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jazz
& blues report



Monterey  ®
Jazz Festival

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!

62nd Annual Monterey Jazz Festival Tickets On Sale Now

MJF 62 - September 27-29 - Headliners Include Diana Krall, Chris Botti, Snarky Puppy, Kenny Barron & Dave Holland, Christian McBride, Tank and the Bangas, Bob James, David Sanborn & Marcus Miller; Eliane Elias, and Many Other Jazz Greats



Diana Krall

Monterey, Calif.; Three-day Arena and Grounds Ticket Packages for the 62nd Annual Monterey Jazz Festival, September 27-29 went on sale May 1. Single-day tickets went on sale May 10. Tickets can be purchased online at www.montereyjazzfestival.org or by calling 888.248.6499

The Festival will feature another "jaw-dropping line-up" of over 130 performances from iconic and emerging jazz artists, educational events, conversations, films, and exhibits on eight stages. A six-time JazzTimes Readers Poll winner, this vibrant and fun festival experience offers 30 hours of live music spanning two days and three nights. This unique musical experience is accompanied by an array of international cuisine and one-of-a-kind merchandise on the oak-studded 20 acres of the Monterey County Fair & Event Center.

"The 62nd Monterey Jazz Festival will be a great addition to the legacy of the world's longest continuously-running jazz festival. You will see a few of your long-time favorites, yet also experience a wide range of what's new in jazz and beyond," said Tim Jackson, MJF Artistic Director.

2019 Lineup Highlights

- The Artists-in-Residence for MJF62 will be Allison Miller and Derrick Hodge
- Christian McBride will act as the 2019 Commission Artist and Showcase Artist
- NEA Jazz Master recipients Kenny Barron and Dave Holland will be featured three times over the weekend

The multiple GRAMMY Award-winning Arena lineup on the Jimmy Lyons Stage on Friday night, September 27 includes Diana Krall, the Kenny Barron Trio with Dave Holland, and a Tribute to Mary Lou Williams presented by Allison Miller and Derrick Hodge.

The Saturday afternoon September 28 Arena lineup includes the dynamic and high-energy Tank and the Bangas, Cha Wa, and Larkin Poe.

Saturday night's Arena shows includes Chris Botti, Eliane Elias, and the Christian McBride Big Band, debuting the 2019 commission piece,



Jazzmeia Horn ©Jacob Blickenstaff

dedicated to the late Roy Hargrove.

The Arena lineup on Sunday afternoon September 29 includes Candy Dulfer, the Pacific Mambo Orchestra, and theNext Generation Jazz Orchestra with Allison Miller and Derrick Hodge.

Sunday night in the Arena will feature Snarky Puppy, Double Vision Revisited featuring Bob James, David Sanborn & Marcus Miller; and Jazzmeia Horn.

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 \$340.

Full Weekend Grounds Packages offer access to seven Grounds stages and activities. Full Weekend Grounds Packages are \$155.

(See the Editors Note at the end of this story)

Grounds activities include over 100 events, conversations, films, and musical performances, with weekend highlights from the Chris Potter Circuits Trio with James Francies & Eric Harland; Christian McBride Situation with Patrice Rushen; Jenny Scheinman & Allison Miller's Parlour Game; Antonio Sánchez & Migration; Ambrose Akinmusire; Larkin Poe; Cha Wa; Bria Skonberg; Donna Grantis; Luciana Souza; Allison Miller's Boom Tic Boom; Michael Mayo; Yellowjackets with special guest Luciana Souza; Amina Claudine Myers; Roberta Gambarini, and many others, including the top student bands from the 2019 Next Generation Jazz Festival.

All weekend long, the Pacific Jazz Café Gallery will host the exhibit Blue Note Records at 80: Perspectives and the Jazz Theater will show the film Blue Note Records: Beyond the Notes on Saturday.

Also on sale are Full Weekend Premier Club hos-

pitality passes, with a lower price of \$150. Benefits include a furnished setting offering closed-circuit Arena simulcasts, menu options and top-shelf bar available for separate purchase, private restrooms, indoor and outdoor patio seating, and more. Arena or Grounds Ticket purchase is required.

The full lineup for the 62nd Monterey Jazz Festival can be found on www.montereyjazzfestival.org.

The Monterey Jazz Festival celebrates the legacy of jazz, expands its boundaries, and provides opportunities to experience jazz through the creative production of performances and educational programs.

(Editors Note: Jazz & Blues Report does not guarantee that all tickets are available. Some tickets or packages may be sold out or otherwise unavailable or the prices may have changed since this issue was put together. See the festival website for correct & updated information at www.montereyjazzfestival.org)



Monterey Jazz Festival



Derrick Hodge ©Chris Baldwin

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Sieze The Moment

A Trip through The 2019 New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival

By Mark Smith

It's 1:00 a.m. on Saturday night and I'm in a shared Uber with my buddy Gregg and a couple we had met leaving the Maple Leaf where we had just witnessed an over-the-top performance by Jon Cleary & the Absolute Monster Gentlemen. I was running out of steam having just finished my third day of the 50th Annual New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. Between the fest and night shows I had notched 26 different musical acts on my Jazz Fest belt in the last 72 hours. I thought that I was on a glide path to the end of this year's adventure with five acts on my planned schedule for Sunday. As we engaged in the normal "where are you from?" conversation we found out that the female half of our new friends had gone to school at Interlochen, a well-known music school in my home state of Michigan. "So, what do you play?" I asked? "Oh, I don't play, I sing" came her reply as she broke into a series of comical country-styled songs about stealing spouses and other indiscretions that soon had the entire car including our Uber driver roaring in laughter.

Between laughs, her husband groaned and said "now you know what I live every day!" As they exited the car and disappeared into the Quarter, I knew we had just had that jazz fest "moment"- the one that takes the day from just another romp through the music and into a "I'll never forget that" adventure. Wired from all the laughter, we decided a night-cap was necessary in the pub across the street from our hotel.

The gift of this magical moment was something that only comes from pushing towards new adventure. I've

always thought that slogans like "seize the moment" or "live everyday like it's your last" are best left to the side of coffee mugs, copycat graduation speakers or the line at the cruise ship buffet. They seem pointless and are little more than a balm for those who fantasize about a life they don't have. They may sing along with Jimmy Buffett's "It's 5 O' Clock Somewhere" but never do anything to realize the fantasy. As I ventured into my 13th Jazz Fest I was determined to live the event as if I was being graded on whether I was worthy of the honor of living the festival life that those stuck in their daily routine dreamed about. Did I accomplish it? You be the judge.

THE PREGAME

My flight from Grand Rapids arrived at 1:30 PM on Wednesday, the day before Jazz Fest was due to start. After scoring a dozen oysters and a fried oyster Po-boy at Acme Oyster House, I headed to the hotel to meet my buddy Gregg who had flown in from Charlotte, NC. We then headed to Lafayette Square Park to catch the Trumpet Mafia and the legendary Deacon John in the company of our friends Dave and Nadine who were in town for their first fest. As always, the festive vibe of the free show (and a couple of beers) got the evening off to a great start. After grabbing a fabulous dinner at a nearby restaurant we headed to the Blue Nile on Frenchman Street to catch Big Sam's Funky Nation who were accompanied that night by several other top-flight trombone players, including Corey Henry, for an event they labeled "Bone Fest". The interplay amongst the musicians who rotated on an off the stage was amaz-

ing with several awe-inspiring cutting contests where they threw the gauntlet down with amazing solo after amazing solo. Just when you thought you had witnessed the ultimate demonstration of trombone prowess, the next player upped the ante. At some point the thought occurred to me that the only thing that could possibly be more powerful is if someone had the nerve to play nothing at all! With four days of the fest looming on the horizon we pulled the plug around 1:00 AM even though it appeared that the band was prepared to entertain the packed crowd until sunrise.

IT'S JAZZ FEST!!

Thursday morning came at 7:30 AM. I was excited to get to the Fest as it had been 2 long years since my last adventure in New Orleans. For the uninitiated, the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival takes place at the State Fairgrounds a few miles from the French Quarter. Most of the festival takes place within the infield of a horse race track with 6 stages spread over the grounds- The Gentilly and Acura stages host the large acts such as Dave Matthews, Little Feat, Jimmy Buffett and the like. The Fais Do-Do stage hosts mostly Cajun and Zydeco Music, while the Congo Square stage hosts mostly R & B, Soul, Rap, Roots and Reggae Music. Just outside of the track are massive tents that host Blues, Jazz and Gospel. There are 12 separate stages/tents altogether with non-stop music from 11:00 AM to 7:00 PM each day. A single ticket gets you into the fairgrounds where you are free to see whoever tickles your fancy. The sets overlap and there are always impossible choices. Do I see Ziggy Marley or Mavis Staples? John Fogerty or the Mavericks? Dave Matthews or Diana Ross?

The food offerings at the fest are almost as tough as the musical ones. Banish thoughts of typical fairground foods. There are no corn dogs, cotton candy or caramel apples to be had. Instead, there are top-notch offerings such as soft-shell crab po-boys, crawfish bread, fried oyster po-boys, smoked duck po-boys, boiled crawfish, fried plantains, cochon du-lait (a smoked pork po-boy), frozen café au-lait and fried green tomatoes. And that's in just one row of the food booths! You could truly eat nothing but the food at jazz fest and brag that you had some awesome meals in New Orleans.

We grabbed one of the first shuttles of the day (they run continuously from the Quarter and at \$22 per day are a bargain) and arrived in time to see local favorites Cowboy Mouth. While the 11:00 AM time slot is not optimal given the late nights that accompany a trip to New Orleans, Fred LeBlanc and crew wasted no time in pumping the crowd up with repeated chants of "the name of the band is" followed by the crowd shouting "cowboy mouth!" By noon, a party was in progress at the Acura stage! After their energetic set ended we migrated to the Blues Tent to see the "Blind Blues Giant" Bryan Lee work his six string magic on the crowd. It was getting hot and stuffy in the tent so we headed to grab some chow (Cochon du lait!) and then made our way

to the Fais Do Do stage to see the powerful Zydeco of Geno Delafosse & French Rockin' Boogie. As good as it was, we knew we had to head back to the Blues Tent to catch the horn-fueled brass-band, gospel rave-up of Glen David Andrews. Our early exit from the Fais Do Do was rewarded with great seats and a stellar set from Andrews' large band. He was performing numbers from a newly recorded disc and his enthusiasm for the new material was contagious. Andrews was followed by the soulful blues guitar of Eric Lindell who has become one of the most beloved figures on the New Orleans blues scene. After Lindell's terrific set we had a terrible choice to make. Ziggy or Mavis? We opted for both! Having been in the tent for the last couple of hours we opted for Ziggy at Congo Square's outside stage and then bailed a bit early to catch the end of Mavis' soulful set. back at the blues tent.

Eight hours of music under our belt. Were we done yet? Surely you jest!. We scored dinner at a fine Oyster Bar, Mr. Ed's, where we had the best grilled oysters to ever cross my lips, and headed to the Howlin' Wolf where we caught Southern Avenue, Marc Broussard and Samantha Fish. The place was packed with fest goers in fine spirits. In fact, some were observed to have had fine spirits in them. Lights out 1:49 AM.

