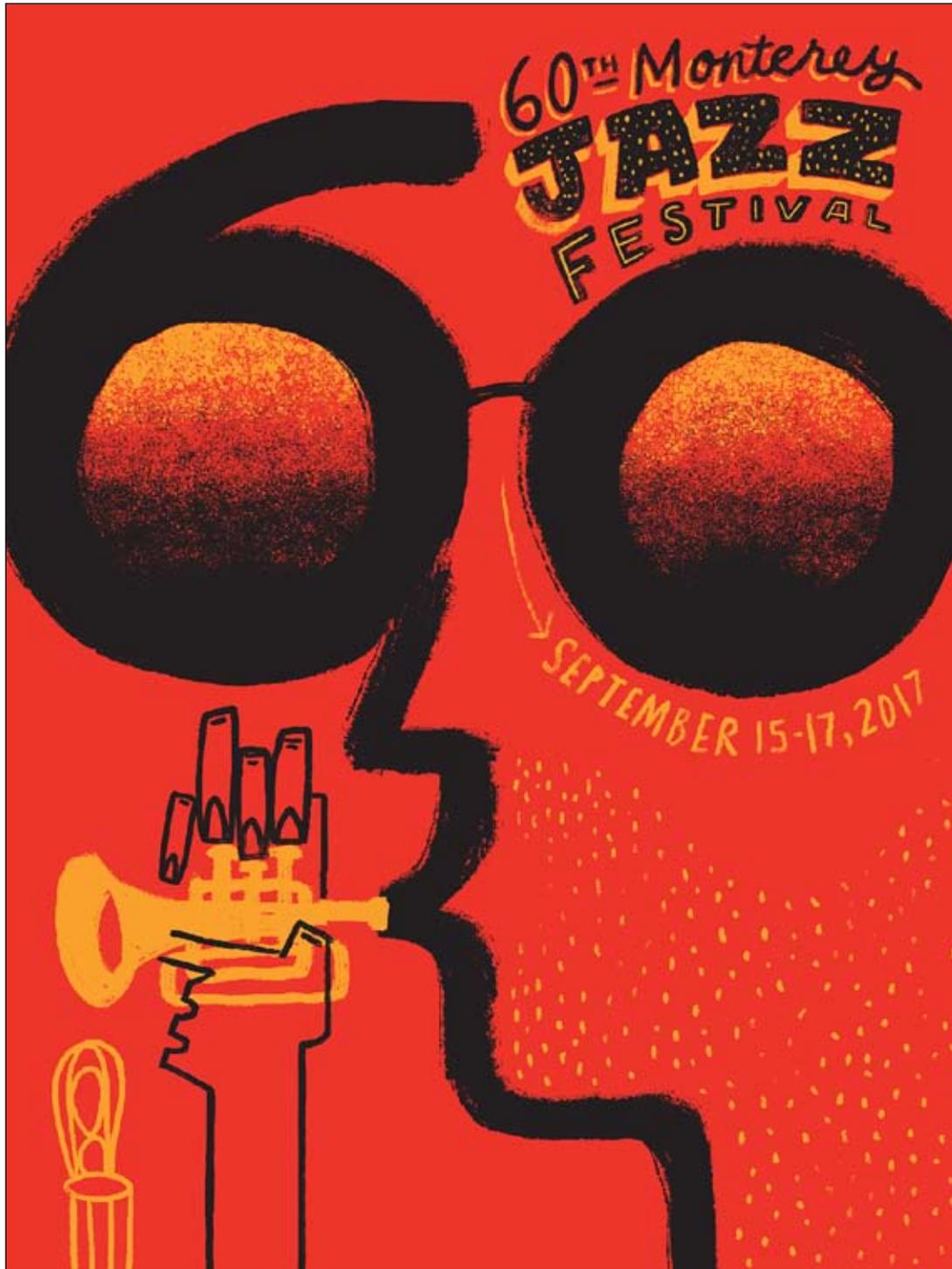


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now in our 43rd year

jazz
& **blues** report



60th Monterey Jazz Festival

jazz & blues report

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Check out our constantly updated website. All of our issues from our first PDFs in September 2003 and on are posted, as well as many special issues with festival reviews, Blues Cruise and Gift Guides. Now you can search for CD Reviews by artists, titles, record labels, keyword or JBR Writers. 15 years of reviews are up from our archives and we will be adding more, especially from our early years back to 1974.

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jazz & blues report

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"Buffaloniou"

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

60th Monterey Jazz Festival

September 15–17



John Clayton, Jeff Hamilton, Gerald Clayton - 2017 Artists In Residence

Headliners Include Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, Common, Leslie Odom, Jr., Dee Dee Bridgewater, Angelique Kidjo, Kenny Barron Trio, Chris Thile & Brad Mehldau, Jimmy Heath, Joe Lovano, Branford Marsalis, Joshua Redman, and Many Others

MJF Celebrates Centennials of Thelonious Monk, Ella Fitzgerald and Dizzy Gillespie, with Additional Tributes to Salsa, and Sonny Rollins

Monterey, CA - Three-day Arena and Grounds Ticket Packages for the 60th Annual Monterey Jazz Festival, September 15–17 are on sale now. Tickets can be purchased online at montereyjazzfestival.org or by calling 888.248.6499.

Celebrating its historic milestone, the Festival, will feature over 110 performances from iconic and emerging jazz artists, educational events, conversations, films, and exhibits on eight stages, for 30 hours of live music spanning two days and three nights, accompanied by an array of 75 vendors selling international cuisine and merchandise on the oak-studded 20 acres of the Monterey County Fair & Event Center.

The Artists-in-Residence for MJF60 will be John Clayton, Jeff Hamilton, and Gerald Clayton, and the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra will debut the 2017 commission piece, "Stories of a Groove: Conception, Evolution, Celebration," written by John Clayton. Regina Carter will be the Showcase Artist, playing with three projects over the weekend.

"In the world of music festivals, the Monterey Jazz Festival continues to be a standout both in terms of presenting the very best of jazz, but also in the character of the event, which welcomes everyone—young and old, jazz enthusiast, and novice alike," said Colleen Bailey, Executive Director. "Artistic Director Tim Jackson continues to deliver a lineup that includes household names, as well as artists who are pushing the boundaries of jazz."

"The 60-year history of the Monterey Jazz Festival is an inspiring legacy



Herbie Hancock (© Douglas Kirkland)



Chick Corea (© Toshi Sakurai)

17 includes Common, John Beasley's MONK'estra, celebrating the Thelonious Monk Centennial, and the Next Generation Jazz Orchestra with John Clayton, Jeff Hamilton, and Gerald Clayton.

Sunday night in the Arena will feature Herbie Hancock & Chick Corea; Angelique Kidjo's Tribute to Salsa with Pedrito Martinez; and Chris Thile & Brad Mehldau.

Full Weekend Arena Ticket Packages offer a reserved seat to each of the five concerts on the Jimmy Lyons Stage in the Arena (renewable annually) plus access to the seven additional Grounds Stages, and all Festival activities. Full Weekend Arena Ticket Packages begin at \$315.

Full Weekend Grounds Packages offer access to seven Grounds stages and activities. Full Weekend Grounds Packages are \$145.

Grounds activities include nearly 100 events, conversations, films, and musical performances, with weekend highlights from the Joanne Brackeen Trio, Gerald Clayton Trio, Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, Regina Carter & Southern Comfort, Tia Fuller Quintet featuring Ingrid Jensen, Linda May Han Oh, Roberta Gambarini, Roy Hargrove Quintet, Vijay Iyer Sextet, Joe Lovano Classic Quartet, Pedrito Martinez Group, Matt Wilson's Honey & Salt, Amendola Vs. Blades, James Carter Or-

and a lesson in the history of jazz," said Jackson. "For the 60th celebration, I am excited and grateful to be able to help build on this historical achievement by celebrating our past masters, reveling in the music of now, and gleefully pointing forward in new directions."

Monterey Jazz Festival is a six-time JazzTimes Readers Poll winner, including being voted "2016 Best Jazz Festival" for its 59th edition last year.

2017's GRAMMY Award-winning Arena lineup on Friday night, September 15 includes Herbie Hancock, and tributes to the 100th anniversary of the births of Dizzy Gillespie and Ella Fitzgerald with the Kenny Barron Trio with special guests Roy Hargrove, Sean Jones, and Pedrito Martinez, and Regina Carter's "Dear Ella."

The Saturday afternoon, September 16 Arena lineup includes Dee Dee Bridgewater and the Memphis Project, Mr. Sipp, and Monsieur Periné.

Saturday night includes a tribute to Sonny Rollins featuring Jimmy Heath, Joe Lovano, Branford Marsalis, and Joshua Redman, with Gerald Clayton, Scott Colley and Lewis Nash; Leslie Odom, Jr. from Hamilton, and the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra with the Gerald Clayton Trio debuting the 2017 commission piece.

The Arena lineup on Sunday afternoon, September



Dee Dee Bridgewater (© Mark Higashino)



Tia Fuller (© Jerris Madison)



Sean Jones (© Jimmy Katz)

gan Trio, Kyle Eastwood Band, GoGo Penguin, Sean Jones Quartet, Miles Mosley, Monsieur Periné, Ray Obiedo & The Latin Jazz Project, Alicia Olatuja, Ali Ryerson Quartet, The Suffers, Mr. Sipp, Kandace Springs, Chester Thompson Trio, Chano Dominguez Trio, Roger Fox Big Band with Chris Cain, Derrick Hodge & Mike Mitchell, top bands from the 2017 Next Generation Jazz Festival, and many others.

Also on sale are Full Weekend District 7 Premier Club hospitality passes, priced at \$300. Benefits include a furnished setting offering closed-circuit Arena simulcasts, wines by District 7 and gourmet cuisine, private restrooms, indoor and outdoor patio seating, no-host top-shelf bars, and more. Arena or Grounds Ticket purchase is required.

The 11th Annual Jazz Legends Gala, held at the Inn at Spanish Bay in Pebble Beach, will honor Herbie Hancock on Thursday, September 14, 2016. Special performances at this beautiful location will feature the Gerald Clayton Trio, Regina Carter, and the Next Generation Jazz Orchestra. Cost is \$290 per person. Proceeds from this event benefit Monterey Jazz Festival's jazz education programs. Contact 831.233.3715 for more information.

Single Day Arena and Daily Grounds Tickets go on sale May 15.

The full lineup for the 60th Monterey Jazz Festival can be found on montereyjazzfestival.org. High-resolution photos available at <http://www.montereyjazzfestival.org/media/MJF>

Lineup for the 60th Monterey Jazz Festival, September 15-17, 2017
(in order of appearance / Partial list, more to be announced)

Friday, September 15

ARENA - Jimmy Lyons Stage: Regina Carter "Dear Ella"; A Tribute to Dizzy Gillespie: Kenny Barron Trio with special guests Roy Hargrove, Sean Jones, Pedrito Martinez; Herbie Hancock

GROUNDS - Garden Stage: Ray Obiedo & The Latin Jazz Project; Along Came Bet-

ty; the Berklee Global Jazz Ambassadors Dizzy's Den: GoGo Penguin; Miles Mosley Night Club: Matt Wilson's Honey & Salt; Alicia Olatuja; Gerald Clayton Trio CoffeeHouseGallery-LatinJazzCollective; Roberta Gambarini Courtyard Stage: Matthew Whitaker on the Yamaha AvantGrand (Two sets) Jazz Theater - Simulcasts from the Arena

Saturday, September 16

ARENA - Jimmy Lyons Stage: Monsieur Periné; Mr. Sipp; Dee Dee Bridgewater; Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra (MJF Commission); Leslie Odom, Jr.; A Tribute to Sonny Rollins featuring Jimmy Heath, Joe Lovano, Branford Marsalis, Joshua Redman and Gerald Clayton, Scott Colley & Lewis Nash

GROUNDS - Garden Stage: Con Brio; The Suffers; Mr. Sipp; Monsieur Periné; Sammy Miller Congregation Dizzy's Den: Ali Ryerson Quartet; Sean Jones Quartet; Kyle Eastwood Band; Roy Hargrove Quintet; Pedrito Martinez Group; Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra Night Club: Top bands from the 2017 Next Generation Jazz Festival; Roger Fox Big Band; Kandace Springs; Regina Carter Quartet; Derrick Hodge & Mike Mitchell Coffee House Gallery - DownBeat Blindfold Test with Tia Fuller; Conversation with Herbie Hancock; the Berklee Global Jazz Ambassadors; Joanne Brackeen Trio (Three sets) Education Pavilion: Student Performances (All afternoon)

Courtyard Stage - Matthew Whitaker on the Yamaha AvantGrand (Three sets) **Jazz Theater** - Simulcasts from the Arena; Jazz on Film: I Called Him Morgan, a film by Kasper Collin

Sunday, September 17

ARENA - Jimmy Lyons Stage: Next Generation Jazz Orchestra with John Clayton, Jeff Hamilton and Gerald Clayton; John Beasley's MONK'estra; Common; Chris Thile & Brad Mehldau; Angélique Kidjo's Tribute to Salsa with Pedrito Martinez; Herbie Hancock & Chick Corea

GROUNDS - Dizzy's Den: Andy Weis & the Monterey Jazz All-Stars; O.F.N.I. Trio; Joe Lovano Classic Quartet; Tia Fuller Quintet featuring Ingrid Jensen; Regina Carter & Southern Comfort; Vijay Iyer Sextet

Garden Stage - Top Bands from the 2017 Next Generation Jazz Festival; Roger Fox Big Band with Chris Cain; Linda May Han Oh; Ranky Tanky; Sandy Cressman and Homenagem Brasileira Night Club: Top Bands from the 2017 Next Generation Jazz Festival; MJF High School Honor Vocal Jazz Ensemble; MJF High School All-Star Big Band; Amendola Vs. Blades; Chester Thompson Trio; James Carter Organ Trio Coffee House Gallery: Conversations with Jimmy Heath and Chick Corea; Top bands from the 2017 Next Generation Jazz Festival; Chano Dominguez Trio (Two sets) Jazz Education Pavilion: Student Bands (All afternoon) Courtyard Stage - Matthew Whitaker on the Yamaha AvantGrand (Four sets) Jazz Theater - Simulcasts from the Arena; Jazz on Film: Chick Corea: The Musician, a film by Arne B. Rostad.

