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jazz
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Paul Carr & Randy Brecker at Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival

MORE FESTIVALS

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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!

20th Annual Panama Jazz Festival January 16-21

Featuring Chucho Valdes, Catherine Russell, Children of the Light featuring Perez, Patitucci, Blade, Erika Ender, Roman Diaz, Global Jazz Womxn, and More

In 2023, Panama Jazz Festival celebrates its twentieth edition in a hybrid format. Last year's festival gathered more than 60,000 people from 20 countries (virtually and on-site). For the 2023 edition, Panama Jazz Festival returns with hopes to see the public, fans and students come together during the festival week to continue their mission of inspiring lives through jazz music.

"The Festival is a cultural project that, over 19 years, has consolidated creativity, exchange, and talent, with a strong commitment to education and social welfare in Panama. It is the largest cultural event in the region, which has had the participation of thousands of artists and public from all over the world, adding more than 500 thousand attendees in its 19 past editions," said Artistic Director Danilo Perez.

"The Panama Jazz Festival, in its twentieth edition, will pay tribute to the 1,000-plus people that work to make the festival happen. Every year the festival celebrates a Panamanian musician related to the history of jazz in Panama and the world, but every five years, the festival celebrates all the people that made the festival happen. The festival happens thanks to approximately 500 volunteers, 300 national and international artists, 70 coordinators, and 200 collaborators from the state, press, nonprofit, and corporate sector," said Executive Director Patricia Zarate.

In January of 2023, the Panama Jazz Festival will feature renowned artists who have already confirmed their participation in the event, such as Cuban pianist Chucho Valdes; singer Catherine Russell (daughter of Panamanian native pioneer of jazz Luis Russell); Children of the Light featuring bassist John Patitucci, drummer Brian Blade and pianist Danilo Perez; Latin pop star singer-songwriter (of the global sensational song "Despacito") Erika Ender, master drummer from Cuba Roman Diaz; and the all-star ensemble Global Jazz Womxn featuring Israeli sax player Lihi Haruvi. Other artists include Proyecto Acustico from El Salvador and distinguished national projects such as the Luis Russell Collective, Hijos del Jazz Big Band, Anthony Morris Kuna Jazz Quintet, Panamanian folk star Celsito Quintero, Idania Dowman, and many more. In addition, through the program Arts Envoy, the Embassy of the United States in Panama will be hosting distinguished global jazz musicians Farayi Malek, Nadia Washington and Chase Morrin.

A week of enriching concerts highlighting the great gala night held at the Anayansi Theater in Atlapa Convention Center on Wednesday, January 18, 2023. The same theater will present great live jazz performances on Thursday, January 19, and Friday, January 20. Ateneo Theater, located in the City of Knowledge, will also present night concerts on Monday and Tuesday of the week of the festival; and Wyndham Hotel will present intimate performances every afternoon.

The Panama Jazz Festival's signature educational events will happen at the City of Knowledge and will host distinguished institutions such as Berklee College of Music and the Berklee Global Jazz Institute, the New England Conservatory, and New York Jazz Academy, among others. The Festival will be celebrating the 11th Latin American Music Therapy Symposium bringing together music therapists from Panama, Chile, the United States, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, among other countries. Other important symposiums that will take place during the festival include the 2nd Symposium of

Natives Peoples, the 7th Symposium of the Culture and Music of Afro-Panamanians, and the first Symposium of Panama and the Caribbean in Jazz History.

The twentieth Panama Jazz Festival will have the Ciudad del Saber as its educational venue, and the official hotel will be the Wyndham Panama Albrook Mall Hotel & Convention Center. The festival will also feature hundreds of national and international musicians in a virtual format. Artists worldwide are invited to share their videos with the festival and be part of our online platform. Some educational and artistic performances will also be streamed during the event on our social media.

The festival is produced by Panama Jazz Productions and co-produced by the City of Knowledge to benefit the social programs of the Danilo Perez Foundation with the help of Panama's Ministry of Culture, Panama City Mayor Office, Copa Airlines, Cable and Wireless, El Salvador Embassy, Embassy of Israel, the United States Embassy and many others.

