003, has played at MJF nine times. Scott also was the drummer with MJF's 50th Anniversary All-Stars on the 54-date tour in 2008, and performed on Terence Blanchard's GRAMMY-winning recording with the band.

iMJF on Tour in 2016 is our fourth national tour since our 50th Anniversary Tour in 2008, I said Tim Jackson, artistic director of Monterey Jazz Festival. It's a great way to spread the gospel of the Monterey Jazz Festival throughout the land! Our 2016 tour looks to be one our best, and without a doubt, will deliver incredible music by some of today's finest jazz artists. I

"As a tour producer, I always strive to offer highly artistic yet compelling and entertaining presentations," said Danny Melnick, president of Absolutely Live

Entertainment. "The audience's reaction at the 2015 Monterey Jazz Festival proves we have succeeded with this band."

The longest continuously-running jazz festival in the world, the Monterey Jazz Festival has presented nearly every major jazz star—from Billie Holiday and Louis Armstrong to Esperanza Spalding and Trombone Shorty—since it was founded in 1958.

All-Star bands at Monterey have been a long-standing tradition at the Monterey Jazz Festival since 1966. Previous Monterey Jazz Festival tours have crisscrossed the United States. In 2008, the 50th Anniversary All-Star Band made a 54-date tour across 22 states to over 43,000 fans, and featured four-time GRAMMY winner Terence Blanchard on trumpet; the late GRAMMY winner James Moody on saxophone; musical director Benny Green on piano; Derrick Hodge on bass; Kendrick Scott on drums, and five-time GRAMMY nominee, vocalist Nnenna Freelon.

In 2010, Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour played 34 dates through 17 states to 26,000 fans, and featured the nine-time GRAMMY-nominated and NEA Jazz Master Kenny Barron on piano; GRAMMY-nominated violinist Regina Carter; GRAMMY-winning guitarist Russell Malone; GRAMMY-winning vocalist Kurt Elling; bassist Kiyoshi Kitagawa; and GRAMMY-nominated drummer Johnathan Blake.

In 2013, 35,000 fans saw the Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour 55th Anniversary Celebration across the country in 40 cities in 23 states across the United States, Canada, and Washington D.C., and featured three-time GRAMMY winners vocalist Dee Dee Bridgewater and bassist and musical director Christian McBride; pianist Benny Green, GRAMMY-winners drummer Lewis Nash and saxophonist Chris Potter; and trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire.

Monterey Jazz Festival, a leader in the jazz world since 1958, celebrates the legacy of jazz, expands its boundaries, and provides opportunities to experience jazz through the creative production of performances and educational programs. For more information, visit www.montereyjazzfestival.org

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Left to right: Archie Shepp (photo by Monette Berthommier), Gary Burton (photo by Bill Gallerly), Wendy Oxenhorn (photo by Francesco Pini), and Pharoah Sanders (photo by Quentin Leboucher)

Celebrate Jazz with the National Endowment for the Arts on April 4

Washington, DC— The National Endowment for the Arts will honor the 2016 NEA Jazz Masters at a tribute concert, held in collaboration with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, on Monday, April 4, 2016 at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall in Washington, DC. Taking place during Jazz Appreciation Month, the concert will honor four individuals whose creativity, passion, and hard work have contributed to the continuing vibrancy of jazz.

Part of the NEA's 50th anniversary celebrations, this concert will feature world-renowned and emerging musicians performing in honor of the 2016 NEA Jazz Masters, recipients of our nation's highest honor in jazz. The 2016 NEA Jazz Masters tribute concert will be streamed live and broadcast on SiriusXM. While in Washington, DC, the 2016 NEA Jazz Masters also will participate in a listening party at NPR's headquarters on Sunday, April 3, and a master class at Duke Ellington School of the Arts on Tuesday, April 5. More details about all of the 2016 NEA Jazz Masters events are below.

The 2016 NEA Jazz Masters are:

Gary Burton - Vibraphonist, Bandleader, Educator
Wendy Oxenhorn* - Musicians' Advocate

Pharoah Sanders - Saxophonist, Composer

Archie Shepp - Saxophonist, Composer, Educator

* Wendy Oxenhorn is the recipient of the 2016 A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Award for Jazz Advocacy, which is bestowed upon an individual who has contributed significantly to the appreciation, knowledge, and advancement of the art form of jazz.

NEA Jazz Masters Tribute Concert - April 4

The 2016 NEA Jazz Masters tribute concert will take place on Monday, April 4 at 8:00 p.m. ET at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall at 2700 F Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20566. It will be hosted by Jason Moran, pianist and Kennedy Center artistic director for Jazz, and include remarks by Jane Chu, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts; Deborah F. Rutter, president of the Kennedy Center; as well as the 2016 NEA Jazz

Masters. The concert will feature performances by NEA Jazz Masters Randy Weston and Jimmy Heath, as well as Ambrose Akinmusire, Lakecia Benjamin, Stefon Harris, Justin Kauflin, Rudresh Mahanthappa, Jason Moran, Linda Oh, and Roswell Rudd. Additional performers will be announced at a later date.

Live concert webcast

The 2016 NEA Jazz Masters tribute concert will be video-streamed live at arts.gov, Kennedy-Center.org, and NPR.org/Music. An archive of the webcast will be available following the event. In addition, SiriusXM Channel 67, Real Jazz will broadcast the concert live. Join the conversation about the concert on Twitter using #NEAJazz16.

NPR Listening Party with 2016 NEA Jazz Masters – April 3

On Sunday, April 3, at 2:00 p.m. NPR will host a listening party in honor of the 2016 NEA Jazz Masters at their headquarters at 1111 North Capitol Street, NE, Washington, DC, 20002. Hosted by Jason Moran, this event will include conversation with the 2016 NEA Jazz Masters, using music from their careers to tell the story of their lives. The 2016 NEA Jazz Masters will be joined by other musicians whose lives they have influenced. This event is free and open to the public but tickets are required. Reserve your tickets here. Media who wish to attend this event should contact Hugo Rojo with NPR at mediarelations@npr.org. An edited audio version of this conversation will be available at NPR.org/music at 7:00 p.m. ET on April 4, 2016, preceding the webcast of the concert.

Student Master Class with the 2016 NEA Jazz Masters – April 5

Recognizing the importance of mentorship to the future of jazz, on Tuesday, April 5, 2016 at 11:00 a.m., 2016 NEA Jazz Masters Gary Burton, Pharoah Sanders, and Archie Shepp will visit the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington, DC, where they will coach Ellington School jazz students (who will also perform at the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage on April 4) and share their unique insights into the music. Music students from other District of Columbia Public Schools will also observe this workshop. This event is closed to the public. Media who wish to attend this event must contact auclaire@arts.gov.

The NEA Jazz Masters

Each year since 1982, the National Endowment for the Arts has conferred the NEA Jazz Masters award to those who have devoted their lives and careers to jazz, an art form uniquely rooted in American history and culture. With this new class, the NEA has honored 140 great figures in jazz. More information about the NEA Jazz Masters and the agency's collection of free jazz content, including podcasts, videos, and Jazz Moments – 30-90 second audio clips of musical excerpts and interviews with and about NEA Jazz Masters – is available here.

The NEA also supports the Smithsonian Jazz Oral

History Program, an effort to document the lives and careers of NEA Jazz Masters. In addition to transcriptions of the comprehensive interviews, the website also includes audio clips with interview excerpts. This project has transcribed the oral histories of more than 90 NEA Jazz Masters.

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the National Endowment for the Arts and the agency is celebrating this milestone with events and activities through September 2016. Go to the 50th section at arts.gov to enjoy art stories from around the nation, peruse the Facts & Figures section, and check out the anniversary timeline.

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is America's living memorial to President Kennedy, and the nation's cultural center. Under the leadership of Chairman David M. Rubenstein and President Deborah F. Rutter, the nine theaters and stages of the nation's busiest performing arts facility attract audiences and visitors totaling 3 million people annually; Center-related touring productions, television, and radio broadcasts welcome 40 million more. Opening its doors on September 8, 1971, the Center presents the greatest performances of music, dance, and theater; supports artists in the creation of new work; and serves the nation as a leader in arts education. With its artistic affiliates, the National Symphony Orchestra and Washington National Opera, the Center's achievements as a commissioner, producer, and nurturer of developing artists have resulted in more than 300 theatrical productions, and dozens of new ballets, operas, and musical works.

NPR Music

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For more information, visit <https://www.arts.gov/news/2016/celebrate-jazz-national-endowment-arts-april-4-2016>



**National
Endowment
for the Arts**
arts.gov



Norah Jones to Perform at Both Newport Folk Festival & Newport Jazz Festival

Nine-time Grammy Award winning singer and songwriter Norah Jones will perform the rare feat of appearing at both the Newport Folk Festival and Newport Jazz Festival on consecutive weekends this July. Demonstrating her versatility and wide appeal, Norah will make her first-ever solo appearance at the Folk Festival on Saturday, July 23 having previously performed at the 2014 festival with her band Puss n Boots and as a special guest with the legendary singer Mavis Staples. The following weekend Norah will make her first-ever appearance at the Jazz Festival on Saturday, July 30.

"Norah Jones is one of America's great singers of songs," said festival founder and music industry icon George Wein. "The scope of her artistry is so broad that it's possible for her to appear at both the Newport Folk Festival and Newport Jazz Festival, while still feeling comfortable that she will reach her audience and fans at these two historic cultural events. We are proud to have her with us."

Norah is currently putting the final touches on her sixth solo album, which is due to be released this Fall on Blue Note Records.

Norah Jones first emerged on the world stage in February 2002 with the release of *Come Away With Me*, her self-described "moody little record" that introduced a singular new voice and grew into a global phenomenon, sweeping the 2003 Grammy Awards and signaling a paradigm shift away from the prevailing synthetic pop music of the time. Since then, Jones has sold over 40 million albums worldwide and become a nine-time Grammy-winner.

She has since released a series of critically acclaimed and commercially successful solo albums—*Feels Like Home* (2004), *Not Too Late* (2007), *The Fall*

(2009), and *Little Broken Hearts* (2012)—as well as albums with her collective bands The Little Willies and Puss n Boots. The 2010 compilation ...*Featuring Norah Jones* showcased her incredible versatility by collecting her collaborations with artists as diverse as Herbie Hancock, Willie Nelson, Outkast, and Foo Fighters. *Little Broken Hearts*, which was produced by Danger Mouse, was a fascinating step in Jones' artistic evolution, revealing her to be one of the music world's most consistently intriguing singer-songwriters.



Philadelphia Center City Jazz Festival set for April 30

Philadelphia - One of Philadelphia's most popular events is returning this spring. To coincide with Jazz Appreciation Month, the Fifth Annual Center City Jazz Festival will be held April 30 from 1:00 pm -7:00 pm. A jam-packed schedule includes 20 bands performing at five venues over six hours, all within walking distance in the heart of Center City. A full schedule with a complete list of additional artists will be released shortly.

Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door. One ticket provides access to all performances. The last two years shows were sold out prior to the festival. Fans are encouraged to purchase their tickets in advance at www.ccjazzfest.com.

Philadelphia native Ernest Stuart is the Founder/Artistic Director of the Center City Jazz Festival. Stuart is a graduate of Temple University where he earned a B.A. in Jazz Performance. As a freelance jazz musician he's performed at clubs such as The Village Vanguard, The Iridium, Smoke and The Blue Note, among others. In 2010 he returned to Philadelphia to record his debut CD "Solitary Walker" which was released in 2011. In 2011 he became a member of the Brooklyn-Bhangra band, Red Baraat, and continues to tour with them. His solo efforts include the 2014 EP "Love/Loss" followed by "Same Walking Animals" released in 2015.