DAY TWO

BOX WITHIN A BOX WITHIN A BOX

While our normal practice at the fest is to rotate from stage to stage throughout the day, Friday was one of those days where it made sense to set up our chairs on one stage and spend most of the day there. The Acura stage featured an incredibly strong line up with the Iguanas, the Honey Island Swamp Band, Voice of the Wetlands All-Stars, Wayne Toups and Chris Stapleton all on the schedule. The fest has a standing zone in front of the stage with a line where people can start spreading tarps and setting up chairs. The standing zone is for people that want a close-up view or who want to move from stage to stage. The chair zone is for those who either want to stay put for the bulk of the day or who want to make sure they have a place to catch a headline act (the standing zone often gets packed to the point of discomfort). Even though we had gotten an early shuttle, the chair zone was packed pretty far back by time we arrived- mostly by those who came that day for the primary purpose of seeing Chris Stapleton.

As the day unfolded, it was interesting to observe the many different groups in the chair zone. Like a box that is opened only to reveal another box, which holds yet another box, the crowd was a series of distinct boxes. There were those who were interested in each act with phones held aloft taking video, while there were those who were more interested in the experience of being there without much regard to who was playing. For them the bands were little more than the soundtrack to their party and the backdrop for their Instagram photos. There were occasional moments of discontent as those there

for the music had to contend with frat boy reunions in front of them.

The standing zone has a different vibe. Most of those willing to stand through an entire hour to hour and a half set are typically there just for the band on stage. While some spend most of the day standing in front of a particular stage (often for prime viewing of a major headliner late in the day), most have either moved in from another stage or migrated from the chairs. Many are clearly die-hard fans who know and sing along with every word. Most are accommodating to the constant migration of people in and out of the area although we did encounter one bulky meathead who refused to let a smaller woman gain an even slight improvement in position to see around him snarling “she should have gotten here an hour earlier if she wanted to see.” The rest of us moved to give her a sight line that consisted of more than the middle of his broad back. Speaking of broad backs, why is it that no matter where you stand in a crowd some tall dude with a big hat stands between you and the stage? We made our way to the second row behind the barrier and sure enough, Mount Everest moved into the front row!

Yet another vibe is evident in the tents and the smaller stages. Those taking in shows in the tents are typically there specifically to see the band. While there is some talking while the performance is underway, it is minimal and is typical of what you would encounter in a concert hall. On the other hand, the smaller outdoor stages such as the Fais Do Do stage, attract those who want to move and groove with the music. Dancing rather than conversation is the norm and happy grins are present in abundance.

While the Acura had the best line-up of the day, we had to sneak away a couple of times- first to see the jazz and rap stylings of Shamarr Allen & the Underdaws over at the Gentilly Stage and later to see the always affable Kermit Ruffins & the Barbeque Swingers at Congo Square. Shamarr had the crowd singing along to his complaint about the infrequency of his sex life while Kermit and crew walked through classics like “Sunny Side of the Street” to the entertainment of all in attendance. Along the way, I picked up a Softshell crab po-boy and a large strawberry iced tea to quench both my hunger and the thirst that comes from hours in the sun.

As the fest came to a close we headed back downtown for a quick dinner and then headed to the Mid-City Lanes Rock and Bowl for a show featuring Cowboy Mouth (yes, again!) and Bonerama, a trombone fronted band that was featuring songs from its newest release- a series of Led Zep covers. Sounds weird but it works! By 12:30, the gas tank was running low so we headed to the exit. Lights out 12:55 AM.

DAY THREE THE GODS OF THUNDER SPEAK

Saturday was slated to be a big day at the fest with appearances by John “Papa” Gros, the Soul Rebels

Brass Band, Cajun wiz-kid Amanda Shaw, Texas Blues Queen Marcia Ball, jazz-funk crew Galactic and the Dave Matthews Band all on our schedule. Our friends Dave and Nadine had Dave Matthews as a bucket list band and a number one priority for their trip. We figured we needed to grab the first available shuttle to have any chance to be within a million miles of Matthews so we climbed out of bed early to grab breakfast and make it happen. We had no sooner opened the curtains when we realized that plan b might be in order. It was almost as dark as when we went to bed! A quick check of the weather revealed a massive storm was moving into the area with sound and light effects compliments of thunder and lightning. The official Jazz Fest App soon announced an indefinite delay to the start of the festival. Rather than sulk, we headed to the Louisiana Music Factory and scored some choice discs before heading to Café du Monde for beignets and café au lait, a required stop on any trip to New Orleans. With thousands of music fans also killing time in the Quarter this wasn't exactly a novel idea. Looking at the long line for seats and the pouring rain we opted for take out and found a sidewalk perch in a covered alley. Trust me, they tasted just as good as in the café. A moment seized!

After an hour and a half delay, the fest suddenly announced that the gates would open at 12:30. We hightailed it to the shuttle and beat a good share of the crowd. Our efforts were rewarded with seats near the very front of the chair zone in front of the Acura stage where Matthews was given a two hour time slot to finish out the day. Despite the delay, we were able to see everyone we had planned to see with the exception of John “Papa” Gros and the Soul Rebels. Amanda Shaw was a sight to behold as she twirled and whirled around the stage all the while playing some fine fiddle. She has literally grown up at jazz fest before our very eyes with our first show over 20 years ago when she was still a pre-teen. Then she was a child prodigy. Now she's a full-fledged performer with her own songs and a savvy stage presence. Marcia Ball was similarly terrific with a large band in tow and lots of songs from her recent “Shine On” release. Unfortunately, the sound mix wasn't up to normal fest standards with the band sometimes sounding like they were buried in mud. That gave us all the excuse we needed to grab some food prior to our planned migration back to the Acura stage to see Galactic and Matthews. I plopped down my cash for a pile of boiled crawfish and was rewarded with the observation of a table-mate that “you eat those things like a local. Even those guys from Texas don't know how to do it!” I took it as high praise.

A point about eating at the fest. There are a few tables spread around near the food booths. Don't be shy. Grab any small spot that exists and have at it with your food. If you don't get asked where you are from, ask your table mates that question. You will soon be engaged in all kinds of conversations including recommendations for bands, food and the best drinks in town. People at

fest are almost uniformly friendly (save the meathead in the standing section) and you will be rewarded with an interesting lunch. It's also amazing that once you make that connection you will often see the same people later in the fest despite the tens of thousands of other attendees.

Galactic laid down a solid jazz funk groove propelling their current featured vocalist, Erica Falls to heights of musical ecstasy. By the time Matthews and crew made it to the stage, the entire area was as packed as we had predicted. He hit the stage hard with a number of early hits and soon had the crowd in the palm of his hand. He was helped along the way with appearances from Warren Haynes of Gov't Mule and Robert Randolph who snuck in a hot lap steel solo before scooting over to his own set in the Blues tent. The crowd at the Matthews show presented a bit of a logistics issue- the shuttles were on the entire other end of the fest and we needed to get out quick to make the Jon Cleary show at the Maple Leaf. The only way to do it was to leave before Matthews was done or we'd be caught in the dense crowd and long shuttle lines. So, while we left a little food on the musical table we hot-footed it to the shuttle and made the Cleary show just in time to catch a coveted stage side spot at the Maple Leaf- a necessity as the Leaf is laid out like a shotgun shack- narrow and long. With a low stage, if you are not in front, good luck seeing much of anything other than the crowd in front of you. The show was one of the clear highlights of the entire trip with Cleary and crew propelling the crowd into a frenzy with uniquely syncopated jazz/funk/blues/ roots music. The end of the show put us on the street for the "jazz fest moment" that made the light night so additionally worthwhile. Lights out 2:00 AM.

DAY FOUR THE FINAL PUSH

The last day of fest is always bittersweet. Given the long days already in the rear-view mirror, the thought "all good things must end" crosses your mind. At the same time there is still a lot to look forward to with a full slate of music on the schedule. Sunday was no exception with George Porter Jr. and his band the Runnin' Parners first up. Porter was one of the Meters and is a true New Orleans legend. He quickly showed why with his funky bass grooves and raspy vocals that these days recall Tom Waits. Up next was Jon Cleary who we had seen just a few hours earlier so we caught a bit of his set to make sure our fond memories of it were not just the product of sleep deprivation and alcohol (they weren't) and then headed over the blues tent to catch Little Freddie King laying down some old school blues. With his jeweled suit, snappy hat and sunglasses, he cut quite a figure on stage. Then it was back to the Gentilly Stage to see Little Feat trotting out its well-known classics such as Dixie Chicken and Oh, Atlanta. As good as Feat was, we decided that this beautiful sunny day would be best spent in the company of Jimmy Buffett and the Coral

Reefer Band over at the Acura Stage. What a great call! We ended up near the front of the standing zone for a terrific view of the band as they took a tour through hit after crowd-pleasing hit. We bailed a few minutes early to catch Terrance Simien and the Zydeco Experience at Fais Do Do for a couple of tunes (you can never go wrong with a bit of Zydeco in your life) before migrating stage side to see the John Fogerty work his way through his deep catalogue of classic CCR hits dating back to Woodstock, which shares its 50th Anniversary this year with Jazz Fest. He was clearly excited by the large crowd and worked in several tales of his Woodstock experience including the fact he was playing the actual guitar that he played on stage there so many years ago. We squeezed out of the fest just as Fogerty and his band struck the last notes of the 2019 Jazz Fest at 7:00 PM.

Where we done? You guessed it. Not a chance. A fabulous dinner at Jacques Imos soon morphed into after dinner drinks in the beautiful courtyard of the Court of Two Sisters and then a nightcap at an Irish Pub where a solo guitarist was working his way through a classic Blasters tune! Hot Damn, this is great!

MOMENT SEIZED

Jazz Fest 2019 came to an end at 12:30 AM. "Seize the Moment". Cheap slogan or worthy experience? Your call. Plans are underway for another fest adventure in 2021. - *Mark Smith*

LIKE JAZZ & BLUES PHOTOS?



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

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



Royal dukes are square-jawed. They have no rhythm. And they wear crowns.

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.



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PAULA HARRIS
Speakeasy
SELF-PRODUCED

Born in South Carolina but now based in the San Francisco Bay area, vocalist Paula Harris has impressed folks in the Blues Scene. Her band finished in the top 3 in the 2012 International Blues Challenge and recordings have furthered her stature with praises from Dan Ackroyd, the late Lou Rawls and Stax legend William Bell.

Her new recording takes her into more of a jazz setting as she explores the nexus of blues and jazz backed by an acoustic piano trio. The backing musicians include pianist Nate Ginsburg, bassist Richard Girard, and drummer Derrick 'D'Mar' Martin, with guest appearances from trumpeter Bill Ortiz, a poetic rap from Big Llou Johnson, and Christoffer 'Kid' Anderson on bongos on one song and waterpipe on another. "Speakeasy" was recorded at Anderson's Greaseland Studios, and he mixed the recording.

10 of the 16 songs on the CD are originals with Harris' lyrics and music from her and Ginsburg, two are from Bay area friends, and the others are interpretations of standards. Scott Yanow has suggested in the liner notes that Paula Harris has created a jazz-blues fusion, bridging "the gap between blues and jazz, while not neglecting soul and R&B." I have heard other singers around Washington DC (where I live) do the same, although they are often viewed as jazz singers. This is not to diminish the talent or what Paula Harris has accomplished here. She is a terrific vocalist. She sings expressively with power, but subtle and nuanced and one can appreciate what the late Lou Rawls meant when he said she was "A thin vanilla coating on a dark chocolate soul."