For more information on the Panama Jazz Festival, visit: www.panamajazzfestival.com

Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival Feb. 18-20

By Ron Weinstock

The Jazz Academy of Music, Inc. (JAM) presents The Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival (MAJF) over Presidents' Day Weekend, February 18-20. Highlights for the Festival include (on the main stage): the Joe Locke Group feat. Kenny Washington; Julieta Eugenio Trio (2022 DC Jazz Festival Grand Prix Winner); Kirk Whalum Group; Randy Brecker feat. Ada Rovatti; Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival's tribute to Roy Hargrove; Ashley Pezzotti with guest Vincent Herring; Scat Summit feat. Sharon Clark, Christie Dashiell & Ashley Pezzotti; Paul Carr Collective; Texas Tenor Titans feat. Kirk Whalum, Walter Smith III & Paul Carr; and Randy Brecker feat. Ada Rovatti. There will also be three other stages (including the free Atrium stage). Performers for these stages will be announced. In past years, the club stage has hosted a free MAJF Midnight Jam Session.

The Jazz Academy of Music Inc, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, produces the Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival. It was established in 2002 and is a manifestation of a longtime dream of Paul Carr, its Music Director, to extend the music education opportunities afforded him, as an inner city youth, to others. The Jazz Academy also offers, at the Festival, masterclasses, live interviews with the performing artist, line and swing dancing, and the aforementioned jam sessions that are free and open to the public.

The Festival takes place at the Hilton Hotel and Executive Meeting Center, 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852-9664 (888-225-9664). For more information, including details on the artists, performance schedule,



Christie Dashiell

and tickets, visit the website <https://midatlanticjazzfestival.org>. Or contact them at Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival, PO Box 6744, Silver Spring, MD 20916-6744. The Festival phone number is (888) 909-6330.

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

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

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

powerfully on the piano, but it was the full orchestra that he considered his most compelling instrument. He introduced improvisation to his compositions — a process unheard of using a 15-piece orchestra. The result was a different approach to jazz that sparked a revolution and an evolution. His music spread across the world with songs like "Sophisticated Lady," "In a



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

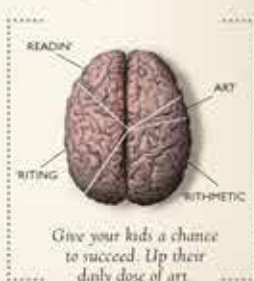
"Sentimental Mood," and "Take the 'A' Train." His historical concert in 1953 at the Newport Jazz Festival has entered the lexicon of legendary live performances. There is no doubt about it, Ellington's brand of jazz has contributed significantly to the American songbook and to the lives of anyone who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

Jazz is art, you dig? Art can

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



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



Art. Ask for More.

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We only bring you
the Cream of the Crop!



ANA NELSON
Bridges
SELF-PRODUCED

Based in Indiana, Ana Nelson displays her multiple talents as a composer, alto saxophonist, and clarinetist on “Bridges.” Classically trained, she discovered jazz and Brazilian music, incorporating them into her musical persona. “[I]t’s difficult for me to label this album as any one specific genre, as I view it more as a melding of music and people I love.” Among those playing on this recording are pianist Jamaal Baptiste, bassist Brendan Keller-Tuberg, drummer Carter Pearson and a string quartet.

Ana Nelson plays with fluidity and displays a warm, calming tone while the backing is sympathetic. The opening “Wanderlust” opens in a relaxed fashion but whose intensity builds. The rapport between her and pianist Baptiste is also evident here, with Baptiste also soloing impressively. The lovely, relaxed “Waltz” is the first of three tracks on which she plays clarinet with a gorgeous, woody tone. This number also showcases bassist Keller-Tuberg. “L.C.B.,” named after her family members, is a delightful, playful performance focused on the interplay between Nelson and Baptiste. A string quartet joins the group on the evocative “Blue Tower,” another track beginning in a tranquil fashion and then growing in heat. “Nelbap Choro” is an original Brazilian-styled composition that is a charming duet between Nelson’s clarinet and Baptiste’s piano. “Let the Light In,” with Nelson’s sweet clarinet backed by the string quartet, has a chamber music quality.