A tentative line-up has just been released. Most of the music this year will be provided by some of Philadelphia's finest jazz musicians, including pianist Orrin Evans & The Captain Black BigBand, saxophonist Mike Cemprola, Philadelphia collective Killiam Shakespeare, singer Anna Cecilia, guitarist Masami Kuroki, Muscle Tough, Chrome Els, saxophonist Anibal Rojas, alto saxophonist Chris Oatts, tenor saxophonist Nasir Dick-

erson, and a band known as Three Oranges. Coming in from elsewhere will be saxophonist Tim Green from Baltimore, trombonist Ryan Keberle & Catharsis from New York, and trumpeter Josh Evans, who has been a regular on the New York City scene. More bands will be added as the date draws near.

For more information on the festival, visit www.ccjazzfest.com

BLUES WATCH

BY MARK SMITH

New Release Blues.... Time to start some new tunes into your blues rotation! Here's some upcoming releases: **Joe Bonamassa- Blues of Desperation;** **Robert Cray Band with Stevie Ray Vaughan- Old Jam, New Blood;** **Stevie Ray Vaughan- Atlanta Sunset;** **Various Artists- God Don't Never Change: The Songs of Blind Willie Johnson;** **Supersonic Blues Machine- West of Flushing, South of Frisco;** **Albert Collins- Live at Rockpalast;** **Mick Clarke-Ruff'n Roar;** **Big Mama Thornton- In Europe;** **Popa Chubby- Big, Bad & Beautiful Live;** **Huey Piano Smith- Don't You Just Know It- The Very Best Of;** **Bob Seeley- Classic Boogie Woogie;** **Various Artists- Classic Chicago Blues Live;** **Johnny Rawls- Tiger In a Cage;** **Jeff Healey- Heal My Soul;** **Wily Bo Walker & E D Brayshaw-Stone Cold Beautiful;** **Toronto Cannon-The Chicago Way;** **Furry Lewis- Good Morning Judge;** **Doug James and the Pocket- Leg Up;** **Danny Bryant- Blood Money;** **Corey Dennison- Corey Dennison Band;** **Kelly Richey- Shakedown Soul;** **Van Wilks- 21st Century Blues;** **Brothers Brown- Dusty Road;** **Sherman Robertson- Takin' You to Texas;** **Guy King- Truth;** **Trudy Lynn-Everything Comes with a Price;** **Bob Lanza Blues Band- From Hero to Zero;** **JJ Appleton/Jason Ricci-Dirty Memory;** **Dave Clark & Friends- Swingin' and Singin' the Blues;** **Paul Flipowicz- Rough Neck Blues Live;** **Louisiana Red- Working Mule-Live;** **Mitchell T. & The HB's- She's Looking Good;** **Various Artists (Kim Wilson, Mark Wenner, Sugar Ray, Mark Hummel and more)-Blues For Big Walter;** **Little Charlie And Organ Grinder Swing- Skronky Tonk.... Big Easy Blues....** Down in New Orleans Offbeat Magazines readers gave honors to a number of blues musicians in the annual "Best of the Beat" awards: Here are some winners of particular interest to blues fans-**Artist of the Year-Jon Cleary;** **Song of the Year- "Boneyard"** by Jon Cleary; **Best Blues Performer-Walter "Wolfman" Washington;** **Best Blues Album-Sonny Landreth: Bound by the Blues (Provogue);** **Best Guitarist- Walter "Wolfman" Washington;** **Best Piano/Keyboardist-Jon Cleary;** **Best Other Instrument-Johnny Sansone (Harmonica);** **Best Festival Outside New Orleans-Bogalusa Blues & Heritage Festival.**



CHARLIE PARKER'S YARDBIRD

Opera Philadelphia at The Apollo Theater

Opera Philadelphia and the Apollo Theater partner to present New York Premiere of Charlie Parker's YARDBIRD starring Lawrence Brownlee, April 1 and 3

PHILADELPHIA - The Apollo Theater and Opera Philadelphia have announced that "Charlie Parker's YARDBIRD" will have its New York premiere in a co-production between the two institutions, April 1 and 3, 2016. The engagement marks the first time opera has been performed on the Apollo Theater stage, and the first time Opera Philadelphia will play New York.

Set in the famed Birdland jazz club on March 12, 1955, the day Charlie Parker died, the opera invites audiences directly into the mind and heart of the great saxophonist as he composes his final masterpiece, and revisits the inspirations, demons, and women who fueled his creative genius. The New York premiere reunites Lawrence Brownlee, the "energetic, bright-voiced tenor" (The New York Times) in the lead role as the legendary jazz saxophonist, with much of the original cast alongside Maestro Corrado Rovaris and the Opera Philadelphia Orchestra, who performed the work's World Premiere to five sold-out audiences in June.

Parker had a rich history with the Apollo and performed at the Theater many times, beginning in 1943 with the Earl Hines Orchestra—including Little Benny Harris, Dizzy Gillespie, and Charlie "Yardbird" Parker. During his many engagements at the Apollo, Parker developed the experimental bebop style and also experimented with classical and other musical forms.

"The real Charlie Parker played the Apollo Theater, and I am honored to be bringing this opera about Bird's life and music to Harlem with Opera Philadelphia and the Apollo," said Lawrence Brownlee. "Taking on this role is a challenge that I have greatly enjoyed and I am thrilled to revisit it in New York, where Charlie enjoyed some of his greatest tri-

umphs and endured some of the hardships and trials that ultimately brought his life to a premature end. I think this opera will bring people an even greater appreciation for the man behind the music that we all love so much."

"The World Premiere of Charlie Parker's YARDBIRD was a watershed moment in the history of Opera Philadelphia, capping our 40th Anniversary Season with a nationally-acclaimed new work as we were expanding the company's impact in both our community and as a leader in our field," said David B. Devan, General Director and President of Opera Philadelphia. "We are thrilled to partner with the incredible Apollo Theater, a driving force in shaping America's music landscape, to bring this opera to New York City, where Bird helped to create bebop."

The legendary Apollo Theater—the soul of American culture—plays a vital role in cultivating emerging talents and launching legends. Since its founding, the Apollo has served as a center of innovation and a creative catalyst for Harlem, the city of New York, and the world.

With music at its core, the Apollo's programming extends to dance, theater, performance art, spoken word initiatives, and more. This includes the October 2014 premiere and 2015 international tour of the dance celebration project James Brown: Get on the Good Foot, the annual Africa Now! Festival, Apollo Club Harlem, and the upcoming New York premiere of the opera Charlie Parker's YARDBIRD. The Apollo is a presenting organization that also produces festivals, large-scale dance and music works organized around a set of core initiatives: Apollo Music Signature Programs—Amateur Night, Salon Series, Apollo Music Café; Legacy Series—work that celebrates and extends the Apollo's legacy through a contemporary lens; Global Festivals including the Women of the World (WOW) Festival and Breakin' Convention, international and U.S.-based artist presentations focused on a specific theme; and Special Projects, multidisciplinary work with partner organizations.

Since introducing the first Amateur Night contests in 1934, the Apollo Theater has served as a testing ground for new artists working across a variety of art forms, and has ushered in the emergence of many new musical genres—including jazz, swing, bebop, R&B, gospel, blues, soul, and hip-hop. Among the countless legendary performers who launched their careers at the Apollo are D'Angelo, Lauryn Hill, Machine Gun Kelly, Miri Ben Ari, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, James Brown, Michael Jackson, Gladys Knight, Luther Vandross, and Stevie Wonder; and the Apollo's forward-looking artistic vision continues to build on this legacy.

The Apollo Theater is a not-for-profit organization and currently in the midst of fundraising for its 21st Century Apollo Campaign, created to extend the institution's role in fostering artistic innovation and in building appreciation of American culture around the world. For more information, visit www.apollotheater.org.

Lawrence Brownlee stars as Charlie Parker Credit: Dominic M. Mercier

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Three Anthony Braxton Box Sets to be Released Simultaneously on April 1

In a demonstration of the breadth and continued creative vibrancy of one of America's living musical masters, the Tri-Centric Foundation and Firehouse 12 Records are set to release three major box sets by visionary composer Anthony Braxton on April 1. Ranging from a wild reinvention of post-Wagnerian opera—*Trillium J (The Non-Unconfessionables)*—to a heartfelt tribute to an improvisatory hero—*Quintet (Tristano) 2014*—to a multi-dimensional, fully immersive electro-acoustic sound environment—*3 Compositions (EEMHM) 2011*—each of the three projects offers a different component of Braxton's constantly evolving vision, and each challenges the listener (or "friendly experiencer," in Braxton terminology) to experience music as an active participant rather than a passive spectator.

At seventy years old, Braxton remains an inspirational touchstone in global creativity, examining the past, dealing with the present and looking to the future. In conjunction with the releases, he will make a rare U.S. concert appearance at the Big Ears Festival in Knoxville, Tennessee, performing with his 10+1tet on April 1 and his Trio on April 2. See below for full info on all of the recordings and the festival performances.

Trillium J (The Non-Unconfessionables) captures the premiere of Braxton's latest four-act opera in a high-definition video documenting the multimedia performance at Roulette in Brooklyn on April 19, 2014 and a four-CD studio recording made the following week. Featuring an all-star cast of twelve vocalists, twelve improvising instrumental soloists and a thirty-seven piece orchestra, along with dancers, interactive video design, full costume and lighting, and moments ranging from a hoe-down square dance to a double-dutch jump-roping crew, *Trillium J* represents the most complete documentation yet of one of Braxton's major operatic works. It is also the latest installment in Braxton's ongoing Trillium Opera Complex System, an ambitious creative endeavor of 36 interlinked acts, comparable in scope to Wagner's *Ring Cycle* or Stockhausen's *Licht*.

On *Quintet (Tristano) 2014*, Braxton pays tribute to

the music and creative community of one of his heroes: the pianist, composer and educator Lennie Tristano (1919–1978). Putting aside his usual saxophones, Braxton takes to the piano, joined by saxophonists Jackson Moore and Andre Vida, bassist Eivind Opsvik and drummer Mike Szekely. In an exhaustively comprehensive overview that covers not just Tristano's music but the compositions of his colleagues and students like Warne Marsh, Lee Konitz, Sal Mosca and Connie Crothers, the quintet radically re-imagines Tristano's melodies and structures, the same way Tristano and his peers radically re-imagined the melodies and harmonies of the American songbook tradition. As Kevin Whitehead writes in his liner notes, "None of Anthony's tributes to jazz heroes have been as extensive as this delve into the works of Tristano and his circle...Time and again these recordings have an uncanny way of evoking the Tristano esthetic, then letting it dissolve into free space, sometimes to be reconstituted, sometimes not."

3 Compositions (EEMHM) 2011 features the first studio recordings of Braxton's Echo Echo Mirror House Music—the latest conceptual innovation in Braxton's five-decade career. With his Ghost Trance Music, Braxton created a framework for his musicians to freely explore his entire compositional output in each concert; with his Diamond Curtain Wall music, he brought his own interactive electronics into his improvisational palette. Now with Echo Echo Mirror House Music, Anthony Braxton brings these ideas to the next level. In this ensemble of longtime collaborators, all the musicians wield iPods in addition to their instruments, while navigating scores that combine cartography and evocative graphic notation, creating a musical tapestry combining live performance and sampled sound from Braxton's extensive recorded discography. Impeccably recorded at Firehouse 12's state-of-the-art studio, the music is available in two formats: a traditional three-CD box set and a 5.1 Surround Sound audiophile Blu-ray disc.