Visit www.montereyjazzfestival.com for more information.



Durango Blues Train Second Weekend Announced August 18th and 19th, 2017

Durango, CO - Due to popular demand and with a sold out June train, the Durango Blues Train is pleased to announce a second weekend, August 18th and 19th, of live blues aboard the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. Presented by SBG Productions and the Telluride Blues & Brews Festival this unique live music experience takes place aboard the historic steam train in Durango, Colorado with musicians performing in their vintage coach car, while passengers are free to sample each musical act by dancing from one rail car to next. For updated information, artists lineup and tickets visit www.durangobluestrain.com.

"We're thrilled to continue the Blues Train in its sixth year aboard the historic railroad," said Steve Gumble, founder of the Durango Blues Train.

An evening on the Blues Train treats passengers to a musical journey on the 100+-year-old Durango &

PAGE FIVE

Silverton Narrow Gauge steam powered train. Each evening will feature four solo and duo acts, and two full bands, each offering an intimate concert aboard the historic train. Passengers will also experience breathtaking views of the San Juan National Forest including the "Highline", a world famous section of railroad crawling along cliffs high above the Animas River.

Guests can enjoy light snacks and beverages including wine and beer from sponsors Telluride Brewing Company and Ska Brewing while riding the train. Tickets are \$95 per person per night, plus a 7% Historic Train Preservation fee. Tickets are extremely limited and will sell out in advance. Purchasers must be 21 years old to participate. For updated information, artists lineup and tickets visit www.durangobluestrain.com.

The Durango Blues Train is a unique 'moving' experience featuring live blues acts while passengers travel aboard the Historic Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad's coal-fired, steam-powered train to the spectacular and breathtaking "Highline" canyon of Colorado's San Juan National Forest.



San Diego Blues Festival

Sat. Sept 9

Embarcadero Marina Park North
(Downtown San Diego waterfront)

When the AimLoan.com San Diego Blues Festival was founded in 2011, it had a simple mission to provide great blues music at an affordable price, and raise money to support the battle against hunger in our community.

Since then, the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank has shared some of the best blues musicians on the planet with an appreciative and growing audience. In the festival's first four years, our sponsors and our festival goers have helped contribute 12 tons of food and more than \$585,000 to help the Food Bank fight hunger in San Diego County.

This year we are honored to present Mavis Staples as our headliner. A Grammy winner and member of the Blues and Rock And Roll halls of fame, Staples was awarded a Kennedy Center Honor in December, the nation's highest arts honor. This year's lineup also includes another Blues Hall of Famer, Joe Louis Walker and the popular, California Honeydrops. There will be a total of nine acts over the course of Saturday covering a broad spectrum of blues styles.

In addition, those who purchase Super VIP tickets will be able to attend our Friday night VIP Party at Ginger's in The Gaslamp Quarter from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.. Robin Henkel will provide the entertainment for the evening.

With the help of more than 28,000 volunteers the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank feeds nearly 370,000 people per in month in San Diego County through direct food distributions to those in need and through a network of more than 350 nonprofit partners, including: food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, low-income daycare centers, senior centers, churches,

schools and day centers for the elderly and disabled.

In San Diego County, 467,000 people live in poverty and face “food insecurity” which means that little or no food is available at home, and they often do not know how they will get their next meal. Nearly 30 percent of those living in poverty are children.

Last year, the Food Bank distributed more than 22 million pounds of food – the equivalent of 18.3 million meals – to neighborhoods and communities throughout San Diego County. Visit www.sdbluesfest.com.



THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ & HERITAGE FESTIVAL ROLLING A WINNER!

A Review By Mark Smith

There are no guarantees when you roll the dice. Sometimes it's a double six, sometimes it's snake-eyes. One's a winner, one's a loser. The odds of each are the same. The odds of something in between are higher but it's the extremes that you remember. Everything you do falls into the same boat. When's the last time you talked about a middle of the road meal? Never! Instead, you talk about the great meal or the horrific one, the great beer or the one that triggered your gag reflexes. So, what's it going to be today? Double sixes? Snake eyes? Something in the boring middle? Roll the dice and take your chances. If you don't roll you won't lose but you can't win either. So, keep on rolling.

My 12th trip to the annual New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival the last weekend in April brought up plenty of double sixes but the odds gods made sure that the snakes hissed from time to time. Snakes are sneaky bastards. You never know when they are going to appear and hiss in your face. Follow my buddy Gregg and I on our Jazz Fest adventure which included 26 bands over the course of the three days and four nights with total concert time passing the 33 hour mark.

The Snake Hisses

"I'm going to wake up in the morning with my dog licking my nose and my wife saying 'yep, you've been drinking whiskey again'". So began our conversation with one of the world's most annoying people. While standing in line for a late-night show at the Maple Leaf featuring the Maple Leaf All-Stars (Jon Cleary and the Absolute Monster Gentlemen plus half of the band Dumpstafunk) after three days at the Festival, we took the bait, rolled the dice and muttered something about there being worse fates. Big Mistake. Snake eyes! We were now his best friends and he stuck with us through the show like bubble gum to a shoe. With literally every sentence punctuated with a cackle worthy of Bevis & Butthead but with the tonal qualities of an asthmatic hyena, he decided we needed to hear about all the clubs, restaurants and bars worthy of his praise. When we stopped feigning interest, he tried to chat up everyone in the 360 degrees of flesh surrounding us in the tightly packed club even though the show was well under way by then. As one person after another refused to engage he decided his new best friends needed to join him in some whiskey. When he left to get it the crowd quickly filled his space. A sigh of relief and an eye-roll was shared by everyone in the vicinity. Hopes were high that we could now finish the show in peace.

Our reprieve was short-lived as he returned- with tequila! Not only was he irritating, he was incompetent!! Trying to push his way back into a space that no longer existed, he baptized a big frat-boy's lady. No quarter was given. The gum got scraped! Double sixes!

I wonder what was left for the dog to lick?

Plenty of chances to roll the dice.

The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival takes place the last weekend in April and the first weekend in May each year. With 13 separate stages featuring music for eight hours each day there are literally dozens of musical options including traditional and modern jazz, rock, blues, folk, Cajun, zydeco and world beat music. While there are many local and regional acts, the biggest names in pop and rock appear as well. This year's big name headliners included Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers, Alabama Shakes, Kings of Leon, Galactic, Patti Labelle, Maroon 5, Lorde, Harry Connick, Jr., Earth Wind and Fire, Stevie Wonder, Widespread Panic, Darius Rucker, Wilco, Rhiannon Giddings, Snoop Dog and Pitbull, just to name a few. The blues tent had plenty to rave about as well with Johnny Sansone, Deacon John, Kenny Neal, Jonny Lang, Little Freddie King, Joe Louis Walker, Southside Johnny & the Asbury Jukes, Henry Gray, Eric Lindell, Alvin Youngblood Heart and Blues Traveler headlining and countless others filling the schedule.

As is usually the case, there are many hard choices to make with favorites playing opposite each other and such a massive crowd in attendance that it can be very hard to stage hop with the hope of catching at least part

of each show. Indeed, there are times when the crowds are so dense that you have no chance at all of making it between two stages, let alone of getting a reasonable vantage point when you arrive. So, do you set up in front of the stage that is hosting your “can’t miss” artist later in the day and give up the chance to see other bands or do you roll the dice hoping a few double sixes come your way so that you can catch the others? Are you a winner or are you a loser?

There are basically two groups of people at the festival: those who bring chairs and blankets and set up for the day at one of the stages and those that move from stage to stage all day long. The “campers” usually arrive first thing and set up with the hopes of grabbing prime real estate to see the headline acts that are typically scheduled for the last couple of sets of the day. Tensions sometimes erupt as the stage hoppers try to squeeze into the space the campers have had staked out for several hours. Nothing wrecks a camper’s well-planned day more than someone squeezing between their chairs spilling beer and food and then standing in front of them. For their part, the stage hoppers resent the fact that the campers spread out blankets and chairs close to the stage making it tough to see headline acts without spending the entire day in front of the stage and so, faced with the risk of missing a favorite, into the chair zone they go.

The problem has been alleviated somewhat over the past couple of years by increasing the size of the standing room only space at the front and moving the chair only zone further back. As a result, for all but the biggest acts, the stage hoppers do not need to infiltrate the chair zone in order to catch a show. While this results in a very crowded standing zone and a less favorable viewing opportunity for the campers, it’s a good compromise for the benefit of both groups.

The camper vs stage hopper battle is limited to the three big outdoor stages where the national headliners appear. Real estate isn’t as precious at the smaller stages with lesser known acts. The blues, jazz and gospel tents are filled with chairs and bleachers and people move in and out of them all day long.

After attending the Festival so many times, I mix and match between being a camper and a stage hopper. Some days it is best to stay put and avoid the risk of not getting back. Other days, it’s time to take a roll and see if the odds are with you. You gotta try right? So, how’d it go this year?

Day One. Stage Hopping.

The first day of the festival found the bands we wanted to see spread from stage to stage for the entire day and so we were destined to be stage hoppers. The issue was overlapping schedules that would make us miss part of many sets in order to catch other bands we really wanted to see. By leaving a set early, you run the risk of missing a favorite song but the trade-off is you might catch your favorite on the next stage. Roll the

dice, take your chances!

We started the day hitting Congo Square for a few minutes of the New Orleans based Revealers, a roots reggae band that was debuting a new disc. The sound was great and the weather a hot, humid mid-80’s- perfect for Reggae. As good as it was, we made the move over to the blues tent to catch Johnny Sansone tearing through some swampy blues with a hot band backing his guitar and harmonica work. That set completed, we hit the food booths which are an outstanding feature of the festival. No fairground food here. Instead, there are countless local and regional favorites including fried softshell crab po-boys, crawfish, fried green tomatoes, oyster beignets and Crawfish Monica. I couldn’t throw the dice on these choices and grabbed both the soft-shell crab and a Cochon de lait po-boy washed down with a frozen café au lait. I’ll count that as a double six every time!

With lunch out of the way, we moved to the Acura stage and caught a red-hot set by the New Orleans Suspects, who featured a slinky, horn-driven sound with strong echoes of Little Feat. We stayed put for the traditional jazz of Meschiya Lake and the Little Big Horns. With swing dancers providing an additional visual punch to the show, the band had the crowd smiling and bopping along to the beat their entire set. Meschiya got a particularly warm and loud response from the crowd when she had some choice words for the big orange one up in D. C.

Next up on the Acura stage was local trumpet legend Kermit Ruffins and his Barbeque Swingers. Kermit is an endearing performer and an heir to Louis Armstrong as the City’s goodwill musical ambassador. We had seen him countless times though and so after a couple of tunes decided to head to the other end of the fairgrounds to see soul/blues man, Leon Bridges. We arrived only to find him playing a long string of ballads. Feeling our energy lagging, we bailed pretty quickly and headed back to recharge with some more Kermit. Our roll of the dice was rewarded by the guest appearance of Nayo Jones, who delivered an over-the-top rendition of Etta James’ classic, “At Last”. When she finished, Kermit moved into familiar territory and so we moved again, this time to the blues tent where the legendary Deacon John was leading a large blues orchestra through a set of New Orleans classics and the Steely Dan gem “Deacon’s Blues” for which he proclaimed he was still awaiting his royalty check!

The last acts of the day presented stark choices. Harry Connick, Jr., The Trey Anastasio Band, NAS with Soul Rebels, Aaron Neville or Astral Project. Since Connick was playing right next to the blues tent, we opted for convenience even though we knew that it would be crowded. The roll of the dice came up double sixes as we found a reasonable standing space and took in his great band. While Connick has gained fame for his tv show, it is a mistake to overlook the fact he has some serious musical chops to back up his stage schtick.