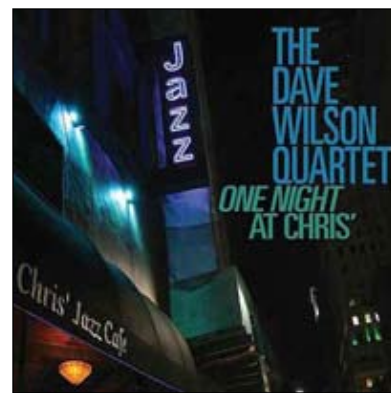
And she brings her vocal talents to some stunning

originals like the cautionary "Nothing Good Happens After Midnight," and the evocative ballad "Haunted." There is the spice and exuberance of "Soul Sucking Man," where she sings about resisting the temptation and charms of this gentleman, and her sober, elegiac rendition of "Good Morning Heartache" a marvelous interpretation of a song associated with Billie Holiday. "A Mind of Her Own" is a superb straight blues while trumpeter Ortiz creates a haunting mood to the sensual "Something Wicked" with interplay with her interaction with Big Llou Johnson's poetic rap.

Ortiz's muted trumpet adds to the late-night feel of the Thelonious Monk jazz standard "Round Midnight" to which she has provided original lyrics and delivers a superb, longing vocal. Her splendid rendition of Al Kooper's "I Love You More Than You Know," is based on Donny Hathaway's interpretation. After the minor-toned blues about a cheating lover, "Who Put Those Scratches On Your Back," the CD closes with a playful take on Louis Jordan's "Is You Or Is You Ain't My Baby."

The contributions of her backing piano trio should not be overlooked. Pianist Ginsburg especially impressed with his deft accompaniments and lively, imaginative solos while the rhythm duo of Girard and Martin provide a light, yet firm foundation for Paula Harris' expressive, subtle singing. With this backing and the excellent material, "Speakeasy" is a superb recording.

Ron Weinstock



THE DAVE WILSON QUARTET
One Night at Chris'
DAVE WILSON MUSIC

This is the fifth release of The Dave Wilson Quartet, recorded live at the famous Chris' Jazz Cafe 'in Philadelphia, PA in March of 2018. The quartet, comprised of Wilson on Tenor and Soprano Saxophones; Kirk Reese on Piano; Tony Marino on Acoustic Bass; and Dan Monaghan on Drums are heard playing four Wilson originals and six re-arrangements by/of pop/rock favorites.

As noted in the publicity materials, this recording is a document of one evening of music recorded live, no overdubs, no second takes and with all the nuances, surprises and magic known as Jazz. Wilson studied with Bill Barron, although he fell under John Coltrane's

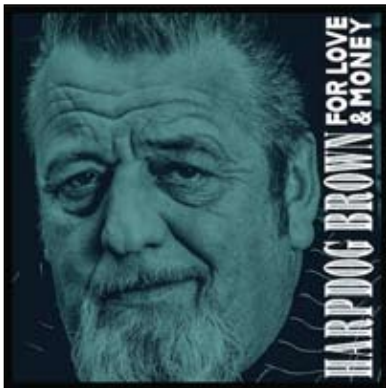
spell as a teenager. Dexter Gordon is another influence along with some of the jam bands for this Lancaster, Pennsylvania resident.

"One Night at Chris" opens with the swinging boogaloo of "Ocean Blues," where he displays his authority playing over the tenor saxophone's entire range as the backing trio helps drive this performance with pianist Reese also taking a solo that shows his chops and melodic invention. Reese's brisk, liquid piano opens the interpretation of the Grateful Dead's "Friend of the Devil" (arranged by Wilson), although Wilson's soprano saxophone's squeaky tone makes this less appealing despite his serpentine improvisation and the excellent backing with Monaghan taking a crisp solo. More satisfying is the rendition of the Beatles' "Norwegian Wood" based on Herbie Hancock's arrangement. There is both robustness as well as his warmth on this lovely performance with exquisite backing by the rhythm section with bassist Marino taking a solo.

I am not familiar with Creed's original of "My Own Prison," but Wilson's performance provides an appealing gutbucket tone. Then there is Wilson's "Movin' On," with an unusual time signature (12/8) and some brawny, sinuous tenor sax along with Reese's surging lines. I find the soprano sax playing a bit more appealing on Brian Wilson's "God Only Knows," with Monaghan laying down an easy swinging pulse. "Untitled Modal Tune," is a burning number with Reese playing vigorously in a McCoy Tyner vein before Wilson wails on tenor here. Wilson lends an Afro-Cuban flavor to a superb performance of "Summertime," with some free blowing at times, crisp piano and some sparks in a spirited drum solo.

Then there is a spirited "Spiral," the title track of a previous Wilson album, with animated piano from Reese, burly tenor sax from the leader and a driving, pulsating groove. As Bill Milkowski concludes, "The crackling intensity of One Night at Chris' is a testament to what can happen on the bandstand on any given night. And this was a particularly good night indeed." The result is this excellent live recording.

Ron Weinstock



HARPDOG BROWN

For Love & Money
DOG HOUSE RECORDS

Canadian husky-voiced blues vocalist and harmonica player, Harpdog Brown, has a new recording rooted

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in the post-war jump blues and the blues shouters like Big Joe Turner, Wyonnie Harris and Smiley Lewis with a touch of Chicago blues. Brown has a gravelly voice similar to Dr. John with a bit of Louis Armstrong, and besides his full-throated singing and harmonica, he contributed three originals while Wayne Berezan added two and both Skye Lambourne and Brandon Issak one. There are songs from the repertoires of Louis Jordan, Memphis Slim, and Amos Milburn. Backing Brown are Dave Webb on keyboards; Robert Vail Grant on drums; Jeremy Holmes on bass; Steve Dawson, who produced this recording, on guitar; William James Abbott on clarinet and alto sax; Skye Lambourne on trombone; and Jerry Cook on tenor and baritone sax.

This is horn-driven, blues shouting with hot grooves. Indeed the temperature is heated with the opening "No Eyes For Me," although the horn arrangement is a bit trite. More impressive is Webb's organ solo. The groove is a bit more relaxed for the cover of Louis Jordan's "Blue Light Boogie," with Abbott's bluesy alto standing out with the horns adding punch with a very appealing vocal, Webb takes an excellent piano solo, and Brown takes a harmonica solo displaying a big tone, sax-like phrasing and a mastery of dynamics. Even if his vocal on "The Comeback" is overshadowed by the great Joe Williams-Count Basie recording, Brown delivers more than a credible vocal with Abbott displaying considerable finesse here while Dawson adds some stinging guitar fills.

Lambourne's rousing trombone opens Brown's "Reefin' Lovin' Blues," a first-rate original jump blues with another tough harmonica solo. Plunger mute growling trombone provides a counter voice to Brown's vocal on the slow blues by Berezan, "A New Day Is Dawning," with Abbott's twisting clarinet solo framed by Dawson's guitar chords with the accompaniment's intensity building as the performance goes on. There are a couple of robust interpretations of Amos Milburn's drinking blues, "Vicious Vodka," and "Thinkin' and Drinkin." Pianist Webb is superb channeling Milburn's own boogie-woogie rooted style.

Brandon Issak's "I'll Make It Up To You, has a lighter, swinging feel with Webb, Abbott and Lambourne soloing before Brown takes a harp solo in a Rice Miller vein. Then there is the philosophical, New Orleans flavor of Webb's "For Love & Money," with a melody that evokes "Stagger Lee," and Webb standing out. Brown's harp enlivens his interpretation of the late Wynonnie Harris' "Buzzard Luck." Brown is not as convincing singing Lambourne's love song "Sasha's Lullaby," written when Lambourne was 14, but his forte is being a shouter, not a crooner. It is not a terrible track, but a minor blemish perhaps on this extremely entertaining jump blues recording.

Ron Weinstock

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NANCY WRIGHT

Alive & Blue

DIRECT HIT RECORDS/VIZZTONE

It has been almost three years since saxophonist-vocalist Nancy Wright's prior recording "Playdate!" As I commented about that recording, "Listening to Wright's raspy sax (with plenty of vibrato) I am reminded of Junior Walker and Eddie Shaw, which certainly has an appeal."

I would though also give a mention of King Curtis whose "Soul Serenade" she performs on this live recording from the San Francisco venue, Saloon. The Saloon is where she first played in the mid-80s. While her prior CD had several guest appearances, this one features her and her Rhythm and Roots band: Nancy on sax and vocals, drummer Paul Revelli, Tony Lufrano on keys and background vocals, Jeff Tamelier on guitar and background vocals, and Karl Sevareid on bass. She contributed five of the twelve numbers here.

The album kicks off with a funky instrumental "Bugalu," with her chicken scratching sax ably backed by the band. Organist Lufano and guitarist Tamelier provide riffs and licks that enhance her playing as well as take their idiomatic solos while Savareid and Revelli lock down the groove. It sets the table for this most entertaining live recording. Wright is a very capable singer with a relaxed, natural delivery. A solid example if her singing is on an old Bobby Bland classic "I Don't Want No Man," with blistering solos from her, Lufano on piano and guitarist Tamelier. Another choice performance is the soulful "In Between Tears," with a groove and guitar riff that evokes in part "Mr. Big Stuff."

Wright's original jazzy instrumental "Jo-Jo" may have her most interesting solo and Lufrano is superb on this. It is followed by a relaxed vocal on her cover of Lazy Lester's recording, "Sugar Coated Love," with Lufrano on an electric piano as well as her booting sax. After a nice original blues-ballad, "Warranty," is some belly rubbing music, "Bernie's Blues," with Tamelier particularly superb on this early-morning, after-midnight instrumental.

"Keep Your Hands Off of Him," set to the groove of "Got My Moho Workin'," is played with an almost frenzied, high stepping tempo with torrid tenor sax, piano, and chicken scratching guitar solos. Another

notable track is the lengthy rendition of King Curtis' classic "Soul Serenade," as mentioned above.

Recorded by Robby Yamilov at the Saloon in late 2018 and mixed by Kid Andersen, this most entertaining release certainly will please not only Nancy Wright's fans but also those into blues and classic soul.

Ron Weinstock



JORDON DIXON

On!

SELF-PRODUCED

"On!" is the second recording by Washington DC area tenor saxophonist Jordon Dixon. Dixon, a graduate of the jazz program of the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), today is no young prodigy although when he was 15 sitting in at bars and clubs in his native Baton Rouge, he may have been considered as such. He came to DC after serving as a musician in the US Marine Corps. Graduating from UDC, he released the self-produced "Conversation Among Friends" which was issued in conjunction with his senior recital.

Dixon composed the nine compositions heard here (one in two takes) and is backed by a superb band of some of the DC area's finest musicians. The remarkable Allyn Johnson, who is the head of Jazz Studies at UDC, plays piano here.

He also engineered, mixed, and mastered this recording. On bass is Herman Burney who like Johnson is a respected educator and mentor to many local jazz artists and played with Freddie Cole, Terrell Stafford, Rene Marie, and others. On drums is Carroll V (CV) Dashiell who has played with Benny Golson, Bobby Watson, the late Geri Allen, and others. JS Williams adds trumpet to two tracks.