"As a culture, we are slowly moving away from target linear experiences that are framed as stationary constructs that don't change on repeated listening, to a new world that constantly serves up fresh opportunities and interactive discourse," Braxton says. "American people have made it clear that the new times will call for dynamic inter-action experiences."

Anthony Braxton is recognized as among the most important musicians, educators and creative thinkers of the past 50 years, highly esteemed in the creative music community for the revolutionary quality of his work and for the mentorship and inspiration he has provided to generations of younger musicians. Drawing upon a disparate mix of influences from John Coltrane to Karlheinz Stockhausen, Braxton has created a unique musical system that celebrates the concept of global creativity and our shared humanity. His work examines core principles of improvisation, structural navigation and ritual engagement—innovation, spirituality and intellectual investigation. His many accolades include

a 1981 Guggenheim Fellowship, a 1994 MacArthur Fellowship, a 2013 Doris Duke Performing Artist Award and a 2014 NEA Jazz Master Award, and he is the founder and artistic director of the Tri-Centric Foundation. 2016 will see the release of his 4-act opera *Trillium J* (4-CD studio recording and live performance Blu-ray), the first studio recording of his Echo Echo Mirror House Music (3-CD box set or 5.1 surround sound Blu-ray) and a 7-CD box set of the music of Lennie Tristano and related colleagues.

The Tri-Centric Foundation is a not-for-profit organization that supports the ongoing work and legacy of Anthony Braxton while also cultivating and inspiring the next generation of creative artists to pursue their own visions with the kind of idealism and integrity Braxton has demonstrated throughout his distinguished career.

The term “Tri-Centric” derives from Braxton’s three-volume collection of philosophical investigations, *The Tri-Axiom Writings*. Braxton believes creative thinking cannot be reduced to dichotomies, but must embrace multiple perspectives. For instance, music is not only composed or improvised, but also includes intuition. We must not only consider the past and the present, but also the future. It is not always this or that, it is often the other.

Tri-Centric exists to vigorously advocate for the crucial role risk-taking art plays in maintaining the health and vibrancy of our culture. Through a commitment to innovation, self-sufficiency, and artistic ambition, the organization looks to create a new model of artist empowerment and offer a supportive community to those in pursuit of “trans-idiomatic” creativity.

For more information on Tri-Centric, visit <http://tricentricfoundation.org/> where you'll see a link for the Big Ears Festival under News & Events, and scroll down to access information on these recordings.

Newvelle Records - a new vinyl only membership label

Newvelle Records is a new kind of label with a curated repertoire of some of the world's finest musicians, released only on vinyl. The label launched January 25 with a Kickstarter campaign.

The first year's membership includes the following new recordings on vinyl:

- Frank Kimbrough Quintet
- Jack DeJohnette Solo Piano
- Noah Preminger Quartet featuring Ben Monder, John Patitucci and Billy Hart
- Don Friedman Trio featuring music from Booker Little's seminal albums which featured Don in 1961:Out Front and Victory and Sorrow – August 2016
- Ben Allison Trio featuring Ted Nash and Steve Cardenas
- Leo Genovese Trio featuring Esperanza Spalding and Jack DeJohnette



Billy Hart - photo by William Semeraro

Members of Newvelle receive one new record every two months. These records are recorded at East Side Sound in New York City by Grammy-winning engineer Mac Urselli, mastered at famed mastering house Master Disc and released solely on the highest quality vinyl.

After a couple years during which only members can hear this music on their turntables, the artists can release their record in whatever manner and with whomever they choose. This model allows Newvelle to focus completely on releasing premium vinyl and allows the musicians to keep all of their rights to the music.

In addition, Newvelle is using the larger canvas of vinyl to curate works from some of the most innovative and renowned visual artists working today. Bernard Plossu, the iconic French travel photographer, is publishing works from his catalogue for the inaugural series. Newvelle is also publishing texts on the vinyl sleeves from world-class writers. The first series will feature the poems of Pulitzer Prize winning poet Tracy K. Smith.

“We are offering lots of goodies for members of Newvelle; invitations to exclusive events, a look behind the scenes, on online community of enthusiasts...but the essence of what we are doing is making a product that's unique and beautiful enough that people will want to join and support this growing community. Join us on January 25th and help make Newvelle Records a reality.” – Elan Mehler & Jean-Christophe Morisseau, founders of Newvelle Records

The label's website is www.newvelle-records.com, and its Facebook page is at www.facebook.com/NewvelleRecords/



NEW VELLE

JAZZ
& BLUES

2016 Baton Rouge Blues Festival April 9-10

Buddy Guy, Kenny Neal & More...



Baton Rouge, Louisiana - Free and open to the public, the 22nd annual Baton Rouge Blues Festival will be held on April 9-10, 2016 in downtown Baton Rouge, featuring performances from Buddy Guy, Latimore, Curtis Harding, Kenny Neal and the Neal family and many more.

This family-friendly festival will feature something for everyone, including a Kids Zone with activities for the younger blues fans, de-

cious Louisiana food and unique vendors. All-Weekend Experience Passes are available for those who want a little lagniappe with their festival experience. All revenue generated from the festival goes toward the mission of the Baton Rouge Blues Foundation to help continue its goal to promote, preserve and celebrate the "Swamp Blues" music native to Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Get more information on this free festival at <http://www.batonrougebluesfestival.org>.

God don't never change
The songs of
Blind Willie Johnson

performed by
TOM WAITS
LUCINDA WILLIAMS
DEREK TRUCKS & SUSAN TEDESCHI
COWBOY JUNKIES
BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA
SINÉAD O'CONNOR
LUTHER DICKINSON featuring THE RISING STAR FIFE & DRUM BAND
MARIA MCKEE
RICKIE LEE JONES

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Photo © Robyn Churchill

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

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

Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington didn't rule over a small English estate. Instead he reigned supreme over jazz institutions like The Cotton Club. He riffed powerfully on the piano, but it was the full orchestra that he considered his most compelling instrument. He introduced improvisation to his compositions — a process unheard of using a 15-piece orchestra. The result was a different approach to jazz that sparked a revolution and an evolution. His music spread across the world with songs like "Sophisticated Lady," "In a



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



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

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

Jazz is art, you dig? Art can

really transform lives.

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



Give your kids a chance
to succeed. Up their
daily dose of art.

Art. Ask for More.

AmericansForTheArts.org



NAMM
Foundation

Illustration by Corbis-Bettmann. TM 2016 Estate of Mercer E. Ellington by CHC Worldwide



We only bring you
the Cream of the Crop!



TORONZO CANNON The Chicago Way ALLIGATOR RECORDS

After his two superior albums on Delmark, many were pleased to learn about Alligator Records signing Toronzo Cannon, and now we have his label debut "The Chicago Way." Those who enjoyed his prior releases will not be disappointed with this and it is likely to raise his profile, not simply in the blues world.

Cannon wrote all eleven songs on "The Chicago Way" and is backed by his band The Cannonball Express. The band consists of Brother John Kattke, Hammond B-3 Organ, Piano, Keyboards; Pete Galanis, Electric and Acoustic Rhythm Guitar, Larry Williams, Bass and Melvin "Pookie Stix" Carlisle, Drums. Kattke also arranged the three-piece horn section on a few selections.

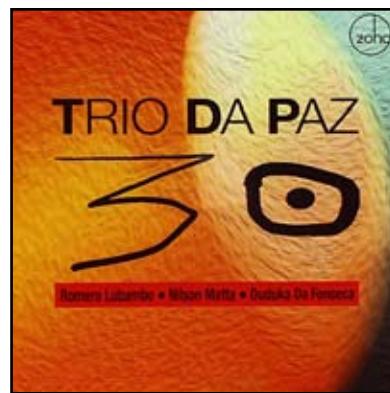
This is hard-hitting music that might superficially be compared to Son Seals. Certainly Cannon's searing buzz-kill guitar bears a similar intensity to what the late Seals brought to his music. And, like Seals, Cannon is all business. His music though is a bit more urban and soul-rooted than Son. Like Son Seals' music, Cannon's music reflects his own life and experiences from growing up in the shadows of the Chicago projects, to working as a bus driver and listening and observing the city life around him.

The tightly performed and hard-hitting playing on "The Chicago Way" provides a frame for his telling social commentary like the opening "The Pain Around Me." Starting off in a funky manner, it has a lyric about six kids on the corner, six broken homes, and Toronzo not wanting his kids to go outside because of the thugs hanging around. Furthermore, he doesn't want to sing this but this is what he in fact sees. There is plenty of fire in his playing and vocal with his band tightly

backing him.

In contrast to the serious opening track, one hears plenty of humor in his lyric about a marriage gone bad on a funky shuffle "Bad Contract." This bad contract is the one where you sign on the line and only gets half back when it's over. The driving shuffle "Fine Seasoned Women" has Toronzo fending off a flirting lady who is trying so hard to catch his eye. Cannon, however, prefers a lady with a touch of gray or wrinkles, who wants a man, not a fool. There is nice use of horns on this along with his crisply played guitar. The humorous "Midlife Crisis" is another number that speaks to those of us who have put on more than a few years (and it has a great line about hair on the chest turning grey). Perhaps this writer's favorite track is a wonderful slow blues, "When Will You Tell Him About Me?," with Toronzo complaining about being tired of the secrecy with which he and his woman must keep their affair.

As a songwriter, as well as a singer-guitarist, Toronzo Cannon brings grit and passion. His playing is varied ranging from blues-rock to jazzy flavored while his singing is robust resulting in the mostly compelling performances here. "The Chicago Way" is one of most striking recent new blues releases. *Ron Weinstock*



TRIO DA PAZ 30 ZOH MUSIC

The Brazilians comprising Trio Da Paz – Romero Lubambo (Acoustic & Electric Guitars), Nilson Matta (Acoustic Bass) and Duduka Da Fonseca (Drums) first came together three decades ago, accounting for the title of their new album "30." In the ensuing three decades they have developed into a dazzling ensemble as they incorporate elements of samba and bossa nova with bebop, and other sounds that are on display on the ten performances here, nine of which were penned by members of the trio.

Matta's brisk "Sampa 67" (named after his home town of São Paulo) gives all three a chance to display not only the interplay between them, but their marvelous instrumental skills with the composer's own solos followed by sizzling exchanges between Lubambo's gypsy-accented guitar and Da Fonseca's propulsive percussion. The afoxé rhythms on Lubambo's bright "For Donato" (for pianist João Donato) lends a invigo-

rating feel along with the writer's own fleet playing mixing single note runs with a series of chords while Da Fonseca brilliantly adds color and Matta provides a steady foundation for the trio. Da Fonseca uses brushes for the breezy, and romantic rendition of "Autumn," Lumambo's bossa nova.

There is plenty of charm in De Fonseca's "Alana" (named after his daughter, with the trio's nimble and buoyant handling of the tempo changes, while Lubambo's "Luisa," named after his daughter, has a sedate lilt in its 3/4 tempo. The breakneck tempo of Baden Powell's "SambaTrieste" belies the title on this spirited performance, and plenty of thought went into sequencing the tunes here as is shown by it being followed by Matta's charming ballad "Águas Brasileiras." The exhilarating "Sweeping the Chimney" (by Lubambo) was inspired by workers at De Fonseca's home, and the composer's fretwork dazzles again while De Fonseca's peppery use on brushes lends the feel of someone playing shakers. De Fonseca's "Flying Over Rio" is another lovely bossa nova.

