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Vaneese Thomas
Ponderosa Stomp



jazz & blues report

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Roy Gaines



Vaneese Thomas

The Ponderosa Stomp October 5-7

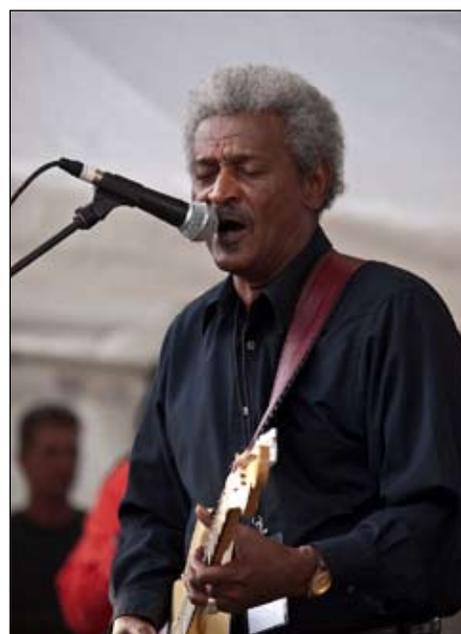
By Ron Weinstock

The Ponderosa Stomp Foundation is producing the 2017 Ponderosa Stomp Festival, October 5 through 7 to celebrate the Unsung Heroes of American Music in new Orleans. Included will be a music conference on the 5th and 6th at the Ace Hotel and the Ponderosa Concert at New Orleans' Orpheum Theater on the 6th and 7th.

The website for the Festival proclaims: "There was a time when popular music was distilled from desperation, striving, raw ambition and a healthy fear of the damnation of the Lord. Menace was in the air as the odds were damn near impossible to beat, getting out of the fields and into a Cadillac, proving to the world that toughness and talent could take a poverty-stricken kid to the bright lights of town. Songs with an edge, a secret code, a punk energy that is undeniable — that is the music of the Ponderosa Stomp. Be it soul singers, country creole, or young rock n' rollers leading the way for the next generation to blossom



Barbara Lynn



Lil Buck Sinegal

in garages around the country, the music fanatics of the Stomp bulldoze the slick detritus of contemporary music to find the rawest, deepest stuff out there, simmering under the surface, waiting to be rediscovered before it's too late. Artists who could nail vocal takes in the studio, without the benefit of auto-tune or even adequate microphones, were the order of the day, and they invented pop music. They are still out there among us, and the Stomp exists to celebrate these architects of American music."

Friday Night, October 6, the Stomp Convert will have performances from Roky Erickson performing with 13th Floor Elevators; The Gories; Archie Bell; soul-blues great Barbara Lynn; cajun legend Doug Kershaw; Chicago blues legend Billy Boy Arnold; blues-eyed soul Roy Head; Willie West; Baltimore/DC deep soul legend Winfield Parker; a Swamp Pop Revue Featuring GG Shinn, Warren Storm, and TK Hulin; Lil Buck Sinegal & The Top Cats; guitar wiz Deke Dickerson and the Eccofonics; and Eve and the Exiles.

Saturday Night, October 6 the concert features another incredible eclectic lineup including The Mummies; Gary U.S. Bonds; Memphis Music Legend Don Bryant & The Bo-Keys; Evie Sands; Johnny Knight; Charles Connor; blues guitar legend Roy Gaines; Rufus Thomas' daughters, Carla and Vaneese Thomas; Texas Honky Tonk Revue Featuring Frankie Miller, Darrell McCall, and James Hand; Linda Gail Lewis; Los Straitjackets; Stompin Riff Ruffs; Deke Dickerson and the Eccofonics; and Eve and the Exiles.

In addition to the Concert, there is The Ponderosa Stomp Music History Conference which will take place October 5th–6th at Ace Hotel New Orleans at 600 Carondelet St. in New Orleans which features musicians, historians and musicologists tackling all kinds of music history topics.

Thursday, October 5th: the conference lineup is 10:00 – 10:45 am - Bourbon Street Parade: A Look at Bourbon Street Clubs in the 60s Featuring "Wacko" Wade, George Porter, Jr. and Moderator David Kunian; 11:00 – 11:45 am The Gospel Truth of Rosemont Records Featuring Al Taylor (Owner and engineer of Rosemont Records), James Williams (Guitarist and Leader of The Electrifying Crown Seekers), Andrew Jackson (Leader of The Famous Rocks of Harmony) and Moderator Brice White; 12:45 – 1:45 pm South Rampart Street Stroll: The Music and Geography of South Rampart Street Featuring Bruce Raeburn, Deacon John Moore, Richard Campanella and Moderator Jordan Hirsch; 2:00 – 2:45 pm I've Got Reasons: The Return of Mary Jane Hooper Featuring Mary Jane Hooper and Moderator Neil Pellegrin; 3:00 – 3:45 Willie Knows How: An Oral History with Willie West Featuring Moderator John Broven; 4:00 – 4:45 It Came from Philly; Featuring Archie Bell and Winfield Parker, with Moderator Jason Hanley; 5:00 – 5:45 pm The RAM Records Story Featuring Margaret Lewis, Alton Warwick, Roy "Boogie Boy" Perkins, V.J. Boulet and Moderator Michael Hurtt; 6:00 – 6:45 pm; Tales of A Louisiana Man: An Oral History with Doug Kershaw Featuring Doug Kershaw and Moderators Deke Dickerson and Dave Stuckey.

Friday, October 6's conference lineup is 10:00 – 10:45 The Man Behind the Montel & Michelle Labels: An Oral History with Sam Montalbano Featuring Moderator John Broven; 10:55 – 11:40 am Evie Sands Oral History Featuring Moderator Sheryl Farber; 12:25 – 1:10 pm Make it Sound Like a Train: An Oral History with Charles Connor Featuring Moderator David Kunian; 1:20 – 2:05 pm Forever Young: An Oral History with Reggie Young Featuring Moderator Red Kelly; 2:15 – 3:00 pm Walking the Dog: Growing Up with the "World's Oldest Teenager" Rufus Thomas Featuring Carla and Vaneese Thomas and Moderator Andria Lisle; 3:10 – 3:55 pm I Wanna Holler: An Oral History with Gary U.S. Bonds; Featuring Moderator Todd Abramson; and 4:05 – 5:00 pm Last Train from Kicksville: A Tribute to Billy Miller of Norton Records Featuring Miriam Linna, Todd Abramson, James Marshall, Deke Dickerson and Moderator Michael Hurtt. Admission to the conference gets one admission to the Record Show.

Also part of the Festival is The Ponderosa Stomp Record Show is vinyl only and used vinyl primarily. There will be tens of thousands of records from a variety of dealers, across musical genres, and including 45s, LPs, and 78s! Thursday night, October 5 DJ Brice Nice & The Ponderosa Stomp present: THE HIP DROP VIII The Official Pre-Ponderosa Stomp DJ All-Nighter of R&B, Soul, Garage, & Deep Funk 45 Madness at d.b.a at 618 Frenchman Street.

For more detailed information on performers, purchase tickets, travel packages and the like visit <http://www.ponderosastomp.com/>. All photos by Ron Weinstock

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



Alexis Suter



Kenny Neal

Inaugural Reading Blues Festival October 6–8 Features Kenny Neal, Robert Cray and Johnny Lang

By Ron Weinstock

The Berks Arts Council has announced the inaugural “Reading Blues Fest (www.readingbluesfest.com) with host venue the DoubleTree by Hilton Reading. The fest also will be presenting performances within walking distance at restaurants and bistros throughout downtown Reading, PA. On Friday, October 6, Saturday, October 7, and Sunday, October 8, 2017; featuring international, national and regional Blues Artists. The Inaugural Reading Blues Fest will be hosted by Michael Cloeren – founder and producer of Pocono/Pennsylvania Blues festivals.

Among the major acts performing are Louisiana Blues Legend Kenny Neal, the Strong Persuader, Robert Cray and former prodigy Jonny Lang. Also the phenomenal traditional blues master Blind Boy Paxton is among those playing, while the wonderful, genre crossing gospel-roots-blues-soul phenomenon Alexi Suter will host after party jams

The Berks Arts Council has been presenting the acclaimed Boscov’s Berks Jazz Fest since 1991 and as part of that festival has staged numerous Blues concerts over the years that have captivated audiences: “You

cannot get enough of the Blues. It is a musical genre that grabs your heart and soul and simply will not let go,” states John Ernesto, who has been general manager of the jazz fest for 28 years, and will be the general manager and producer of the Reading Blues Fest. The Reading Blues Fest is collaborating with the annual Arts Festival Reading, that will be held Saturday, October 7, and Sunday, October 8, at The Goggleworks Center for The Arts from 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. and several other downtown venues.

Reading Blues Fest kick-off luncheon is Friday, October 6, featuring The Bluesmasters; followed by the Arrival Party featuring Deb Callahan Duo; Blues at The Hen; and a concert with Samantha Fish and Kenny Neal. There will be an After Party Blues Jam hosted by Alexis P. Suter & the Berks Horns with special guests Mikey Junior & Deb Callahan & many more.

Saturday, October 7: Arts Festival Reading begins at The GoggleWorks Center for the arts; Teeny Tucker will present Women in the Blues that is hosted by Michael Cloeren. Also taking place will be an Afternoon Blues

Party featuring the Philadelphia Blues All-Stars; Blues at The Hen; and The Robert Cray Band with opening act Blind Boy Paxton. Also performing Saturday will be the Dave Mell Blues Band. There will also be an After Party Blues Jam hosted by Alexis P. Suter, The Berks Horns, and special guests Kevin McCann, Dave Holtzman, Deb Callahan and more.

On Sunday Sunday, October 8: there will be a VIP only Sunday Blues Brunch featuring Slam Allen Blues Band as well as more of Arts Festival Reading/Goggle-Works Center for The Arts. Keynote Speaker on Sunday will be former XM-Sirius Bluesville host Bill Wax and music that day will be heard from Josh Taylor's Next Gen Blues; Blind Boy Paxton; and Johnny Lang with opening act Dana Fuchs Duo featuring Jon Diamond.

There is a VIP ALL-FEST PACKAGE for \$240 per person limited to 160 fans. The package includes preferred seating for all major ticketed concerts at the DoubleTree grand ballroom and the Santander Performing Arts Center; ticket to the Arts Festival Reading at the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts for Saturday, Oct. 7, and Sunday, Oct. 8; a VIP-only Sunday Blues Brunch featuring Slam Allen on Sunday, Oct. 8; and a commemorative VIP laminate. VIP tickets may be purchased by contacting Trent Gray at 610-898-7201.