The material ranges from blues to hard bop and ballads and Dixon impress the listener with his big tone and the repertoire. On the opening track, "Notes From the Nook," Dixon displays his full sound and the authority with which he plays the blues. Johnson, who is also heard on organ, follows with a terrific solo before Burney takes an arco bass solo. The tempo picks up with the brisk pace of "Way too Serious," with the leader navigating the tempo with ease. "What You've Done For Me" is a lovely ballad where Dixon's warmth is complemented by Johnson's excellent accompaniment and solo. Dashiell crisply kicks off "We Kin," a

lively hard bop performance.

The title track opens with some rhapsodic piano before shifting to some hot swing with Burney and Dashiell driving this spirited number with Burney and Johnson also contributing cogent solos. "Flame and Friction" is a late-night blues with JS Williams adding his trumpet on this first-rate selection. "Lee Lee Dee" is a robustly played swinger followed by a precious ballad "She Meant It When She Said It," with Burney's solo giving this performance deep roots. Williams returns for "Fake Flowers," a tune that hints at a New Orleans parade as well as the church music all these artists grew up with. Dashiell takes a strong, crisp solo here.

An alternate take of "Notes From the Nook" closes this recording. Jordon Dixon impresses with the invention and passion he brings. One can hear the influences of Coltrane and Sonny Rollins at times, but also with his big tone and warmth, and affinity for blues and ballads will especially appeal to fans of Houston Person and the late Stanley Turrentine and Gene Ammons. Simply stated, this is a fabulous recording. **Ron Weinstock**



JERSEY SWAMP CATS

Go Cat Go!
SELF-PRODUCED

Fans of jump blues and hot swing will find this debut from the Jersey Swamp Cats to their liking. Comprised of Gerry Gladston on piano, Don Leich on guitar, bassist Larry Ghiorsi and drummer Chris Reardon with all four contributing vocals whether lead or backing. They lay down nine rocking rhythm and blues classics with influences including the like of T-Bone Walker, Fats Domino, Pee Wee Crayton, Professor Longhair and others on a program of five covers and four idiomatic originals.

Things kick off with an exuberant rendition of the Louis Prima classic, "Jump, Jive and Wail," with a capable vocal, terrific jump blues guitar, and rollicking piano. An original "Cupcake!" is an easy rocking performance with a credible vocal from Leich who also handles the vocal on a straight cover of "Blue Monday" that hews to the Fats Domino hit, although Leich is nowhere as strong a singer as Domino. "I Don't Mind" is another original with a New Orleans flavor with a melody that evokes "Junco Partner," with Gladston

showing restraint in his piano and a strong trumpet solo from guest Patrick Dudasik, with another guest, Anthony Salimene Jr adding saxophone.

There is terrific playing on "Too Tired" although the vocal sounds forced and lacks the swagger of Johnny 'Guitar' Watson's original. Pianist Gladston sings quite capably on the smooth swing of "Dance All Night!" There is more of a New Orleans groove on "Tootie Ma is a Big Fine Thing" with quite a good vocal from bassist Ghiorsi while Reardon plays a nice understated second-line groove. Both of these tracks feature the horns and the two trade fours on the latter number. "I Get Evil" is based on Albert King's recording of an old Tampa Red classic "Don't You Lie To Me," with fine guitar and Gladston ably singing.

The album closes with some driving hot rod rock and roll, "Shiny Gray Corvette" with Leich and Gladston both singing and a fiery guitar solo. It should be noted that the playing time is around a half hour, but the performances are tight and concise. The Jersey Swamp Cats are a very talented band, and even if the vocals occasionally do not match the terrific playing, this is a thoroughly entertaining recording. **Ron Weinstock**



CONIECE WASHINGTON

Shades of Shirley Horn
SELF-PRODUCED

Poet Seth Washington provides a narration that provides an overview of Shirley Horn, a Washington DC musical icon. It opens vocalist Coniece Washington's rendition of "Here's To Life," one of Shirley Horn's most famous songs that opens her tribute to Horn. Horn touched her "the first time I heard Shirley Horn sing, I fell in love with her groove and elegance. Due to my military service I never had the opportunity to attend one of her shows but I always carry her sound in my heart."

While born in New Jersey, Coniece Washington has formed a deep connection to the Washington DC area. After 35 years of military service she has focused on her musical career as a singer, songwriter, and producer. Washington produced this CD. She is former member of the renowned Washington Performing Arts Society Men & Women of the Gospel Choir and can be seen performing at various venues in the Washington, DC Metropolitan area, including Blues Alley, Bethesda

Blues & Jazz Supper Club, Twins Jazz, Mr. Henry's, and Westminster Presbyterian Church Friday Night Jazz.

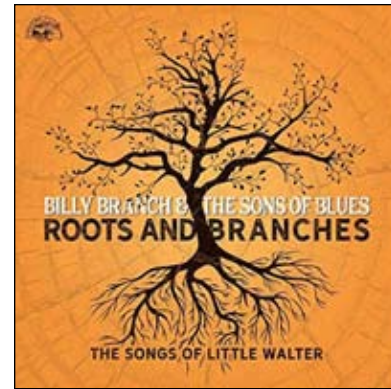
For this recording, she has put together a marvelous studio band of some excellent Washington DC musicians that include Vince Evans: piano; Wes Biles: bass; and Jc Jefferson: drums. Also appearing on selected tracks are Kevin Kojo Prince: percussion; Thad Wilson: trumpet; Carl Carrington: flute and David B. Cole: guitar. There is an elegance to Evans' accompaniment to Seth Washington's introduction to "Here's To Life," before Washington enters with a marvelous vocal that hints at Horn's recording. The rhythm section plays a light accompaniment (drummer Jefferson's soft touch is noteworthy).

While Shirley Horn is a dominant influence on Washington, Coniece has through years of performing (while in the military and after) developed a delightful, personal approach displayed in the 12 songs here. Some songs were penned by Horn, while others are others from the American songbook. There is the light swing of "Get Out of Town" with clean, precise phrasing and melodious voice; the breezy samba feel of "How Am I To Know;" and the wistfulness expressed in her cover of Louis Jordan's "Don't Let The Sun Catch You Crying." Thad Wilson's crying muted trumpet complements the softly delivered vocal on a marvelous blues performance. Wilson also plays a melodic solo on the swinging "I Just Found Out About Love," that closes this recording.

Washington's understated, restrained approach provides certain appeal to the standard, "Our Love Is Here To Stay." She delivers a sultry rendition of Little Willie John's hit "Fever." On Jobim's "Dindi," percussionist Kevin Kojo Prince adds spice to the accompaniment, while flutist Carrington and guitarist Cole add support to another Brazilian flavored performance, "Once I Loved." It is a delight to hear guitarist Cole, best known as a blues artist, playing a thoughtful, precise solo that is followed by a lovely flute solo to enhance Washington's delightful vocal.

With "Shades of Shirley," Coniece Washington has produced not only a wonderful tribute, but a recording that shows her to be a very charming singer with strong backing by Vince Evans and the musicians heard here.

Ron Weinstock



BILLY BRANCH & THE SONS OF BLUES **Roots And Branches — The Songs Of Little Walter** **ALLIGATOR RECORDS**

Now after performing for almost four and half decades, Billy Branch has established himself as among today's leading harmonica players, if not the heir to the Chicago harmonica throne. Here he turns his attention to the music of perhaps the greatest of blues harmonica players, Little Walter. He recalls as a youth "During my early, formative years, I would sit in every chance I got. I listened and absorbed every harmonica player that I would encounter, young, old, black or white. I just wanted to get as good as I could. Many times I would engage in "head-cutting" contests with Junior Wells, James Cotton, Carey Bell, and the great late Big Walter Horton." He may have had his head cut, but he grew and learned from these masters.

But he never had the chance to hear or meet Little Walter. "Once I began my quest to become a skilled blues harmonica player, it wasn't long before I realized that there was one person that was an absolute must to listen to and emulate—Little Walter. It quickly became apparent that Little Walter was "The Man." All of the cats on the scene who were around my age said it, including seasoned players such as Rick Estrin and Jerry Portnoy. This was echoed by the guys who would eventually become my teachers and friends: Junior Wells, Carey Bell and James Cotton. ... Good Rockin' Charles, Charlie Musselwhite, Easy Baby, Eddie "Jewtown" Burks, Little Arthur Duncan, Lester Davenport, Golden Wheeler, and Louis Myers were other great harp men who all testified that the genius of Little Walter's playing was unequalled."

His expressed his intent with respect to this recording "We were determined not to make this a 'typical' Little Walter tribute recording. We are proud to present an album with elements of soul, funk and even a little bit of gospel. Our goal was to competently and respectfully produce a Little Walter-themed recording with a different twist, while preserving the integrity of Little Walter's innovative style." The Sons of the Blues backing Billy Branch on this are Sumito "Ariyo" Ariyoshi on piano; Giles Corey on guitar; Marvin Little on bass; and Andrew "Blaze" Thomas on drums. On one track, Shoji Naito replaces Corey on guitar.

Branch is a superb singer and harmonica player and

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the Sons of the Blues do a stellar job accompanying him with the feel being more of the later Checker recordings with guitarists like Luther Tucker or Freddy Robinson as opposed to Louis Myers and Robert Lockwood. The authority with which Branch handles the opening “Nobody But You” is characteristic of this entire recording with his marvelous vocal and superb harmonica solo with Corey adding a sizzling solo to his comping and chords. “Mellow Down Easy” is one instance to demonstrate how original the arrangement is of the original material opening with some full-bodied amplified harmonica along with a vocal where he emphasizes “easy,” while his harmonica solo floats over the backing. Besides Corey, pianist Ariyoshi while the rhythm duo lay down a firm groove.

Corey hints at Bo Diddley’s playing on the original “Roller Coaster,” although his playing is less trebly. This is a tour de force for Branch’s playing full of swoops and leaps and followed by “Blue and Lonesome” with Corey’s intense guitar matched by Branch’s chromatic harmonica solo. Willie Dixon’s “My Babe” was based on “This Train,” but Branch and the Sons of the Blues transform the melody with a jazzy, latin tinge, again with some brilliant harmonica solo which includes a shift of tempo and some hot guitar. Similarly, they rearrange “Juke,” with a funky groove into the contours of which Branch lays down his solo. Then there is a funky medley of “Just Your Fool/ Key to the Highway,” with Corey’s stinging guitar accompanying the vocal on the 1st part, while Branch’s harmonica (with echoes of some of Carey Bell’s harmonica effects) segues into the latter number.

Among the other Little Walter classics is a superb, rollicking “You’re So Fine,” with the band playing with unfettered abandon, and a terrific “Blues With a Feeling,” that closes the music here. The album actually closes with some remembrances of Little Walter by his daughter, Marion Diaz. It adds a bit of a human dimension to the blues giant that Billy Branch and the Sons of the Blues honor in this superlative recording. **Ron Weinstock**



BLOODEST SAXOPHONE
Texas Queens 5
 DIALTONE/VIZZTONE

I am familiar with the Japanese jump blues band, Bloodiest Saxophone from a terrific Jewel Brown recording on which they backed her. I understand that they also did a disk with the late Big Jay McNeely, Eddie Stout

brought them in for one of his East Side Kings Festivals in Austin, Texas and then got them in the studio to back five blues queens, Diunna Greenleaf, Lauren Cervantes, Angela Miller, Jai Malano, and Crystal Thomas. Diunna and Angela both sing one song, Crystal and Lauren each sing two, and Jai sings three with all five on one song. Bloodiest Saxophone’s members include Koda “Young Corn” Shintaro on tenor saxophone, Coh “Colonel Sanders” on trombone, Osikawa Yukimasa on baritone saxophone, Shuji “Apple Juice” on guitar, The Takeo “Little Toyko” on upright bass, and Kiminori “Dog Boy” on drums and congas. Nick Connolly is on keyboards throughout, while Kaz Kazanoff and Johnny Moeller are added to two instrumental tracks by the band.