The closing "LVM/ Direto AO Assunto," opens in a reflective fashion with Matta's solo bridging the performance's torrid close, again displaying the virtuosity of the three and the empathy they have for each other. It is an exciting conclusion to this superb album.

Ron Weinstock



BROTHERS BROWN Dusty Road FUNKY JOINT RECORDS

A new roots rock band, Brothers Brown brings together a variety of blues, country, soul, jazz and other musical elements for a musical experience that might suggest The Band (although they are not on The Band's level).

The Brothers Brown are fronted by two musicians named Paul Brown, one is a double Grammy winning producer, guitarist, singer and songwriter from Los Angeles and the other is a Grammy nominated producer, keyboardist and songwriter based in Nashville. The band is completed by a virtuosic rhythm section that also calls Nashville home: bassist David Santos and drummer Peter Young. They have just issued "Dusty Road" on Funky Joint Records that is distributed by

Larry Carlton's 335 Records.

There is plenty to like about this recording. Guitarist-singer Brown has an appealing voice with a bit of grain, with his relaxed delivery combining with the nicely paced backing. His bluesy guitar is complemented by the keyboardist Brown whose greasy playing contrasts with the effective, sparse guitar leads and a terrific rhythm duo. A particular favorite track is the low-key "Love Sake" as Brown asks his woman to tell him the truth and be real, and don't show him love just for love's sake, and one of these days these things will come back to her, with a terrific organ solo and a brief jazz-inflected break.

When guitarist Brown gets to showcase his playing as on "When All Is Said And Done," his prickly tone, use of space and his construction of his solo stands out while the organ adds some greasy accents. "Can't outrun The Blues" also benefits from guitarist Brown's restrained vocals and guitar, and even if the organist Brown plays with a bit more heat while adding swells of sound to the performance, there is a delightful relaxed quality to these performances. Bassist Santos takes the vocal on the country-tinged "The River," a song about a journey through aging, love, solace and the quest for joy.

It's a refreshing to listen to such a nicely constructed release with solid original songs that are sung with warmth, feeling and restraint, and marvelously played with thoughtful soloing and solid ensemble playing. Brothers Brown's "Dusty Road" is a real good, delightful roots stew of blues, country, and more.

Ron Weinstock



LEW TABACKIN TRIO Soundscapes SELF-PRODUCED

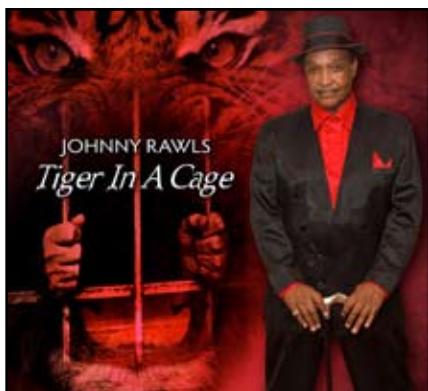
A new self-produced recording by the Lew Tabackin Trio, "Soundscapes," is one that certainly merits plenty of attention. Tabackin, whose career spans decades, continues to display remarkable fluency on tenor sax and flute and constructs some remarkable improvisations. Tabackin is joined by bassist Boris Kozlov and drummer Mark Taylor on this recording that was engineered by Jimmy Katz and mostly recorded at Steve Maxwell's Drum Shop, with the exception of one selection done at Tabackin's basement.

The opening performance, John Lewis' "Afternoon in Paris," immediately sets the tone with the authority and imagination of Tabackin's playing. The robustness of his playing along with the exemplary support by Kozlov and Taylor, and the trio's interplay, makes this and the entire album stand out. Particularly impressive selections include Tabackin's blues "Bb Where It's At," opening as a percussion supported duet between Tabackin and Kozlov that features the leader's marvelous improvisation with Taylor's accents on snare and cymbals adding to the performance's flair.

Three selections feature Tabackin on flute, of which his fat, wet playing on the standard "Yesterday's," stands out. Tabackin was a regular poll winner in the eighties and his playing on this and the rest of this recording illustrates why. Then there is a spellbinding interpretation of Billy Strayhorn's "Daydream."

When listening to a trio recording by a tenor saxophonist, one is reminded of legendary Sonny Rollins' "Live at the Village Vanguard." While not exclusively devoted to Tabackin on tenor, "Soundscapes" can stand the comparison and stands out as a superb hard bop trio recording.

Ron Weinstock



JOHNNY RAWLS

Tiger In A Cage
CATFOOD RECORDS

"Tiger In A Cage" is the latest Catfood Records effort from soul-blues veteran Johnny Rawls. One again he is backed by bassist Bob Trenchard and the Rays for a set of mostly originals with a few choice covers. For this release Jim Gaines came down to produce this effort.

The album sets off with the title track, penned by Rawls, Trenchard and guitarist Johnny McGhee, with a topical lyric indicting the American prison system and a young man who is a tiger in a cage and when he gets out can only push that dope and lack any hope. Adding to the power of the performance is the smoldering backing and Mike Middleton's trumpet accents.

It is followed by "Born to the Blues" as Rawls sings about having blues in his blood set against a nice groove and terrific backing behind a likewise terrific Rawls vocal. There is a solid funky groove on his new rendition of "Red Cadillac," a celebration of Memphis where there is so much soul in that town as the horns

frame his singing. The song was originally on the album with that name.

The driving "Every Woman Needs a Working Man" is a nice classic soul styled number while "Reckless Heart" is a country-tinged soul ballad with strings effectively employed in the backing. Rawls starts Sam Cooke's classic "Having a Party" almost as a dirge before the tempo picks up with horns and vocal backing making a nice interpretation. The rendition of "Your Love Is Lifting Me (Higher and Higher)" comes across as a straight reading of the Jackie Wilson classic although Rawls can't reach Wilson's incredible vocal range. If it suffers in comparison to the original, it still is very enjoyable. Eden Brent joins Rawls for a vocal duet on the zydeco flavored "Southern Honey," with keyboardist Dan Ferguson playing accordion with Tommy Sheen on violin helping on a exuberant performance.

Among the other tracks is a strong interpretation of the Rolling Stones' "Beast of Burden" before the album closes with Rawls redoing a wonderful ballad "I Would Be Nothing," which he recorded years ago for JSP. There are no musical surprises on this latest Rawls recording, but his singing here is as good as any recording he has made, and The Rays are superb backing him. He has had a number of award winning recordings, but the excellent "Tiger In A Cage" may be as good as any he has released. *Ron Weinstock*

KALTHOUM



IBRAHIM MAALOUF

IBRAHIM MAALOUF
Kalthoum
IMPULSE/UNIVERSAL MUSIC CLASSICS

Paris-based trumpeter Mr. Maalouf offers a seven-part piece based on a composition from the late Egyptian composer Balighe Hamidi and originally popularized by legendary Egyptian diva, Oum Kalthoum. Maalouf's arrangement conflates jazz and traditional Arab improvisation, producing a compelling piece, decidedly circular in character.

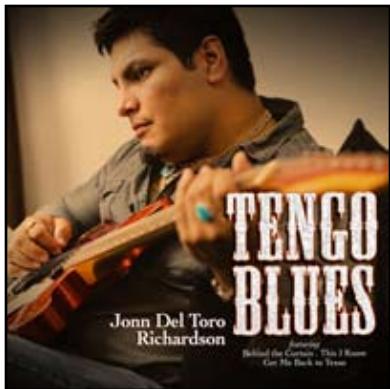
The piece's bold horn theme, stated by tenor saxophonist Mark Turner and Maalouf, returns frequently through initially brief segments, creating the aforementioned circularity. Pianist Frank Woest plays a key role, both as co-arranger and as lead-in voice to separate segments.

The "meat" of the piece lies in the final, extended

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segments, movements three and four (tracks six and seven). Number Three is the most "Western" flavored theme, featuring nice breaks from Woest and drummer Clarence Penn. Maalouf's play early on in the final movement re-states his intention of merging the two musical strains in a conclusion laden with change-ups, where all, including bassist Larry Grenadier who usually functions as anchor, get some break time.

Duane Verh



JONN DEL TORO RICHARDSON

Tengo Blues

JRCD LLC/ VIZZTONE RECORDS

Jonn Del Toro Richardson is likely best known as guitarist with the terrific singer, Diunna Greenleaf. He also collaborated with Rich DelGrosso for a warmly received recording. "Tengo Blues" is a solid new self-produced recording by him that is distributed by Vizz-Tone. This was recorded in Austin and produced by Jonn and Anson Funderburgh, who also plays on three selections. The band backing Jonn includes Nick Connolly on keyboards, Nathan Rowe on bass, Wes Starr on drums and the Texas Horns with Kaz Kazanoff. The leader wrote all 13 songs, with Gary Vincent and Anson Funderburgh each contributing two songs.

As expected from both Del Toro Richardson's playing and the band assembled here, one hears some nicely played songs that cover a variety of musical textures and flavors. He comes across as quite an appealing vocalist. He may not be a great singer, but he sings honestly and with heart besides laying down plenty of strong solos.

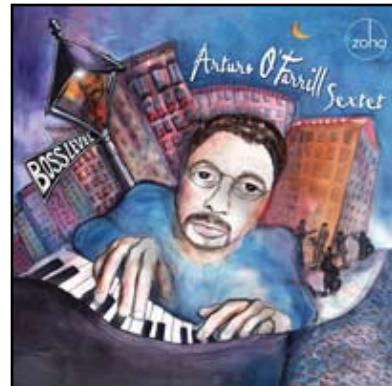
There is an almost Koko Taylor groove for "I'm Her Man," which is a celebration of his guitar as he sings he can make her laugh, cry, moan and sigh. "Love If You Want It" is not the Slim Harpo number but an original that is built on a lazy Jimmy Reed shuffle groove. "Triple Lindig" is a jazzy instrumental (very nice guitar) with Connolly on organ and horns adding to the flavor of this performance and is followed by the Tex-Mex flavor of "The Moment" with the Texas Horns adding a mariachi feel along with some superb trumpet.

A Memphis funk groove is present on "Can't Run From Love," with a catchy lyric that "you don't find love, love finds you." "Get Me Back To Texas," one of the songs on which Anson Funderburgh is present, has

a groove that evokes Hound Dog Taylor. "This I Know" is a swamp pop ballad, the performance of which sounds like a Gulf Coast adaptation of a Charles Brown number and has a nicely played and paced guitar solo. "Tell Me Pretty Baby" is updated T-Bone Walker styled jump blues with terrific guitars from both, and "Wild Ride" is bluesy rock and roll with Connolly's rollicking piano coming off like Johnnie Johnson.

The title track, "Tengo Blues" is a splendid organ-guitar instrumental with a Latin groove that displays Del Toro Richardson's inventive and, at times, fiery playing as Rowe and Starr lay down a crisp groove with a touch of a Latin accent. With solid production and marvelous performances, "Tengo Blues" is a fine showcase for Jonn Del Toro Richardson's considerable talent.

Ron Weinstock



ARTURO O'FARRILL SEXTET

Boss Level

ZOHO

Arturo O'Farrill is one of today's most astonishing musicians, composers and arrangers. Son of the legendary Chico O'Farrill, he is best known as leader of The Afro-Cuban Orchestra, but a new Zoho release "Boss Level" has him leading his sextet on a modern hard bop rooted date. The Arturo O'Farrill Sextet includes the leader's piano, son Adam on trumpet, son Zach on drums, Livio Almeida on tenor saxophone, Travis Reuter on guitar and Shawn Conely on bass.