The animated “Fruit of the Groove” on which Nelson’s father Bill adds his tenor sax closes this well-played and engaging recording. Ana Nelson’s first full album (she previously released an E.P.) indicates that she is a noteworthy talent to keep one’s ear open to. **Ron Weinstock**



ANGELA STREHLI
Ace of Blues
NEW WEST/ ANTONE’S

It has been 17 years since Angela Strehli’s last solo album. With the encouragement of her husband, Bob Brown, she has a new album, “Ace of Blues.” The album is devoted to recordings and artists that inspired her as a singer. On this album, she is backed by a core band of Mike Schermer on guitar, Steve Ehrmann on bass, Kevin Hayes on drums, and Mike Emerson on keyboards. Others playing on this include Jim Pugh on the Hammond B-3 and Mark Kazanoff on harmonica with a horn section on several selections.

Strehli was seventy-six when this album was recorded. Her voice may be a tad less supple, but she remains an expressive singer who employs her lower register in a most convincing fashion. The album starts with her cover of Bobby Bland’s recording, “Two Steps From the Blues,” which echoes the original recording with Joe Scott’s iconic arrangement. “Person to Person follows.” This is based on the Elmore James song, not the Cleanhead Vinson number. After a take on OV Wright’s “Ace of Spade,” she turns her attention to a tough rendition of Muddy Waters’ “I Live The Life I Live,” on which Kazanoff adds harmonica. In the accompanying booklet, she relates her own relationship with Muddy Waters.

I am not going to recite all the tunes played, but other highlights include a rendition of “Gambler’s Blues,” a song that derives from Dinah Washington but her fervent recording and Schermer’s fiery guitar is based on Otis Rush’s version. Things take a more soulful turn with the cover of Otis Clay’s “Trying To Live My Life Without You.” Also notable is her rendition of Dorothy Love Coates’ gospel classic, “I Wouldn’t Mind Dying.” There are also renditions of songs associated with Jimmy Reed, Chuck Berry, Little Milton, and Howlin’ Wolf.

Her heartfelt reflections on her close friend, Stevie Ray Vaughan, “SRV,” serves to cap this exploration of some of her musical heroes and inspirations. As mentioned, a booklet with her comments on the songs and a number of photos is included. The digipak cover also contains an interview with her where she reflects on her career. “Ace of Blues” has classy packaging that suits this tasteful and memorable recording, for which we are thankful.

Ron Weinstock



ANNIKA CHAMBERS & PAUL DESLAURIERS

Good Trouble
VIZZTONE

I was greatly impressed by Annika Chambers's 2014 debut album, "Making My Mark." I wrote, "Annika Chambers may possess a powerful voice but she also is a marvelous singer whose timing, phrasing and her sense of dynamics is quite impressive, and one awaits more funky blues and soul from her in the future." The 2019 release "Kiss My Sass" fulfilled this promise, which included one track with guitarist Paul DesLauriers. DesLauriers is a blues-rock guitarist of considerable facility and imagination and provided supple backing. Chambers and DesLauriers have merged their careers and lives. This album, which had roots as a means of pandemic therapy, is their first together. Annika describes this album as "Think Mavis Staples meets the Rolling Stones." It is an apt description, and this is a terrific blues-rooted rock album.

The main folks backing Ms. Chambers' vocals are Mr. DesLauriers on guitars, dobro, mandolin, and bass; J.P. Soars on guitar and bass; and Chris Peet on drums. Also appearing on some tracks are bassists Gary Davenport and Alex McElcheran, drummer Bernard DesLauriers, Barry Seelen on the Hammond B-3, and background vocalist Kim Richardson. Four of the eleven tracks are originals by the musicians, while there are some choice covers from George Harrison, Joe South, Little Willie John, Mountain, and Baby Washington.

Things kick off with the energy and the positive message that one should step outside one's comfort zone, "You Got To Believe." Chambers' singing has a force-of-nature authority that one associates with Mavis Staples, Aretha Franklin, Tracy Nelson, and Tina Turner. At the same time, the backing mixes energetic blues-rock guitar with intricate mandolin fills. It sets the tone for the whole album full of forcefully delivered message originals like "Stand Up" to covers such as George Harrison's "Isn't It a Pity," which are at least as good as the original. Also choice is the rendition of Joe South's "Walk a Mile in My Shoes," where here spoken rap adds to the song's relevancy. DesLauriers himself is no slouch as a vocalist as on his cover of

Little Willie John's "Need Your Love So Bad," where he shares the vocal with Chambers. It also features perhaps his best straight blues guitar.