So, a lot of music for one day right? Ah, but that's just the start! One of the great things about jazz fest is that virtually every club and music venue in town puts on an evening show to take advantage of the large contingent of music fans in town for the festival. The choices are almost as tough as the festival itself and are not for the weak of heart. Most shows do not start until at least 10:00 and many start as late as 2:00 a.m. We took in spectacular sets from the New Breed Brass Band featuring Big Chief Monk Boudreaux, JJ Grey & Mofro and Nathaniel Rateliff and the Nightsweats. Beating the odds, we rolled doubles sixes almost all day.

Day Two. A Campground Day.

The second day of the Festival found us playing it safe and joining the campers at the Gentilly Stage because of the solid line-up there and not much of significant interest elsewhere. We also knew that with Alabama Shakes playing there at the end of the day we would have to set up for the day or be relegated to the standing zone which was sure to be packed tighter than a constipated elephant.

The Lost Bayou Ramblers kicked things off with traditional Cajun music that soon had the sleepy crowd hooting its approval. Even though we planned to stay put, we decided we had to sneak out to catch the blue-eyed soul of Marc Broussard. That roll of the dice came up right as he fronted a great band with a horn section adding just the right punch to the mix. We got there before the massive crowd waiting to see Marron 5 later in the day filled every available nook and cranny of the standing zone.

We had to bail before he was done in order to get back to See Jon Cleary and the Absolute Monster Gentlemen deliver their trademark funkified blues. While we had been gone less than an hour, the crowd had nearly doubled with those waiting to see Alabama Shakes. Cleary and crew made converts out of the many there who were not familiar with his music- one of the major benefits that local bands get when booked on a stage that features a national headliner later in the day.

Cleary was followed by Philadelphian Amos Lee who occupied the same soul blues space as we had heard from Broussard earlier. By the time his set was done, maximum crowd density was being reached. Britney Howard fronts Alabama Shakes with not only her big booming voice but with her thrashing guitar work. She took charge right away and the crowd was clearly appreciative of their soulful rock.

About half way through, though, the band fell into the same slow soul groove as Broussard and Lee and so we decided to ramp up the energy by heading to the Fais Do Do stage for some Zyedco by Terrance Simien and the Zydeco Experience. It was a risky move because the crowd was so tight that moving was an act of bumping and grinding around people. The roll came up double sixes, though, as we found ourselves rejuvenated by the happy accordion grooves and feel good

vibe of the band.

The snakes hissed again on our next couple of rolls. First, Alabama Shakes ended earlier than we thought resulting in the massive crowd beating us to the shuttle bus line. We lost major time waiting and so, with tickets in hand for a night show featuring London Souls and the Honey Island Swamp Band, we had to skip our planned meal at Acme Oyster House (the crowd beat us there too) and had to grab dinner at the Crescent City Brewery which is fine but not the classic New Orleans choice we had in mind. That said, we rolled the dice on its fresh oysters and they came up solid sixes!

Back to the snakes. The London Souls are a two piece drum/guitar combo like the Black Keys. While they were clearly adept musicians, they may have spent too much time with Spinal Tap as they played at an ear splitting volume that had many in the crowd physically plugging their ears or heading to the bar next door. We stuck it out, though and got a great set of swamp blues and rock from the Honey Island Swamp Band. Another late night.

Day 3. Snakes, I hate Snakes.

All week long, the weather forecast called for massive rain on Sunday with severe thunderstorms, a major problem for an outdoor festival. Sure enough, we awoke to a tornado watch and the promised thunderstorms a bright red scar on the radar just west of New Orleans. The festival sent out notice that the gates would not be opened as scheduled and to stay tuned for news. Crap! No Tom Petty. No Mavericks. No Dr. John. No Southside Johnny. All were acts that had caused us to select the first rather than second weekend of the festival. With the festival on hold, we did the only logical thing and grabbed a Cajun bloody Mary! We then headed to Frenchman Street to browse the awesome music collection at the Louisiana Music Factory. The threatened weather showed up right on schedule and the streets were soon over-flowing with water which was illuminated by regular lightning bolts. During a quick break in the deluge we sought refuge in a bar with a jazz trio and strong cocktails: the Corpse Reviver soon found its way to our table.

As the morning turned to afternoon with continued rain and without word from the festival we moved to a new micro-brewery to pass the time at a lower alcohol content. Just as we were about to bail on that and head back to the Quarter for some food, the festival announced the gates were going to open in minutes! We quickly found our way to the fairgrounds and immediately rolled a double six. A couple was looking to unload a pair of tickets at a huge discount. Done! We made our way to Dr. John just in time to see him do "Right Place, Wrong Time", a perfect answer to the delayed day! Better yet, because of the delay, most of the crowd had not yet arrived and we scored a spot right in front, something that would have been impossible had the festival been on its normal schedule.

Since Petty was up next on the same stage we knew it would be a huge gamble to leave the prime real estate. The crowd was filling in by the minute. Even so, we took the risk of leaving because we simply had to see the Mavericks lay down their infectious Tex-Mex groove as a base for the glorious vocals of Raul Malo. The risk was worth it as the Mavericks were in top form buoyed by their unexpected chance to play after a near sure rain out. They quickly had the appreciative crowd moving in musical ecstasy. Definitely worth the roll of the dice. A solid double six.

Heading back to Petty found our earlier fears realized. Despite the late start and rain his fans all came out for the show making it almost impossible to move into sight of the stage. Luck came our way though as we tailgated a beer vendor pulling a cart through the masses and ended up in a great spot, not far from our earlier vantage point. I was ticked to find out that my efforts to film a bit of the show were spoiled by some jerk in front of me holding his cell phone in my way while he was filming the show. The irony was not lost on me.... Petty and crew were enthusiastic as they played all their classic hits kicking off a celebration of their 40 years on the road. As fun as it was, we decided to take one last roll and headed to see Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes close out the blues tent! We arrived just in time for the band to power its way through a sultry version of



Kermit Ruffins

“Fever” and a no-holds barred rave up of Sam Cooke’s “Having a Party”, the latter of which proved to be the perfect way to end the day at jazz fest.

A day of double sixes after the snake eye start.

But, you can’t beat the odds forever. We rolled again and the snakes appeared with our Maple Leaf buddy. Does anyone have a mongoose?

Mark Smith

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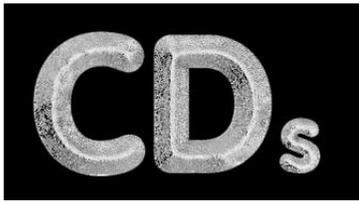
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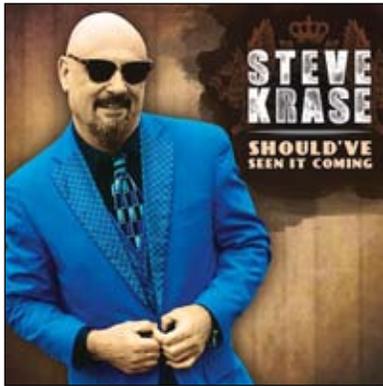
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STEVE KRASE

Should've Seen it Coming
CONNOR RAY MUSIC

I am familiar with harmonica-player Steve Krase from his contributions to recent Trudy Lynn recordings. This is apparently his fourth album, but first this writer has heard. He is backed by a band that includes co-producer Rick Romano on bass, David Carter on guitar, Richard Cholakian on drums, Randy Wall on keyboards and Alisha Pattillo on saxophones, with appearances from guitarists Mark May and Bob Lanza, and backing vocals from Trudy Lynn. Six of the eleven songs here are 'covers' (including one credited to Krase) and there are two explicit versions of two of the originals that are at the end of the CD.

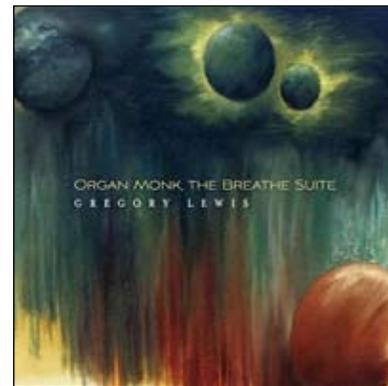
Krase says he wanted to make a fun record and he did so opening with a bouncy Romano-penned shuffle "Brand New Thang" with Mark May's stinging guitar along with his harp (the vocal likely overdubbed over the backing). The track displays his appealing, unforced vocals and verbally skilled harp. It is followed by a take on a classic Little Walter recording, "Crazy For My Baby," distilled through Charlie Musselwhite's version with a rumba groove, backing vocals and solid chromatic harp. A bouncy rendition (with terrific harmonica) of an old Bobby Mitchell (and Fats Domino) recording "Let the Four Winds Blow" is followed by his lyrical updating of a Jimmy Rogers recording "The World's Still in a Tangle" (which actually goes back to Arthur Crudup, Robert Lockwood and Honeyboy Edwards) as he is building a bunker instead digging a cave and adding references to assault rifles and zombies. This is a wonderfully paced performance with steady backing and more terrific harmonica.

A bit of danceable rock and roll with Bob Lanza taking the lead guitar is "Shot of Rhythm and Blues,"

followed by the title track that Krase's brother penned with Pattillo's sax adding to the mood on this lyric along with a whispered vocal and then a lengthy jamming section where Wall and Carter also solo. There is a lively and imaginative interpretation of James 'Wee Willie' Wayne's "Travellin' Mood" (also a staple for Snooks Eaglin), followed by a take on Clarence 'Frogman' Henry's "Troubles, Troubles," that is solidly played but taken at too quick a tempo. After a strong shuffle, "Make You Love Me Baby," comes the hilarious "Repo Man" as a modern bad ass who won't knock on the door, bang one's wife but will take one's car, and nothing one can do because the repo man is coming after one with some terrific sax. This along with the title track are also heard in separate takes with explicit lyrics at the end of the CD. "Way Back Home" by Wilton Felder was originally recorded by the Jazz Crusaders. Krase has adapted Junior Parker's recording for this excellent, moody instrumental.

Certainly a solid recording as Krase is a very good singer and striking harmonica player with adept, steady support, and fresh material and takes on older songs making for a totally engaging recording.

Ron Weinstock



GREGORY LEWIS

Organ Monk, The Breathe Suite
SELF-PRODUCED

The remarkable organist Gregory Lewis' latest album represents an attempt to pay homage to the victims of police violence in the US, several of which are named in the various parts of the work. The title is a reference to the cries of "I Can't Breathe" that Eric Garner was heard saying several times while in the chokehold that ended his life. He is supported here by an impressive cast of musicians including drummers Nasheet Waits and Jeremy 'BEAN' Clemons; guitarists Marc Ribot and Ron Jackson; tenor saxophonist Reggie Woods and trumpeter Riley Mullins.

Lewis is of course one of today's most striking Hammond B-3 players, and this release also illustrates how original a composer he is. The album opens with "The Chronicles of Michael Brown," the victim of a police shooting outside St. Louis. It opens with Lewis' sober atmospheric introduction with Ribot adding some acidic guitar as the horns join in the opening statement with

Waits' drumming adding to the suspended tempo of the opening before Woods, Mullins, and Ribot explode with their solos. The second part of the suite, "Trayvon" (for Trayvon Martin) is a brisk, bluesy trio with trio Jackson and Clemons, followed by "Aiyana Jones Song" (Jones being a seven-year old killed during a police raid of a residence), a reflective performance by this trio with some stunning straight-ahead guitar along with Lewis' marvelous, at times bouncy playing here more in the vein of a Larry Young than Jimmy Smith and Jack McDuff. The quintet with Waits, Ribot, Woods and Mullins returns for the atmospheric "Eric Garner," that slowly builds intensity with Wait's standing out.

The final two parts of the suite are "Ausar And The Race Soldiers" and "Ausar And The Race Soldiers Reprise." The title here likely refers to the Ausar Auset Society, a Pan-African religious organization. The first part is a spirited quintet performance with Clemons, Jackson, Woods and Mullins, all of whom are on fire here. The Reprise is a driving trio performance by Lewis with the two drummers where Lewis' virtuosity and his improvisatory imagination is at the fore here. They conclude a recording full of exceptional music that is a worthy homage to the tragic events that inspired Lewis here.

Ron Weinstock



ADRIANNA MARIE AND HER ROOMFUL OF ALL-STARS

Kingdom of Swing
VIZZTONE

West Coast chanteuse Adrianna Marie has a second recording of jump blues and swing backed by a fine band including underrated guitarist L.A. Jones, pianist Al Copley, bassist Kedar Roy, drummer Brian Fahey and the Roomful Horns (Doug James, Rich Lataille, Doug Wooverton, Mark Early and Carl Querrfuth). Duke Robillard, who did the studio production, and Junior Watson guest on selected tracks while Bob Corritore is on harmonica for one tune.

There is a mix of originals by Adrianna along with covers of classic blues and swing numbers. The originals are pretty good songs and like everything here are well played in the vein of the early jump blues style of Roomful of Blues with plenty of brass as on the opening title track, her tribute to the swing era although the real king of swing was King Carter and not Goodman.