O'Farrill talks about video gaming and how he used to blame the world's evils for them, but one Christmas after relenting and getting a system, his views would change. And if his family loves video gaming, it is superseded by the love of music, and while he has worked with them many times, he states he does not view this as a family band, rather with his sons and the others, just people he loves playing music with. And it is a collaborative effort as Arturo contributes four compositions, Adam contributes two, Zack contributes one and Travis Reuter one. Also heard are compositions by trombonist and composer Papo Vazquez and Horace Silver. The recording is a varied program from hard bop to Latin-rooted romps and more.

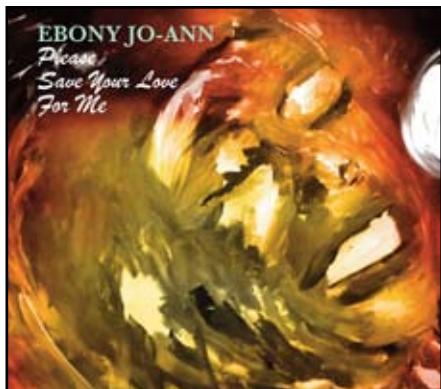
O'Farrill's "Miss Stephanie" is a torridly paced harp bop number that is in the mode of the Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter Blue Note recordings when they

were with Miles, and Almeida certainly impresses with the fire and the intelligence of his opening solo, while Zach percolates the groove like Tony Williams. Adam displays his own voice on trumpet, suggesting Miles in his phrasing but certainly not in his machine gun like enunciation of solos, and is followed by Reuter's sizzling fretwork making for some compelling listening. "True That" is built over intriguing dissonances and the leader's solo is crafted out of this beginning as well as working off the unusual groove of Conely and Zack on this also unusual performance.

Adam's "The Moon Follows Us Wherever We Go" opens with his melodic trumpet set against Reuter's prickly guitar on what becomes a fascinating performance with a lively, intriguing rhythmic pulse with Adam's lyrical playing standing out. Zack's "Circle Games" has what Arturo describes as "a deceptively simple melody, almost childlike" but the sextet builds on this seemingly simple basis for the marvelous solos (and Reuter's use of tone for his comping is notable). Again Almeida and Adam impress, but so does bassist Conely. Adam's "Maine Song" is inspired by the family's trips to that state and the performance mixes passages of serenity with spirited ones, while Arturo's "Company Doug" brings together a mix of musical textures and colors. Reuter stretches out on his "V.F.S" (standing for Vamps For Sale) along with Arturo. Then there is a lovely rendition of Horace Silver's "Peace," with just piano, bass and drums.

Recorded after a week-long engagement at Birdland, "Boss Level" is a superb recording that makes one wish one had been at Birdland to listen to this fabulous band. Based on this, the Arturo O'Farrill Sextet is a band that one should make plans to see if performing near oneself.

Ron Weinstock



EBONY JO-ANN Please Save Your Love For Me BLACKGOLD PRODUCTION CO.

An unexpected musical surprise is "Please Save Your Love For Me" (Blackgold Production Co.)," the first full-length studio recording by Ebony Jo-Ann, an internationally renowned performer from stage, movies and television who has appeared at theaters and clubs around the world, including being part of The

Wiz's National Tour. She reprised her role at a 40th Anniversary celebration of The Wiz. In recent years, she helped launch a blues night at Ashford & Simpson's Sugar Bar in New York. It was at the Sugar Bar that she met many of the musicians on this recording including Danny Kean who produced it, played keyboards and wrote one of the five originals.

The original songs are "Just Rain," by Ashford & Simpson; "Yo Love," by Irene Datcher; "Nosybody," by Miles Jaye; "Glad I Waited for Love," by Aziza Miller; and "Burnin' World," by Kean. Cover song classics include Syl Johnson's "Is It Because I'm Black"; Percy Mayfield's "Please Send Me Someone to Love"; Buddy Johnson's "Please Save Your Love for Me"; Eddie Miller's "I'd Rather Drink Muddy Water"; and the Mississippi Sheik's "Sittin' On Top of the World." It's a nice variety of material and I agree with Christian John Wikane's comments in the liner notes that Ebony is a stunning song stylist.

Listening to the opening "Just Rain," with brassy backing and a solid guitar solo, her vocals remind one of Denise LaSalle in the delivery of the lyrics. On other performances she evokes other legendary singers such as the late Helen Humes, Etta Jones and the still active Jewel Brown. Her take on "Is It Because I'm Black" is powerful, and not simply because of the song's continued relevance. Guy Davis adds acoustic harmonica on the strong "Yo Love," where she sings that love is like a cooling summer rain. Mike Bowers' guitar also adds to this performance's flavor.

Percy Mayfield's classic (called simply "Send Someone To Love" here) is a marvelous duet with Kean with understated backing by Kean, (Bowers with a nice jazz-tinged blues solo here), bassist Larry Ross and drummer Phil Bloom (using brushes). "Glad I Waited For Love" is a marvelous ballad while "Burnin' World" is a topical song. I associate the Buddy Johnson classic that gives this album its title with Charles Brown, although its Bobby Bland's rendition that left a deep impression on Ebony who delivers an impassioned rendition.

It is followed by "Muddy Water," a driving rendition of the Eddie Miller standard with greasy Hammond B-3 from Kean, Bowers in a jazzy vein, and a boating tenor sax solo by Bill Easley. Incidentally the album credit is wrong as Eddie Miller, who wrote and first recorded this, is not Bumble Bee Slim (real name Amos Easton). In any event, this is a fine rendition to go with those by Lou Rawls and Carmen Bradford (with the Count Basie Orchestra) amongst others.

The band sits out the closing "Sitting On Top Of The World," with Guy Davis ably providing backing on guitars, banjo and harmonica behind a wonderful vocal on an unplugged performance. Given her theatrical background, this writer appreciates the lack of theatricality in the heartfelt singing throughout.

Ebony Jo-Ann talks about the Blues being part of her DNA, and this exceptional recording is evidence of that.

Ron Weinstock



HIROMI
Spark
TELARC/CONCORD

Pianist Hiromi's interplay with heavyweight fusion/prog-rock drummer Simon Phillips is on full display on this fourth release of her Trio Project series. Their high-energy dialogue on the title track, highlighted by the pianist's dazzling technique, sets the stage for the duo's ongoing dynamic.

Phillips' expanded drum-kit sound creates an unconventional foundation and, while he's not quite assumed "co-leader" status, he provides a distinctive, constant counterbalance to the leader's formidable presence. Contrabass guitarist Anthony Jackson provides the necessary low-profile grounding to this affair.

And for all that distinguishes Hiromi and her crew from the typical piano trio, she is possessed of abundant sense of elegant swing, exemplified here on her chorus on "Wonderland" and capable of stylish blues statements—"Indulgence", "What Will Be, Will Be" - to keep the group in good standing with the old school. The Chopin-esque solo piece "Wake Up and Dream" stands out as well.

Duane Verh



MAGIC SAM
Black Magic
DELMARK RECORDS

While usually overshadowed by many writers in comparison to the earlier studio album, "West Side Soul," Magic Sam's "Black Magic" is in the opinion of some, including this writer, a better recording. Recorded in Fall 1968, with a superb band includ-

ing Mighty Joe Young rhythm guitar, Lafayette Leake on piano, Eddie Shaw on tenor sax, Mac Thompson (brother of Jimmy and Syl Johnson) and Odie Payne, Jr. on drums, "Black Magic" is full of Sam's soulful vocals and wonderful guitar playing without any harried, frenzied moments (for example the rendition of "Mama Talk to Your Daughter") or sometimes shrill, overwrought vocals ("My Love Will Never Die") that marred the earlier recording.

It is a pleasure to listen again to "Black Magic" in Delmark's new deluxe reissue with new, previously unissued alternate takes included. This release contains the ten selections that were on the original vinyl LP and 1994 CD reissue, six selections that were included on "The Magic Sam Legacy" and two previously unissued alternates. The additional eight tracks include three songs not on the original and alternate takes of four songs ("What Have I Done Wrong" is heard in two alternates).

There are so many pleasures listening to the flow of the music, the relaxed soulful intensity of Sam's vocals and the terrific backing with some solo space for Shaw and Young. Leake was a superb band pianist and Thompson and Payne made a superb rhythm foundation. The album opens with a marvelous take on "Just a Little Bit," the classic Little Willie John number that became a blues standard. He takes us back to his Cobra recordings, reworking "Easy Baby" as well as a take on Lowell Fulson's "It's All Your Fault."

Then there is his wonderful take on Willie Cobb's "You Don't Love Me, Baby," followed by a terrific rendition of Freddie King's classic instrumental, "San-Ho-Zay," that is so wonderfully paced as well as played. The standout track remains for this listener Andrew Brown's "You Better Stop," where he tells Leake to "play those ticklish blues for me."

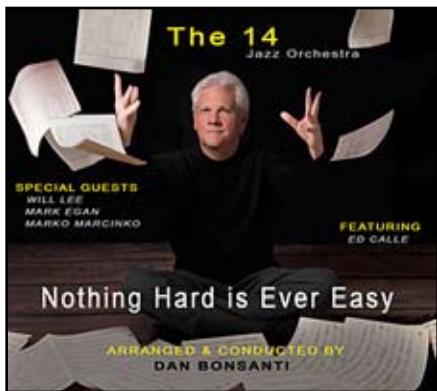
Of the songs not issued on the original album, Sam's reworking of his Cobra single "Everything's Gonna Be All Right," a musical sibling to the Fulson number stands out along with a slow instrumental "Blues For Odie Payne." The alternate takes are pretty solid in their own respect, although with minor differences in the groove, Sam's vocal or perhaps a sudden end. The accompanying booklet reproduces Jim O'Neal's liner notes from the original release and the 1994 CD reissue, along with liner notes from "The Magic Sam legacy" and is updated with Bob Koester's own recollections of Sam and the music.

This is a most welcome new Deluxe Edition of Delmark's classic blues albums, of which is one of the finest.

Ron Weinstock

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THE 14 JAZZ ORCHESTRA

Nothing Hard Is Ever Easy DABON MUSIC, LLC

The 14 Jazz Orchestra is comprised of 13 of South Florida's premier Jazz and studio musicians. Under the direction of Dan Bonsanti they take a Contemporary Jazz approach to a wide assortment of styles, performing compositions from Jazz composers such as Billy Strayhorn, Joe Henderson, Chick Corea, John Scofield, and Wayne Shorter and pop/rock artists such as Paul McCartney and John Lennon.

Certainly not tied to nostalgia, the band has been delighting audiences since its first public performance in 2013 with its contemporary approach that is adventurous yet lyrical and highly rhythmic. Featuring the saxophone of Ed Calle, their debut album is titled "Nothing Hard Is Ever Easy" (Dabon Music, LLC).

The members are alumni of the University of Miami: Ed Maina, Ed Calle, Neal Bonsanti and Peter Brewer on reeds; trumpeters Stephen Reid, Cisco Dimas and Ray Chicalo; Dante Luciani and Major Bailey on trombones; and a rhythm section of Jim Gasior on keyboards, guitarist Tom Lippincott, with Matt Bonelli and Jack Ciano on bass and drums.