For more information visit the official website, www.readingbluesfest.com, which has information on schedule, artist biographies ticket information, times and locations, lodging, directions and more. Photos by Ron Weinstock

Palm Springs Women's Jazz Festival Heats Up November

By Ron Weinstock

Celebrating its fifth year in Palm Springs, California, the Palm Springs Women's Jazz Festival's stage is reserved to exclusively recognize women musicians. "We recognize that men have a greater advantage attaining work as musicians," says Gail Christian, Executive Producer of the Festival, "We choose to take this time to hire 100% women artists and know we are the one festival in the country taking that stand. ... Men are invited to join the audience and to bring their wives, sons and daughters to celebrate the artists on stage. In the end, it's about great music, but a survey of jazz festivals shows, on average, 19% of artists and band members are women. Looking at the bands on late night TV, it's a similar ratio with some bands being male only. For women to get three concerts is just a beginning."

Spotlighting women in jazz will be three main shows. Opening Night, Friday, November 3, 8pm at the Riviera will be a salute to the grand ladies of jazz vocals. Step back in time to the Golden Age of Jazz when you enter Sweet Baby's Place, a setting reminiscent of the famous New York jazz clubs. Exciting vocalist, Jazzmeia Horn, winner of both the Sarah Vaughn International Vocal

PAGE FIVE



Jazzmeia Horn

Competition and the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Vocal Competition, and saxophonist Melissa Aldana, the first female to win the coveted Thelonious Monk International Jazz Saxophone Competition, will be joined by the internationally acclaimed Chilean recording artist, Claudia Acuña and the Jazz All-Stars in a tribute to the legendary music of Sarah Vaughn, Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday and more.

Miki Howard and Kandace Springs will be at the Anenberg- Saturday, November 4 at 8pm for Jazz + Blues = Soul, celebration of the rhythms of jazz, funk, blues and R&B. Together with Jazz All-Stars they will rock the house, while on Sunday there will be Tribute to the Divas – Gospel Brunch – Sunday, November 4 at 11am at the Riviera Hotel. The internationally acclaimed Firm Soundation gospel quartet is headed by lead singer Sandra Adams, who has performed with Aretha Franklin and BeBe Winans and they will pay homage to the female greats of gospel music; Mahalia Jackson, The Winans and Shirley Caesar for a morning of soul-stirring music rooted in the tradition of southern Black churches.

Each year the headline vocalists perform with an all female band, which they don't usually meet until we go in to the rehearsal 24 hours before the show," says Festival Music Director, Sweet Baby J'ai, "This is a master class on music and musicianship. It creates a unique audience experience and a combination of artists audiences only see at our festival." Regarding her experience at the Festival, legendary jazz vocalist/pianist Diane Schuur described it as, "One of the greatest moments in music."

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It was very magical. There is an intuitive quality that happens when women get together.”

PALM SPRINGS WOMEN'S JAZZ FESTIVAL is produced by The Palm Springs Women's Jazz and Blues Association, a non-profit established to preserve and foster an appreciation of jazz and blues music and to support female jazz and blues musicians who traditionally struggle for recognition and employment. The 2017 Festival dates also take place concurrently to Palm Springs Pride. Two special Pride events for the LGBT friendly audience are on sale including a Pride Casino Party at Spa Casino on Friday and Pride Pool Party at the Riviera on Saturday. The host hotel is The Riviera, Palm Springs. For ticketing, show times and complete Festival information visit: PalmSpringsWomensJazz-Festival.org. For questions about tickets, please call the office at 760-416-3545 Monday through Friday 9am - 5pm PST, Except holidays.

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Photo © Robyn Churchill

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

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

Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington didn't rule over a small English estate. Instead he reigned supreme over jazz institutions like The Cotton Club. He riffed

powerfully on the piano, but it was the full orchestra that he considered his most compelling instrument. He introduced improvisation to his compositions — a process unheard of using a 15-piece orchestra. The result was a different approach to jazz that sparked a revolution and an evolution.

His music spread across the world with songs like "Sophisticated Lady," "In a



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

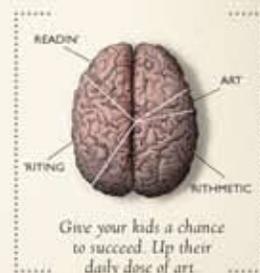
Sentimental Mood," and "Take the 'A' Train." His historical concert in 1953 at the Newport Jazz Festival has entered the lexicon of legendary live performances. There is no doubt about it, Ellington's brand of jazz has contributed significantly to the American songbook and to the lives of anyone who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

Jazz is art, you dig? Art can

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



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



Art. Ask for More.

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We only bring you
the Cream of the Crop!



BILL EVANS

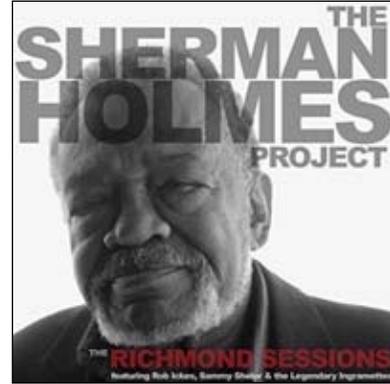
Another Time: The Hilversum Concert RESONANCE RECORDS

This is a follow-up to Resonance Records' highly acclaimed "Some Other Time" that similarly documented the short-lived Evans trio of bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Jack DeJohnette (who would leave Evans when recruited by Miles Davis). While that album was a studio recording, this was live recording made at the studios of the Netherlands Radio Union two days after the studio album. Like all Resonance reissues, the production is exquisite with a wonderfully illustrated booklet containing essays from Marc Myers on the music contained; Dutch music critic Bert Vuijsje; producer of the radio broadcast, Joop De Roo; recollections of the concert and performing in Holland by Gomez and DeJohnette and pianist Steve Kuhn's recollections on Evans and his piano style.

The music is sublime with Evans' brilliance and dynamic lyricism evident from the opening moments of Andre and Dory Previn's "You're Gonna Hear From Me," with Gomez brawny bass anchoring the performance with DeJohnette's use of brushes adding accents while Gomez takes a dynamic solo. It is followed by Evans' waltz, "Very Early," that opens slowly before quickly accelerating into a brisk frolic. Evans' romanticism and intelligence is evident on the treatment of the standards, "Who Can I Turn To," "Alfie," and "Embraceable You." After Evans swings "Who Can I," Gomez is superb on his solo, with DeJohnette helping drive things along at the close, and his brush work is impeccable on "Alfie." A brilliant Gomez bass solo opens the Gershwin classic and after stating the theme, Evans and DeJohnette enter but serving as support for the bassist. A lovely "Emily" is followed by an ener-

getic interpretation of Miles' "Nardis," with DeJohnette imaginatively, and vigorously, soloing.

A spirited "Turn Out the Stars," and a quick "Five," close this recording. It is another superb Resonance reissue of musical history that has been lovingly been made available for contemporary audiences and certain to receive the same accolades that were given to "Some Other Time."
Ron Weinstock



THE SHERMAN HOLMES PROJECT

The Richmond Sessions M.C. RECORDS

The origins of this album by the surviving member of The Holmes Brothers goes back to 2014, the year they were honored with a National Heritage Fellowship, the highest award given in the US for traditional arts. That same year they participated as master artists in the Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program where they mentored several young musicians. While they enjoyed the performances of those they mentored along with other traditional musicians, not long after in January 2015, Popsy Dixon passed away from cancer and then Sherman's brother Wendell died a few months later of multiple health problems. Sherman in that year continued to participate in the Apprenticeship Program mentoring 11 year old Whitney Nelson, and after backing her at the Apprenticeship Showcase, he was asked to sing a number in honor of Wendell and Popsy. He sat down at the keyboards to sing a traditional gospel number, "I Want Jesus." It was after that performance that Jon Lohman suggested they record this album.

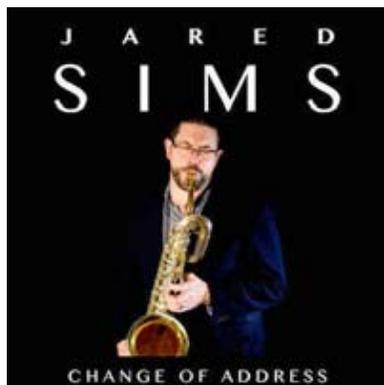
Lohman suggests that in the spirit of The Holmes Brothers, this recording draws on a variety of genres and styles. While true, this recording has a strong bluegrass-Americana feel, with the blues and soul aspects somewhat less prominent. Lohman, besides producing this, adds harmonica behind Holmes' vocals, bass and keyboards. Other notable musicians on this include Rob Ickes on dobro; Jared Pool on mandolin and telecaster guitar; Sammy Shelor on banjo; Jacob Eller on upright bass; and David Van Deventer on fiddle. Joan Osborne, long-time friend of The Holmes Brothers, adds her vocal on one track, while the Ingrams add backing vocals to others selections.

Gospel songs are in fair abundance here ranging

from the living bluegrass rendition of “Rock of Ages,” with strong dobro and fiddle along with a terrific supporting vocal from one of the Ingramettes; the austere “I Want Jesus,” with simple accompaniment (again with dobro prominent) and gospel chorus backing; the traditional African-American gospel rendered “Wide River,” and a stunning bluegrass-rooted rendition of Carter Stanley’s sentimental ballad “White Dove.” There are strong heartfelt performances, including renditions of Vince Gill’s “Liza Jane” (not the similar New Orleans number) and Jim Lauderdale’s “Lonesome Pines.” Toss in intriguing versions of The Band’s “Don’t Do It,” and Creedence Clearwater Revivals’ “Green River,” with vocals that would likely have impressed Levon Helm.

There are two deep soul numbers, renditions of “Breaking Up Somebody’s Home” (with an intriguing employment of traditional country instruments in the backing), and the James Carr classic, “The Dark End of the Street,” with Joan Osborne guesting in support here. The Carr number has also been one that a number of country performers recorded back in the sixties. The album closes with the Ben Harper composition “Homeless Child,” with a powerful lyric, fervent backing chorus and focused backing. It is another heartfelt performance on this strongly performed and moving recording that may transcend classification but one that will enthrall those who simply love good music.

Ron Weinstock



JARED SIMS
Change of Address
 ROPEADOPE

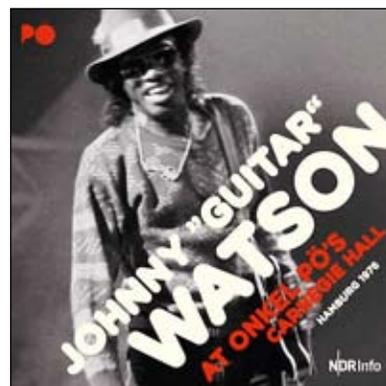
An educator (currently Director of Jazz Studies at West Virginia University) who plays multiple reeds, Jared Sims as a performer focuses on the baritone sax. The title of this album reflects his move from Boston to West Virginia where he went to school. On this he is joined by Steve Fell on guitar; Nina Ott on organ, Chris Lopes on bass and Jared Seabrook on drums for a program of 7 tunes where he gets to display his rugged, energetic playing on seven originals.