A cover of Mountain's "Mississippi Queen" is perhaps the only track that, to this listener, wasn't as compelling as the rest of the album, but that might simply be my reaction to the material. The closing "I Need Your Power" is "dedicated to our ancestors" before Chambers starts singing about needing the everlasting power set against a simple rock groove that becomes mesmerizing with handclaps and a band vocal providing a response to her riveting vocal. It concludes a superb album (that may be as good as anything I have heard this year) showcasing stellar talent.

Ron Weinstock



DUDUKA DA FONSECA & QUARTETO UNIVERSAL

Yes!!!

SUNNYSIDE RECORDS (OCTOBER 21)

Brazilian-born drummer Duduka De Fonseca recalls, "In the summer of 2021, I met bassist Gili Lopes and guitarist Vinicius Gomes at a concert that I attended at Central Park. After the concert, we were walking together in the park and they mentioned that they wanted to play with me. I felt flattered, and had a gut feeling that something special could happen. I suggested to include my long time friend Helio Alves on piano, they loved the idea, and that is how Quarteto Universal started." It was a band that exhibited considerable chemistry from the beginning and one that Duduka wanted to catch the freshness of the ensemble even if they get better in the future.

Since starting the Quarteto, Duduka has wanted to find new ways to mix samba with jazz—in equal parts, and has been one of the leaders in this musical fusion. Pianist Alves had a long association with Claudio Roditi, Joe Henderson, Paquito D' Rivera, and others, while guitarist Gomes has collaborated with Seamus Blake, Joe Cowherd, and others. Bassist Gili Lopes has played and recorded with legendary Brazilian pianist Dom Salvador, Marcos Valle, Nicolas Folmer, and John Crawford.

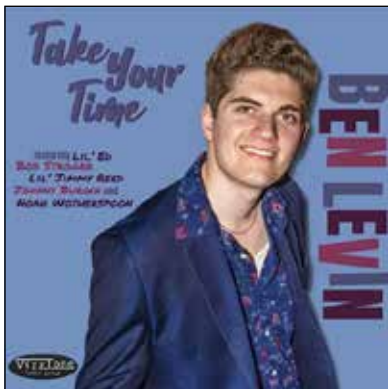
"Samba Novo" opens this album with a lively, spirited performance with Alves and Gomes stating the

theme in unison before Alves displays his formidable technique and lyrical invention, followed by equally dazzling soloing from Gomes. Lopes is a subtle anchor, while Duduka is explosive in propelling things along with adding rhythmic accents. Duduka opens Dom Salvador's "Transition" with a mesmerizing drum solo before his accompaniment drives the sterling contributions from the band, especially Gomes' scintillating acoustic guitar solo. These are some of the pleasures of this album.

Other highlights include the sophisticated interpretation of Milton Nascimento's "Lilia," with the intricate interplay between the four. Hermeto Pascoal's "Montreux" is a ballad with Alves and Duduka employing a light touch while bassist Lopes and guitarist Goms (on acoustic guitar) Latin down some precious solos. Another ballad, "A Correnteza," features some delightful interplay between Alves and Gomes' acoustic guitar, while Lopes adds color with his Arco bass. There are complex ensemble passages and engaging solos on "Viver De Amor" and the energetic "Exodo," which may suggest Chick Corea to some.

Duduka Da Fonseca & Quarteto Universal is a superb band that brings forth a fresh mix of Jazz and Brazilian samba. With an outstanding musical program, excellent ensemble, and solo playing, "Yes!!!" is an impressive album by a band that is undoubtedly going to make a considerable mark in the future.

Ron Weinstock



BEN LEVIN
Take Your Time
VIZZTONE

Ben Levin's previous recordings have impressed me. His debut showed a maturity that belied his youth. As he grows older, his piano continues to display virtuosity along with focused, imaginative playing. His latest album brings him with guests Bob Stroger, Lil' Ed Williams, Little Jimmy Reed, Johnny Burgin, and Noah Witherspoon. The backbone of his studio band includes his father, Aron, on guitar, Walter Cash on bass, and Ricky Nye on drums.