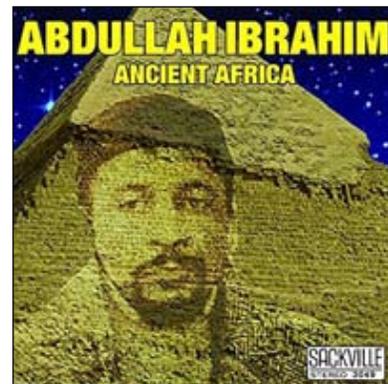
Some nice growling trumpet from Wooverton on this selection. A similar thrust is "Gimme a Roomful," a salute to swing and Roomful of Blues."

A straight cover of an Esther Phillips' classic "Better Beware" is followed by a rollicking original "Sidecar Mama" that sounds like a cover of an unissued Camille Howard or Wynona Carr recording with a superb solo. "Memphis Boogie" is another noteworthy original in the jump blues tradition. These are fun sides with plenty of solo space, although when she attempts renditions from Ellington "Mood Indigo," and Billie Holiday, "The Blues Are Brewin'," her vocals are enjoyable but hardly distinctive. And if not in the league as a singer on Helen Humes' level, her rendition of Humes' "Drive Me Daddy" displays her good taste in material. The terrific Muddy Waters' styled slide guitar has Bob Corritore's harmonica lend it a Chicago blues meets jump blues feel.

"Jump With You Baby" gives several of the players a chance to solo while L.A. Jones duets with her on the boisterous "T-Bone Boogie," a thinly disguised reworking of Big Joe Turner-Pete Johnson classic "Roll 'Em Pete" with a terrific Doug James baritone sax solo and Al Copley laying down some strong boogie woogie piano.

Jones takes a T-Bone Walker styled solo here followed by his wonderful playing on the closing instrumental "Blues After Hours." It closes an enjoyable and well-performed, if not outstanding, swing and blues recording.

Ron Weinstock



ABDULLAH IBRAHIM

Ancient Africa
SACKVILLE/DELMARK

Still known as Dollar Brand when sackville released some of this on a vinyl album, "Sangoma," it was recorded during his first visit to Toronto in 1973 shortly after converting to Islam and having made a recent pilgrimage to Mecca. What fascinates about these lengthy solo piano improvisations is his jazz invention extemporizing off South African folk themes in a magical manner.

The title of the vinyl album "Sangoma" means the one who beats the drum, and that meaning is consistent with the percussive aspects of Ibrahim's playing as he develops the folk themes underlying

the compositions, starting with the title track, a three part suite of "The Water's Edge," "Bertha in Turquoise," and "Krotoa." Simply listening to his improvisation during this first part is mesmerizing as he develops a melodic line set against a droning rhythmic bass foundation as he chants with the music with seamless transitions to the other parts of this suite. The other two improvisations are similarly fascinating to listen to his inventiveness.

The final selection, "Khotgso," is previously unissued. Here Ibrahim plays a bamboo flute (instead of piano) and provides a spoken recitation. It is a captivating performance that brings to a close another important Delmark reissue from the Sackville catalog.

Ron Weinstock



THE CASH BOX KINGS

Royal Mint
ALLIGATOR RECORDS

Those wanting some house party, rocking real deal blues need go no further than The Cash Box Kings' new disc, the first for Alligator. With the strong singing from Oscar Wilson and harmonica and occasional vocals from Joe Nosek, guitar from Billy Flynn and/or Joel Patterson, drums from Kenny 'Beedy Eyes' Smith or Mark Haynes, keyboards from Lee Kanehira, this is one straight shot of Chicago blues mixed with a dose of jump blues and a touch of rockabilly.

The rollicking reworking of Amos Milburn's hit, "House Party," certainly kicks this off on the right start and one takes notice of Wilson's strong singing along with Nosek's full toned harmonica. It is followed by a solid rendition of Jimmy Reed's "I'm Gonna Get My Baby," with strong singing and harp and a terrific shuffle groove. It has a cover of a lesser known Muddy Waters number, "Flood," as Wilson's vocals evokes the legendary Chicago giant and Flynn's slide guitar suggests Waters' guitar style and Kanehira is equally solid. An acoustic rendition of Robert Johnson's "Traveling Riverside Blues," set to the "Rollin' and Tumblin'" music, and the cover of "Sugar Sweet" showcase how strongly Wilson and company evoke Waters. On Junior Wells' "I'm a Stranger," Kanehira lays down greasy organ under the vocal while Flynn's slide is in a Robert Nighthawk vein.

Nosek perhaps is less impressive, although an honest, unforced and straight-forward vocalist perhaps, but

his topical original, "Build That hat Wall," set to a Tex-Mex rockabilly backing is delightful with a Chuck Berry flavored guitar break. "Blues For ChiRag" is a strong urban, topical blues about violence in Chicago today, and the humorous shuffle "If You Got A Jealous Woman Facebook Ain't Your Friend," with some terrific guitar from both Flynn and Patterson besides Wilson's full-bodied singing. Another party song is the rendition of Clifton Chenier's rocker "All Night Long," with solid horns and a terrific piano break along with a terrific Flynn solo. Nosek's easy going singing and harp delights on the raggy, closing number, "Don't Let Life Tether You Down."

"Royal Mint" is chock full of some exceptional performances, and the level of the music is never less than very entertaining. Listening to this, it is easy to see why they have a strong fan base, and one that is certain to expand.

Ron Weinstock



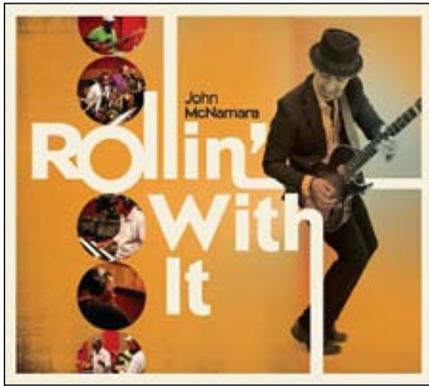
JOE POLICASTRO TRIO

Screen Sounds
JERUJAZZ RECORDS

Film and TV themes have proven enticing fare for jazz players either looking for a commercial hit or to genuinely mine the creative potential of any given tune. For those taking the latter route, there's the added feature of attracting new listeners thanks to the popularity of a particular movie or series. Chicago bassist Joe Policastro and cohorts guitarist Dave Miller and drummer Mikel Avery belong to the second camp, recasting themes as platforms for wide-open, extended exploration, typically putting multiple faces on the same theme.

The song selections, primarily of a "classic" nature, consistently prove to be engaging vehicles. A blending of the two memorable melodies from the film *Midnight Cowboy*- the main theme and the Fred Neil song "Everybody's Talkin'" - works well as does the now-timely inclusion of the "Twin Peaks Theme." Other standout tracks include "Angela," the theme from *Taxi*, and the main title and love theme from *The Godfather*. Leader Policastro frequently handles theme-stating chores while Miller provides the primary voice for the changing coloration and mood swings. The guitarist's considerable emotional range contributes much to the success of these imaginative and frequently fun sounding explorations. Nice stuff. Release date 8/11/17

Duane Verh



JOHN McNAMARA

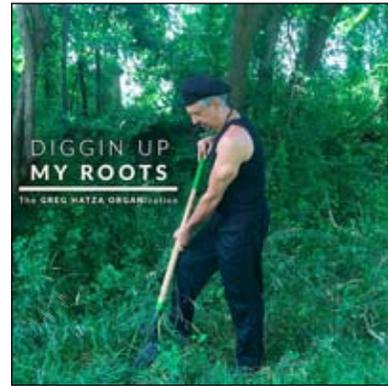
Rollin' With It
BAHOOL RECORDS

John McNamara is an Australian whose music took him to Beale Street, not simply because he competed at the International Blues Challenge, but because the influence of soul and blues is evident in his own music. His new album was recorded in Memphis at the Ardent Studios and found the singer, songwriter and guitarist backed by such Memphis studio stalwarts as drummer Steve Potts; bassist James Kinard; guitarist Michael Toles; and keyboardist Lester Snell (who did the arrangements) along with a strong horn section. McNamara wrote six of the ten songs, along with his renditions of songs associated with Bobby Bland, Otis Redding and Little Willie John.

McNamara impresses as a singer as well as guitarist from the opening "One, Two Of A Kind," that evokes the brassy Memphis sound with his soulful, natural sounding singing and biting guitar set against the horn riffs. The idiomatic originals and choice covers continue with "Bad Reputation" delivered in his slightly whisky parched singing on a song whose musical structure is a cousin to "Fever," and a lyric of ignoring his reputation as he is "all about loving you." Then there is the slow, moody "Under The Weight Of The Moon," as he laments about laying awake about being without her, with very apt backing.

The covers are straight-forward and delivered in a relaxed fashion ranging from the Bobby Bland classic soul ballad "Ask Me Nothing (But About the Blues)," to an Otis Redding Stax classic "Security," another strong Bobby Bland cover "Blind Man" (that Little Milton also covered five decades ago) and the closing rendition of Little Willie John's "Suffering With the Blues."

With heartfelt singing and the handsome arrangements, McNamara displays not simply his love of the music that influenced him but how ably he interprets these classic songs in addition to his marvelous originals. One gets impressed by his strong performances on a striking new recording to delight fans of sixties-seventies Memphis soul and blues. *Ron Weinstock*



THE GREG HATZA ORGANIZATION

Diggin' Up My Roots
FLIP RECORDS

Hammond B-3 master Greg Hatza was playing g boogie woogie on the piano at the age of 5 growing up in Reading, Pennsylvania. Growing up on classic R&B, he becoming obsessed with the Hammond B-3 after hearing Jimmy McGriff and Jimmy McGriff. Baltimore Colt legend Lenny Moore caught Hatza playing at a hotel in Reading, and asked him to perform at a club that he was opening in Baltimore. Moore would also become his manager and Hatza moved to Charm City and recorded a couple albums for Coral Records at this time. Subsequently he led a pretty diverse career, including playing other electric keyboards and later studying tabla and sitar. He met Joey DeFrancesco in 1994 who advised him the B-3 was undergoing a popular renaissance and he returned to playing that and forming the Greg Hatza ORGANization, who currently also consists of Robert Shaid on drums, Brian Kookon on guitar and Peter Fraise on saxophone.

The title of this disc refers to the R&B and blues songs that Hatza heard growing up and there are eight interpretations of "High Heel Sneakers," "I Got a Woman," "Back at the Chicken Shack," "Night Train," "Please Send Me Someone To Love," "Hand Jive," "Something You Got," and "Stagger Lee." There are also three originals, including a couple of vocals. The mood is set on the pening bouncy blues, "Baltimore Strut," that allows Fraise to get down as Hatza lays down a greasy foundation before Kookon solos while Shaid and the leader maintain the groove.

An original blues "Big Big Back," opens with some down-in-the alley organ before Hatza takes a vocal about his baby having a big behind. Hatza is ok as a singer, but he sounds off-mike for most of it before the closing vocal where the rest join him. It is followed by Tommy Tucker's "High Heel Sneakers," with a funky riff providing a fresh take on the blues classic.

The last original, "Headin On Down South," is another slow blues with some bluesy guitar from Kookon and a decent vocal. The renditions of "I Got a Woman," "Back to the Chicken Shack" and "Night Train" are straight-ahead organ group performances with everything played at a relaxed tempo. "Night Train," is partly adapted from the James Brown recording with

Fraise's sax solo evoking Jimmy Forrest. The longest performance is the moody take on "Please Send Me Someone To Love," with some fine bluesy solos from Hatza, Fraise and Kooken. There is also a peppy take of the John Otis hit, "Hand Jive."

Digging up his musical roots, Greg Hatza has produced a solid, blues-drenched Hammond B-3 led jazz recording that will delight organ and soul jazz fans.

Ron Weinstock



LAURA TATE

Let's Just Be Real
811 GOLD RECORDS

Texas born vocalist Laura Tate has a resume that goes way beyond the blues and soul rooted music on this recording. She is an actress who performed in musicals and other theatrical productions, as well as television shows like "Dallas" and HBO's "First and Ten," as well as engaging in film production and directing music videos, commercials and documentaries. As far as her vocal influences, she states "I grew up listening to everything from rock and roll and Motown to show tunes, and soulful ballads. I loved Tony Bennett, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, and other greats from the past along with the Beatles, James Brown, Bonnie Raitt, Carole King, and Linda Ronstadt. I have been singing their songs ever since." Her vocals on this is supported by a terrific studio band including the producer, arranger and engineer, Terry Wilson on bass guitar, Billy Watts on guitars, Jeff Paris on keyboards and mandolin, Tony Braunagel on drums, Lee Thornberg on brass, and Paulie Cerra on saxophones. Leslie Smith adds percussion and Teresa James is on backing vocals.