The album takes off with the bouncy, funky groove of “Offer For Wilson,” with Ott’s greasy organ setting the mood for Sims to join in with his brawny attack. It is followed by “Seeds of Shihab,” a tribute to one of his influences, baritone great Sahib Shihab, where his

authoritative soloing is supported by a simple backing with Fell then taking a blues-inflected solo contrasting with the dark bottom sound of the leader’s baritone. The soul-jazz flavor of this recording continues with “Ghost Guest 1979,” which showcases guitarist Fell who employs a number of effects on his solo before Sims barrels in on the baritone. “Leaf of Faith” is a tone poem with electronics creating aural textures that is the foundation for Sims’ playing. “Forest Hills,” named after a Boston neighborhood, is a spirited number with Fell’s bluesy guitar making judicious use of tonal variations and effects. The opening to “Tower of Fazenda” establishes a morose atmosphere which Sims maintains as he plays with restraint, followed by Fell’s deliberate crafting of his solo.

“Lights and Colors,” with a bouncy groove, and strong playing from Sims and Fell, closes this album on a danceable note. The playing, especially of Sims and Fell, captures the ear, even if the backing sometimes is only serviceable. Still an intriguing recording by a formidable baritone player.

Ron Weinstock



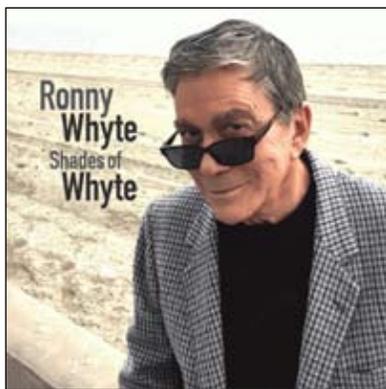
JOHNNY GUITAR WATSON
At Uncle Pö’s Carnegie Hall, Hamburg 1976
 JAZZLINE

This is a live 1976 German radio broadcast of Johnny ‘Guitar’ Watson from Hamburg that has just been made available on CD and download. Watson is backed by his Watsonian Institute comprised of Peter Martin - trumpet, Tommy Robertson - trombone, Paul Dunmall - sax, Gil Noble - piano & synthesizer, Bobby Howard - bass and Emry Thomas - drums. The recording was made around the time of the “Ain’t That A Bitch” album but the songs here range beyond the dance funk blues of that recording.

I have several videos and recordings of a number of Watson’s live performances, but these are mostly later and the repertoire is somewhat different here. It opens with a cover of the Grover Washington hit “Mister Magic” on which Watson unleashes some pretty solid guitar, followed by the title track of one of his underrated Fantasy albums, “I Don’t Want To Be a Lone Ranger,” with more electrifying guitar on this song where he sings no one wants to be a lonely one, but Johnny wants to be the lady’s only one. In

addition to his seductive singing, one should note the horn arrangements as well as the jazzy guitar runs. It's followed by a terrific slow rendition of "Stormy Monday" in which he incorporates a bit of the lyrics of Jimmy Reed as well as some spectacular blues guitar. A strong, funky "Superman Lover" is followed by the bravado of "Gangster of Love," the funky, topical trying to make ends meet of "Ain't That a Bitch," and then his rock and roll ballad "Cuttin' In." Watson was in first-rate form this evening and his band provides tight, crisp support.

A jam on the sensuous "I Need It" allows him to introduce and showcase his band members before a short instrumental closes nearly an hour of exceptional Johnny 'Guitar' Watson. I purchased this as a bargain priced download with digital booklet on iTunes for about \$5 and believe the hard copy is bargain priced (although not that cheap). This would be highly recommended even if it was not so inexpensive, and at that price, any JGW fan needs this. **Ron Weinstock**



RONNY WHYTE
Shades of Whyte
AUDIOPHILE RECORDS

Perhaps there is nothing extraordinary of the latest release by singer-pianist Ronny Whyte, which is not to deny definite pleasures to listening to this recording of renditions mostly from the Great American Songbook. A veteran musician, he has been a fixture on the New York scene performing in many of the city's intimate supper clubs, night clubs and superior hotel lounges. Besides arranging the songs, he co-wrote 5 of the 16 selections on this release. Backing him are bassist Boots Maleson, guitarist Sean Harksness, Lou Caputo on tenor sax & Flute, Mauricio De Souza on drums, and Alex Nguyen on trumpet with Dave Stillman on drums on one track.

Whyte recently turned 80 and there are a few spots where his intonation is a tad off, but that is a minor problem. It is delightful to hear his straight-forward treatment of "This Song is You" (with a bit of scatting), "Nina Never Knew," and "Linger Awhile," as well as his bossa nova original "It's Time For Love," and a Bossa Nova medley of "A Little Samba" & "So Danco Samba." He is a romantic as displayed on his own "I Love The Way You Dance," and the ballad "Blame It on The Movies." Caputo is outstand-

ing throughout on either tenor sax or flute such as on the sober ballad, "Some Of My Best Friends Are The Blues." Nguyen's trumpet also marvelously compliments Whyte, like on "For Heaven's Sake." "I'm Old fashioned" is a splendid performance without horns that allows Whyte to showcase his deft piano playing along with brief solos from Maleson and Stillman.

A swinging "Dancing in the Dark" with choice solos from Caputo, Maleson and Harksness closes this delightful vocal jazz CD. **Ron Weinstock**



THE NIGHTHAWKS
All You Gotta Do
ELLERSOUL

The East Coast based Nighthawks are a blues institution with recordings dating all the way back to 1974. This new release finds only harmonica ace Mark Wenner from the original line up but the present crew, Mark Stutso on drums, Johnny Castle on bass and Paul Bell on guitars has been around for years and has waxed some of the band's best work including the award winning Last Train to Bluesville.

While instrumental prowess has always been a given with the band, the fact that all four current members sing has enabled it to take on material that stretches beyond Wenner's vocal range and style and, as a bonus, gives him more time to shine on harmonica. A case in point is Johnny Castle's upbeat "Another Day" where he rails at the rich with Wenner's hard charging harmonica adding to the rage. Elsewhere Mark Stutso gives soulful readings of Levon Helm's swan song, "When I Go Away," his own weeper, "Three Times Your Fool" and then sheds the sorrow to rock out on the self-penned "VooDoo Doll." Guitarist Paul Bell adds plenty of tasty licks throughout along with solid harmony vocals. For his part, Wenner is at the top of his game with hard-hitting versions of the Muddy Water classic, "Baby, I Want to Be Loved," Sonny Boy Williamson's "Ninety Nine," Jesse Winchester's "Isn't That So" and his own "Blues For Brother John."

After all of these years it is hard to say which is better- his harmonica playing or his singing- both would earn him dinner at any blues club. The band's four- part harmonies are on display throughout the disc, most notably on RL Burnside's "Snake Drive." For those looking for a little break from all blues the band also adds a smoking cover of the bar band classic "Dirty Water." Fun times with the Nighthawks!
Mark Smith



**DAVE ASKREN
JEFF BENEDICT**
Come Together
TAPESTRY RECORDS

The days of summer may be numbered but the “groove jazz” that jibes so well with the season lives on through sessions such as this. Guitarist Dave Askren and saxophonist Jeff Benedict front a solid “organ trio plus one” format, capably supported by organist Joe Bagg and drummer Paul Romaine. The bluesy “head” of Benedict’s “Cheese Grits” sets the tone for what evolves into tasty mix of originals and well-chosen covers. The latter includes groove-worthy takes on “Willow Weep For Me”, Trane’s “Moments Notice” and the Beatles tune that serves as the title track. All soloists handle their tasks well with a particular nod going to Benedict’s alto work. Nice stuff. *Duane Verh*

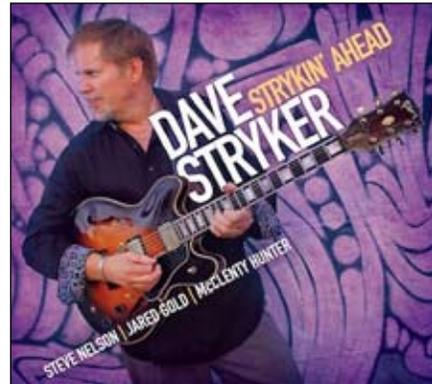


LIL' SHAKY AND THE TREMORS
Aftershock
EZV RECORDS

Chris Vachon, Roomful of Blues’ guitarist for the past 25+ years who also has co-produced their last 10 albums, alerted me to this group and project he is part of that he recorded, mixed and mastered. The rest of this group is Ed Wright, a solid blue-eyed soulful vocalist and bassist; Jeff Ceasrine on keyboards, and Larr Anderson on drums. Also heard are The Naked Horns on several tracks, Mike Rand on harmonica for a couple selections, Brenda Bennett who contributes a lead vocal on one selection, and several other musicians and backing vocals.

Much of this is in a soul-blues vein and showcases Wright’s strong singing that stands out, especially on a surprising cover of Bill Withers’ “Grandma Hands” that also has solid vocal backing from The Gospel Love Notes (and crisp Vachon guitar fills). If that is perhaps the standout track, his renditions of the O.V. Wright classic “I’d Rather Be Blind, Crippled and Crazy,” the George Jackson penned Ann Pebbles;’ gem “Slipped Tripped And Fell In Love,” or Syl Johnson’s soul stomper “I Only Have Love.” Wright and the horn augmented band give a gritty rendition of Bobby Bland’s “I Wouldn’t Treat A Dog (The Way You Treated Me).”

Several other numbers have more of roots-rock flavor including a strong take on Bobby Charles’ “Why Are People Like That,” a rockabilly-flavored rendition of Willie Dixon’s “I Love the Life I Live,” and the closing “It’s All Over Now,” that is based on Bobby Womack’s 1997 recording, not The Valentinos’ original from the sixties. They complement the deep soul performances with some very fine playing throughout, and excellent production, that make for a very appealing recording for blues and soul fans. *Ron Weinstock*



DAVE STRYKER
Strykin' Ahead
STRYKEZONE

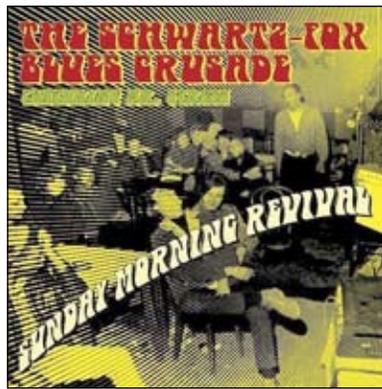
Guitarist Dave Stryker returns with his 28th album as a leader with the same supporting cast as last year’s “Eight-Track II” – his working organ trio of Jared Gold on organ and McClenty Hunter on drums augmented with vibraphone player Steve Nelson. Unlike that recording’s focus on pop hits of decades past, the present album features his originals along with re-harmonizations of several jazz standards.