Musically this is a wonderfully played recording, although there is some variation in the vocalists. Levin himself is an appealing singer, as he demonstrates on the opening "Take Your Time," one of two tracks that Johnny Burgin enlivens with his guitar. It also has

some splendid piano. Burgin adds some West Side-styled guitar behind Levin's vocal on "Out of Your Own Way." I wish I could muster enthusiasm for Bob Stroger's vocals, but he is a colorless singer, such as on Stroger's "Jazzman Blues" (Jazz ain't nothing but a bluesman blowing his horn), or his cover of Eddie Taylor's "Bad Boy." In fairness, Stroger is over 90, and one wishes one might have heard him 20 or 30 years ago. Of course, he still is steady as a rock on bass. It should be noted that "Jazzman Blues" is a swinging performance with some terrific two-fisted piano along with Noah Witherspoon's T-Bone Walker-tinged fretwork and a brief walking bass solo. Levin takes the lead vocal on a solid Chicago blues, "Love You Baby," with Bob Stroger contributing a vocal chorus.

It is interesting to hear Ed Williams in a setting other than his Blues Imperials. A highlight of his three strong performances is a reinvention of Roy Hawkins' doom West Coast blues, "Why Do Things Happen To Me." In a slow Chicago blues performance with sterling piano in the vein of Otis Spann and Little Johnny Jones along with Williams' tough slide guitar. Williams and Levin share the vocal on the driving "Hole in the Wall." The down-home blues of Lil' Jimmy Reed is not well-known as he should be, and he delivers a strong shuffle interpretation of Smokey Smothers' "I've Been Drinking Muddy Water." Again, Levin shines on the piano. Another strong performance is Reed's cover of Lightnin' Slim's "You Know You're So Fine." Some of Levin's best piano is on Levin's original "Lump of Coal," with a solid down-home Reed vocal.

Overall, another quite enjoyable recording from Ben Levin. Ben Levin has developed into a marvelous pianist in the manner of the late Dave Maxwell and Paul Oscher and is himself an engaging singer. He has produced another entertaining release with a fine studio band and some notable guest singers. *Ron Weinstock*



JESSY J
California Christmas Volume 2
CHANGI RECORDS

The first volume of "California Christmas" came out in 2016. The contemporary jazz saxophonist Jessy J has just released this follow-up volume. Playing on this are long-time band members Jay Rowe on piano, Dave Anderson on bass, Trevor Somerville on drums,

Andy Abel on guitar and Richie Gajate Garcia on percussion. Others heard include some longtime collaborators Paul Brown, Jeff Lorber and Euge Groove along with guitarist Mark Lettieri. Jason Goldman provides two arrangements. Guest vocalists include Mississippi soul singer Maurice Smith and Brandon Wattz. I note that the download I was provided with does not contain more specific personnel information

This is a highly listenable recording with Jessy J's fluent and melodic sax having a definite appeal on these cleanly laid down performances. There is dreamy smooth, strings backing for the opening "Jolly Old St. Nicholas" to support her lyrical alto sax. "Oh Holy Night" starts with her sax riding over a vocal chorus before transitioning to a lively funk groove with a soulful vocal. Guitarist Lettieri adds his rock-tinged guitar to "Angels We Have Heard On High" with Jessy J's first miming lyrics before taking brief solo followed by more guitar. "Go Tell It on the Mountain" is a lively rhythm'n'blues flavored rendition with a vocal chorus and some intriguing sax lines. Latin percussion enlivens "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" which spotlights Jessy J's flute playing. There is a light funky groove for "Auld Land Syne," with fascinating, twisting saxophone lines before the performance transitioning into a hot Latin jazz. The closing "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" features her in an acoustic setting with a splendid acoustic guitarist comping as well as soloing.

Jessy J's adept sax and the handsome accompaniments result in an album for listening this holiday season and holiday seasons to come.