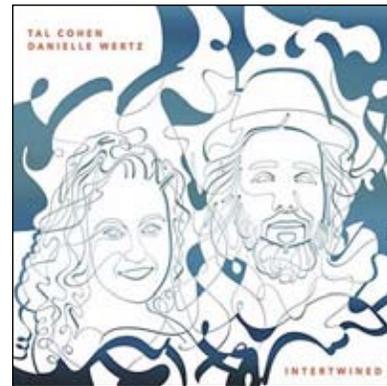
This is a wonderfully recorded album full of fresh songs, most in a classic rhythm & blues vein and even the covers are not your typical standards, including a wonderful reworking of a Thin Lizzy favorite, "Boys Are Back In Town." Tate is a soulful singer with a relaxed, unforced delivery that gets one's attention with the opening "Nobody Gets Hurt," that has hints of classic Hi Records as well as the easy rocking groove of "If That Ain't Love." She is quite good, if not quite on the level of Irma Thomas, whose Allen Toussaint penned "Hitting on Nothing" she does a nice cover of. The studio band captures the feel of the 1963 original and

includes a nice tenor sax solo.

After a jazz-tinged late night blue ballad "Can't Say No," Tate reworks "Boys Are Back In Town" into a reflective lament for an outstanding performance. "Still Got the Blues" is a superb urban blues with a relaxed vocal and Watts playing strongly on guitar. "I Need a Man" is another solid blues performance with a vocal that might be described as Peggy Lee crossed with Etta Jones. It has a fine piano solo from Paris. The title track is another lovely ballad marvelously played and followed by the swampy, southern-rock blues, "I Know You Live." Watts contributes both slide guitar backing and a tremolo laced background riff while Paris takes a brief solo on this. The Stephen Bruton penned "Big Top Hat" evokes Louis Jordan while Tate sings the lyrics with plenty of sass.

"Wildest Dreams," is a solid country-rock performance in the vein of seventies Linda Ronstadt that is the final track on a first-rate recording by a fine singer that is wonderfully backed throughout.

Ron Weinstock



DANIELLE WERTZ & TAL COHEN

Intertwined
SELF-PRODUCED

This collaboration between vocalist Danielle Wertz and pianist Tal Cohen is a delightful, lovely recording of standards and originals that is ultimately full of charm. Wertz, from Falls Church, Virginia, received a degree in Jazz Vocal Performance from the University of Miami's Frost School of Music, and was a semi-finalist in the 2015 Thelonious Monk International. Cohen's piano in part reflects the folk songs and classical music he played growing up in Israel. He moved to Perth, Australia at the age of 16 where he continued his musical studies at the Western Australian Academy of the Performing Arts. Then established in Australia as a performer, he is the winner of the 2015 Barry Harris International Jazz Competition in Detroit.

"Intertwined," is an intimate session in which the two develop their ideas together. It opens with saxophonist Jamie Oehlers (one of the two tracks he plays on) introducing the standard "Beautiful Love," on which Oehlers solos as does Wertz, scatting after her lovely delivery of the lyrics. She has an enchanting voice that sings the lyrics in a soft, almost dreamy fashion, and

the interplay between her, Cohen, and on this track Oehlers, has a fugue-like quality. The title track is an original by the duo where her scatted, wordless vocals is set off against Cohen's piano again displaying a chamber-like quality in this duet. There is the longing of Wertz's vocal on "But Not For Me," before the other original by the pair, "Chopin Meets Abach," where her vocal again provides an instrumental voice as opposed to simply interpreting lyrics. Other standards receiving very appealing interpretations include "I Wish You Love" (with some scating by Wertz intertwined with Cohen's piano); "Manhattan in the Rain" with Cohen's spare piano introduction and backing; and "Autumn Leaves," on which Oehlers contributes to the wistful rendition of this classic.

A brief snippet of the title track closes this marvelous recording. Danielle Wertz enchants with her voice, tone and phrasing while complemented by Cohen's uncluttered accompaniments (as well as the accents added by Oehlers' saxophone on two selections), resulting in some wonderful listening.

Ron Weinstock



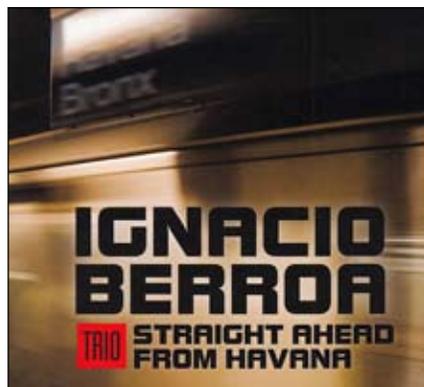
GINA SICILIA
Tug Of War
BLUE ELAN

Philadelphia-born and now a resident of Nashville, TUG OF WAR appears to be Gina Sicilia's seventh CD, unless I lost count somewhere down the line. Her eight strong originals make me wonder how often Sicilia has had her heart broken over the years, starting with the opener "I Don't Want To Be In Love," a good blues/R&B rocker, buoyed by a strong riff running through it. "Damaging Me" leans more towards R&B as "I'll Stand Up" has a gospel & blues feel to it, thanks to Ron Jennings guitar with B-3 support by Joel Bryant backing up the mood.

Two of the more interesting cover tunes here are "Tell Him," a 1962 #4 hit by the Exciters from Brooklyn, New York and a slow, blues fueled version of the Beatles' "All My Loving" from their first release "Meet The Beatles." Dave Darling's guitar gets the assist as Sicilia gives it a slow and sultry reading. The latter tune touched a nerve with me because it was "our song" of the first girl I went steady with in high school. Ah, young love. May she be happy wherever she wound up.

While everything here is based on the blues or a variation of the same, "Heaven" switches back to some gospel layers, thanks to help from Walter Runge on the B-3.

All around good stuff and Gina Sicilia has the pipes to pull it off. I just hope Gina has a little more luck in the romance department in the near future. *Peanuts*



IGNACIO BERROA TRIO
Straight Ahead From Havana
CODES DRUM MUSIC

The organizing principle of drummer Ignacio Berroa is taking standards from the Cuban repertoire and reimagining them in a straight ahead jazz context. On this recording he is joined by pianist Martin Bejerano and bassist Josh Allen (Lowell Ringel substitutes on two of the ten songs) with Conrado "Coky" Garcia adding percussion on two tracks and Ruben Blades takes the lead vocal on one.

The approach can be heard on the opening "Alma Con Alma" that some may be familiar with from Ray Barreto's recording which comes off like a solid hard bop number that allows one to approach Bejerano's considerable technique, as well as strong post-Bud Powell playing on this with Allen and the leader terrific supporting his fiery playing here followed by Allen's own brisk, cleanly articulated solo and Berroa's hot solo. One not knowing the nature of this session would simply find this to be superb bop piano. A similar musical imagination invests the treatment of "Le Tarde" into a medium tempo swinging number with Bejerano engaging the listener with his fluidity, touch and nuance. The rendition of the Afro-Cuban Children's lullaby, "Drume Negrita" (some will know from Celia Cruz), has a Latin tinge with the leader's drumming accenting the relatively spare piano lead. Ruben Blades is heard on "Negro De Sociedad" which is performed in a more relaxed manner than the hot salsa fashion that is incorporated at the beginning and end here.

Other delights include the bouncy "Los Tres Golpes," with Garcia's percussion adding to the driving groove, the reflective "Si Me Pudieras Querer," and the dazzling, spirited "Me Recordaras" that closes this fabulous recording.

Ron Weinstock



BRAD STIVERS

Took You Long Enough
VIZZTONE

In his mid-twenties, Austin-based singer, songwriter and guitarist Brad Stivers will make folks take notice with this album which is a solid mix of roots rock, blues, soul and country.

Certainly the opening “2000 Miles” is a solid rockabilly laced stomper with a raspy vocal and crisp solo followed by the driving rendition of a Ray Charles number, “You’re Just About To Lose Your Clown,” with gutbucket tenor sax from Mark Wilson along with more fine guitar and a solid soulful, vocal. “Put It Down” is another rockabilly flavored performance with his tremolo-laced guitar prominent.

The funky R&B laced “Took You Long Enough,” is followed by a fine country duet with pianist Emily on a cover of a classic Ray Charles recording, “Here We Go Again,” with his guitar in a supporting role. Malford Milligan handles the vocal on a good cover of the O.V. Wright classic, “Nickel and a Nail,” with some searing guitar on a version evocative of the late Otis Clay with Roy Buchanan.

An instrumental take on the Smiley Lewis recording, “One Night of Sin” showcases Stivers playing with his judicious and thoughtful development of the solo and his attention to tone. “Can’t Wait” is a nicely paced shuffle followed by the brooding “Save Me,” again where he employs a heavy tremolo tone. The album closes with a searing guitar instrumental rendition of the James Brown classic “Cold Sweat,” perhaps inspired by Albert King’s similar treatment of this funk classic.

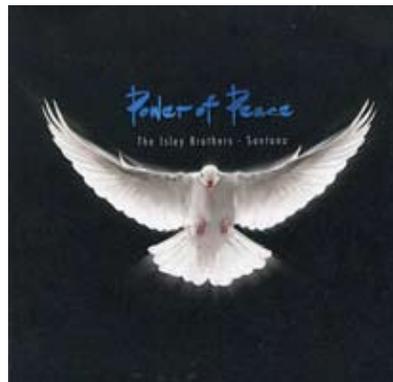
Stivers is a very good vocalist, and a guitarist who builds his solos in an intelligent and imaginative fashion, never overplays and makes use of his tone to great effect.

Stivers establishes himself on “Took You Long Enough” as a roots rock and blues voice to keep one’s ears open to.

Ron Weinstock

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THE ISLEY BROTHERS-SANTANA

Power of Peace
SONY LEGACY

Arriving in time for Deep Summer is this smart and tasty assemblage of good-vibes statements, executed in style by masters of their respective crafts. Ronald Isley shows that his distinctive vocal style is quite simpatico with the works of Stevie Wonder (“Higher Ground”), Curtis Mayfield (“Gypsy Woman”) and Marvin Gaye (“Mercy Mercy Me”). Carlos Santana consistently delivers the appropriate amount of sensitivity or power as counterpoint and, of course, his very identifiable guitar sound.

The range of material moves from Burt Bacharach (“What The World Needs Now”) to a rocked-up Muddy Waters (“I Just Want To Make Love To You”). Adding to the nature of this family affair is the presence of Ernie Isley on rhythm guitar and powerhouse drummer Cindy Blackman Santana. An ideal summer soundtrack.

Duane Verh



THE NEW VISION SAX ENSEMBLE

Musical Journey Through Time
ZAKI PUBLISHING

Based in southern Florida, The New Vision Sax Ensemble is a saxophone quartet comprised of Diron Holloway on Soprano, Alto Sax and clarinet, James Lockhart on Alto Sax, Jason Hainsworth on Tenor Sax and Melton Mustafa on Baritone Sax.

It was formed by Mustafa in 1999 and its members are music educators as well as musicians. They are able to play all genres of music but focus on Jazz as

its core.

While inspired by the 29th Street Sax Quartet and the World Saxophone Quartet, on the present disc they play more traditionally in their renditions of jazz classics as well as material from the ragtime era to modern show tunes in a lively manner opening with a spirited bebop rendition of Bobby Watson's "Conservation" featuring Holloway's alto sax along with Mustafa's baritone which provides the bass anchor as well as takes a brief, gruff solo, followed by an equally appealing bop-flavored rendition of "A Night in Tunisia."

The old classic "Won't You Come Home, Bill Bailey," has the spotlight on Holloway's twisting, at times squealing, clarinet lines, as well as the tenor sax of Hainsworth.

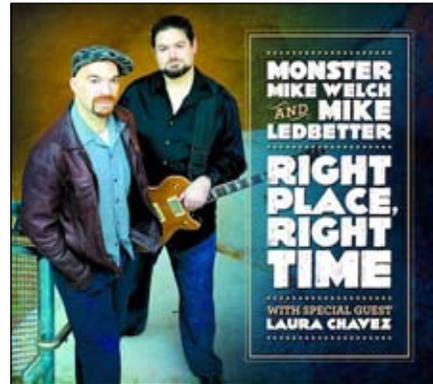
And there is a nice, straight rendition of Monk's "Round Midnight," along with a lengthy "Selections From Porgy and Bess" with considerable lyricism as well as the opportunity for each member to take the spotlight. Lockhart is featured on a lyrical rendition of "My Favorite Things," staying close to the lyrics throughout and followed by a joyful reading of "I Feel Pretty" from "West Side Story Story."

"Selections From Scott Joplin" is a chamber ensemble medley of several familiar numbers from the great ragtime composer including "The Entertainer" and "Maple Leaf Rag," before the moving closing per-

formance of "Amazing Grace"

As noted, the performances here are straight forward, and one is impressed by the full ensemble sound throughout so one does not miss a rhythm section when enjoying this highly engaging recording.

Ron Weinstock



MONSTER MIKE WELCH AND MIKE LEDBETTER

Right Place, Right Time
DELTA GROOVE MUSIC

Having been part of the Chicago Blues Festival Tribute to Otis Rush, it was natural that Mike Welch and Mike Ledbetter collaborate on a recording and the spirit of the legendary Rush is evident on this new recording by the two, from the title that evokes a legendary Rush album, to the performances by vocalist Ledbetter and guitarist Welch that both show the deep impact of Rush' soul-searing music on both.