His time with Jack McDuff and Stanley Turrentine certain is evident on the opening 14 bar blues, “Shadowboxing,” with some strong organ in addition to guitar. It is followed by a nice “Footprints,” that starts off in an understated fashion with intriguing chordal variations on Wayne Shorter’s classic number as the performance starts simmering with a building intensity. Nelson provides a different tonal voice with his shimmering playing here followed by some more impressive guitar with Gold’s organ smoldering as the performance reaches its end. Another original follows, the swinging “New You,” a contrafact of the oft-played

“There Will Never Be Another You,” which was inspired by the Blue Note recordings of Larry Young, Grant Green and Elvin Jones.

There is an exceptionally lovely rendition of Billy Strayhorn’s “Passion Flower,” followed by the lively title track and then another excellent, atmospheric late night blues, “Blues Down Deep,” with Stryker’s technique, restraint, taste and imagination at the forefront. A bright rendition of Clifford Brown’s “Joy Spring,” with some lovely unison playing from Stryker and Nelson along with some of Stryker’s most scintillating fretwork is followed by an enchanting “Who Can I Turn To,” with some peppery guitar, and surging organ from Gold.

The album closes with a spirited “Donna Lee,” with fast fluid fretwork along with Nelson’s nimble mallets. I haven’t mentioned Hunter, but his crisp, imaginative stick work adds rhythmic accents as well as drive these marvelous performances. With his latest, Dave Stryker continues to impress with his imaginatively conceived and superbly played recordings. **Ron Weinstock**



SCHWARTZ-FOX BLUES CRUSADE

Sunday Morning Revival
SMOG VEIL RECORDS

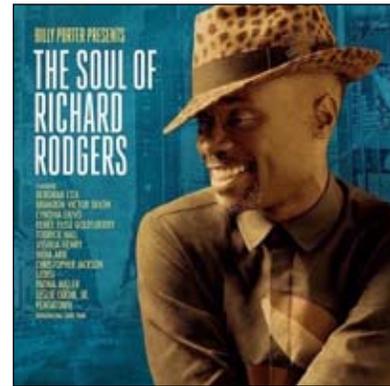
The energy and enthusiasm of the early days of blues revivalism are on full display in this re-discovered 1967 session featuring key players from Cleveland’s then-burgeoning “underground” scene.

Sunday Morning Revival may lack the polish of the Paul Butterfield and Charlie Musselwhite albums of that era but the spirit and drive present in this set of blues classic covers is enhanced by the almost “garage band” charm of the production. Furthermore, the play of guitarist Glenn Schwartz stands up well to that of Mike Bloomfield’s lead work on the Butterfield releases of the day.

The rhythm section, drummer Jimmy Fox and bassist Tom Kriss- rockers at heart and Schwartz’s bandmates in an early lineup of the rock group The James Gang- handle their tasks with poise and Cleveland stalwart, the late harmonica player Bill “Mr.Stress” Miller, adds an authenticity with his harp work and vocal feel for the genre. Sunday Morning Revival is a gem of a period piece.

Duane Verh

jazz-blues.com



BILLY PORTER PRESENTS

The Soul of Richard Rogers
SONY MASTERWORKS[TITLE]

A quick and dirty description of this new recording by the Tony and Grammy Award winner Billy Porter is hip hop meets the classic songs of Richard Rogers. Included are solos and duets from a variety of artists (in addition to Porter himself) including Tony and Grammy Award winners Cynthia Erivo (The Color Purple), Renée Elise Goldsberry (Hamilton) and Leslie Odom Jr. (Hamilton), Tony Award-winner Patina Miller (Pippin), Grammy Award winners Pentatonix and India.Arie, Tony Award nominees Brandon Victor Dixon (Shuffle Along), Joshua Henry (Violet), and Christopher Jackson (Hamilton), alongside YouTube sensation and Kinky Boots star Todrick Hall and multiple Grammy Award nominees Deborah Cox and Ledisi.

“I like to think of this as the Richard Rodgers version of the Hamilton Mixtapes,” Porter said. “These are classic songs that everybody knows and loves, and I’m so excited for people to hear them in a brand new way.” Certainly listening to Ledisi singing “Bewitched,” the hip hop groove recasts a familiar melody, elongating and transforming it as well as incorporating an explicit rap from Zaire Park.

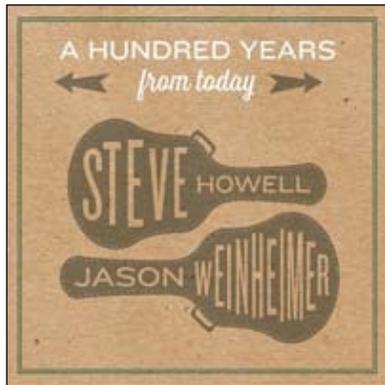
India.arie sings “Carefully Taught,” from the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic musical “South Pacific” and its 1949 lyric is unfortunately so relevant today, “You got to be taught to hate and fear; You got to be taught from year to year; It’s got to be drummed in your dear little ear; You got to be carefully taught.” Porter himself provides the lovely interpretation of “Edelweiss” from “The Sound of Music,” and a brief narration notes that the flower exists in the harshest of environments and reminds us we must flourish in the harshest of times, again not only reworking the song for contemporary tastes, but showing its continued relevance,

There is the hip hop rendition of “I’m Gonna Wash That Man Right Outta My Hair” with a politically charged rap mixed with the singing of the lyrics. Not everything has political connotations, such as the dreamy duet between Renée Elise Goldsberry & Christopher Jackson on “If I Loved You,” Cynthia Erivo’s lovely “My Funny Valentine or Porter’s interpretation of “The Lady Is a Tramp,” with a Zaire Park rap playing off the

lyrics, incorporated in this performance. Then there is Pentatonix's optimistic and spirited take on "What a Beautiful Morning."

Billy Porter has put together this imaginative re-imagination of some classic songs that are well established parts of the American Songbook, and these performances show the contemporary relevance of these songs in introducing them to new audiences. At the same time, there is no question that some will be put off by the musical settings and there are some explicit raps on a couple of tracks on a very intriguing recording.

Ron Weinstock



STEVE HOWELL JASON WEINHEIMER

A Hundred Years From Today OUT OF THE PAST MUSIC

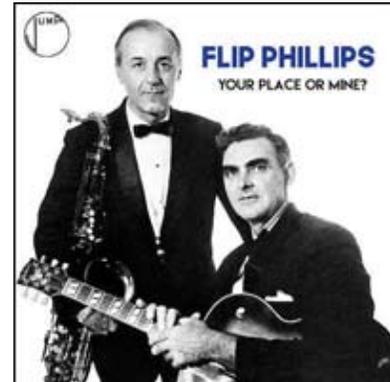
Steve Howell & the Might Men's "Yes I Believe I Will," I found to be "a delightful, congenial mix of folk, country and blues that will appeal to a wide range of roots music listeners." Howell's latest is an acoustic collaboration with Weinheimer, a member of the Mighty Men, as they interpret early jazz and blues numbers from a variety of sources including Mississippi John Hurt, Jim Jackson, Jack Teagarden, Louis Armstrong and Bo Carter.

Howell's easy flowing finger style guitar and genial vocals are supported by Weinheimer's bass starting with "Lulu's Back in Town" that was first popularized by Fats Waller. Howell does lack the exuberance that Waller had, with a low-key singing approach that is analogous to Mississippi John Hurt, even if he doesn't have quite the warmth of Hurt's vocals (but who does). Of the pleasures to be heard here are covers of a couple of Hurt's recordings, including a marvelous "Louis Collins." There is a nice reading of Jim Jackson's "Kansas City Blues," along with the reflective title track that he learned from Jack Teagarden. An earnest "Basin Street Blues" is followed by the medley of "Limehouse Blues" and "After You've Gone" with superb finger style playing and a genial vocal on the latter number.

After a jaunty version of Bo Carter's "Who's Been Here" (Carter's rendering of "Alabama Bound"), Howell closes this with an affecting rendition of Hoagy Carmichael's "Rockin' Chair," that was a staple of Jack Teagarden and Louis Armstrong's repertoire, often a

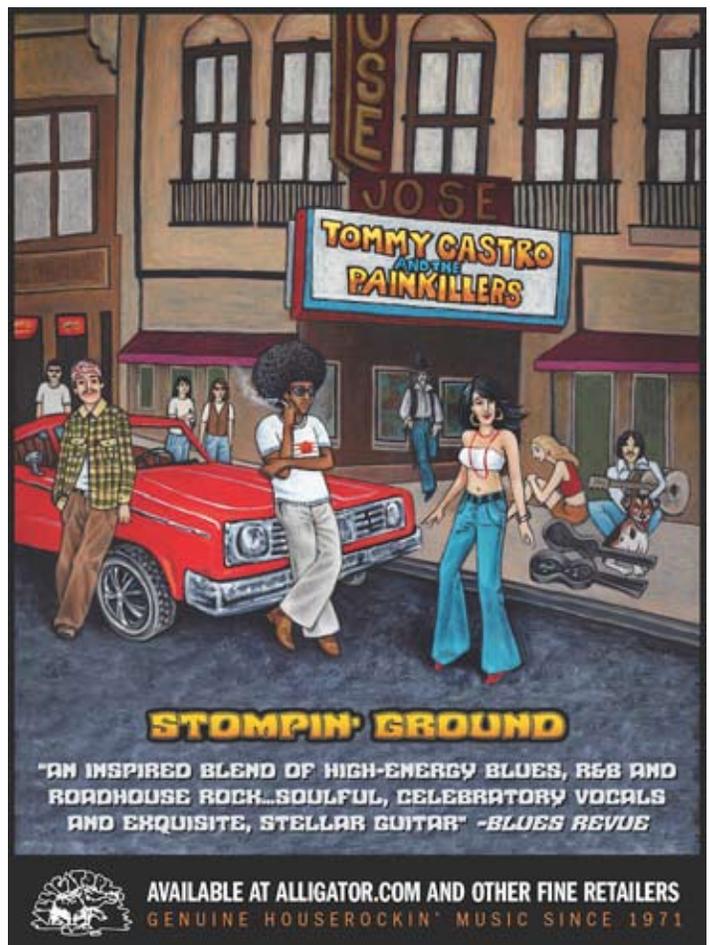
highlight of Armstrong's All Stars when Teagarden was a member. Living Blues once characterized Howell as a "gentle, Deep South-inspired acoustic troubadour," and this thoroughly captivating, if brief, recording displays why with his affable and charming performances.

Ron Weinstock



FLIP PHILLIPS YOUR PLACE OR MINE JIMP/DELMARK RECORDS

Best remembered for his stint on the Jazz at the Philharmonic tours with his barn-burning solos in the company of Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Charlie Parker and others, tenor saxophonist Flip Phillips had moved to south Florida after those days, playing locally but otherwise in semi-retirement. He got together with



guitarist Dell Staton and they jammed for the fun of it at either's home. In 1963 they went to a recording studio for the kicks of it and this is one of the only two records Flip made in the twenty years after leaving JATP. Staton, in addition to his guitar, adds bass using a foot organ attachment.