There is also a trio of special guests who bring their formidable talents to the album in bassists Will Lee and Mark Egan on one track each, and drummer Marko Marcinko on three. This ensemble brings a contemporary and fresh approach to jazz classics, popular hits, gospel and fusion works connected with such figures as Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Weather Report, Chick Corea, the Beatles and Ray Charles.

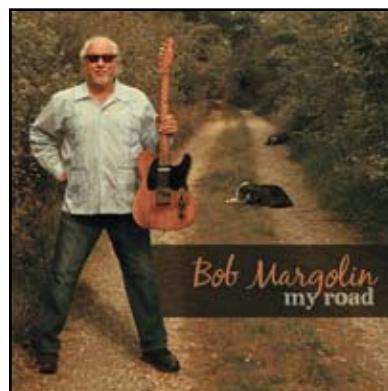
Bonsanti arranged ten of the eleven performances, the sole exception being Clare Fischer's arrangement of Billy Strayhorn's "U.M.M.G." that he re-orchestrated and which opens the recording. After a swinging performance with Dante Luciano standing out on trombone, The 14 Jazz Orchestra turns its attention to a big band treatment of Wayne Shorter's "Palladium," with Calle on tenor and Jim Gasior on electronic keyboards being prominent. Jaco Pastorius' "John and Mary," dedicated to his two children, mixes a delicate ballad-like sensibility with an island-like flavor with Calle's serpentine soprano showcased.

Bonsanti's arrangement of "Donna Lee (In Disguise)" is an imaginative reworking of this Charlie

Parker classic whose tone is set from Gasior's Tyner-esque piano and sports driving tenor sax from Calle while guest Marcinko pushes the groove on drums. Luciano's growling trombone opens a slow blues drag rendition of Percy Mayfield's hit for Ray Charles "Hit The Road Jack," with trumpeter Cisco Dimas making effective use of his mute in a manner that Bubba Miley or Cootie Williams would approve. The trumpet of Ray Chicalo and the baritone sax of Peter Brewer are at the forefront of a stately version of Thomas Dorsey's gospel classic "Take My Hand Precious Lord," while "With a Little Help From My Friends" is a pretty straight big band rendition of the Beatles' tune with Will Lee on bass and some very attractive tenor from Calle.

Other performances reimagine Chick Corea and a John Scofield tune that was part of Miles Davis' repertoire and exhibit the same range of musical adventure, lyricism and rhythmic drive that make "Nothing Hard Is Ever Easy," such a stimulating big band listening experience.

Ron Weinstock



BOB MARGOLIN

My Road

VIZZTONE LABEL GROUP

Bob Margolin has had a long career in the blues including a prime spot in Muddy Waters' band between 1973 and 1980 where he appeared in countless shows and on several discs. Since leaving that gig he has forged a well-respected solo career with numerous discs and production jobs keeping him busy. This, his third release for VizzTone, reflects a lifetime of roads, bandstands and hard lessons.

"My Whole Life" kicks things off with an homage to the stages where he's earned his living, a thought that sometimes takes a while to kick in as evidenced on "I Shall Prevail" where he starts the day with dread "Oh no.../these are my first words today" before coming to his senses and noting that "I'll play my blues with fire/there are more songs to be sung." On "Young and Old Blues" he reassures himself and others that age is just a matter of perspective to a musician and no matter his age "the road is tough/so am I." Speaking of roads, "Heaven Mississippi," takes you to Clarksdale, Mississippi for a history lesson of old school blues with a name check of countless departed legends including Muddy, Pinetop Perkins, Hubert Sumlin, Robert

Johnson and others.

When he's not reflecting on his musical path, Margolin takes on life lessons such as found on Sean Costello's "Low Life Blues" where he laments having "so many dollars/but I didn't have no sense" and recounts the timeless adage of "ask me no questions/I'll tell you no lies" on "Ask Me No Questions."

While Margolin made his mark as a guitar player this is far from a guitar slinger's vanity piece. Instead, much like Muddy, he gives ample room to Tad Walters on harmonica and uses his guitar as more of an accent to his vocals than as the centerpiece of the sound. The solos he does play, such as on the mid-tempo ballad, "More and More," the swampy "Understanding Heart," the rocking "Feelin' Right Tonight" and on the solo acoustic, "Goodnight," are economical with not a wasted note. On Nappy Brown's "Bye Bye Baby" he sets the guitar aside entirely and relies solely on Walters' harp work to drive the acapella vocals he lays down with drummer Chuck Cotton.

While there are some shuffles and a couple of slow grinding blues, this is not a straight blues disc which, after all these years, is probably a nice change of pace for Margolin but will probably be a surprise for those looking for another tour through the Muddy Waters catalog.

Mark Smith



PETER ERSKINE

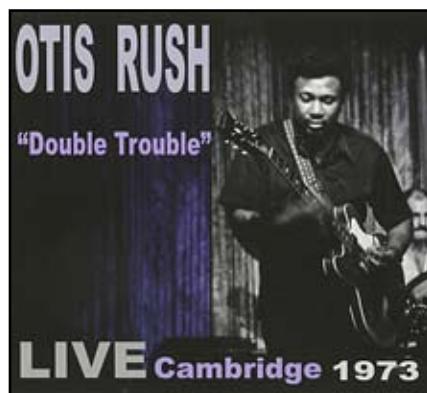
Dr. Um
FUZZY MUSIC

Weather Report alum drummer Erskine and crew here serve up some decidedly fresh sounding fusion, stocked generously with sophisticated grooves and more than a little WR mojo. Mr. E prefers to "lead from behind" while electric bassist Janek Gwizdala's up-front moments conjure the late Jaco P.'s solo sensibility as well as his chops and keyboardist John Beasley maintains a high profile throughout the set.

That classic WR swing-meets-funk component comes through on Beasley's "Lost Page," underlined by tenor saxophonist Bob Sheppard's touches. Sheppard energizes the follow up track as well, Erskine's "Hawaii Bathing Suit," sharing a tasty breakdown with the leader. The drummer's former boss's presence is felt up close with two Joe Zawinul compositions, "Bourges Buenos Aires" and "Speechless." Further

ingredients adding to this set's overall tastiness are the bluesy contributions of guitarist Jeff Parker on Erskine's "Little Fun K," Beasley's "Okraphilia" and the keyboardist's trio tribute, "Mahler".

Duane Verh



OTIS RUSH

Double Trouble Live Cambridge 1973

ROCK BEAT

Joe's Place in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the seventies must have been quite a place as Joe mentions Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry along with Lowell Fulson as upcoming acts before he introduced Otis Rush for a night of blues. Rush on that night was backed by Little Bo on tenor sax, Ernest Gatewood on bass and Bob Richey (not Richards as mistakenly spelled on the back cover) on drums.

Rush, until a severe stroke in 2004 curtailed his career, was one of the most revered blues artists bringing some of the strongest modern blues guitar playing, which was matched by his anguished singing. This recording has some uneven sound quality (Little Bo is somewhat muffled on the opening "Watermelon Man"), but the brilliance of Rush's playing doesn't suffer in the mix.

The program here includes several renditions of Rush's Cobra recordings including "It Takes Time," "I Can't Quit You Baby," Keep On Loving Me" and "Double Trouble," along with several numbers associated with B.B. King, including "Gambler's Blues" (which became identified with Otis) and "Why I Sing the Blues."

In addition to the instrumental warm-up of "Watermelon Man," there are a couple James Brown numbers, an instrumental workout on "Popcorn" (as much a feature for Little Bo who is more audible here) and the closing "Please, Please, Please," and also inspired playing on Rush's instrumental treatment of Ike and Tina Turner's "I Think It's Gonna Work Out Fine." This latter number has more solid saxophone from Little Bo, demonstrating why Rush described him as the little man with the big sound.

Frank Scott provides an overview of Rush's career and a brief description of the performance in the accompanying booklet.

Ron Weinstock

www.jazz-blues.com



JUSTIN MULLENS The Cornucopiad BJU RECORDS

Justin Mullens is known for his work as an instrumentalist, composer and bandleader in pushing the boundaries of the French Horn as an improvising instrument in jazz. "The Cornucopiad," his new Brooklyn Jazz Underground Records (BJU) release plays new compositions along with thee standards to display his flair as an improviser as well as composer. He is accompanied by his octet that also includes Chris Cheek (Alto Sax & Clarinet), Peter Hess (Bass Clarinet), Ohad Talmor (Tenor Sax), Peter Thompson (Guitar), Desmond White (Bass), Matt Ray (Piano), and Marko Djordjevic (Drums).



While the French Horn has often been used to add tonal colors, Mullens is at the forefront of expanding the instrument's role, borrowing technique more in line with what one might expect from a saxophonist or trumpeter, yet still retaining the character of the French Horn. While featuring his playing, this recording also provides plenty of space for the band's members to display their various talents. The leader opens the soloing on Freddie Hubbard's "Hub-Tones" and the tonal quality is not far from a trombone. He is followed by a sharp, yet dry-toned tenor sax solo, then piano and then guitarist Thompson, whose ostinato figure first provides a foundation for a Djordjevic and then the ensemble to conclude the performance.

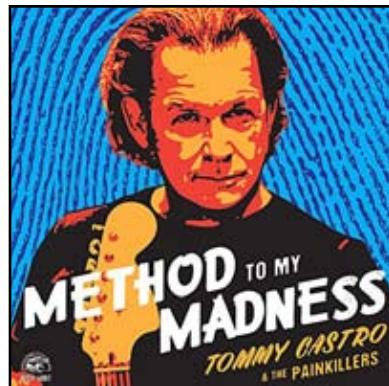
After a brief short horn-guitar duo, one of three originals, "Amalthea," (named after the goat-nymph

that reared Zeus, who accidentally broke off her horn which became the cornucopia), the music displays not simply the leader's compositional skills but the wonderful tones of the ensemble with the bass clarinet helping to fill out the bottom. White is featured on bass before Mullens solos with Thompson chording in support and certainly further demonstrates his skill and imagination. The two other originals are "The Goatfish" (named after Aegipan, Amalthea's son who was reared with Zeus) and "The River Horn" (refers to the horn of Amalthea that Heracles received after battling the river god Achelous).

Mullens provides a very fresh setting for "You Stepped Out Of A Dream," with a bit of funk at the opening before he at first embellishes off the melody before crafting a solo taking off from the song's structure with considerable imagination and followed by Thompson's solo which also displays similar invention, followed by Hess' woody bass clarinet before Mullens restates the melody for the coda. The octet also treats listeners to a very imaginative and lovely rendition of John Coltrane's "Naima," with Cheek contributing a bright solo on alto sax. The briskly paced "River Horn" first spotlights Talmor's singing tenor sax followed by Mullens spirited soloing and then Hess' serpentine bass clarinet.

"The Cornucopiad" is much more than a novelty of a jazz recording featuring a French Horn. Mullens certainly shows it to be quite capable of being more than part of an horn section and with his Octet has produced a recording that contains marvelous original compositions and quite original renditions of familiar standards that result in very wonderful listening.

Ron Weinstock



TOMMY CASTRO & THE PAINKILLERS

Method To My Madness

Alligator Records

According to Tommy Castro, there might be a "Method To My Madness," the new Alligator album by Tommy Castro & the Painkillers. Castro is a fairly reliable artist and he brings his husky, slightly gravelly vocals and rocking guitar to a disc with ten originals and a couple of choice covers.