The disc opens with Diunna Greenleaf’s superb, passionate cover of Big Maybelle’s cover of “I’ve Got a Strange Feeling,” with a first-rate booting tenor sax solo from Shintaro. All five are heard trading the lead and backing each other on a funky, Muddy Waters hit “I Just Want to Make Love to You,” with another excellent tenor sax solo with Apple Juice’s subtle comping on guitar. Crystal Thomas ably covers one of my favorite Johnny Adams recordings, “A Losing Battle,” as well as Roscoe Gordon’s “Don’t Move Me,” with the Bloodiest Saxophone providing the funky mambo-inflected groove behind her vocal. Apple Juice displays his strong guitar skills on this as the horns riff behind him. Thomas, who played trombone behind the late Johnny Taylor, has also recorded a 45 and hopefully a full album by her on DialTone will be coming forth soon.

Jai Milano shows her vigorous singing on a cover of Rufus Thomas’ “Walking the Dog,” with blistering tenor sax and guitar solos. With “Colonel Sanders” baritone providing an anchor for the performance, Milano belts out the Charles Sheffield number, “Is Your Voodoo Working,” with imaginative twisting guitar followed by more hard-edged tenor sax. Her final song is a take of an Amos Milburn recording, “I Done Done It.” This track is a bit frantically performed, and her vocal comes off a tad shrill. Another number where the tempo is too fast is Lauren Cervantes cover of Louis Jordan’s calypso classic “Run Joe.” There is a terrific sax solo here. Her other song is a credible version of “The Grape Vine,” an old Lucky Millinder recording. Angela Miller’s recording of Mabel John’s “Don’t Hit Me No More,” is a superb Memphis deep soul performance.

Shintaro composed the rousing “Pork Drop Chick,” with the band reciting the title. All members get showcased, and there are torrid guitar and sax solos (refreshing to hear Yukimasa’s gutbucket baritone and then listen to the baritone trading fours with the tenor sax). A down-in-the-alley rendition of Lafayette Thomas’ “Cockroach Run” (with Johnny Moeller adding his guitar) closes this sampling of five Texas blues queens along with the Japanese Jump Blues Band, Bloodiest Saxophone. Overall, this is an excellent set of blues and soul. **Ron Weinstock**

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SANTANA
Africa Speaks
 CONCORD

Cutting to the chase, suffice it to say that Carlos Santana and the lineup here shortchange no one in terms of their expected percussive heat and, of course, the leader's white-hot solo guitar work. These are present in ear-pleasing abundance track after track. The added fire and excitement comes in the form of Spanish-born ethnically African vocalist/lyricist and Latin Grammy winner, Buika.

Possessed of presence and power that is a match for the leader's formidable instrumental persona, she defines this potent set in equal measure and the listener misses nothing, emotionally speaking, not knowing the language.

Exhilarating tracks abound, among them is "Batonga", with Santana and Buika trading off against a breezy choral backdrop (and Cindy Blackman Santana's volcanic drumming). Further on, behold Buika's arena-rock punch on "Yo Me Lo Meresco", and her impressive jazzy departure, "Blue Skies"- an original, sung in English. Of course, this groove leads into a combustible chorus courtesy of Mr. Santana.

Duane Verh



GRADY CHAMPION

Steppin' In: A Tribute to ZZ Hill

MALACO

"Steppin' In" is Grady Champion's 11th album and is a tribute to the great ZZ Hill who has been gone so many years, and is well done in memory of his mother whose favorite artist was Hill. He states on the inside

back cover to this CD, "I am very blessed and honored to have the opportunity to record the songs he sang on the label he recorded, and for the great writers work, which he performed for the world to hear." On this recording he is backed by his veteran road band of guitarist Will Wesley, Frederick Demby Sr. on bass, Sam Brady on keys and Edward Rayshad Smith on drums, with special guests including guitarist Eddie Cotton, the Jackson Horns, and Jewel Bass and Lahlah Devine supplying backing vocals.

Grady Champion and his band do nothing fancy here. They just bring back memories of Hill starting with the slow dance, bump and grind feel of "Down Home Blues," a recording that is still celebrated anyplace where folks "Bump and Grind" (another song revived here) to soul-blues and southern soul today. The band does an excellent job of backing Champion here, with guitarist Wesley standing out. One is impressed by the performances that convey much of the feel Hill gave these songs three-odd decades ago including "Shade Tree Mechanic" on which Grady adds some down-home harmonica fills, and Sam Brady provides grease on the organ. Then there is the insistent groove of Denise Lasalle's "Someone Else Is Steppin' In," with the horns and backing chorus adding punch. Champion's harmonica adds a down-home feel to "Bump and Grind" while Eddie Cotton adds some stinging guitar.

Champion really pours his soul into his insistent vocal on "I'm a Bluesman," while "Open House at My House" is one of two numbers ("Everybody Knows About My Good Thing") Hill recorded that were initially recorded by Little Johnny Taylor (not the Stax singer). They are both intense urban blues about back door men who know about too many personal details about Champion's wife (like a man knowing where his wife's birthmark is and the preacher who praises his wife's fried chicken). Wesley takes the lead guitar on "Open House" which has Champion's harmonica overdubbed over the vocal, while Cotton dazzles on the similar themed "Everybody Knows About My Good Thing," with its line "Call the plumber there must be a leak in my drain." Other songs explore a similar vein including "Who You Been Giving It To" (when you're not giving it to me) and "Cheating In the Next Room" where the love is no longer there. Of course, not every song involves the back door lovers, and there is the soulful ballad about how much he loves his woman and would cut off his "Right Arm For Your Love."

The performances of "Steppin' In" may not radically rework the ZZ Hill original recordings, but Champion and his band bring a lot of heart and soul to this memorable tribute to a Soul and Blues performer who is still remembered and missed. *Ron Weinstock*

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EYAL VILNER BIG BAND

Swing Out! SELF-PRODUCED

This fourth album by Vilner's big band is a celebration of jazz as music for dancers. His powerful 18 member big band has some of New York's finest musicians, including both seasoned veterans and talented young newcomers. Eyal Vilner himself has earned a prominent place as one of the leading voices in the New York Swing Scene and has held a weekly jam with professional swing dancer Gaby Cook and a group of leading New York dancers.

"Swing Out!" might be seen as the culmination of these jam sessions, recorded live in the studio with dancers dancing to the Eyal Vilner Big Band. Vilner proclaims, "Ever since I started playing, for me, swing was the thing. I remember having conversations with my teachers back in Tel Aviv about the bands that really swung and how that feeling is so essential to the music we call jazz. But it was only after I started swing dancing myself that I began to truly understand just what that means." Furthermore, he observed, "In the past few years, we've started playing more and more for swing dancers. This has really influenced the way I play and write music. I fell in love with the dance and have become really passionate about the connection between musicians and dancers in the swing world." It should be noted that on the album packaging, the beats per minute (bpm) is provided for each song.

Vilner, an accomplished alto saxophonist/clarinetist/composer/arranger, leads a superb band. Members of the band include trumpeters Bryan Davis, Michael Sailors, Brandon Lee, and James Zollar; trombonists Robert Edwards, Mariel Bildstenm and Ron Wilkins - bass trombone; reed players Bill Todd - alto sax, clarinet and flute, Jordan Pettay - alto sax, Evan Arntzen - tenor sax, clarinet, Michael Hashim - tenor sax, and Eden Bareket - baritone sax; Jordan Piper on piano; Ian Hutchison on bass; and Eran Fink on drums. Brianna Thomas and Brandon Bain add vocals to some selections.

Vilner's hard-swinging, exuberant, "Downhill" kicks off this recording, a performance that displays the joy that they bring with hot, driving solos from the leader, trumpeter Brandon Lee and trombonist Robert Edwards. It is followed by a couple of wonderful vocals from Brianna Thomas on "Duke Ellington's "In a Mellow Tone," and the flag-raiser "Dinah." Besides her excellent singing, the backing from

the rhythm section including some elegant piano from Piper is exquisite. Also, on the Ellington number, Vilner's arrangement bringing in the horns and building up the dynamics is marvelous in a 50s-60s Basie Band manner.

The band prances on "Do You Know What it Means (To Miss New Orleans)" with Zollar's gutbucket, growling trumpet standing out. Vilner's clarinet helps introduce a spirited rendition of "St. Louis Blues," with delightful interplay between vocalist Thomas and a muted trumpet, a Michael Hashim's booting tenor saxophone solo, with Piper adding a piano solo more in the vein of Teddy Wilson that Jay MacShann. The band also contributes hand-clapping and a vocal chorus for Thomas' stirring singing. Bain is heard singing on the ballad "That's All." His crooning provides a contrast to Thomas perhaps, with Vilner's fresh arrangement and Vilner's romantic alto sax solo.

While much of the inspiration here is Count Basie's New Testament Band, the lively "Big Apple Contest," evokes Basie's first big band with a wonderful clarinet solo from Arntzen while Sailors' trumpet conjures up Buck Clayton. Other marvelous Thomas vocals include a splendid big band treatment of "My Baby Don't Care For Me" from Nina Simone's repertoire, and the bluesy groove of the Ruth Brown classic recording "5-10-15 Hours," on which Eden Bareket wails on baritone saxophone. I would love to hear a full album by Ms. Thomas (perhaps a full Ruth Brown tribute). Vilner's "Going Uptown," with the trumpet sections use of mutes, has more of an Ellington tinge than Basie. In any event, both Brandon Lee's muted trumpet and Michael Sailors' wide open playing are showcased. "Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen," is a tribute to the Andrews Sisters, that opens with a hint of a klezmer band before hot solos from Hashim and Zollar.

"I'm on My Way To Canaan Land" showcases Thomas' gospel roots, as well as guest flutist Itai Kriss and drummer Eran Fink. It is a wonderful close to a fabulous big band recording. Eyal Vilner leads a superb big band, has brought together a wonderful group of classic tunes and original compositions for which he has provided arrangements that give new life to even the most familiar of the songs here. The performances are superlative, and one that makes for both terrific listening, as well as one the dancers will love.

Ron Weinstock

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MARK DOYLE

Watching the Detectives: Guitar Noir III FREE WILL RECORDS

This is apparently the third album of a series that guitarist/arranger/producer Mark Doyle initiated twenty years ago exploring TV and movie themes having to do with detectives and spies, while avoiding obvious and overdone themes like “Peter Gunn” and “Perry Mason” which was on his first album in the series back in 1999. Doyle’s career extends back to when his band the Jukin’ Bones was signed to a contract and has included significant studio work as guitarist or producer.

On this album, he plays guitars, keyboards, bass and drum programming along with Josh Dekaney on drums and percussion and a string section that he conducted and arranged. Opening with a medley of Elvis Costello’s “Watching the Detectives” with the themes from “Get Smart” and “The Untouchables,” he brings a Ventures meets Link Wray meets Roy Buchanan approach set against a rock-oriented backing to explore the melody as well as the dramatic implications with his phrasing and tonal manipulations. It is fascinating to hear him develop improvisations on “Kojak Theme” as well as the theme from “Man From U.N.C.L.E.,” where his organ adds contrasting tonal colors. A particularly arresting selection is his original “Thirteen Crimes,” with the counterpoint of his guitar with strings set against a hard rhythm.