From the opening moments of "Come Rain Or Shine," Phillips impresses with the warmth and rhapsodic quality of his playing whether on tenor sax or on bass clarinet (for example the tenderness heard on "Just Say I Loved Her"). Listening to "It's the Talk of the Town," the airy, breathy quality of his playing evokes the great Ben Webster, while Staton, who chords his simple accompaniment, shows a similar attention to tone in his solo interlude. Phillips returns to the bass clarinet for a lovely "Summertime," while against Staton's chording brings his romanticism to Django Reinhardt's "Nuages."

A nicely swinging "Jada" provides a change in pace from the ballads that predominate here along with the driving "Scatterbrain," with some marvelous chording and single note guitar along with Phillips here. Then there is the bass clarinet on "Chloe," with some exquisite playing evocative of Webster and clarinetist Barney Bigard on this number that was also part of the Ellington repertoire. Brisk takes on "Jazz Me Blues" and "Gone With the Wind" (with Staton superb here) are among other performances on this marvelously, delightful recording.

Ron Weinstock



TUCCI
Olivia
HIDEAWAY

When this Tucci cd first showed up in my mailbox, it was one of those rare releases that did so without a bio included. So as I wondered "who the heck are these guys?," I turned the cd itself over and saw "featuring Larry McCray and Dan Toler." Now the former is a well-known blues guitarist/singer, and the latter name I knew, having reviewed him over the years as the guitarist for Dickey Betts' Great Southern and the Allman Brothers Band (1978-1982 line-up). Hitting the internet, I found out the band is from Sarasota, Florida, and sadly, this was Tolar's last appearance on a disc, since he had died in February, 2013, from Lou Gerhig's Disease.

So essentially "Olivia" is southern blues/rock, led by the guitar of Steve Tucci. The spotlight is passed around though, as Larry McCray dominates the opening cut "High Roller," on both guitar and lead vocal. The title cut is fundamentally a sonic dog fight between the B-3 of Donnie Richards and the slide guitar activity of Ira Stanley. "I Don't Need It" and "Train Blues" are the more conventional examples on "Olivia," the latter powered by Shawn Murphy's sax.

While "Overtaxed Blues" won't make a lot of fans at the next IRS convention, that crowd might like the pounding "Hey Florida" and Dan Ryan's caressing the 88's during "You Hurt Me." The sentimental favorite cut should be Dan Tolar's last appearance via "Play By The Rules" and the grand finale is a 12+ minute workout for everyone involved called "Third Eye," where Harry DeBusk's bass solo leads into a three minute tour de force around Michael Tucci's drum kit.

Bottom line is if you like any of Dickie Betts' Great Southern or the Allman Brothers Band stuff, you will want to track down "Olivia" by Tucci. *Peanuts*



KRIS FUNN
Corner Store
CORNER STORE MUSIC

The Corner Store - "On the corner of bebop and hiphop, hard rock and hard knocks ... Here in West Baltimore. This ain't just a store. It's a metaphor for our lives. ... So take a look around. We ain't got what you need, but I know we got what you want. ... Thank You For Shopping With Us... Welcome to the corner-store." This bits and pieces excerpt comes from Paige Hernandez' narration of the opening track of bassist Kris Funn's long-awaited recording "Corner Store," which is also the group under which this music is presented in public.

Funn is a second generation jazz artist whose father Charles is also a noted educator who was honored a couple years ago by the Jazz Journalists Association as a jazz hero. Kris Funn may be familiar to those who are fans of trumpeter Christian Scott's music, as he has been part of Scott's band for a number of years as well as is heard on Scott's recordings. Funn has also plated and recorded with vibraphonist Warren Wolf and too many others to note, except when the Mid-Atlantic

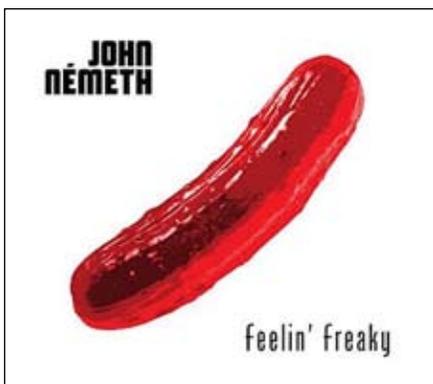
Jazz Festival needed a rhythm section for the great Benny Golson, Funn was on bass.

The rest of the Corner Store includes drummer John Lampkin (or Quincy Phillips), guitarist John Lee and saxophonist Herb Scott. Allyn Johnson and Janelle Gill add piano to a few tracks. When this writer first saw Kris Funn and Corner Store at a Capital Bop produced show several years ago, it was Lee and Lampkin. Seeing the group on other occasions I told Kris he needed to record this group. I was not alone in this, and finally we have this recording.

The music here brings together the mix of lyricism, blues feeling, funk and more that the Corner Store performances bring. Blues is a root of Funn's compositions, often repeating a melodic phrase before the compositions open in unexpected and delightful fashions. The opening "Visceral," a trio performance with Funn, Lampkin and Lee imaginatively and energetically taking us through this blues. It was on the following "Gemini," with Scott's alto added, that one starts to appreciate the melodic elements of Funn's music with his singing tone in harmony with Lee's guitar on stating the theme. The performances are full of fun (no pun intended) as well as imaginative playing with unexpected twists.

The only number on this that was a bit disappointing was "Thursday Night Prayer Meeting," and that is because pianist Allyn Johnson is spectacular as usual, but he dominates the performance so that it minimizes the stop time, bass break that makes this such a favorite of live performances. In fact at the CD release party at the Kennedy Center (viewable at the Kennedy Center's website), they closed with this. While Johnson was perhaps even more astonishing, the bass break was also more prominent. But it still is a good performance, and something that those not familiar with Kris Funn's performances will not notice. In any event, this terrific album has been well worth the wait for us.

Ron Weinstock



JOHN NEMETH

Feelin' Freaky

MEMPHIS GREASE RECORDS

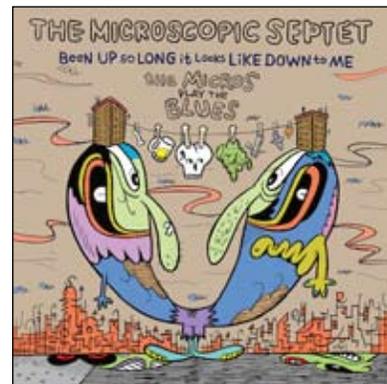
The veteran blue-eyed blues and rhythm singer and harmonica player has a new release featuring his band, The Blue Dreamers, along with some crack Mem-

phis musicians on eleven Nemeth originals. The Blue Dreamers are Danny Banks on drums, Matthew Wilson on bass and guitar, and Johnny Rhodes on guitar and they are joined by the organ of the legendary Charles Hodges, horns and strings for a recording that often evokes the classic Hi Records sound behind Nemeth who sings soulfully as those already familiar with him would expect.

The high-points often are those selections that are in the Hi Records style including the opening "Under the Gun," with its lyric directed against gun violence and the pressure of living where there is gun violence; "Rainy Day," as Nemeth sings about the rainy day and he has nothing saved including not having saved his love; and the closing "Long Black Cadillac" about a young love and how he lost his love and the long black Cadillac took his baby away with some pithy harmonica adding to the performance. There are a couple of solid tracks not in the mould such as "S.T.O.N.E.D." The title track is a dance number with Nemeth playing upper register harmonica along with his high pitched vocal. It is an entertaining performance perhaps, if not a memorable one as is the similar "Get Offa Dat Butt," which evokes people to get up and boogie.

As indicated there are some exceptional performances here, along with some solid ones and others that are entertaining, if less compelling. This makes John Nemeth's latest recording one that should have considerable appeal to soul as well as blues enthusiasts.

Ron Weinstock



THE MICROSCOPIC SEPTET

Been Up So Long It Looks Like Down To Me:

The Micros Play the Blues

Cuneiform Records

Despite the solemnity some may view jazz, the music is serious fun, and among those to display this is the New York based The Microscopic Septet. Having recently done an album of Thelonious Monk compositions, they now turn their attention to the blues, one of the foundational components of jazz itself. This recording is comprised of 12 originals by either Phillip Johnston or Joel Forrester, along with a cover of Joe Liggins' "I Got a Right to Cry," and played with the blend of imagination, inventiveness and quirky humor

that the Micros have been know for. The Micros are comprised of Phillip Johnston – soprano saxophone, Don Davis – alto saxophone, Mike Hashim – tenor saxophone, Dave Sewelson – baritone saxophone, Joel Forrester – piano, Dave Hofstra – bass and Richard Dworkin – drums.

Blues is one of the foundational aspects of jazz and here the Micros take the twelve originals blues compositions as a springboard starting with the playfulness of the opening “Cat Toys,” with Hashim, Hofstra and composer Forrester soling (the latter set against the central riff). Sewelson’s barreling baritone sax takes center stage on “Blues Cubistico,” another Forrester original with an unusual twist in the melody. Johnston’s “Dark Blue” has a ‘three in the morning’ feel that opens with some nice piano before robust tenor and baritone sax solos. The scoring of the sax ensembles here, with the call and response with the sax solos, is wonderful.

Blues comes in all shapes, tempos and moods and the compositions vary from the frolicsome quality of “Don’t Mind If I Do,” the rambunctiousness of “PJ in the 60s,” the rush-hour traffic feel of “When it’s Getting Dark,” the languid tenor of “12 Angry Birds” (excellent Davis’ alto sax) or “Silent Night”, Forrester’s Monkish reworking of a Christmas classic into a blues (featuring Johnston, Sewelson and Forrester). A bouncy, delightful cover of the Liggins’ R&B classic (with Sewelson taking the raspy vocal) closes this fascinating and fresh take on the blues. I note that I was among those who donated on kickstarter to help this recording happen.

Ron Weinstock



VARIOUS
Classic Piedmont Blues
From Smithsonian Folkways
SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS

A new acoustic blues compilation from Smithsonian Folkways delves in the archives for the selections on this. Piedmont blues has an easy flow played in a finger-picking style where the guitarist, according to the late John Cephas, uses “thumb and fingers with an alternating thumb and finger style. I keep a constant bass line going with my thumb, and on the treble strings I pick out the melody or the words of the song I’m singing.” Cephas is quoted in the cogent booklet

with liner notes on the Piedmont blues, and the specific songs included (along with artist biographies), by Barry Lee Pearson.