The Painkillers of Michael Emerson on keyboards, Randy McDonald on bass and Bowen Brown on drums

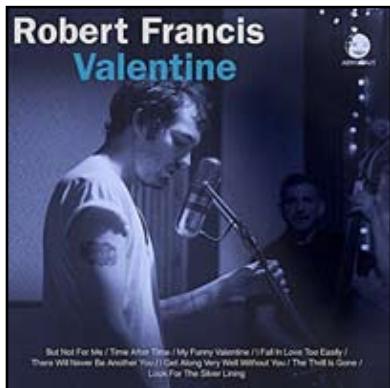
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with Ari Rios on percussion is a pretty well-oiled machine. There are no surprises on this, unlike his last album, "The Devil You Know," which had a few hard rock oriented tracks that fell flat to these ears.

Castro writes clever songs with an ability to generate a lyrical hook. Certainly the opening "Common Ground," with its call for us to stand together on common ground, band together before we all fall down demonstrates this. The title track is a catchy rocker where he tells this lady that he is blinded with desire for her and there is a method to his pursuit of her. It is followed by a ballad where he sings about having "Died and Gone To Heaven," when he is with the one he loves. The rocker "Got a Lot," has a rocking groove and one could easily imagine this being done by a zydeco band. As good as these songs may be, the wonderfully paced shuffle "Two Hearts," and a cover of the Muscle Shoals soul classic "I'm Qualified" (the latter perhaps having Castro's finest vocal here) stand out as exceptional. Also strong is "Lose Lose," a slow blues that Castro co-wrote with Joe Louis Walker with a nice lyric and terrific guitar.

"Method To My Madness" closes with a rendition of B.B. King's "Bad Luck." Castro toured with King years ago and this solid cover, done in tribute, closes a very appealing recording.

Ron Weinstock



ROBERT FRANCIS Valentine AERONAUT RECORDS

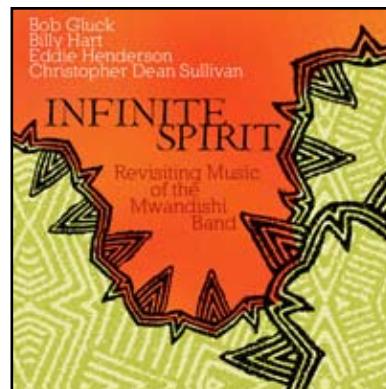
Singer-songwriter Robert Francis, has a new album "Valentine" where he covers the classic "Chet Baker Sings," which was the late Baker's first vocal recording. The origin for this session came from one night he came by a Wednesday jazz gig that Aeronaut's owner John Mastro organized and sang the standard "My Funny Valentine" with the house band. A few weeks later he recorded this album with backing from Guitarist John Storie, bassist Tim Emmons, drummer Kenny Elliot and sax man Zane Musa (who are all members of Jeff Goldblum's band The Mildred Snitzer Orchestra). Saxophonist Musa passed away a few weeks after this was recorded.

Francis evokes Baker's low-key, whisky laced vocals without simply imitating Baker. The backing helps contribute to this with Guitarist Storie providing a nice

setting and Elliot's adroit use of brushes contributing to the feel of the performances. Francis almost whispers "My Funny Valentine" until he cries "stay little valentine," while his more demonstrative singing on "Time After Time" is complemented by Musa's saxophone, both feathery and robust. Musa adds obligatos on "I Fall In Love Too Easily" and solos with some delightfully old school tenor. His robust tenor sets the plate for Francis' swinging "There Will Never Be Another You."

A particular highlight is "The Thrill Is Gone," with Francis' melancholy vocal echoed by Musa's sax. I have not heard Francis outside of this recording, and even if stylistically indebted to Baker here, the performances have their own charm. This charm, in part, results from the sympathetic backing, as well as Francis' own vocals, leading to focused, concise performances. This is available as a 10-inch vinyl album and as a digital download from the usual sources

Ron Weinstock



INFINITE SPIRIT Revisiting Music of the Mwandishi Band FMR RECORDS

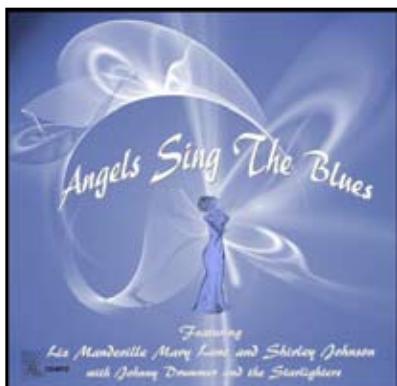
Pianist Bob Gluck authored "You'll Know When You Get There: Herbie Hancock and the Mwandishi Band" (University of Chicago Press, 2012), and in the course of writing the book had conversations with the members of this legendary band. This was inspiration for Infinite Spirit, a quartet that includes Gluck on piano and electronics, Christopher Dean Sullivan on bass, and members of the Mwandishi Band, Eddie Henderson on trumpet and Billy Hart on drums on three songs from that band, one number that is interlaced with a Gluck original and an original from Sullivan.

There have been a number of recent recordings that have reexamined similar music of this period in an acoustic manner. This release is partly (and most successfully) in that manner. Hancock played an electronic piano (Fender Rhodes) on some of the originals from this period, while Gluck adds to this an array of electronic sounds. It is a combination that to my mind is not completely successful. I mean listening to the wonderful development of Hancock's motif's on "Sleeping Giant" from Gluck on piano along with the haunting playing of Henderson as well as Hart's superb drumming (and Sullivan is a rock on bass)

gets mesmerizing until about three/fourths of the way through one is assaulted with electronic effects that overwhelm the listener. Much better is the poignant performance of "You'll Know When You Get There," as well as "Quasar" in which there are sound effects layered among the performance, but do not overwhelm Henderson's marvelous playing over the ostinato bass, Gluck's chords and Hart's shifting groove. The electronics sound more integrated into the opening of "Spirits Unleashed," another display of Henderson's ability to paint a mood, and then some musical fireworks between him and Gluck with the electronic effects at the end again not overwhelming the musicians. And while the original "Water Torture" employed electronics, it was employed more successfully on the original where it was employed like an instrument and not simply sonic effects.

An intriguing recording but the electronics at times is a distraction and for this listener even unlistenable, particularly on the first of the five tracks. This is unfortunate because there is much here that is compelling.

Ron Weinstock



VARIOUS ARTISTS Angels Sing The Blues EARWIG

"Angels Sing The Blues" (Earwig Records) arose out of lectures and performances by Sunnyland Slim (1993) and Bo Diddley (1995) at meetings of the American Society of the Aging.

Inspired by the Blues Brothers and adopting their persona, Michael "Jake" Marcus and John "Elwood" Migliaccio have produced such programs in the years since for a series "The Blues and Older Minority Musicians: More Than Just Music," a series of lectures, interviews and performances. In 2007, at Chicago's Taste Entertainment Center, they presented Liz Mandeville, Mary Lane and Shirley Johnson backed by Johnny Drummer and the Starliters for an old-fashioned blues review that was recorded and now released on Earwig.

Like a review, Drummer & the Starliters open the proceedings with lead guitarist Al Short credibly covering "A Real Mother For Ya," followed by bassist Danny O'Connor singing Albert King's hit "Cold Women With Warm Hearts. Both are solid club-type performances

and Drummer follows with a couple of his originals "Gonna Sell My Cadillac, Buy Me a Mule," and "Born in the Delta." Drummer is a solid club performer as well with a bit more personality as a singer than Short and O'Connor, and his amateurish harmonica heard at times perhaps has its charm for some. On "Delta" he tells his audience if you don't like the blues you are in the wrong place before singing about being born in the Delta, way down on the farm.

These are enjoyable warm-up songs, but the stars are the three ladies, Johnson, Lane and Mandeville. Johnson takes the lead on a vibrant cover of a Bobby Bland classic "Get Your Lovin' Where You Spend Your Time," with a brief solo from Short. She does a husky rendition of Maurice John Vaughan's "I'm Gonna Find Me a Lover," but the highpoint of her songs here is a reworking of Irma Thomas' early blues "You Can Have My Husband But Please Don't Mess With My Man," taken at a slower tempo and with a fervid vocal.

Drummer's cheesy electric keyboards help kick start Mary Lane's gravelly treatment "Just As Grown As You," a feisty rendition of the Bobby Bland classic "I Don't Want No Woman" that has Lane receiving songwriting credit. Mandeville is as feisty, sassy and bawdy as her colleagues as she sings to the men in the room about their needing to "Use What You Got," and not worry about their stuff being stacked wrong "It ain't the size of the pistol, but how you line up the shot, that really hits the spot," for what might be the high point of this session and she delivers a powerful cover of "I Just Want To Make Love To You," with Dollar adding his harp in the backing.

The three ladies share the vocals on a nice cover of John Prine's "Angel of Montgomery," a track that was not part of the concert but recorded in a studio. While not from the 2007 performances, this new 2013 recording is a nice addition to a varied and most entertaining collection of songs from these angelic blues singers.

Ron Weinstock



GEORGE LEWIS The Solo Trombone Record SACKVILLE/ DELMARK

The reissue of "The Solo Trombone Record," the debut recording by George Lewis is most welcome to fans of creative improvised music. Lewis, the trombonist,

composer and scholar, had been playing with Roscoe Mitchell and Anthony Braxton, amongst others, when he was recorded at Toronto's A Space by Sackville, and Delmark has made this available as part of the invaluable reissue of Sackville label recordings.

"The Solo Trombone Record," was issued the same year as German Albert Mangelsdorff released his second solo trombone recording, and followed also in the footsteps of other solo horn instrumental recordings such as Anthony Braxton's "For Alto."

This recording includes three live solo performances after opening with the extended "Toneburst (Piece For 3 Trombones Simultaneously)," which was recorded with Lewis overdubbing the trombones. Lewis not simply impresses with his technique, but his compositional and improvisation sense on a performance that is also full of humor.

"Phenomenology" is a swinging track that is fascinating to listen to Lewis take a simple phrase and develop the performance in contrast to "Untitled Dream Sequence," which as a more abstract feel to it.

Lewis' final performance here is a remarkable rendition of Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life," with his embellishments to the classic composition striking this listener as pretty accessible to a more general audience than other 'free' jazz recordings. *Ron Weinstock*

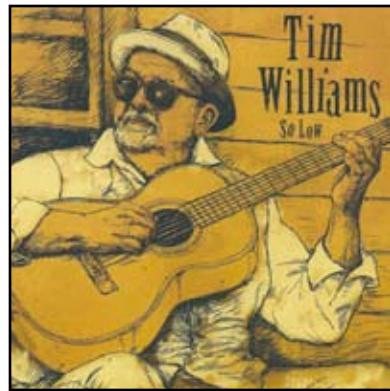
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Toronto Cannon THE CHICAGO WAY

"Deep, contemporary Chicago blues...razor-sharp guitar and compelling, forceful singing"
—The Chicago Tribune

★★★

THE NEW RELEASE ON ALLIGATOR RECORDS AVAILABLE NOW AT ALLIGATOR.COM AND OTHER FINE RETAILERS GENUINE Houserockin' MUSIC SINCE 1971



TIM WILLIAMS

So Low

LOWDEN PROUD RECORDS LTD

According to his website, "Tim Williams is a blues-based singer / songwriter / multi - instrumentalist. He is a 40 year veteran of the 'Roots' music scene in North America, roots which stretch back to the coffee-house scene of his native California in the mid 60s." Living in Canada since 1970, he has toured throughout the world and was the 2014 International Blues Challenge winner in the solo/duo category.