Not every track derives from a detective or spy media theme. There is a splendid ballad reading of Frank Zappa’s “America Drinks and Goes Home,” with lovely guitar and lush strings. It adds to the variety of a most fascinating and atmospheric recording.

Ron Weinstock

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CHRISTONE “KINGFISH” INGRAM

Kingfish ALLIGATOR RECORDS

This CD is Christone “Kingfish” Ingram’s long-awaited debut. Called a rising prodigy by NPR music and endorsed by Buddy Guy, Kingfish has been playing to blues audiences for most of his young life. Videos and youtube and performances have led to hype about him. Tom Hambridge produced this debut and plays drums on most selections, with Bob McNelly adding guitar and Tommy McDonald on bass. Others playing on this include Marty Sammon on keyboards, Buddy Guy on guitar and vocals, Keb ‘Mo on guitar and vocals and Billy Branch on harmonica. Tom Hambridge was involved in writing most of the 12 songs, many in collaboration with Ingram and others with Richard Fleming. One song is a collaboration between Ingram and Jontavious Willis.

At the outset, Ingram is a terrific guitarist with a heavy blues-rock pull out all the stops on most of the electric tracks on this. I really don’t enjoy his guitar fireworks as much as I do his singing. He is an outstanding vocalist with plenty of warmth and expressiveness with an unforced delivery. So even if the opening “Outside of This Town” is a bit heavy musically, his singing knocks out. It is followed by a terrific duet with Buddy Guy with another excellent vocal and some of his best electric blues guitar here which is not overshadowed by Guy who is in fine form here.

Billy Branch adds harmonica while Keb ‘Mo also is on guitar on the driving “If You Love Me,” with an energetic guitar break followed by Branch’s solo. “Listen” is a duet with Keb ‘Mo and a pop-blues in the vein of Keb ‘Mo’s music with the backing more restrained. “Believe These Blues” has some of his more interesting guitar solos with exciting twists and turns along with his effective use of tonal dynamics. “Trouble” is a rocking number set against a New Orleans second-line groove.

“Been Here Before” is one of the acoustic blues here, with remembrances of his grandma singing and Ingram not sure how he became the way he is. Again he sings the lyrics with clarity and feeling. “Hard Times” is a traditional sounding acoustic blues with Ingram’s vocal backed by Keb ‘Mo’s adept Resonator slide guitar.

The closing “That’s Fine By Me” is a heartfelt blues ballad that is evocative of some classic Chuck Willis with an excellent piano solo in addition to effective blistering guitar.

I do not deny he is an excellent guitarist, just not to my taste. Cristone ‘Kingfish’ Ingram is a superb blue singer and with strong songs (and one reason I may view the songs so highly is because of how good a singer he is) and the firm support and production, “Kingfish” is a terrific recording, not merely an excellent debut.

Ron Weinstock



CHICK COREA

The Spanish Heart Band – Antidote
CONCORD JAZZ

This new Chick Corea album with his new band is simply terrific. Corea’s piano and keyboards are supported by his 8 piece band that includes flamenco guitarist Niño Josele; saxophonist/flutist Jorge Pardo; bassist Carlitos Del Puerto; trumpeter Michael Rodriguez; trombonist Steve Davis, drummer Marcus Gilmore; percussionist Luisito Quintero; and the fiery footwork of flamenco dancer Nino de los Reyes. Also heard is the great vocalist Rubén Blades and gifted singers Gayle Moran Corea and Maria Bianca.

Corea states that his “genetics are Italian but my heart is Spanish. I grew up with that music. This new band is a mix of all the wonderful and various aspects of my love and lifetime experience with these rhythms that have been such a big part of my musical heritage.” It is a heritage that gets off with the volcanic opening title track with Blades joyfully singing as well as giving Josele and the horns a chance to solo. Corea himself dazzles on acoustic piano and electric keys, while the arrangement and layering of the horns, piano, and guitar add to the joyous fire here.

The music is so wonderfully played but the incorporation of the flamenco dance to open “Duende,” a composition and performance of lyricism and passionate romanticism along with the interplay between Pardo’s flute and the brass of Rodriguez and Steve Davis. Nino de los Reyes dancing is even more of a presence in “The Yellow Nimbus” that was initially written as a duet between Corea and Flamenco master Paco de Lucía, with the flurries of the dancer matched by Corea’s piano

and the responses from Josele’s guitar.

“My Spanish Heart” was the title of one of Corea’s most successful albums in addition to being a beautiful composition. It opens with an introductory vocal choir before Corea introduces it with stark chords as the performance builds in complexity including an enchanting Blades vocal with the horns providing a counterpoint. It is followed by a thrilling rendition of “Armando’s Rhumba,” with sterling solos by Davis, Pardo, Rodriguez, and Josele in addition to Corea’s magnificent playing while comping for some percussive fireworks by Gilmore and Quintero.

Other performances include Paco de Lucía’s “Zyryab” with its Spanish and Middle Eastern influences; the smoldering heat in the rendition of Jobim’s “Desafinado” with Maria Bianca’s heartfelt vocal; Corea’s captivating solo piano arrangement of “Pas de Deux” from Stravinsky’s ballet “The Fairy’s Kiss” that weaves into Corea’s original “Admiration.” This fabulous recording will undoubtedly be on many Best of 2019 lists.



SOUL MESSAGE BAND

Soulful Days

Delmark Records

While at the Chicago Blues Festival, a photographer-blues deejay I knew mentioned he was going to catch The Joel Paterson Trio in part because of organist Chris Foreman being part of the trio. I made sure to see a portion of their Festival set to see Foreman, one of the most outstanding Hammond B-3 players in the world. He did not fail to astonish. I was aware of Foreman from his playing as part of the Deep Blue Organ Trio on a Delmark album as well as his playing on a Red Holloway Delmark album. All these albums include drummer Greg Rockingham, and the other member of the Deep Blue Organ Trio is famed guitarist Bobby Broom. Other members of this band include guitarist Lee Rothenberg and Greg Ward on alto sax. Geof Bradford on tenor sax replaces Ward on two of the 9 performances, and both saxophones are heard on one track.

There is some spectacular music to be heard here starting with the strutting blues groove of Rothenberg’s “Sir Charles,” named for Barkley and then organist Earland. Ward displays a sharp bluesy tone, while Rothenberg shows his facility and taste in constructing his solo. Fore-

man quickly exhibits why he is among the top practitioners of the Hammond B-3 on the planet, Of course, Foreman and Rockingham have been playing so long together that one should not be surprised how tight the groove they lay down is.

The material ranges from the blues to hard bop and a standard tossed in. There is Cal Massey's reflective "These Are Soulful Days," with Bradford featured, a terrific rendition of Wayne Shorter's hard bop classic from his Art Blakey days, "Hammer Head," with both saxophones heard with the band's feel evoking Jimmy Smith's classic album "The Sermon." In fact, there is a rousing rendition of Smith's hot blues, "J.O.S." from that album. If not possessing a heavy vibrato like Ben Webster, Bradford is marvelous on a reflective performance of Rodgers and Hart's "Little Girl Blue."

The album closes out with a rendition of Freddie Hubbard's "Thermo," another song first done by Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. Ward leads off with sparks flying before Foreman takes over with his deep-fried organ grease. It is a marvelous close to this terrific album. **Ron Weinstock**



SOUL BRASS BAND

Levels
SELF-PRODUCED

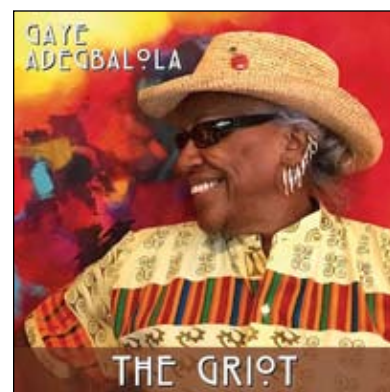
According to a story in Offbeat Magazine, the origins of the Soul Brass Band go back to when CeeLo Green was shooting a video in New Orleans for his song "Music To My Soul." Drummer Derrick Freeman of Kermit Ruffins' Barbecue Swingers was asked to be a consultant and then asked to form a Brass Band. Given the word soul was central to the video's theme, Freeman used the name Soul Brass Band for the project and the producers provided traditional Brass Band uniforms for those in the shoot that Freeman kept.

After shooting a video with New Orleans Pelicans star Anthony Davis, Freeman was receiving requests for the Soul Brass Band. He formed an All Star ensemble: snare drummer "Freeman, bass drummer Aron Lambert, trumpeter Leon "Kid Chocolate" Brown, trombonists Michael Watson and Terrance Taplin, saxophonist James Martin, guitarist Danny Abel and tuba player Steve Glenn." After checking with the Soul Rebels, they started performing with the first performance was opening for Red Baraat at Tipitina's and subsequently toured and played Festivals in Europe

and more.

The music ranges from traditional Brass Band numbers to funky soul and pop covers over a wide variety of material. The recording opens with what sounds like static radio music before it segues into Soul Brass at full force on the driving swing of "Open Your Eyes," with its hints of Latin along Ivan Neville's vocal. Michael Watson takes a terrific trombone solo followed by Khris Royal's searing alto sax, the horn arrangement supporting the vocal is wonderful and the groove is irresistible. The title track has a groove that hints at "Funky Nassau," as Freeman shouts out the vocal of life being about levels as the horns help punctuate the vocal. Ricio Fruge takes a scorching trumpet solo before Martin's earthy tenor sax, with the percussion percolating with Doyle Cooper's sou-saphone providing the anchor. There is more of a Caribbean groove on "How Far We Come," with Sean C adding his soulful vocal to Freeman's gravelly one with Corey Henry adding his muscular trombone to the funk. Sean C. also is present on "Circles" which also features Freeman's funk band Smoker's World, a mix of rap and soulful singing.

There is plenty of soul on the spirited revival of "Ease On Down The Road" from The Wiz with an outstanding vocal by Erica Falls, and noteworthy solos from Mark Levron on trumpet and Danny Abel on guitar. The closing number goes back to a more traditional jazz vein with a rendition of Leroy Jones' "Rendezvous," with Kevin Louis' high note trumpet featured before Terence Taplin's rambunctious trombone solo. While there is only a little over a half hour of music, the Soul Brass Band has plenty of spirit along with funk to go with its Brass Band foundation to produce a recording that should have folks at least tapping their fingers. If you can sit still through this album, you need to have your pulse checked. **Ron Weinstock**



GAYE ADEGBALOLA

The Griot
VizzTone

On the back cover of Gaye Adegbalola's new album, "The Griot," she provides a definition of The Griot as "a member of a class of traveling poets, musicians, and storytellers who maintain a tradition of oral history on parts of West Africa ... and on this CD."

On the second selection of this CD, "Definition: The Griot," she does a recitation set against Jackie Merritt's bones accompaniment that among other things observes The Griot is also "a REPOSITORY, a LIVING ARCHIVE ... of Oral History." Additionally, the griot is, in part, a singer, seeker, teacher, preacher, "the entertainer, the unchainer, the keeper of our history, the remover of whitewashed mystery." This should give a sense of the spirit that infuses this recording, much of which might be termed 'protest' songs, but I prefer the term truth songs that the late street gospel singer Flora Molton termed some of her recordings. On this latest musical journey of mostly original songs, she is backed by her co-producer Jeff Covert on electric and acoustics drums, bass, banjo and keyboards; her own acoustic guitar and harmonica; Roddy Barnes on piano on several selections; Reesa Gibbs on chant and backing vocals on several tracks; Jackie Merritt on bones on three tracks and a horn section led by trumpeter Zack Smith.