From the opening John Jackson performance of “Truckin’ Little Woman,” the delightful Warner Williams performance, “Hey Bartender There’s a Big Bug in My Beer” with Kentucky flatpicker Eddie Pennington, several performances of Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry, Baby Tate’s wonderful “If I Could Holler Like a Mountain Jack,” along with the incomparable Rev. Gary Davis’ instrumental “Mountain Jack,” John Cephas and Phil Wiggins’ rendition of Blind Boy Fuller’s “Mamie,” Elizabeth Cotton’s “Going Down The Road Feeling Bad,” Pink Anderson’s “Meet Me in the Bottom,” to the closing tribute by Archie Edwards to his friend Mississippi John Hurt, “The Road Is Rough and Rocky,” this is marvelously played music by some of the style’s finest artists.

There are also included a few performances by old-time music artists such as Hobart Smith, Doc Watson and Roscoe Holcomb, and as Pearson notes there was plenty of musical interaction between such artists with Black artists. One of my finest memories of John Jackson was him playing old-time string band music with former musical students and it is unfortunate that none of the performances he and Doc Watson performed together at The Smithsonian Folklife Festival have been issued as they would have made this wonderful collection even better.

I do note that the Archie Edwards performance had been previously issued on the similarly themed Smithsonian-Folkways collection “Classic Appalachian Blues” and it is unfortunate another performance by him was not chosen. Still this is a first-rate collection of this blues style.

Ron Weinstock



SARAH MCKENZIE
Paris in the Rain
IMPULSE! RECORDS

Born in Australia, schooled at Berklee and recently moved to Paris, pianist-singer-songwriter and arranger Sarah McKenzie will delight listeners on this new release, her second for Impulse! Records.

The backing musicians include vibraphonist Warren Wolf, guitarist Mark Whitfield, bassist Reuben Rogers,

drummer Gregory Hutchinson, trumpeter Dominick Farinacci, flutist Jamie Baum, alto saxophonist Scott Robinson, tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore, and guitarist Romero Lubambo in various combinations. While the press materials suggest this album be viewed as sort of a travelogue with performances including her original title track, Cy Coleman and Carolyn Leigh's "When in Rome," and her closing "Road Chops," the pleasures of this recording do not depend on such thematic considerations.

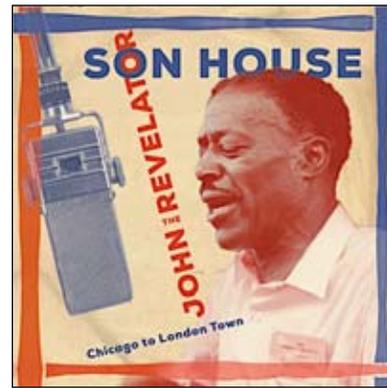
What is evident from the opening "Tea For Two," is the clarity and freshness of her arrangement provides as well as her lyrical piano and her delightful vocals on a bright, breezy performance. The horns sit out the title track, a celebration of the city of lights with her wonderful singing in French and English. Her vocals stand out with her clean articulation, sense of timing, and her nuanced phrasing whether singing in an intimate or coquettish fashion. On the bluesy "One Jealous Moon," Ralph Moore takes a strong tenor solo and then at the close exchanges fours with McKenzie.

The moody Rogers and Hart ballad "Little Girl Blue" is followed by the perky rendition of Kern & Mercer's "I'm Old Fashioned," with a choice Scott Robinson solo. A rendition of Jobim's "Trieste," with Romero Lubambo's guitar, lovely flute from Baum and some jaunty scatting is followed by an enchanting "Embraceable You," with McKenzie's lovely vocal backed only by Whitfield's guitar played in a spare manner.

Kenny Rankin's "In the Name of Love" is another lively Brazilian flavored performance with Lubambo taking a solo against the nicely laid down rhythm, followed by a pensive rendition of her ballad "Don't Be a Fool," with some lovely vibes by Wolf accompanying the vocal as well as in his solo.

A spirited instrumental "Road Chops" has controlled fire from Farinacci and Moore before McKenzie takes a blues-inflected solo and closes this recording in a wonderful fashion. Sarah McKenzie impresses with these lyrical and enchanting performances on a terrific album.

Ron Weinstock



SON HOUSE

John the Revelator: Chicago to London Town THE DEVIL'S TUNES (UK) 2-CD SET

Eddie 'Son' House was one of the pillars of the Delta Blues in the thirties, rediscovered in Rochester, New York in 1963 and performed for a little over a decade before retiring.

House was of the most compelling blues performers with his raspy, intense vocals and highly percussive, slide guitar. A British label has now compiled a double CD release of House performing and being interviewed. A good portion of this was previously unissued.

The first CD, "Chicago ... The Sixties," is from a radio broadcast hosted by Studs Terkel mixed with performances of such House numbers as "Death Letter Blues," "Levee Camp Moan," "I Shall Not Be Moved," "Preachin' the Blues," "Louise McGhee," "Empire Express" and "Grinnin' in Your Face," interspersed with lengthy interview segments with some themes that might be familiar to some from House's monologues in concerts.

The other CD, "London ... The Seventies," is taken from performances at London's Club 100 that was issued on English Liberty and reissued an out-of-print EMI country blues reissue. I believe some of the performances may be previously unissued and on the first rendition of "Between Midnight and Day," Alan Wilson is heard on harmonica while Delta Dave backs House on "How To Treat a Man."

Besides his monologues, other songs heard here include "Levee Camp Blues," "Death Letter Blues," "John the Revelator," and "Grinnin' in Your Face."

House may not have been as accomplished a musician as he was when he recorded for Paramount in the early 1930s and the Library of Congress in the early 1940s, but the sheer forcefulness of his performances in which nothing is held back is simply riveting.

When House performed, it was like you were looking into his soul. That is how powerful and mesmerizing he was and why those who have other reissues of House from this time will still want this document of one of the true blues icons.

Ron Weinstock

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CHARLIE WATTS

Charlie Watts Meets The Danish Radio Big Band IMPULSE!/VERVE

Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts has always had a love of jazz and his Tentet's live recording at the famed London club Ronnie Scott's is just one instance of this. In 2010 he spent several days with the Danish Radio Big Band and presented a concert at the then newly opened Concert Hall of Denmark in Copenhagen that was broadcast on Danish National Radio and now has been made available on CD. The promotional materials I received do not include personnel or identify the various instrumentalists besides Watts and bassist Dave Green.

The performance with "Elvin Suite" that Watts cowrote with Jim Keltner, a two-part tribute to Elvin Jones, opens with a lush, lovely initial part with marvelous arranging of the horns around a deliberately played and paced guitar solo and some marvelous harmonies surrounding short trumpet and trombone leads and a bass solo leads into some growling trombone. The second part picks up the groove as Watts evokes Jones with percussion support before some robust tenor saxophone over percussion before the full band joins in to add to the heat.

Watts leads with a funk-bossa nova groove for "Faction," his reworking of the Stones' signature tune "Satisfaction," with marvelous trumpet with the guitar accompanying with short bursts and chords. It is fascinating how Watts added to the original melody here while keeping its basic structure. There is also another fervent tenor sax solo and husky baritone sax with the very imaginative scoring of the other horns. It is one of three Stones numbers heard here. The Stones original "You Can't Always Get What You Want" had an orchestral and choral setting, so it is not surprising it is transformed into a big band setting with a bit of funk in the groove and greasy organ (with a horn riff in the arrangement that evokes Cannonball Adderley's recording of "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy,") with strong trumpet and a swirling soprano sax solo. "Paint It Black" becomes a jazz ballad with the guitarist setting evoking the lyrics as the horns provide varying colors as he snakes his playing through this.

"I Should Care" is a lovely, almost dreamy performance with some wonderful mid-range trumpet and

trombone while the closing "Molasses" is a rollicking, high stepping blues in the vein of "Night Train" and similar instrumentals with more sinewy tenor sax (like Jimmy Forrest playing with the 70s Basie Band), growling trombone, and organ trading riffs with the horns with the intensity building before the horns cool things to close out this very striking recording that shows that the Stones' drummer is much more than a rocker.

Ron Weinstock



BEN HUNTER & JOE SEAMONS WITH PHIL WIGGINS

A Black & Tan Ball HEARTH MUSIC

The Seattle-based duo of Ben Hunter and Joe Seamons were winners of the 2016 solo/duo competition of the Blues Foundation's International Blues Challenge.

Although blues may be their music's anchor, the duo move as easily into string band music, old-time jazz and ragtime, and while some might liken them to songsters, a better term might be Black Americana in how they pull together so many threads of Black American roots music.

In fact they think of themselves as songsters, rather than thinking of their music as blues, and it's best to situate Ben and Joe as American songsters. On this recording, the violin, mandolin and guitar of Harper and the guitar and banjo of Seamons is joined by harmonica master Phil Wiggins, who himself has explored similar musical threads, perhaps reflecting the influence of mentors and friends like Howard Armstrong and Nat Reese. Phil has indeed made a similar recording of varied music with his Washington DC area group, The Chesapeake Sheiks.

The album opens with Phil singing "Do You Call That a Buddy," that Louis Jordan recorded originally and was also done by Louis Armstrong with his big band. Phil may have learned this from Howard Armstrong, and if a tad stiff in his phrasing, does bring out the humor of the lyrics.

The versatility of the trio can be heard in "Shanghai Rooster," an old time string band number with some wonderful banjo from Seamons, fiddle from Hunter and harp from Wiggins and then a peppy, delightful

reworking of The Mill Brothers' "How'm I Doin'," with the three trading lead and harmony vocals. Leadbelly was first to record "Po Howard," inspired by a black fiddler has an intricate mandolin-banjo-harmonica accompaniment.

There is nice interplay between Hunter's violin and Wiggins' harmonica on a surprising take on the jazz classic "Struttin' With Some Barbeque," with some sublime solos from both. It is followed by an Ellington classic "Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me," with Wiggins taking the vocal along with adding some wistful harmonica.

The rendition of "John Henry" is derived from that of Sid Hemphill and Lucius Smith and has Seamons on banjo setting the tempo along with Hunter's fiddle and Wiggins' harmonica accents and followed by a nice rendition of Leroy Carr's "Longing For My Sugar" with some superb harmonica from Wiggins along with some marvelous mandolin.

Although attributed to Sylvester Weaver's twenties' recording, the rendition of "Guitar Rag" is more akin to the instrumental workouts Wiggins and the late John Cephas would include in their performances and in addition to Wiggins terrific harp, Hunter is sublime with his fiddle as Seamons' guitar provides the steady backing. After the trio's reimagining of Lane Hardin's "Hard Time Blues," there is a stutter-step rhythms of their adaptation of William Harris' "Bullfrog Blues," with some fine harmonica, and it is nice to have another cover of this to join Canned Heat's 50 year rendition.

"Bad Man Ballad" is a song that was collected from an unnamed Parchman Farm inmate by John and Alan Lomax, but recorded by a number of old timey artists like Clarence Ashley and Doc Watson. The string band rendition here employs the lyrics collected by the Lomaxes. A cover of the Mississippi Sheiks, "Stop and Listen Blues," itself an adaptation of a Tommy Johnson theme, has Wiggins taking the vocal set against a solid fiddle and guitar backing to close this very engaging, genre-transcending recording that merits wide attention.