They are backed by Welch's associate in Sugar Ray & the Bluetones Anthony Geraci on keyboards, Ronnie James Weber on bass and Marty Richards on drums along with appearances from Laura Chavez on guitar; and Sax Gordon and Doug James on saxophones, and they play wonderfully starting with a cover of an Elmore James recording "Cry For Me Baby," with Welch echoing Eddie Taylor's original guitar part, and closing with a nice instrumental shuffle feature for Welch's Rush-influenced styling, "Brewster Avenue Bump."

The only overt Rush cover is a fine rendition of "I Can't Stop Baby," Willie Dixon's reworking of "I Can't Quit You Baby," Rush waxed for Chess. But the spirit of Rush is also present in a reworking of Jimmy Robins' bluesy Northern Soul groove, "I Can't Please You"; the reworking of Junior Parker's "How Long Can This Go On" into a West Side Chicago shuffle; as well as playing the Tampa Red-Robert Nighthawk's gem "Crying Won't Help You Baby," as if Rush recorded it. There is also a nice reworking of the Jerry Leiber-Artie Butler funk, "Down Home Girl," along with the Rush inspired originals, Welch's deep slow blues, "I'm Gonna Move To Another Country," and the Ledbetter penned medium tempoed shuffle "can't Sit Down."

The only possible quibble that might be leveled is that Ledbetter might have toned down a couple of the vocals such as the opening "Cry For Me Baby."

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That might be in part a result of Ledbetter's 'operatic training' which I was not aware of before reading Dick Shurman's liner notes but one can find no other fault in his strongly projected singing. This is a minor, and a subjective, criticism of what is an excellent recording.

Ron Weinstock



JOHN PIZZARELLI
Sinatra & Jobim at 50
CONCORD JAZZ

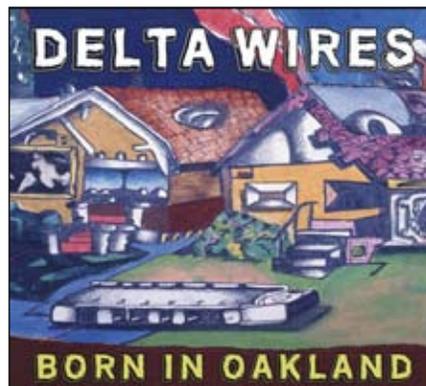
John Pizzarelli cites Frank Sinatra and Antonio Carlos Jobim as major influences on his vocals and his latest release commemorates the 50th Anniversary of the Grammy Winning collaboration between the two legends. He pays tribute to those recordings on this set with eight tracks being songs that Sinatra and Jobim recorded at a 1969 session along with two originals, and Michael Franks' ode to Jobim. Among those with Pizzarelli on this recording are Jobim's grandson singer Daniel Jobim, drummer Duduka Da Fonseca, bassist Mike Karn and piano player Helio Alves.

On this recording, both Pizzarelli and Jobim channel the elder Jobim more than Sinatra, who admittedly was understated compared to his usual style. The musical tone on most of these selections is more like Getz-Gilberto than the Claus Ogerman or Eumir Deodato orchestrated sessions resulting in delightful performances in their own lightly swinging fashion including then marvelous "Agua De Beber," as well as the lovely medley of "Meditation / Quiet Nights of Quiet Stars," with Daniel singing the latter number in Portuguese before Pizzarelli sings softly in English along with his soft guitar chording, and the pretty "Dindi." There is also the delightful lightly swaying bossa nova medley of "I Concentrate On You / Wave," with Alves exquisite in his accompaniment and Pizzarelli takes a brief acoustic chordal break. Pizzarelli's father recorded "Two Kites" with the elder Jobim, with Daniel taking the vocal on this remake with a vocal chorus with its celebration of the kites flying in the sky. There is also a wonderful tenor saxophonist on a few selections including Michael Franks' "Antonio's Song."

As indicated this is a delightful recording, full of charm and elegance that might not quite reach the level of the legendary Sinatra-Jobim collaboration, but is enjoyable and laudable on its own considerable merits.

To be released 7/28/17.

Ron Weinstock



DELTA WIRES
Born In Oakland
MUD SLIDE RECORDS

This seven-piece crew has been tearing up the West Coast blues scene for over 30 years. On this, their seventh disc, they showcase a number of original cuts and covers that take advantage of the horn-heavy, harmonica fueled line-up.

"Fine and Healthy Thing" channels the Blues Brother's classic take on "I Don't Know" while "Vacation" recalls vintage Huey Lewis & the News with a charging harmonica lead and ruminations on escaping the daily grind and traffic jams to enjoy some well-deserved time off. The band shifts gears for a slow blues on "Your Eyes" where vocalist Ernie Pinata's world weary vocals are accented by a dose of mournful trombone. The same low-key approach drives "Devil's In My Headset" until some inspired saxophone and guitar soloing lifts the energy a couple of notches.

Elsewhere, on "Fun Time" and "Days of the Week," the groove is considerably more upbeat with a mid-song guitar solo on the later cut celebrating good times with a new lady. "In the Middle" and "I Don't Care" put the horn section closer to the center of the action than many of the cuts with the trumpet, saxophone and trombone roaring in unison on the later cut and the rest of the band laying down some hard edged-funk underneath punchy trumpet and sax solos on "In the Middle."

With a sound that leans closer to the funk of Tower of Power than the more traditional blues of Roomful of Blues this disc will nevertheless appeal to fans of horn driven blues.

Mark Smith

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NYSQ

**Sleight of Hand
WHIRLWIND RECORDINGS**

This is the fifth album for the New York Standards Quartet who have been together for twelve years. The present recording finds them comprised of saxophonist Tim Armacost, pianist David Berkman, drummer Gene Jackson and double bassist Daiki Yasukagawa. As Berkman observes about the members, recalls: "We were at the period where we'd all done a lot of original recordings of our own music, as composers and leaders; and then, through a series of circumstances, we came together as a quartet with the particular mission of taking on standards, but arranging them to create a feeling that was similar to the original albums we recorded."



About this specific recording he explains that, "the album title refers to the four of us, conjuring transformations of standards and enjoying the magic of creating something new out of that repertoire; really exploring the group's alchemy and chemistry, achieved through twelve years of touring and recording together." Certainly it gets off on a strong note with the vibrant, driving rendition of Mal Waldron's Soul Eyes, "that displays Armacost's strong, imaginative tenor along with Berkman's superb piano with Yasukagawa, who solos briefly, and Jackson kicking this lively performance along. There is some playful solo piano to open the bright performance of Thelonious Monk's "Ask Me Now," with more authoritative tenor sax from Armacost who then displays his warmth as a ballad player on the Ellington classic "In a Sentimental Mood," with Jackson's cymbal embellishments adding to the appeal here.

Other delights include Berkman's title track, an original based on Gershwin's "But Not For Me," with his lively, flowing solo followed by Armacost' husky tenor sax and exchanges between Yasukagawa and Jackson. There is another lovely ballad performance of Jules Styne's "I Fall In Love Too Easily," with Armacost's serpentine soprano sax standing out, while the four ably negotiate the metrical changes and brisk rhythms of Hank Mobley's "This I Think of You," with Yasukagawa standing out as he opens this and then Armacost plays brilliantly on tenor. A Herb Ellis ballad, "Detour Ahead," again is a vehicle for Armacost's tenor and Berkman.

The closing "Lover's Man" is taken at a considerably swifter pulse than the more familiar renditions of Billie Holiday and Charlie Parker and again Berkman excels as does Armacost who is heard on soprano. The strong ensemble playing, in addition to the many fine solos, and the imaginative reworking of the material make for a superb straight-ahead recording. *Ron Weinstock*



SELWYN BIRCHWOOD

**Pick Your Poison
ALLIGATOR RECORDS**

This is the second Alligator release by the Floridian blues talent and his marvelous band of Regi Oliver - Saxophones, Flute, Background Vocals; Huff Wright - Bass Guitar, Background Vocals and Courtney "Big

Love” Girlie - Drums, Percussion, Background Vocals. This followup to the award-winning “Don’t Call No Ambulance” has a baker’s dozen of Birchwood originals for which he did all of the arrangements and is much in the same mould as the earlier release.

While having a somewhat limited vocal range, Birchwood is an appealing vocalist with a gravelly, raspy delivery whose phrasing and dynamics make him a convincing one. This is evident on the opening “Trial By Fire,” with its North Mississippi Hill Country groove, with Oliver’s flute and Birchwood’s whining slide guitar. He changes mood on the high stepping gospel-flavored “Even the Saved Need Saving,” with his observations of religious hypocrisy with Oliver’s baritone pushing the groove before his slide guitar break which shows a definite influence from the sacred steel players. “Guilty Pleasures,” built on a guitar riff, has a lyric about not liking various vices, such as not liking gambling but liking his luck, as Oliver’s baritone echoes the guitar. “Heavy Heart” is a straight-forward blues about a relation coming to an end with blistering guitar as Oliver’s multiple horns backing add to this intense performance.

One continues to be impressed by Birchwood’s ability to employ unusual melodies as on “Haunted” and his vocal dynamics as displayed with contrast in his vocals against an insistent backing on “Are Ya Ready?” His acoustic steel slide guitar sets the atmosphere for the morose “Reaping Time,” while with a delta blues slide riff, Birchwood launches a complaint about police brutality, “Police State,” with a chorus “you have the right to remain silent, they have the right to remain violent.” There is an urgent acoustic slide solo on this. Oliver’s sax is featured on the blues lament, “Lost In You,” as he sings about searching himself and hoping he finds himself again. This low-key performance is followed by the topical protest about working a 60 hour week and doesn’t want to be a cog in the machine when the machine don’t care about him, “Corporate Drone.”

Like his earlier album, Selwyn Birchwood displays a fresh and immediately recognizable approach to his blues and has presented another set of varied and fresh material that is imaginatively and often compellingly performed with his excellent band. **Ron Weinstock**



LARRY NEWCOMB QUARTET WITH BUCKY PIZZARELLI

Living Tribute
ESSENTIAL MESSENGER

Blessed with a marvelous tone and a swinging melodic sense, guitarist Larry Newcomb’s latest album is a tribute to some individuals who had a significant impact on him as a guitarist such as the late Dick Hall, Jim Hall, and Bucky Pizzarelli, who Newcomb studied under and adds his acoustic archtop guitar, mostly playing rhythm in a Freddie Green fashion to 7 or the 11 tracks. He adds comments to various selections that link the song to a particular individual or individuals. Newcomb and his quartet of pianist Eric Olsen, bassist Dmitri Kolesnik and drummer Jimmy Madison are also joined by vocalist Leigh Jonaitis on two selections.

Newcomb captivates with his beautiful tone, single note lines and carefully placed chords with his swinging backing band starting with a sonorous “I Remember You,” as well as the Cole Porter gem “You’d Be So Nice To Come Home To,” the Jim Hall recording of which inspired him to become a jazz guitarist. Jim Hall’s duet with Ron Carter of “Alone Together,” inspired the rendition here with Kolesnik’s bass being the dominant solo voice with Newcomb’s only solo judiciously employing chords against a spare backing. “Morningside Heights,” one of Newcomb’s seven originals, is a driving blues with Pizzarelli adding a short, rhythmically emphatic chord-rooted solo after effervescent solos from Newcomb and Olsen.

Another original, “Band of Brothers,” dedicated to his sons, is a lovely waltz with Olsen’s adding deft accompaniments along with a solo complementing the leader’s playing on a charming original. Jonaitis adds her lovely vocal to “One Heart Ain’t As Great As Two,” with Pizzarelli’s rhythmic chording anchoring this performance to which Newcomb adds pithy obligatos to her vocal, as well as “Love Is Here,” with its breezy samba groove and Newcomb’s understated support and charming solo.

Much of the charm of the performances on “Living Tribute” rest in the restraint often shown along with the invention and lyricism manifest throughout in the solos and the solid ensemble playing. This is a jewel of a recording of swinging, guitar jazz. **Ron Weinstock**

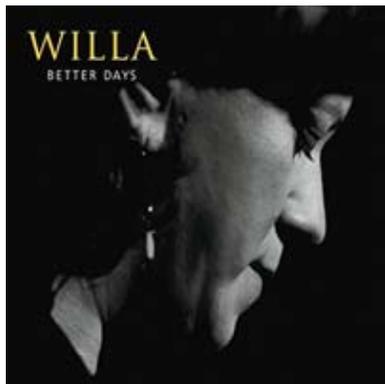
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WILLA VINCITORE

Better Days
BUILDING RECORDS

Singer-songwriter Willa Vincitore certainly sounds poised to expand her fanbase beyond New York's Hudson Valley with this recording. She is a founding member of harmonica player Chris O'Leary's Band, who is heard on this, her debut CD. Others accompanying her on her twelve originals include guitarist Chris Vitello, saxophonist Jay Collins, brass player Reggie Pittman, bassist Brandon Morrison, drummer Lee Falco and keyboardist Scott Milici.