Ron Weinstock



DAVE KEYES
Rhythm Blues & Boogie
BLUE HEART RECORDS

This writer is so used to Dave Keyes as a sideman that my attention was riveted as soon as he started singing "Shake Shake Shake," the opening selection on "Rhythm Blues & Boogie." I am familiar with Keyes from his performances with bluesman Slam Allen as well as being a participant at a Pennsylvania Blues Festival tribute to Johnny Copeland with alums of Copeland's band along with Copeland's daughter Shemekia Copeland. Keyes has performed with some of the most prominent figures of blues, roots, and folk mu-

sic, including long musical relationships with Odetta, David Johansen, Bo Diddley, rockabilly legend Sleepy LaBeef, and gospel great Marie Knight. Keyes has also worked in numerous roles for both Broadway shows and TV. These include, most notably, the six-year Grammy-winning Broadway smash run of "Smokey Joe's Café." He has also conducted and performed in the orchestras of Broadway musicals "Lennon," "Urban Cowboy," and the Earth Wind & Fire-inspired "Hot Feet." This only touches on his broad experience.

For this, Keyes' sixth album, Keyes has written nine tunes with one cover. Behind Keyes' vocals and keyboards, the studio band includes Bernard 'Pretty' Purdie or Frank Pagnano on drums, Jeff Anderson Putnam or David J. Keyes on bass, John Putnam on guitar, Chris Eminizer on tenor sax, and Tim Ouimette on trumpet and horn arrangements. Earl Times and Papa Chubby each play guitar on one track, and Doug MacLeod adds acoustic guitar to one song.

As mentioned, Keyes singing caught my attention on "Shake Shake Shake," a gospel-tinged song with a message that however bleak things seem, just move your feet, clap your hands, get on your groove and shake it so things work it out as the horns help bring out this uplifting theme. "Blues and Boogie" is a rocking shuffle as he calls upon folks to have a good time as we blues and boogie all night long. Earl Times solos here. The publicity notes Keyes' roots in the piano of such legends as Fats Domino, Dr. John, Johnny Johnson, and Professor Longhair. This writer suggests that Keyes' performances also evoke the late Leon Russell in bringing together rock, blues, soul, and gospel influences in one joyous musical stew.

A solo piano rendition of Willie Nelson's "Funny How Time Slips Away," shows his interpretative powers both vocally and instrumentally with his piano adding color to a pensive vocal. "WBGO Boogie," a stomping instrumental named after the Newark jazz radio station, is another solo piano feature. Then there is the New Orleans groove of "Ain't Doing That No More," with Bernard Purdie laying down the second-line groove while Keyes sings about no longer taking the sadness from playing your game. Papa Chubby adds his guitar to another song dealing with leaving a relationship, "Not Fighting Anymore." Doug MacLeod lends his acoustic guitar to back Keyes singing and piano on "Invisible Man," where Keyes sings about getting older and for pretty gives one might be the invisible man.

A buoyant salute to frontline heroes (doctors, nurses, and EMS), "7 O'Clock Somewhere" caps an outstanding album of blues and roots music.

Ron Weinstock

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ERIC DEMMER

So Fine

GULF COAST RECORDS

This is the debut album of saxophonist-vocalist Eric Dimmer. Demmer is best known for his long tenure in the legendary Clarence ‘Gatemouth’ Brown’s Band. Since Gatemouth’s passing, Demmer has kept busy, playing with blues-rock guitarist Mike Zito and his horn work has graced albums by The BB King Blues Band, Zito, and Tito Jackson. On this recording, he is joined by guitarists Hugo Rodriguez, Jonn Del Toro Richardson, Mark May, and The Funky Rick Marcel; the Grooveline Horns; bassist Dennis Delfino, drummers Jerre Jackson or Jordan Alves; and keyboardists Barry Seelen, Darrell Lavigne, or Shawn Allen. The personnel information is taken from the album publicity as the album packaging does not provide track data. Also, no composer credits are listed, but Demmer’s thanks on the cover mention Scott McGill and Freddie Pate.