While he performs (and has recorded) a wide range of music, his new recording "So Low" (Lowden Proud Records Ltd) is a marvelous solo recording (the album title is a play on words on solo) that indicates the talent that won the International Blues Challenge and shows his versatility as he plays a 19th Century Marquette guitar, a Gretsch resonator, a Stella mandolin and a Harmony Sovereign 12-string on various selections.

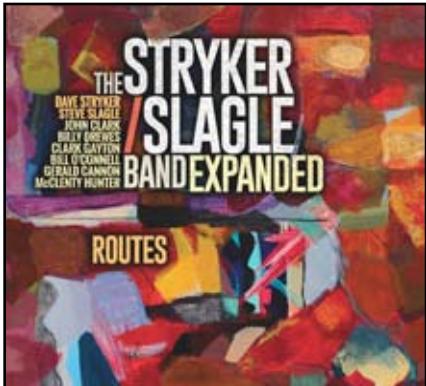
Listening to his strutting rendition of the opening selection, Mose Allison's "If You Live," one immediately is drawn to his clean, emphatic picking and his grainy, appealing singing. It is followed by his adept finger picking on the bouncy "More Peppers In Your Chili." One can detect a lot of possible sources to Williams playing, including Blind Boy Fuller, Big Bill Broonzy, Charlie McCoy, Tampa Red, Lightnin' Hopkins and Lonnie Johnson. He obviously has listened to a lot of music and adapted elements of these in his own playing, which I might like most with Broonzy, although on Broonzy's "My Big Money" his mandolin accompaniment brings McCoy to mind on a song that employs the same melody as "Sitting on Top of the World." His slide playing on the resonator on "Anywhere c/o The Blues," is a cross between Robert Johnson and the Black Ace as he incorporates a number of blues lines in this nicely paced performance.

Other performances are equally entertaining. "Pistol Snapper" is his rendition of a Blind Boy Fuller recording and the mix of his backing and natural vocal is a delight, followed by a wistful rendition of Tampa Red's "Witching Hour Blues," matching his slide playing with a vocal on another fine performance. "Grizzly Bear," adapted by Geoff Muldaur and others five decades ago, was a take on Jim Jackson's "This Morning She Was Gone." On this, Williams plays some lively 12-string

while singing about his gal going to Frisco to dance the Grizzly Bear there. Johnny Cash's "Big River" is transformed into a driving slide blues. After the loping, and pensive, "Midnight after Midnight," inspired by some Lonnie Johnson licks, the recording closes with a tribute to Lightnin' Hopkins entitled "Lightnin'," where Williams suggests the music of Hopkins and sings about Lightnin' playing a juke joint on a Saturday night with cousin Cleveland on a rubboard.

Tim Williams' "So Low" impresses with his wide ears, his terrific playing and his unforced singing which results in an acoustic blues album of great appeal.

Ron Weinstock



THE STRYKER/SLAGLE BAND (EXPANDED)

Routes STRIKEZONE

"Routes" is a new release by an expanded edition of The Stryker/Slagle Band. To the band of guitarist Dave Stryker and saxophonist/flautist Steve Slagle, along with bassist Gerald Cannon and drummer McLenty Hunter are added John Clark on French horn, Billy Drewes on tenor sax and bass clarinet, Clark Gayton on trombone and tuba and Bill O'Connell on piano (including Fender Rhodes).

The full eight pieces are heard on six of the nine performances. Of the remaining three, one is a sextet, one is a quintet and one features the quartet. Stryker and Slagle each contribute four compositions and the ninth piece is from Charles Mingus (Slagle is a significant contributor to the Mingus Big Band), and one can detect Mingus' influence in the hard driving performances contained in this recording.

Certainly the driving "City of Angels," Slagle's salute to his hometown, establishes this feel, with the horn voicings contributing to the lively solos from the leaders. Drewes' bass clarinet riff and O'Connell's floating Fender Rhodes set the mood on Stryker's 'Nothin' Wrong With It,' with the interplay and counterpoint between Slagle's serpentine soprano sax and the bass clarinet with Slagle, and then Stryker soloing. The ensemble does a lovely rendition of Slagle's arrangement of the Charles Mingus ballad, "Self-portrait In Three Colors," with the leaders and bassist showcased. Slagle's "Fort Greene Scene," with O'Connell

on Fender Rhodes, evokes the late Les McCann in the driving performance. Gayton is featured on trombone and tuba for Stryker's "Great Plains" while Slagle's flute adds coloring to the sounds. The quartet performance "Extensity" is a lively blues-rooted "burner" quoting annotator Rick Simpson, while "Gardena," another homage to his home town of Los Angeles from Slagle, is another composition that suggests a definite Mingus influence (hardly unexpected), with excellent solos from O'Donnell, Slagle, and Stryker and fresh support from the horns.

The closing "Lickety Split Lounge," is a brisk bluesy shuffle named after the lounge where Stryker auditioned for Jack McDuff and joined the legendary organist's group that included Slagle with some hot blowing from the leaders, O'Donnell and trombonist Gayton. It provides a lively coda to this strong recording.

Ron Weinstock



MIGHTY MIKE SCHERMER

Blues In Good Hands FINEDOG RECORDS/VIZZTONE

Marcia Ball's guitarist since 2009, Mighty Mike Schermer has played with a who's who of blues and roots acts including most notably Angela Strehli and Elvin Bishop, and recorded with Ball, Bishop, Maria Muldaur, Howard Tate, Sista Monica and many more.

He has a new release under his own name, "Blues In Good Hands" (Finedog Records/Vizztone), mostly recorded at Kid Andersen's Greaseland Recording Studios in San Jose, CA, with an A-List of musicians from the Bay Area, CA and Austin, TX music scenes including Paul Revilli, Tony Stead, Steve Ehrmann, Austin Delone, Nancy Wright and Terry Hanck, along with guest appearances by Marcia Ball, Tommy Castro, John Németh, and Carolyn Wonderland. Schermer penned the 13 songs (three in collaboration with others).

Mostly recorded at Kid Andersen's Greaseland Studio, and mixed by Andersen, this varied recording benefits from the uncluttered and clean production of these crisply delivered performances. Schermer displays his many talents on the opening "Baby Don't Stop," with his appealing gritty vocals and keen guitar (there is a nice Hanck solo here) with the rhythm section very tight behind him. While he may have a narrow

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vocal range, Schermer's understated, unforced singing has considerable appeal. "Heaven's on the Other Side" has a nice lyric about struggling in his everyday life with bill collectors and the car not running with a catchy hook about not minding to go through hell if heaven is on the other side. Set against a funky vamp, he has a fiery, concise guitar solo. "It's a Pleasure" is a lovely ballad while a reggae groove anchors the peppy "One Tear At a Time," and then there's "Wait-On-Me Woman," with Greg Izor's harmonica along with the relaxed shuffle groove.

The title track with Schermer's mix of his own experiences (how seeing Albert Collins perform and conduct himself changed Schermer's life, as well as how he and Terry Hanck were affected by Junior Walker's passing), inspired him to write and perform songs that everyone could understand, and that were real which everyone could feel. I usually dislike 'keep the blues alive' songs, but Schermer's lyric and solid playing make this an exception. "Most People," with twangy guitar and a swampy feel, is suggestive of some of Bobby Charles' songs. Marcia Ball adds piano to the rollicking "Barkin' Up The Wrong Tree," while Tommy Castro adds some fiery guitar to the slow blues "Stop Crying" and John Nemeth adds harmonica to the lazy Jimmy Reed groove of "Baby Be Kind."

There is so much to like about this recording. Schermer is a marvelous songwriter, guitarist and a singer with wit and heart. With the strong backing throughout, this is a gem of a recording.

Ron Weinstock

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JOEL PRESS Live at Smalls SMALLSLIVE

New to me is tenor saxophonist Joel press, an artist who has been blowing swing-styled music for a half-century or so (think a bit of Ben Webster with a touch of Lester Young). He has played with Jackie Byard, Jimmy Garrison, Sheila Jordan and Ray Nance amongst others.

For years, he was based in Boston, but moved to New York in 2011. A new "Live at Smalls" on the Smallslive label, finds him in a quartet setting from October 2014. Seven of the ten selections have him backed by Michael Kanan piano, Chris Haney on bass and Fukushi Tainaka on drums, while the other three have Spike Wilner on piano, Boots Maleson on bass and Steve Little on drums.

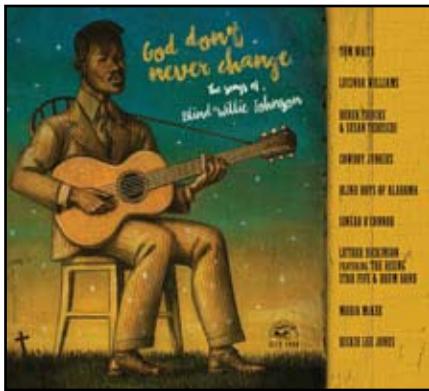
Fans of swing era tenor sax will find so much to enjoy on what twenty years ago would have been described as a Mainstream jazz album (is it considered traditional jazz today). Opening up with a swinging "There Will Never Be Another You," other delights include "All of Me," where his extended notes and feathery (or buttery) tone evoke Webster or Harold Ashby and on which there is a splendid piano solo from Kanan. A spirited "I Hear a Rhapsody" again showcases Kanan's inventive and melodious piano in addition to more feathery saxophone including Kanana and Press trading fours.

With the exception of Press' own lovely ballad, "Sunrise," the program continues with sumptuous performances of known fare such as "Lover Man" (with Wilner on piano), "All the Things Your Are," "That Old Feeling" and other classics of the Great American Songbook, all lyrically and warmly played. In addition to Press' superb playing and the marvelous pianists, kudos must be extended to the superb rhythm section. As a result, Joe Press' "Live at Small's" is superb, straight-ahead swinging jazz.

Ron Weinstock

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VARIOUS ARTISTS
God Don't Never Change
The Songs of Blind Willie Johnson
ALLIGATOR RECORDS

This all-star project collects 11 of Blind Willie Johnson's classics from the 1930s and reintroduces them anew. While he recorded only 30 tunes, Johnson's contribution to the music world is indispensable. Melding raw guitar with gospel-driven songs of salvation, Johnson did not sing the blues but, instead, sought to minister to the down and out through his powerful voice and music.

The artists that are featured here bring a sense of authenticity to the project through rough and tumble versions of the songs that melt away the many years

that have lapsed since they were first written and performed. Many have been covered before including *It's Nobody's Fault but Mine* (Led Zeppelin), *Motherless Children Have a Hard Time* (Clapton) and *John The Revelator* (more people than you can count!) but are given enthusiastic readings here by Lucinda Williams, the Blind Boys of Alabama and Tom Waits respectively. Devoid of the hard rock of the well known covers, the songs shine in an entirely new light. Williams also powers through the title cut with Doug Pettibone's guitar adding an eerie counter-point to her raw vocals.

The other artists rise to the task as well. The Cowboy Junkies step away from their typical hypnotic style and lay down a surprisingly gruff reading of *Jesus is Coming Soon*. Maria McKee (Lone Justice) throws her powerful voice into a full roar on *Let Your Light Shine On* and the husband/wife duo of Derek Trucks & Susan Tedeschi add a gospel sheen to *Keep Your Lamp Trimmed and Burning*. Rickie Lee Jones brings the necessary dread to *Dark was the Night-Cold Was the Ground* and Sinead O'Connor offers a choir of vocals over a simple but powerful guitar groove on *Trouble Will Soon Be Over*.

A solid listen from beginning to end that should remind music fans of the rightful place of Blind Willie Johnson in musical history.

Mark Smith

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