Willa sings with considerable power as well as nuance with her on point phrasing and intonation. She can handle the hot jump blues groove of the opening "Love Looks Good On Me" with a booting sax solo; or the funk of "Stop, Drop and Roll," with a neat keyboard solo. Then she struts soulfully on "Hooked On You," really soaring at the close with marvelous backing vocals, and the title track which is a nice soul ballad that displays her vocal range as well as her expressive range with some nice guitar fills

If the above suggests a soulful orientation other songs are in a different vein. There is the insistent blues-rock, "Hey Little Sister," with some smoldering harmonica after a blazing guitar solo, and the folk-flavored "Caroline" with Pete Hop's acoustic guitar. Some buzz-tone slide guitar opens "Mama Needs Some Company," a driving rocker that might evoke Bonnie Bramlett for some, while "Say What," has a reggae-tinged groove with wah-wah keyboards under the brassy backing supporting her fervent vocal and a fine guitar solo. The Caribbean feel also is present on "Opposite of Lonely," which also has Pittman's lugubrious sounding, muted trumpet behind her moving vocal.

The closing "Demons" is an original down-home acoustic blues wonderfully sung with Vitello laying down an outstanding slide guitar accompaniment. While Willa has been compared to the likes of Susan Tedeschi, and Shemekia Copeland, I suggest Ruthie Foster is a more appropriate comparison and she stands up well in comparison. This wonderfully produced recording (credit to Falco and Morrison) allows her to exhibit how marvelous a singer she is, and one whose career certainly is headed to see "Better Days."

Ron Weinstock



LEIGH PILZER

Strunkin'
SELF-PRODUCED

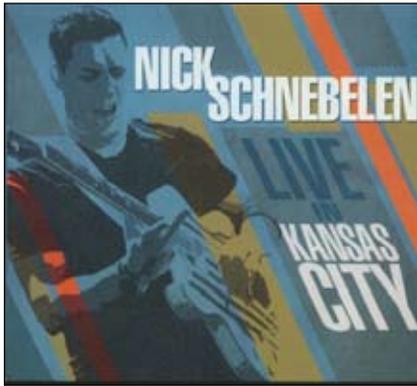
One of the mainstays of the very fertile Washington D.C. jazz scene, this is the first album for baritone saxophonist, composer and arranger Leigh Pilzer, who is a member of the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra and The DIVA Jazz Orchestra as well as one who frequently can be heard with other area ensembles. On this album, recorded live at the 6th Annual Washington Women in Jazz Festival, she leads a terrific ensemble that also includes Jen Krupa, trombone; Sherrie Maricle, drums; Amy Shook, bass; and Jackie Warren, piano. She composed six of the eight compositions with Amy Shook contributing "Brag Time," and Jen Krupa contributing "Duel at Dawn."

The title track is a jaunty number that to me suggests a classic Prestige Records date with Pilzer's vigorous, heavy tone suggesting the likes of Pepper Adams, Nick Brignola, and Cecil Payne, while Krupa's trombone complements Pilzer as well as displays her own strong playing with Warren also spotlighted. What a rhythm section as well. There is a nice romantic tinge to "Blue Moo," with Krupa taking the lead as Pilzer weaves around her on the head on this wonderfully paced number that also showcases Amy Shook's firm, driving bass.

There is a definite Harry Carney-Duke Ellington flavor on the lovely ballad "Miss Ally In Allyworld," while Shook opens "Brag Time" with a finger popping groove on this hard swinging number that has some marvelous growling trombone in a Tricky Sam Nanton manner, along with Warren's rollicking piano. Pilzer seems to relish focusing on the low end of the baritone's register, yet swings in an effortless sounding manner as on "Thaddish," as well as her bossa nova "It's Anyone But You," with its exchanges between her and Krupa and also provides solo space for all including Marcie. There is a playful opening of bop-laced "Duel at Dawn," with Maricle's drums adding considerable heat with echoes of Tadd Dameron on the close.

What a wonderful recording. These are all musicians playing with passion, intelligence and imagination and with the excellent rhythm section and the marvelous solos, one has a superb recording that has one wanting more.

Ron Weinstock



NICK SCHNEBELEN

Live in Kansas City
VIZZTONE

This is a follow-up to “Live at Knuckleheads,” and features one of the members of the family band, Trampled Under Foot, leading a trio with Cliff Moore on bass, and Adam Hagerman on drums (I am taking this information of Nick’s website as no other her personnel is given on the CD cover), although some tracks, like the closing “Conformity Blues,” sounds like additional musicians are present. Moore was on that earlier album which also featured Heather Newman. From the credits, most of the songs may have originally been by Trampled Under Foot with a few interesting covers.

Musically, this recording comes across as blues-rock. He is a limited singer who certainly invests his vocals with heart, although with a small range. He is quite a guitarist, combining technique, tone and imagination in the power blues-rock trio format heard here. Taken in small doses, tracks like the opening “Fool,” with its field holler opening transitioning to a driving blues-rock; the cover of “Herbert Harper’s Free Press News” (from the infamous “Electric Mud” album); and the sparkling slide guitar he plays “Bad Woman Blues” set to the Bo Diddley groove certainly stand-out. There is more slide on a hyper-kinetic cover of Johnny Winter’s “Mean Town Blues,” and then the Z.Z. Top sounding boogie “Johnny Cheat.” However, “Bad Disposition” comes off musically as a bit over the top. The closing “Conformity Blues,” is musically the most interesting track with superb guitar and a vibe in the manner of the Allman Brothers

Those coming to hear Nick Schnebelen’s impressive blues-rock guitar playing will not be disappointed, although some others, like this listener, will enjoy the music here as a few songs at a time.

Ron Weinstock

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THE JANET LAWSON QUINTET

The Janet Lawson Quintet
BBE RECORDS

This is an expanded rerelease of a Grammy nominated album by The Janet Lawson Quintet. It was originally issued on Inner City Records in 1981 and augmented by four selections from a tribute to Miles Davis in the late 1990s.

Lawson was born in Baltimore before moving to New York for decades of performing as well as teaching. Recently she has had health issues and moved back to Baltimore to be with family. The Janet Lawson Quintet on the Inner City recording included Bill O’Connell, piano; Ratz Harris, bass; Roger Rosenberg, sax/flute; and Jimmy Madison, drums. For the Miles Davis Tribute, Mike Richmond was on bass and Billy Hart on drums.

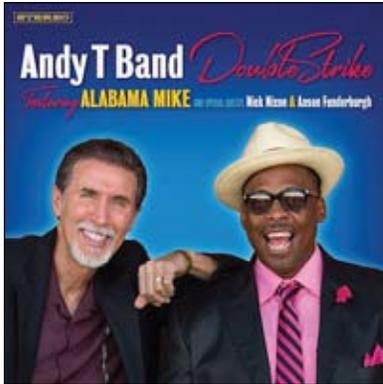
What becomes clearly evident on the opening “You Promised” is how commanding she was with her articulation and interpretation of lyrics, with her attention to diction and the nuances of words, through her phrasing, intonation, range and dynamics as well as magic of wordless improvisation lyrics, where her voice becomes another horn and becomes as important a solo voice as the instrumentalists, reflecting perhaps her studies with Warne Marsh.

It does not hurt that she is backed by a superb band with O’Connell’s soloing (and accompanying) brilliantly in addition to Rosenberg’s flighty flute or meaty saxophone. Another stunning performance is of the Fats Waller classic “Jitterbug Waltz,” where Rosenberg’s sax enters after Lawson opens it scating the theme on a performance that seems modeled on Eric Dolphy’s. Lawson’s riveting scatted solo is followed by O’Connell’s own fresh improvisation. “Round Midnight” generally lends itself to perhaps a more reflective tenor, but her scating is followed by some brawny tenor sax.

From the Miles Davis session, there is an inspired interpretation of “It Ain’t Necessarily So,” with Mike Richmond adding a bass solo as well as a lovely “I Thought About You,” and a stunning free-bop of “Joshua” from Miles’ second great quintet. The remainder of this release is of a similar high level.” The Press release for the British release mentions the inclusion of her rendition of Jobim’s “Dindi,” but that was not

included on the review copy I received, so I am not sure whether that is included in the US release. The copy of the CD I received also did not list the personnel that I have included in this review. But with 72 minutes of often stunning music, this expanded "The Janet Lawson Quintet" makes for enthralling listening.

Ron Weinstock



ANDY T BAND

Double Strike

AMERICAN SHOWPLACE MUSIC

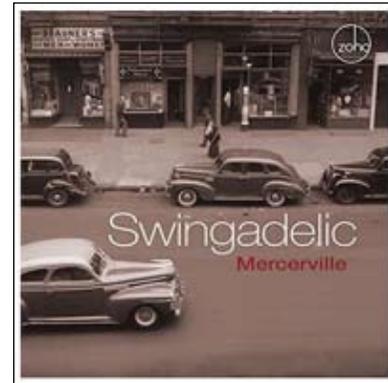
One of the real pleasures of the past few years were releases by the Andy T - Nick Nixon Band. Health issues have forced Nixon to have to retire from performing and his vocals on this album are his last. Guitarist Andy Talamantez has since recruited Michael A. Benjamin, aka Alabama Mike, to become the lead vocalist with his group. On this new release, Nixon and Alabama Mike each take 6 vocals and there is one instrumental. This is co-produced by Andy T and Anson Funderburgh, who adds his guitar to four tracks. Others on this session include Larry van Loon on keyboards (Mike Flanigan is one one track), Johnny Bradley on bass, Jim Klinger on drums and Greg Izor on harmonica for one track. Kaz Kazanoff leads the Texas Horns as part of the backing.

Fans of Gulf Coast to West Coast blues will find much to enjoy here starting with a shuffle "I Want You Bad," with Alabama Mike's gospel rooted vocals along with backing from Andy T's Johnny 'Guitar' Watson meets Ike Turner fretwork along with Funderburgh's own Texas meets B.B. King approach. Alabama Mike is very strong on the Nixon-penned, crying blues, "Sad Times," and the strong original he wrote with Andy T and Anson, "Doin' Hard Time." With Izor on harmonica adding a country flavor, Nixon ably delivers the lyrics on a Jimmy Reed-influenced shuffle, "Deep Inside," a Nixon original. Nixon also delivers solid vocals on a couple of Chuck Willis' numbers "I Feel So Bad" (patterned after Little Milton's recording) and "Juanita." Both also have strong guitar, but the latter number stands out perhaps because it is less familiar. Nixon's solid cover of Goree Carter's "Drunk or Sober" has an understated mambo groove blistering guitar and gutbucket tenor sax from Kazanoff, while on "I Was Gonna Leave You" Nixon evokes the deep soul Goldwax

recordings of James Carr, with another solid sax solo and Funderburgh's biting lead guitar.

Funderburgh's "Mudslide," is a relaxed instrumental shuffle showcasing both guitarists and van Loon. "Where Did Our Love Go Wrong," is a swamp pop ballad written by Kazanoff, with a strong Alabama Mike vocal, another terrific slashing guitar solo in the vein of Johnny 'Guitar' Watson, and a booting baritone sax solo from John Mills. It closes this excellent collection of blues performances and shows that with Alabama Mike, Andy T will be continuing the fine modern blues that he had been making with Nick Nixon.

Ron Weinstock



SWINGADELIC

Mercerville

ZOHO MUSIC

The self-described 'little big band' Swingadelic was formed in 1998 when the neo-swing movement was cresting, when bassist Dave Post gathered his jazz & blues playing friends together to play engagements at various New York City venues. When the swing scene waned, the band stayed active playing swing dances, concerts, festivals, schools and private engagements and today plays 100 dates a year. This new album is a tribute to the legendary songwriter Johnny Mercer. Previously Swingadelic has recorded tributes to Duke Pearson and Allen Toussaint.

Pianist and vocalist Johnny Bauers traces the origin of the present recording to the work he did for a Mercer show during the 2009 centenary of him. Subsequently he brought this concept to Swingadelic's Dave Post, and enlisted Vanessa Perea, the sublime vocalist featured on this recording and they started doing shows all over the New York area. During these shows, they told the story of Johnny's life and the stories of his songs, striking a chord with the audiences. According to Bauers, "[t]his CD is an attempt to recreate some of that magic we feel when we go onstage and perform this great music."

As my first exposure to Swingadelic, I was surprised and impressed by the band's solid musicianship and the focused performances of such familiar numbers as "Too Marvelous For Words," "Blues in the Night," "That Old Black Magic," "I Wanna Be Around," "Jeepers Creepers," "Moon River/The Days of Wine and

Roses,” “G.I. Jive,” and “One For The Road.” This set kicks off with “Too Marvelous For Words,” where the band’s punchy, brassy playing grabs the listener. Johnny Bauers is a decent singer, but vocally the star here is Vanessa Perea whose timing, intonation and relaxed phrasing shines. He does shine in a Louis Prima manner with his growl on “That Old Black Magic,” and does a credible job crooning on the Tony Bennett hit, “I Wanna Be Around.”

The medley of two songs co-written with Henry Mancini, “Moon River/The Days of Wine and Roses,” opens with Panea’s lovely, wistful treatment of the former number before Bauer’s crooning of the latter number, but he cannot convey the humor present on Louis Jordan’s hit on “G.I. Jive.” Paul McCartney wanted to collaborate with Mercer in the 1970s but health issues prevented this from happening. The performance of “P.S I Love You” is a fascinating mash-up of the Beatles song with a Gordon Jenkins-Mercer collaboration of the same name.