For more information on the recordings here, including the sources of the songs, visit <http://www.benjoemusic.com/black-tan-ball>.

Ron Weinstock



OUR THING
Manhattan Style
JAZZHEADS

The group Our Thing is a collaboration between guitarist Roni Ben-Hur, whose roots are in Tunisia and Israel, bassist Santi Debriano, who was born in Panama and grew up in Brooklyn, and percussionist Duduka Da Fonseca, whose roots are in Brazil, and their latest effort is "Manhattan Style" (Jazzheads).

In the publicity materials for this release, mention is made of 'home' as a theme underlying the album whether in the originals from the trio or the covers of compositions from Ellington, Coleman and Jobim.

The music here is breezy, uplifting, reflective and exuberant. Ben-Hur's "Home" opens on an exhilarating fashion as he exhibits marvelous technique and tone displayed before solos from Debriano and then Da Fonseca on a scintillating opening track. Ornette Coleman's mid-tempo blues, "The Blessing," is another vehicle for Ben-Hur to showcase his touch, tone and musical sense that evokes Wes Montgomery and Grant Green to these ears before another taut Debriano solo while the trio's rendition of Jobim's "Polo Pony" further evidences their sophisticated interplay, with the deft support of Ben-Hur's wonderful playing.

Ellington's "African Flower" just may be the diamond of this recording of many musical jewels, with mallets and percussion used to accent Ben-Hur as he states the theme with a marvelous Arco solo from Debriano the centerpiece. The sober, melancholic tone of Debriano's "Imaginary Guinea" reflects it being composed during the earthquake in Haiti in 2010. Its title is a reference to Vodun, whose followers in Haiti believe that Guinea is where their ancestors reside and that they will be reunited with them there in death. Guinea also represents Africa.

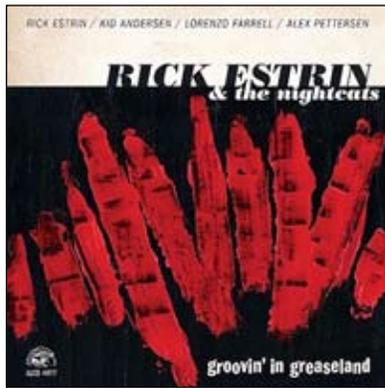
This superb recording closes with the lively title track that Da Fonseca composed after seeing Freddie Hubbard at the Blue Note in the 1980s where Hubbard was "playing his butt off." This selection opens with Ben-Hur's vibrant lead before Da Fonseca takes an explosive solo. "Manhattan Style" is simply terrific.

Ron Weinstock

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RICK ESTRIN & THE NIGHTCATS

Groovin' in greaseland ALLIGATOR

Starting things off with a rich harmonica groove, Rick Estrin & the Nightcats (now consisting of Estrin on vocals and harmonica, Kid Andersen on guitar, Lorenzo Farrell on keys and Alex Pettersen on drums) rip their way into their new disc with the sharp-eyed observation that “as long as the world ain’t fair the blues ain’t going nowhere.”

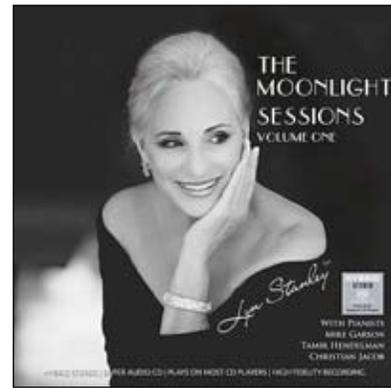
They then proceed on the same track to give a handy primer on all the times in your life the blues come to the rescue- Bad luck. Check. Bad romance. Check. Money troubles. Check. Crooked politicians and bad preachers. Check. Then, to drive the point home, Estrin, Andersen and Farrell trade hot solos that wash all the day’s troubles aside. And that is all on just the first track!

From there the band looks at living without respect, “Dissed Again,” explores the perils of opening your heart to the scoundrels and charlatans of the world, “Tender Hearted,” reflects on the bad mistakes and choices that have lead up to “Another Lonesome Day,” relishes the toll the ravages of time will take on a woman who pretended to be a lover but was only a user, “Hands of Time,” laments about the drag of barely making ends meet, “Living Hand to Mouth,” and delves more deeply into lost love, “Looking For a Woman,” where Estrin comically tries to pass off heartbreak by noting it is no big deal because he was looking for a woman when he found the one that just ditched him.

As is usually the case with Estrin, a good number of the lyrics take on sober subjects with snarky, wise-guy wit. While Estrin takes the front of the stage as vocalist and is a fine harmonica player, the contributions of the rest of the band are critical to the overall feel of the disc. Kid Andersen has no fear as a guitar player and is comfortable with everything from the jump blues of “Hot In Here” to a smoking tribute to Lonnie Mack on the over-the-top instrumental “MWAH!”

Meanwhile, drummer Alex Pettersen holds the wild proceedings together and Lorenzo Farrell simply smokes on a variety of keyboards evoking memories of greasy organ grinders like Ron Levy or Dr. Lonnie Smith on “Cool Slaw.”

Mark Smith



LYN STANLEY

The Moonlight Sessions Volume One A.T. MUSIC LLC

A former corporate marketing executive, Southern California vocalist Lyn Stanley has produced this, the first of two volumes that is directed not simply at jazz enthusiasts but also audiophiles, with SACD, hi resolution downloads, high end 45 RPM vinyl editions and even 15ips reel to reel tapes.

She certainly has assembled a stellar cast of players for this recording session: pianists Mike Garson, Christian Jacob and Tamir Hendelman, guitarist John Chiodini, bassist Chuck Berghofer, drummer Joe La Barbara, percussionist Luis Conte, harmonica maestro Hendrik Meurkens, tenor-saxophonist Rickey Woodard, and trumpeter/trombone player Chuck Findley. Garson, Hendelman, Jacob, Chiodini and Doug Walter provided the arrangements on the standards and adaptations of pop songs.

Stanley is a marvelous song stylist as opposed to a scattling jazz vocalist who delivers a program of “All or Nothing at All,” “My Funny Valentine,” “Embraceable You,” “Why Don’t You Do Right,” “Crazy,” “Close Your Eyes,” and “in the Wee Small Hours,” with a soft, sultry voice and direct, clean articulation of the lyrics.

Her natural phrasing and delivery also contributes to the wonderful performances, along with the marvelous musicians, such as Findley’s trumpet on the opening “All or Nothing at All,” with wonderful piano and the brassy horn riffs. Woodard’s tenor sax adds his magic to “Willow Weep For Me,” as he embroiders her vocal with guitarist Chiodini adding chords and fills.

Meurkens adds his harmonica to a Brazilian tinged treatment of “Close Your Eyes,” while harmonica and Chiodini’s guitar to the lament, “How Insensitive,” that she sings in a heartfelt fashion.

One here’s a definite Peggy Lee influence on her rendition of “Why Don’t You Do Right?” that opens with finger-snapping, bass and guitar before La Barbara lightly brushes with Berghofer taking a solo and the choice of the Willie Nelson penned Patsy Cline hit, “Crazy,” is an inspired choice with Berghofer opening playing the opening line before the band comes in with a juke joint feel and Findley and the horns

contribute extra spice.

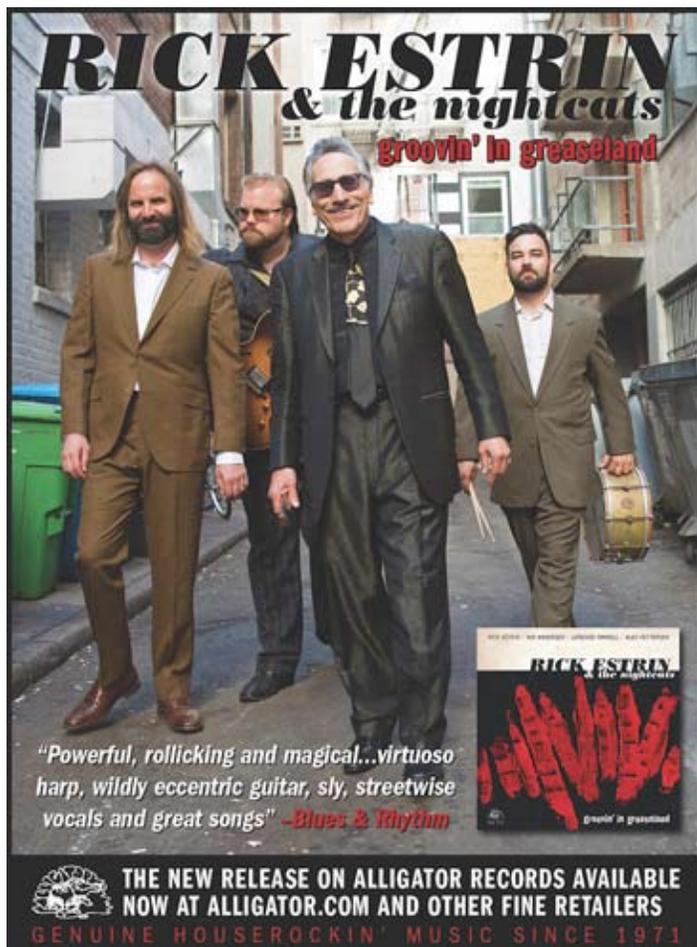
Another softly sung late night lament, "In the Wee Wee Hours," with Meurkens' harmonica complemented by Chiodini's guitar accompaniment and La Barbara's brushes providing the right atmosphere for this marvelous closing performance on a wonderfully sung, played, and recorded album of sophisticated jazz vocals.

Ron Weinstock



CHARLIE OWEN
Worth the Wait
SELF RELEASED

Like the prodigal son, DC native Charlie Owen has returned to the DMV (District-Maryland-Virginia) after decades on the West coast where he fronted the



3DIVAS

3Divas
SELF-PRODUCED

Dynatonones as well as part of the house band at various venues. Now he has this release produced by Jim Pugh, who was the keyboardist for the Dynatonones and others including Etta James. In addition to Pugh (and Owen's own trumpet on 4 tracks), among those heard in the backing include saxophonist Nancy Wright, drummer Paul Revelli, Jon Cleary (piano on one track) and Curtis Salgado (a duet on one track).

This is mostly an album of southern soul and blues ably played and capably sung. Owen shows clear affection for this material and his renditions of the O.V. Wright classic "I Don't Know Why," James Carr's "Pouring Water on a Drowning Man," Little Milton's deep blues "So Mean To Me" and classic urban soul "We're Gonna Make It," Johnny Adams' "It Ain't the Same Thing," and the Johnny Taylor classic "Cheaper to Keep Her," show him an able singer although his renditions do not reach the level of Carr, Milton, Adams and Taylor, as capably sung and played as they are. His affection for New Orleans R&B is reflected in the Adams cover along with a nice treatment of Allen Toussaint's "On the Way Down," along with surprising, and well-sung recreations of Tommy Ridgely's "Let's Try and Talk It Over," along with Lloyd Price's "Just Because."