There is a definite tinge of anger in her vocals on such tunes as "Nothing has Changed" where she recalls sit-ins and picket lines, dogs, water hoses, burning crosses and lynchings as well as James Byrd dragged by a truck, and brings us up to date singing about the KKK and Nazis marching in Charlottesville with a chorus of "How Can I Be Angry? There's been some change it's true. Too slowly in my lifetime, much more we can do." Set against a smoldering blues-rock backing and a bit of acid in her vocal, it sets a tone for this remarkable recording. The mood is present in "Hypocrisy: Liearrhia," where she confronts the discourse of the day "You've got a bad case of liearrhia/ You keep running off at the mouth/ Your tongue comes from the devil/ And your truth is crapping out"

She addresses female genital mutilation in "Sexism: FGM," with a middle eastern tinge to the vocal as she sings how she will fight to prevent one from taking a woman's Joy. There are also lyrics addressing poverty in a blues track subtitled "Dirty Sheets" with biting guitar; pollution in "Flint Water" set against a rollicking shuffle groove with Covert's Allman Brothers' inspired slide guitar; and protest on "Kaepernicked" where she proclaims him her new Muhammad Ali.

There are several covers including Doc Pomus and Kenny Hirsch's "(There is Always) One More Time" to illustrate hope; the Bessie Smith classic (also done by Nina Simone) she has been singing since her days with Saffire-the Uppity Blues Women three and a half decades ago, "Need a Little Sugar in My Bowl"; and a modern arrangement of Ma Rainey's "Jelly Bean Blues" that closes this CD. "The Griot" has provocative songs along with Gaye Adegbalola's most passionate singing. It makes for compelling listening. **Ron Weinstock**

www.jazz-blues.com



SCOTT RAMMINGER

Rise Up
ARBOR LANE MUSIC

I wrote about Scott Ramminger's last studio album that Scott "writes real good songs, is a most engaging singer and a strong saxophonist who backs himself with some stellar players. The result is another helping of real fine musical gumbo." Since then he issued a live album in the same vein. It included a couple of my photos, so I did not review it. This one is a bit different from his previous studio albums that had been heavy on horn sections and backing vocals. About this recording, Scott says, "I set out trying to make a record that had a slightly different sonic footprint, sort of a stripped down, more acoustic vibe. I hired a fine jazz drummer and upright bass player. And at one point, with my producer hat on, I asked them to play less like we were at Blues Alley (a famous DC jazz club) and more like we were playing in a Brooklyn strip club in about 1960,"

Rise Up features only five players -- Ramminger on vocals and tenor sax, Wes Lanich on piano and Hammond B3, Shane Theriot on guitar, Paul Langosch on upright bass, and Emre Kartari on drums. They tackle eight songs on this CD. Scott's laconic, grainy vocals deliver his sometimes self-deprecating vocals with the right sense of humor and irony, while his sax flows like a nice stiff drink. The band is terrific laying down the right grooves. Pianist Lanich is excellent with his mix of bop and New Orleans rumba, while Theriot (former Neville Brothers guitarist) wails whether playing straight or stinging slide (as on "88 Reasons" where his woman gives him reasons to cry).

The material ranges from songs about failing relationships to the topicality of the title track with its funky groove (Lanich on organ) and his acerbic sax as he sings about corrupt politicians, children hungry, and immigrants vilified and we have to stop this madness before its too late. He has a robust and passionate sax solo here. Elsewhere his sax is overdubbed to be part of the vocal accompaniment.

Ramminger's songs resonate with memorable lyrics and the rhythm duo of Langosch and Kartari provide a steady groove like in "Lemonade Blues," a slow blues that opens with "Life gave me lemons, so I made some lemonade, ... I got no sugar in my cupboard, so this stuff don't taste that great." The only complaint is the relatively short playing time, but there is no fat or gristle heard in the 8 songs on another entertaining CD from Scott Ramminger. **Ron Weinstock**



THE CASH BOX KINGS

Hail to the Kings
ALLIGATOR

The new recording by the Chicago based Cash Box Kings is a terrific CD of traditionally rooted Chicago blues. Take the excellent rhythm section of bassist John W. Lauter and drummer Kenny 'Beedy Eyes' Smith with Queen Lee Kanehira guesting on keyboards and Little Frank Krakowski on rhythm guitar; they have a real, real, real good singer in Oscar Wilson; and add superb guitar and harmonica from Billy Flynn and Joe Nosek respectfully, and one has one fabulous band. Shemekia Copeland guests on one song, Xavier Lynn adds lead guitar to two, Derek Hendrickson takes over the drum chair on two, and Alex Hill adds percussion to two. Nosek and Wilson collaborated on nine of the 13 tracks (with John Hahn on one), Nosek wrote two by himself, and there are two novel covers.

One has to be impressed by how tight, and in the pocket, Lauter and Smith are throughout the shifting tempos and material. Flynn is superb whether channeling B.B. King on the opening shuffle "Ain't No Fun (When the Rabbit Has the Gun)," the Freddy King of King's Federal recordings on "Take Anything I Can" with its boogaloo groove (think King's instrumental "Texas Oil"); and Jimmy Rogers crossed with Blue Smitty on "Smoked Jowl Blues." With Nosek's full-bodied harp backing and solos, they provide first-rate support for Wilson's robust and nuanced singing. He sounds comfortable handling a tough shuffle like the opening "Ain't No Fun," a Jimmy Rogers' styled performance on "Smoked Jowl," and the Muddy Waters' styled "Poison in My Whiskey." With Flynn's slide guitar evoking Earl Hooker, the Cash Box Kings recast Mercy Dee's "Sugar Daddy" into a terrific Chicago blues. The closing "The Wrong Number" is ebullient Bluebeat Beat styled performance in the manner of Washboard Sam and Jazz Gillum.

The songs are strong, idiomatic blues laced with irony and humor, including the highly amusing duet between Wilson and Shemekia Copeland, "The Wine Talkin'." Nosek handles a couple vocals including "Back Off," and is an adequate vocalist but lacks Wilson's authority. Nosek and Wilson team up for the humorous duet "Joe, You Ain't From Chicago," where Joe starts off naming a place to get Italian Beef but

it is in Elmwood Park, and Wilson states that isn't in Chicago. Against a Bo Diddley groove, Nosek sings about going to Maxwell Street, riding the redline after dark and seeing Smokey Smothers while Wilson sings Joe doesn't know the Loop from Cabrini Green.

The highpoint may be "Bluesman Next Door," about people who say they like the blues, but don't want Wilson living next door. They say Wilson is the top singing up on stage, but if they see him in the neighborhood, they would probably call a cop. Besides Wilson's terrific singing, Xavier Lynn plays the first-rate solo. It stands out among the consistently excellent music heard on this superb CD. *Ron Weinstock*



MARK MORGANELLI & THE JAZZ FORUM ALL STARS

Brasil!
JAZZ FORUM RECORDS

This double CD album was recorded at the Tarrytown, NY club, The Jazz Forum, that trumpet and flugelhorn master Morganelli has been operating for a couple of years. On this salute to Brazil and its music which he has been listening to for 40 odd years, Morganelli is backed by a band that includes Abelita Mateus on acoustic and Fender Rhodes piano and vocals; Eddie Monteiro on Midi-Accordion and vocals; Monika Oliveira on vocals; Nilson Matta on bass; Adriano Santos on drums; Nanny Assis on percussion, guitar and vocals and Carlos Barbosa-Lima on guitar.

The 27 tracks on the two discs contain an hour and 48 minutes of renditions of songs, some familiar and others new to listeners. Among the composers here are Antonio Carlos Jobim, Vinicius Morales, Baden Powell, Ivan Lins, Claudio Roditi, Joao Donato, Luiz Bonfá, and Ary Barroso. Jobim is the most represented composer with 18 of the selections composed in whole or in part by him.

Jobim-Moraes' "Amor Em Paz" opens this marvelous celebration of Brazilian music with a breezy groove and Morganelli's melodious flugelhorn and inspired improvisation that is followed by Monteiro's accordion sounding like a Hammond B-3. Baden Powell's brisk "Deixa" introduces us to vocalist Oliveira whose approach contrasts with the softer approach, whispery style of Astrud Gilberto. After a crisp Morganelli solo,

Mateus improvises over several inspired choruses. One of the most familiar compositions here will be “Desafinado” opening with lovely guitar from Assis before the leader’s lyrical improvisation. Morganelli’s favorite Jobim tune is “Chovendo Na Roseira,” with its jazz waltz feel and another vocal from Oliveira with Monteiro’s midi-Accordion evoking the Toots Thielemans’ harmonica.

There are so many impressive performances including Monteiro’s vocal on Ivan Lins’ “Velas Icadas,” and Morganelli’s take on Claudio Roditi’s “Rua Dona Margarida,” which he produced years ago. One would have to check the pulse of anyone not moving in some way to “So Danco Samba.” Is it Mateus’ Fender Rhodes that takes a vibes-sounding solo and Morganelli quotes “Take the A Train” during this track. Then there is “A Ra” by Joao Donato and Caetano Buarque with an infectious rhythm and bright solos from the leader and Mateus on Fender Rhodes to accompany Monteiro’s vocal (and a sympathetic vocal chorus).

“A Felicidade” by Jobim and Moraes opens the second disc with its samba groove and the leader’s bright melodicism. Nanny Assis takes the vocal on Jobim’s “Este Seu Olhar,” with Morganelli’s lyricism and Assis’ soft vocal delivery supported by Carlos Barbosa-Lima’s charming guitar. “Corcovado” is a jazz standard known in English as “Quiet Nights of Quiet Stars.” Morganelli’s flugelhorn has a haunting beauty here with Mateus’ sublime on piano. Then there is the delight of “Samba de Verae” that some may know from organist Walter Wanderly’s recording. Morganelli’s improvisation here goes beyond melodic embellishments. Oliveira’s loveliest vocal may be on her enchanting, wistful rendition of Jobim’s “Dindi.”

“Mas Que Nada,” that will be familiar from Sergio Mendes with Oliveira’s spirited vocal. It is followed by a medley of a couple of Luis Bonfá compositions from the film “Black Orpheus,” “Manha de Carnival/ Samba de Orfeu.” A wordless chorus is featured in the first number in addition to the leader’s mid-range melodicism. It segues into a lively samba with Monteiro again emulating an organ on the Midi-Accordion. Santos crisply solos on this.

An infectious interpretation of “Aquarela do Brasil” (known as “Brazil”) may evoke Carmen Miranda and closes this release with a vibrant mood. It concludes a varied, superbly played, and enthralling salute to the music of Brazil by Mark Morganelli and associates.