A serviceable singer, Bauers’ piano and his arrangements are first-rate and help account for the splendid playing throughout this recording. Also, there are a number of notable solos including those of guitarist George Naha on “Acc Cent Chu Ate the Positive” and “Blues in the Night,” while John Disanto’s baritone establishes the feel on “That Old Black Magic.” Robert Edwards’ trombone enlivens “I Wanna Be Around” while Audrey Welber’s clarinet is featured on “Goody Goody,” and Michael Weisberger ably reprises Louis Jordan’s alto sax solo on “G.I. Jive.”

Dancers and listeners will find much to enjoy in this lively, appealing recording. **Ron Weinstock**

quite an exciting live performer) and these solid originals showcase her authoritative, nuanced, oft powerful, expressive singing with Holter’s fiery blues-rock pyrotechnics (overdubbed at times) featured as well. This is evident on the seductive opening “Diamonds Are Optional,” where Kappalis asks her man for a kiss as diamonds are optional. On the lazy shuffle “Love Hangover,” she sings about the shivers up her spine from the good loving she has received with Holter adding bluesy fills behind her vocal before taking his own solo. He impresses not simply with his imposing technique, but his conciseness here and the interplay between his solo and his rhythm guitar on this.

One of the two covers of the 11 selections here is a slow, bluesy reworking Bob Dylan’s “Million Miles,” with simple bass and drums accompaniment to the soulful singing and the impressive guitar fireworks followed by the rockabilly flavored shuffle “Circles,” with more fine singing and impressive, understated playing. The tempo slows down for the moody “Pieces,” a remembrance of endless nights filled with love, but now those days are gone. It has an ambience suggestive of The Doors’ “Riders in the Storm.” The other cover, Z.Z. Top’s “Just Got Back From Baby’s,” becomes a wonderfully done slow blues.

One shortcoming might be the austere, skeletal backing on most of these tracks. A bit more life rhythmically from the bass and drums would make the singing and searing guitar sound stand out more, and provide more variety in the musical color palette, although one appreciates the uncluttered quality of the performances here. Still, there is plenty of “Grit” on this intriguing debut by Vintage 18. **Ron Weinstock**



VINTAGE 18

Grit
SELF-PRODUCED

The Washington DC area blues and rhythm group Vintage 18 debuts on CD with this recording. Comprised of vocalist Robbin Kappalis, guitarist Bill Holter, drummer Alex Kuldell and bassist Mark Chandler, the band has been performing since 2013 and this writer has had the pleasure to enjoy them perform a number of times.

With the solid rhythm section here, the focal point is the very expressive singing of Ms. Kappalis (who is



TAS CRU

Simmered and Stewed
VIZZTONE

One of Tas Cru’s earlier albums was titled “Grizzle n’ Bone” and that is a fair approach to his blues with roots accents. His crusty, seasoned singing is matched with his very adept songwriting and solid, adept guitar, ably supported by some fine studio musicians. In fact he redoes “Grizzle n’ Bone” in a rollicking performance (terrific piano from Chip Lamson) as he sings about he used to get biscuits and gravy and now all he gets

is grizzle and bone.

“Feel I’m Falling” is a stark call for help set against a trance groove in the manner of Otis Taylor with a swirling repeated guitar riff and some biting slide guitar before it segues into a more emphatic, driving segment displaying his skill at arranging his material as well as singing and playing with Dick Earl Erickson adding haunting harmonica. On the plaintive ballad, “Time and Time,” Erickson’s mournful harmonica again adds to the mood. “Road To My Obsession” has a dynamic groove as Tas heads down a lonesome road with 200 miles to go to pay his dues, as he will play them blues and recounts his experiences playing. The closing track is a reworking and interpretation of Jackie Wilson’s hit “Higher and Higher,” that builds to its jubilant climax

This is a consistently strong recording that displays why Tas Cru has become a popular performer on the blues circuit. His music is fresh and original, wonderfully played whether he is playing acoustically or getting a rocking groove on, and with a gravelly, honest vocal approach making for this first-rate recording. And he is even better live. For more information on Tas Cru, visit the website, <http://www.tascru.com>.

Ron Weinstock



VARIOUS ARTISTS
The Passion of Charlie Parker
IMPULSE

Reading more like a theatrical work than a tribute album, producer Larry Klein and lyricist David Baerwald have fashioned new, re-titled vocal renditions of Charlie Parker classics, sketching an engaging aural portrait of the iconic bebop pioneer.

However one takes to the concept, Passion works as a tasty buffet of jazz vocals, served up by top-notch singers including Madeline Peyroux (“Ornithology”), Kurt Elling (“Moose The Moochie”) and Camille Bertault (“Au Privave”). The inclusion of actor/vocalist Jeffrey Wright assuming Bird’s persona is perhaps the most powerful single component; his segments also including some of the piece’s strongest instrumental moments.

Further distancing from the “tribute” approach, a tenor sax is the featured axe rather than Bird’s alto, though Donny McCaslin does work the higher registers of his horn frequently. Pianist Craig Taborn provides strong work throughout.

Duane Verh

2017 Detroit Jazz Festival Artist Lineup Delivers Iconic Musicians, Special Collaborations



Wayne Shorter (© Robert Ascroft)

The Detroit Jazz Festival, the world’s largest free jazz festival, has announced its full artist lineup for the 38th annual Labor Day weekend event. The lineup, which is filled with rich and diverse jazz talents, is anchored by 2017 Artist-in-Residence Wayne Shorter, a revolutionary saxophonist and composer globally recognized for his immense contributions to jazz music. Ranging from genre-defining icons to up-and-coming artists, this collection of world-class musicians continues the Festival’s proud tradition of delivering a distinctive performance schedule. Live sets will take place September 1-4, 2017, on four stages in downtown Detroit. For complete info, visit www.detroitjazzfest.com

“Every year during Labor Day weekend, the Detroit Jazz Festival creates a scene downtown that bursts at the seams with culture, vibrancy and wonderful music,” said Gretchen Valade, Chair of the Detroit Jazz Festival Foundation Board of Directors. “We are proud to deliver a Festival, for free, that Detroiters and jazz fans from around the world continually mark on their calendars as a can’t-miss event. Our remarkable lineup of musicians and joyous atmosphere will deliver attendees a jazz experience that not only highlights great artists, but also our dynamic community.”

Shorter will help set the tone for the Festival by jump-starting performances on opening night with a quartet featuring Danilo Pérez, John Patitucci and Brian Blade.

Additionally, Shorter also will participate in other special artist collaborations, a hallmark of the Detroit Jazz Festival, throughout the holiday weekend. One of these rare performances is a Wayne Shorter Quintet, featuring Geri Allen, Leo Genovese, Esperanza Spalding and Terri Lyne Carrington, and will take place on Sunday night. Shorter will be featured in an additional collaboration on Monday, making its North American debut: Wayne Shorter Quartet with the Detroit Jazz Festival Orchestra performs Emanon.

Day-by-day Festival highlights include:

Friday

• Wayne Shorter Quartet featuring Danilo Pérez, John Patitucci and Brian Blade

- Miles Mosley
- Herbie Hancock
- George “Sax” Benson Detroit Jam Session

Saturday

• HUDSON: Jack DeJohnette | Larry Grenadier | John Medeski | John Scofield

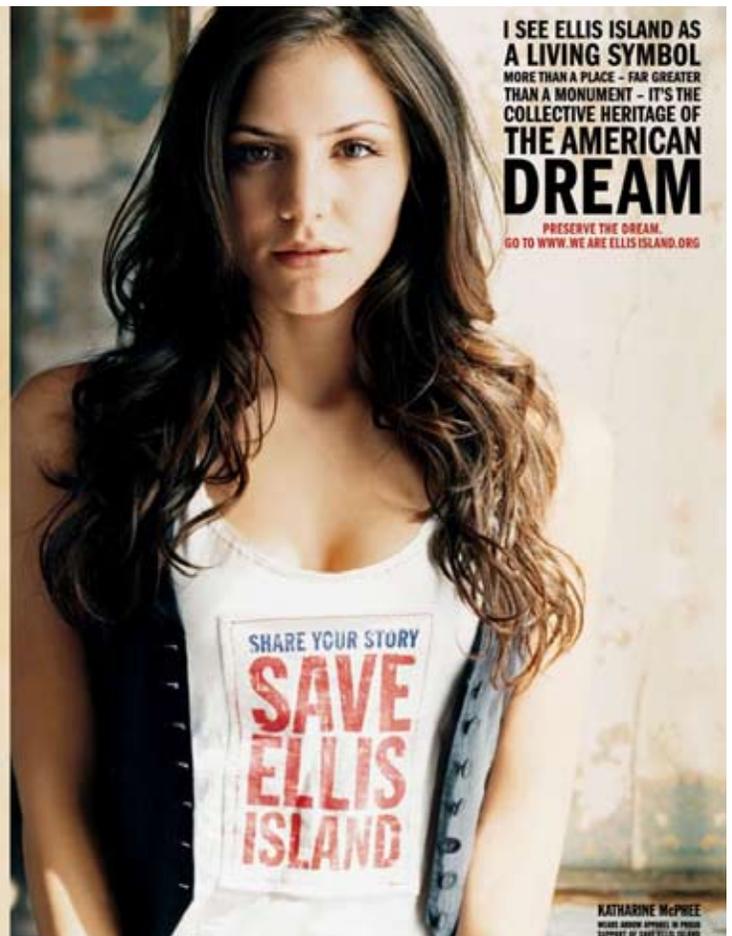
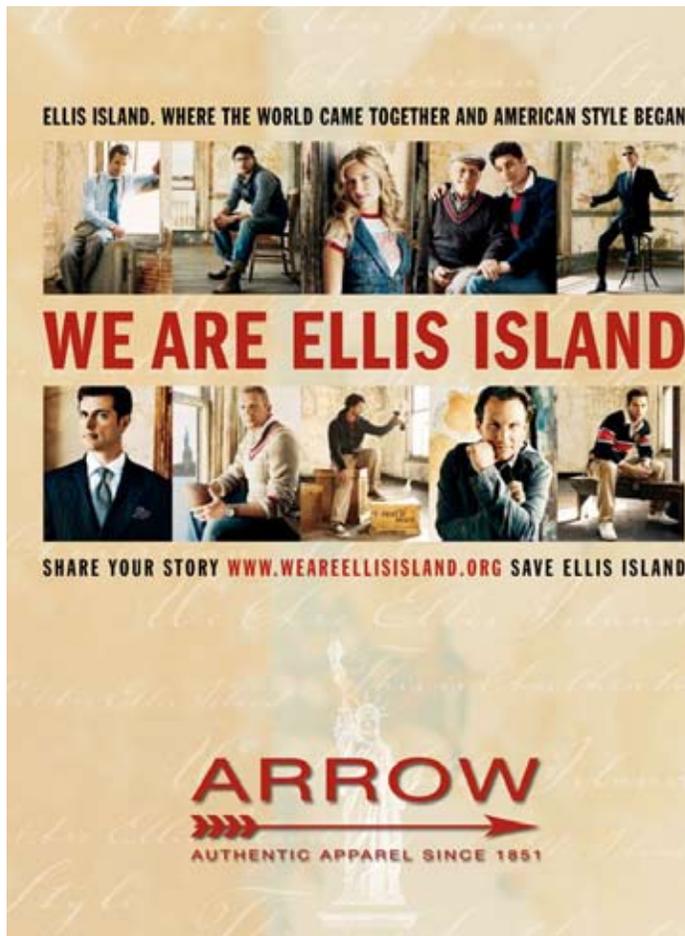
- Dee Dee Bridgewater
- Theo Croker Quintet
- Chucho Valdés Joe Lovano Quintet
- Donny McCaslin
- Spanish Harlem Orchestra
- Miles Mosley + The West Coast Get Down
- Billy Childs Quartet: Rebirth
- Danilo Pérez: PanaMonk
- John Patitucci: The Electric Guitar Quartet

Sunday

- Henry Butler & the Jambalaya Band
- Cameron Graves
- Benny Golson
- Sean Jones Quintet
- John Beasley presents MONK’estra
- Kyle Eastwood Quintet
- Akihiro Nishiguchi Trio
- Kamasi Washington
- Mark Guilliana Jazz Quartet
- Kat Edmonson
- Quintet: Wayne Shorter, Geri Allen, Leo Genovese, Esperanza Spalding and Terri Lyne Carrington
- Wide Angles: The Music of Michael Brecker Under the Direction of Gil Goldstein Featuring: Joe Lovano, Donny McCaslin, Rick Margitza, John Patitucci, Brian Blade and members of the DJF Orchestra

Monday

- Vijay Iyer
- Regina Carter: Simply Ella
- Stanley Clarke
- New Light: The Music of Elvin Jones: Live @ The Lighthouse, featuring Dave Liebman, Gene Perla, Adam Niewood, Adam Nussbaum
- Jason Marsalis Vibes Quartet
- Johnny O’Neal Trio
- Wayne Shorter Quartet with the Detroit Jazz Festival Symphony Orchestra perform Emanon





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San Rafael Desert, Utah © David Muench

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