A couple of ballads stand out including his rendition of Jesse Winchester's "No Pride At All," and Allison Moorer's "Soft Place To Fall" that closes this recording. These have a warmth and do not suffer from unavoidable comparisons with some soul legends. Owen is a very good singer, and fans of classic soul with a dose of blues should find "Worth the Wait" quite entertaining.

Ron Weinstock



3Divas is an offshoot of the Diva Jazz Orchestra which is led by drummer Sherrie Muncie and also includes Orchestra members Jackie Warren on piano and Any Shook on bass. As a resident of the Mid-Atlantic, I am most familiar with bassist Shook who is quite busy in addition to being part of this trio, but all three have impressive resumes as players, composers and educators.

The trio certainly has a very distinctive approach to the ballad "Beautiful Love," which quickly establishes the complete authority they have as they transform this. War-

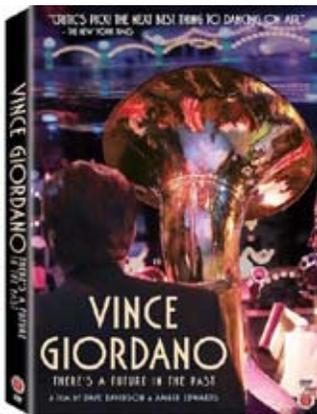
PAGE TWENTY ONE

ren certainly displays technique, touch, drive and imaginative invention while complemented by the other two. They then turn their attention to John Denver's "Sunshine on My Shoulders" that opens as an exuberant romp before Shook's bowed solo engenders a sober mood to close this performance. A lyrical "Tennessee Waltz" follows and then a jaunty "I Thought About You." Jobim's "Favela" opens wistfully before they launch a spicy Latin groove and Warren dazzles here with Shook as an anchor and Muncie's crisp stick work and use of her cymbals accenting the torrid piano with Shook also soloing strongly and Muncie also generating fireworks. Warren opens "In The Wee Small Hours of the Morning" in a reflective manner before Shook takes a thoughtful bass solo with Muncie deftly employing brushes and Warren's spare runs and chords.

A fresh, dynamic take on the old Sonny and Cher hit "The Beat Goes On," based on Alan Baylock's arrangement of Sonny Bono's number, closes a marvelous recording by a superb trio.

Ron Weinstock

DVDs



VINCE GIORDANO

There's a Future

In Our Past

FIRST RUN FEATURES

This is a trailer for a film I recently purchased as a download. For those not familiar with Vince Giordano, he has led a small big band, The Nighthawks for about 4 decades that focuses on the hot and sweet music of the 1920s and 1930s, often play-

ing arrangements dating from those years and trying to replicate the sound of the bands as heard on recordings from that era. This band has been employed on a number of films including those by Woody Allen, "The Aviator," as well as on the HBO TV series "Broadway Empire," in which the band actually was seen performing in some episodes.

This documentary examines what is entailed for him to actually engage in such activities, how he became interested in this music and his ongoing obsessiveness, his collecting of original stock arrangements (he has tens of thousands of such arrangements), the musicians who are in his band and what is entailed in keeping the band afloat and regularly performing.

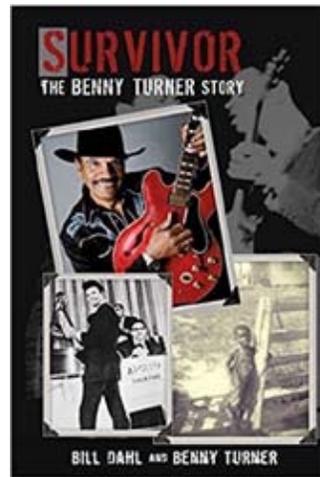
He is seen performing at (among other locations) Sofia's where he had a regular gig for several years, The Iguana where they currently perform two nights a week, the Newport Jazz Festival (with George Wein off to the side enjoying their set), at a Lincoln Center summer performance, and Wolf Trap as part of a Prairie Home Companion broadcast from that venue. There are scenes of a recording session for Broadway Empire and him on

radio promoting a Town Hall concert that celebrated the 90th Anniversary of Paul Whiteman's Aeolian Hall Concert which included the premiere of Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue. Towards the documentary's end we are taken to a NYC Hot Jazz Festival where a number of younger performers discuss Vince's influence and the Nighthawks are joined by vocalist Catherine Russell for a number.

It is a fascinating look at a gentleman who triples on bass saxophone, tuba and a steel bass, in addition to leading the band, singing and so much more in filling a certain, and important musical niche. This should be available as a download or a rental as well as hard DVD.

Ron Weinstock

books



SURVIVOR: THE BENNY TURNER STORY

Bill Dahl and

Benny Turner

NOLA BLUE, INC. 2017:

238 + XIV PAGES

This is a little gem of a book where Benny Turner, with Bill Dahl's assistance, tells his fascinating story from growing up in Texas along with half-brother Freddie King, moving to

Chicago where he worked with him, along with various gospel, rhythm and blues and Chicago blues legends, spending time with Mighty Joe Young after Freddie passed until Young had medical issues, then spending years leading Marva Wright's Band, and after her passing taking up the spotlight as a leader and recording and performing under his own name.

The story begins as Turner goes into his family background, noting Freddie's real father who abandoned him and how he became King while Benny is named after his father. They grew up in Jim Crow Texas although it wasn't until several years passed that he experienced the humiliation blacks could be subjected to. While his father did not play, his mother did as did several uncles including Uncle Leon. Benny states his mother and Uncle Leon played songs from Robert Johnson and Leadbelly, which I take allegorically (as to songs similar to those of Johnson and Leadbelly) and not literally. What is more important than this is the closeness of his family, including his relationship with his half-brother and he helped Freddie in the cotton fields, although he was accidentally injured once and still has a four inch scar from it, and the accidental death of Uncle Leon. His mother also laid down the discipline as he was growing up.

The family moved to Chicago in 1950 with his fa-

ther getting a job with a steel company assisting with molten steel and tipping buckets into molds. It was a whole new world of experiences including electric lights, indoor plumbing and Freddie wanting to see a refrigerator make ice and also getting enrolled in school and the like, with Benny initially enrolled in a predominantly white school where he faced racist bullying and after fighting out of a situation was enrolled in a black school, but even here he had to fight himself out of a similar situation except here it was neighborhood kids, but he also recalled experiences of police harassment simply walking back home from a movie theater.

Besides recalling some of the interesting characters in the neighborhood and other situations, he starting singing doo-wop with classmates and after awhile they even went to Chess Records hoping to record and met Rice 'Sonny Boy Williamson' Miller who they watched record with Turner recalling the interaction between Miller and Leonard Chess.

Benny would next cross paths with Miller while playing with his brother. Turner recounts his experiences auditioning for gospel groups and other vocal groups, and day jobs after his father was disabled after being hit by a car. He started playing guitar in a gospel group, the Kindly Shepherds with whom Turner traveled and made his first recordings. He recounts experiences traveling with them including harassment from police down south.

While his career was starting, brother Freddie's career was taking off. Turner notes the influences of Jimmy Rogers and Robert Lockwood on King's guitar style as well as King's admiration of Earl Hooker while also noting folks like Jimmy Lee Robinson that were in King's bands. He recalls Freddie taking him to see Howlin' Wolf who put King under his wing, and recalls Freddie recording "Spoonful" with the Wolf, a recollection that will bring back the controversy of decades ago on Freddie's claim of having recorded that backing Wolf. He also recalls Freddie playing with Robert 'Mojo' Elem and T.J. McNulty who Luther Allison would front after Freddie started going on the road (Luther told me this years ago and Turner includes a picture of a very young Luther with McNulty here).

The detail I have provided is incomplete but indicates the contents of this wonderful memoir that details his own musical career that included touring with Dee Clark, which he spends some detail on, and later he would play bass with The Soul Stirrers (the first electric bassist with a gospel group) as well playing with various Chicago blues and soul legends including Freddie in a band that included Little Johnnie Jones and Abb Locke.

Later he would return to Freddie's band after his time playing with the Soul Stirrers, though also spent time with Jimmy Reed and others before rejoining Freddie who he remained with until his passing detailing concerts, recording sessions and the like. And he was with Freddie until the end, remembering some conversations between the brothers, the last performance and

the aftermath of his death.

After his brother's death, Mighty Joe Young got him into his band with whom he would play with until surgery intended to fix a pinched neck in his neck, instead left unable to play with that arm. Around this time, he moved to New Orleans although remaining close with Young until Young passed away in 1999. In New Orleans he started playing at the Old Absinthe Bar which unfortunately now is a daiquiri shop.

Interweaving his experiences living in New Orleans was his hooking up with Marva Wright who was a church-going woman starting as a blues singer. At the time Marva had a band of jazz players which she didn't like (in fact hated it), when she hooked up with Turner which was fine as he really preferred working with just one person like he had with Freddie and Joe Young. It was the beginning of a lengthy time as he became her band leader.

There are recollections of her powerful singing, especially with the bishop, organist Sammy Berfect who passed in 1999, of a plane ride in Europe where all the band members were scared for their lives and being reunited with Tyrone Davis in New Orleans who he had not seen in years and then seeing James Cotton in Brazil who he had last seen when Cotton had been in Muddy Waters' band. Hurricane Katrina of course interrupted Turner's life as it did Marva. Marva relocated to Baltimore, and Benny flew in to play a benefit for Marva at the now closed Bangkok Blues in Falls Church, Virginia a Washington DC suburb, that Benny includes a photo of himself from on page 197 (it was likely my photo although uncredited but I recognize the location), noting it was his 1st post-Katrina performance. Marva eventually came back to New Orleans and Benny rejoined her until she suffered a stroke in 2009 and passed in 2010.

After Marva's passing, Turner took the spotlight at last and the last chapter details some of the events such as going up to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame with her niece Wanda when Freddie King was inducted as well as paying a musical tribute to Marva Wright at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival and later at the Rock'n'Bowl in New Orleans. Then she ran into an old friend, Sallie Bengtson, with whom he has partnered to release a number of recordings as a leader and this memoir as well as tour over the past several years, such as running into old friends, former Muddy Waters band-member Bob Margolin and Mark Wenner of the Nighthawks.

As Turner states near the book's end, he still has plenty to say and play and one certainly hopes that he does for many years to come while having some observations on the state of the music today. He certainly may be a blues survivor, but he remains today a terrific musician who continues to enrich us today with his blues performances, recordings and this book. The lively text is also copiously illustrated with photos from Turner's entire life. This is highly recommended to all fans of blues music.

Ron Weinstock



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