Ron Weinstock



SOUTHERN AVENUE

Keep On
CONCORD RECORDS

I was impressed by Southern Avenue’s eponymously titled debut album that appeared on Stax a couple of years ago. This follow-up is on Concord Records itself. The core of the band remains the same: Memphis-born, church-bred sisters Tierinii and Tikyra Jackson, respectively a soulful, charismatic singer and a subtle, husky drummer; guitarist Ori Naftaly, an Israeli-born blues disciple; and the band’s newest addition, keyboardist Jeremy Powell, an early alumnus of Stax’s legendary music academy. Gage Markey is the bassist on this album but on this album of originals is not identified as a member of the band. Among others heard here are Art Edmaiston on saxophones and Mark Franklin on brass, William Bell guesting on a vocal, and CD producer Johnny Black on various keyboards.

The band sounds as powerful as on the prior recording. The title track opens this recording with Tierinii passionately delivering the song’s message of even when one thinks they hit rock bottom, “You get what you put out, You gotta keep on.” It is a superb track with the band and horns adding to the heat, while Naftaly adds a tight, cutting solo that almost matches the impassioned vocal. Then there is the punchy backing of “Whiskey Love,” about dealing with a broken relationship and how she needs a cup. Tierinii is a superb singer who sings with clarity, nuance, and power. “Savior” is another display of her mastery of vocal dynamics as she goes from a virtual whisper to a scream, but never off-pitch, and letting the intensity develop naturally as opposed to being forced.

There is the bluesy feel of “The Tea I Sip,” and the classic soul flavor of “Lucky.” In a similar classic soul vein is “Too Good For You,” where she tells her would be lover, “You can’t do for me, Anything that I can’t do ... Be a whole lot better off without you.” The interplay between keyboards and guitarist Naftaly also is worthy of note. Another message song “We Are Not So Different,” has choice lyrics “Regardless of whose privileged we all got rights, ... To ignore our cries over bloodshed, is just as low as the man.” It has another fiery vocal with a smoldering, intense backing. William Bell joins Tierinii for another message song, “We

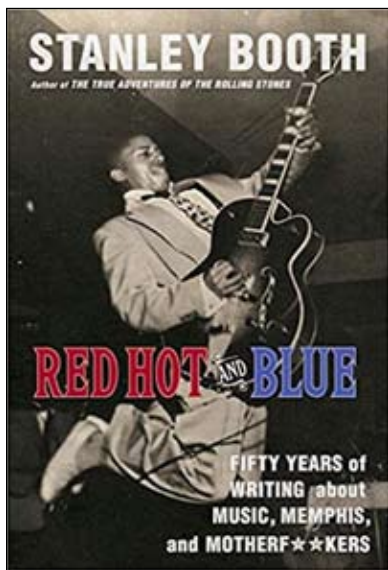
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Got the Music,” as they sing “if you don’t look like me, If you don’t talk like me, That’s alright, We’ve got the music ... ,” set against a classic Memphis sound backing. Then there is a celebration of sisterly love in “She Gets Me High” where Tierinii’s girlfriend helps her unwind at times with her magical touch, with a potent blues-rock guitar break.

The closing number, “We’re Gonna Make It,” is not the Little Milton song but a slow song of dealing with tough times and even though things may seem low, “Just don’t let go, We’re gonna make it,” again with a heartfelt vocal, along with firm and supple backing and a first-rate blues guitar solo to conclude another superb CD by Southern Avenue. *Ron Weinstock*

books



RED HOT AND BLUE: FIFTY YEARS OF WRITING ABOUT MUSIC, MEMPHIS, AND MOTHERF**KERS

Stanley Booth
2019: CHICAGO REVIEW PRESS
400 6X9 PAGE.

Author of the excellent collection of blues- and jazz-related pieces, *Rythm Oil*, Stanley Booth, has another compilation of mostly blues- and jazz-related pieces in this new book (In addition to chapters on such folk as Bobby Rush and Phineas Newborn Jr, there is a piece on photographer Williams Eggleston). To say Booth is opinionated is an understatement, but to give a minor sense of the flavor of his writing there is this quote from the opening article, “Blues Dues” about reading a galley about a book on blues whose publisher sought his endorsement:

“So, finally, I picked up one of the proofs to look it over. I hadn’t read far before I came upon these words: “The weekend I was in Memphis ...” Unlike

many before him, who’d simply bought a lot of blues records, listened to them, and written a book, this writer had made the extra effort of going to the blues museum in Clarksdale, Mississippi, passing through Memphis on his way there, thus becoming an authority. I, who lived in Memphis twenty-five years, going in the course of my research to the city and county jails as a guest more times than I cared to remember, found it hard to restrain myself from hurling the galley all the way back to New York. ...

There’s the blues, an emotional state, and there’s the blues, an art form, or a group of art forms. Believe me, when you’re in the Memphis jail, city or county, you got the blues. When you’re in your cozy room, listening to Robert Johnson’s plaintive tunes, you’re hearing the blues. Two different worlds. But some people, people from Berkeley, or Boston, or wherever, are so highly imaginative that they make a leap of funk and become Spokesmen of the Blues. No, really, they make a living this way. People in Dublin, London, Kyoto, Amsterdam, and Lower Slobbovia read them and feel somehow enhanced, enlightened, end manned by the blues.

I never intended to have anything to do with the blues. They came into my life through my bedroom window when I was a child. It wasn’t a matter of choice. What I learned, I paid for in experience at the school where they arrest you first and tell you why later.”

There are brief portraits like the one on King Oliver (that ends “Oliver died two months later, on April 10, 1938. His sister used her rent money to bring his body north and gave up her plot in Woodlawn for him. But there is still no headstone on the grave of one of the true founding fathers of jazz.”) and a lengthier one on Ma Rainey which includes a brief history of minstrel shows and development of music to the blues before chronicling her life and career and another one on Blind Willie McTell with its detailed chronicling of McTell’s Library of Congress recordings and the account that McTell was allegedly paid ten dollars for the session.

There are two chapters on Furry Lewis that are based in part on the close relationship between the two and tell Furry’s story and gives a glimpse about how good Booth’s writing is. “Furry put the candle down and leaned back in his chair. ‘When I was eighteen, nineteen years old,’ he said, ‘I was good. And when I was twenty, I had my own band, and we could all play. Had a boy named Ham, played jug. Willie Polk played the fiddle and another boy, call him Shoefus, played the guitar, like I did. All of us North Memphis boys. We’d meet at my house and walk down Brinkley to Poplar and go up Poplar to Dunlap or maybe all the way down to Main. People would stop us on the street and say, ‘Do you know so-and-so?’ And we’d play it and they’d give us a little something. Sometimes we’d pick up fifteen or twenty dollars before we got to Beale. Wouldn’t take no streetcar. Long as

you walked, you's making money; but if you took the streetcar, you didn't make nothing and you'd be out the nickel for the ride."

Then Booth describes Furry's life today. "Furry has been working for the City of Memphis Sanitation Department since 1923. Shortly after two o'clock each weekday morning, he gets out of bed, straps on his artificial leg, dresses, and makes a fresh pot of coffee, which he drinks while reading the Memphis Press-Scimitar. The newspaper arrives in the afternoon, but Furry does not open it until morning. Versie is still asleep and the paper is company for him as he sits in the kitchen under the harsh light of the ceiling bulb, drinking the hot, sweet coffee. He does not eat breakfast; when the coffee is gone, he leaves for work."

There are chapters on Elvis, one on Elvis in 1967 and one on the aftermath of his death and what happened to Elvis' Doctor, who became a scapegoat for some after Elvis passed away, who believed (contrary to the autopsy which said Elvis did not die of drugs) the Doctor was responsible and pictured as a pusher. A chapter on The Memphis Soul Sound takes us to The Bar-Kays funeral; Otis and Steve Cropper working on and recording "Sitting At the Dock of the Bay"; Issac Hayes and David Porter working up a song; a visit to American Studio and Donald Crews and Dan Penn; and WDIA's annual Goodwill Revue including Carla Thomas story. Booth notes that the next night after the Goodwill Revue Otis Redding and most of The Bar-Kays would be dead.

In his history of Beale Street, the chapter "Beale Street's Gone Dry," he writes, "In 1959, having graduated from Sidney Lanier High School for (white) Boys in Macon, Georgia, I moved with my family to Memphis. I knew little about the place other than that it was on the Mississippi River and had an association with the kind of music I liked. I soon learned that Memphis was, if anything, even more "Southern" and puritanical than Macon, with no liquor served by the drink and almost no integration. Restaurants, taxis, hotels, parks, libraries, movies, all were segregated. Blacks still sat in the back of the buses. Whites who wanted to hear black music went to an all-white club called the Plantation Inn across the river in West Memphis, Arkansas, and listened to a singing group called the Del Rios or to Loman Pauling and the Five Royales. My first experience on Beale Street was being thrown out of a Ray Charles concert at the Hippodrome for sharing a table with some black classmates from newly integrated Memphis State University. There were tables for blacks and tables for whites, but no mixing allowed. 'What you mean, pattin' these nigger girls on the ass?' a cop asked me. 'I haven't patted anybody on the ass yet, sweetheart,' I said, finding myself seconds later face-to-face with the gravel in the alley. Living in Memphis, off and on, for twenty-five years, learning the blues, I would come to know those alleys, that downtown gravel, well."

Then there is a piece he wrote about Phineas Newborn, Jr., that ended up being an obituary in the Village Voice, where he traced the Newborn family history, including the father, drummer Phineas Sr. and brother, guitarist Calvin, as well as Phineas Jr.'s life and brilliant career, not ignoring the psychological issues this piano genius experienced. "Phineas Newborn, I would learn, was to some people a living symbol of African American genius, the ultimate product of a tradition whose roots are mysterious and deep. His family life and American music were one and the same, with a cast including Elvis Presley, B. B. King, Count Basie, Benny Goodman, Charles Mingus. His style resembled that of Secretariat, or the young Muhammad Ali. He could think of things to do that no one else had ever done, and then he would do them. He had, another Memphis pianist once observed, "a boogie-woogie left hand, a bebop right hand, and this ... third hand." But it was not simply unsurpassed technique that made his work so affecting: his music derived power from its own emotional range—the outer-space comedy of 'Salt Peanuts,' the nostalgic humor of 'Memphis Blues,' the rhapsodic sadness of 'The Midnight Sun Will Never Set,' the majesty of 'The Lord's Prayer.'"

The article on Bobby Rush brought much about Bobby that went way beyond his musical persona, but assesses his stature as a major blues artist. "In the following account, I try to avoid invidious comparisons between Bobby Rush—it's a stage name, and he likes it used in full—and great historical figures like B. B. King and John Lee Hooker, who have not made an exciting recording in years. Bobby Rush, in his mid-sixties, continues to make first-rate R&B records and to have the best stage show since Ike and Tina broke up. If my friend Mick Jagger were hip enough and wanted to revive his career—instead of endlessly dragging his scrawny ass around the planet regurgitating his greatest hits—he would cut Bobby Rush's 'Jezebel.' But he's not hip enough, nowhere near as hip as this senior citizen from Houma, Louisiana, southwest of New Orleans, within spitting distance of the Gulf of Mexico. Not Houma proper but a farm near there. Bobby Rush is the real thing, as country as a tree full of owls or a passel of possums. But he's also at least as up to date as Kansas City."

There is a brief appreciation of Marvin Sease and extended one of his friend, the celebrated photographer William Joseph Eggleston. The closing chapter, which gives this volume its title is on legendary Memphis disc jockey Dewey Phillips and takes us from his heyday, through his fall and his funeral with Elvis and Priscilla there. This chapter, like practically everything in this superb collection of Stanley Booth's writing, authoritative, evocative, informative, and compelling reading.

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