Dammer is more striking as a saxophonist than a vocalist, but he is an honest and expressive singer. It is that his saxophone playing is of a higher level. There is a nice range of material included, including the Latin-tinged blues-rock of “She’s So Fine” with a fine Jonn Del Toro Richardson solo to go with a riveting Demmer tenor sax solo. Mike Zito takes the lead vocal on a southern rock-sounding “Will It Ever Be the Same,” with Rodriguez’s impressive guitar fills before Demmer’s full-toned sax solo. An outstanding track is the humorous funky talking song, “What Was I Thinking,” with Demmer reciting several times how a pretty lady led him on with a smile or a kiss. Richardson returns on rhythm guitar with Rodriguez fiery as Demmer sings, “I’m a Guitar player,” but he doesn’t play a guitar, and then takes a booting sax solo.

“Start It All Again” is an appealing late-night number as Demmer sings the blues about it being 4 AM, and he can’t get someone off his mind. Then there is a solid vocal on a slow blues, “Let Me Go.” Demmer’s daughter Danielle is featured on the funky “Any Day Get Away,” and she is a singer to keep an ear open for,

Eric Demmer’s “So Fine” is a solid blues and roots recording that will appeal with his vocals, striking saxophone, and tight backing provided him.

Ron Weinstock



GRANT GEISSMAN

Blooz

FUTURISM RECORDS

Kirk Silsbee’s liner notes describe this album as “a bouquet of blues in many different flavors.” Not every one of the twelve tracks may be strictly a blues, but all are imbued with a bluesy feel. Geissman himself says, “The album is called “BLOOZ” because it’s my take on the blues. It’s a fairly wide interpretation, and not always traditional.” Guitarist Geissman has played on recordings by artists such as Quincy Jones, Steve Tyrell, Burt Bacharach and Elvis Costello, Van Dyke Parks and Brian Wilson, Robbie Williams, Michael Feinstein, Lorraine Feather, Gordon Goodwin’s Big Phat Band, and David Benoit. On this album, he is joined on many selections by Jim Cox or Russell Ferrante on keyboards, Trey Henry on bass, and Ray Brinker on drums. Geissman composed all twelve tunes.

There are several special guests starting with Randy Brecker’s incendiary trumpet on the opening, relaxed groover, “Preach.” Cox doubles on the B-3 and piano as Geissman lays down the melody with Brecker’s support. Geissman exhibits a fluid jazzy attack before Brecker contributes spirited playing and Cox lays down some organ grease. I note that while Geissman plays in a straight-ahead manner here, he varies his tone and approach throughout this album. Geissman salutes Carlos Santana on the Latin rock of “Carlos En Site,” on which pianist David Garfield plays a choice solo. There is the interplay with pianist Russell Ferrante on the relaxed “Time Enough at Last.” Ferrante also is present on the moody “Stranger Days,” which hints at some of Oliver Nelson’s blues-rooted compositions. Tom Scott’s saxophone lends a Crusaders feel to the lazy blues of “Fat Back” and the lively shuffle, “This and That.” “Rage Cage” is a brisk, funky organ shuffle with a fleet, imaginative solo.

“Robben’s Hood,” with guitarist Robben Ford, is another instrumental that sounds like an unrecorded Crusaders tune with wondrous interplay between the two guitarists as well as crisp, driving solos in contrasting styles. Geissman has more of a chicken scratch tone complementing Ford’s blues-rock attack. Set against a Bo Diddley groove, “One G and Two J’s” has Joe Bonamassa and Josh Smith guesting. Geissman takes the first solo in a bluesy vein, followed by

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Smith and then Bonamassa. Smith makes imaginative use of twang in his playing, followed by Bonamassa's scintillating playing before the three trade fours. There is plenty of Bakersfield country twang when John Jorgensen joins Geissman on "Whitewalls and Big Fins."

The other tracks on this album are of a similar level. Backed supply throughout, Geissman and his friends have produced a thoroughly engaging and varied recording that should have substantial appeal.

Ron Weinstock



JOHNNY RAWLS

Going Back To Mississippi
THIRD STREET CIGAR RECORDS

"Going Back To Mississippi" is the fourth album on Third Street Cigar Records for the award-winning soul-blues crooner Johnny Rawls. The album was recorded in Denmark and in Ohio and finds Rawls performing ten originals (two co-written with Linda Francis). The album has a confusing list of personnel and does not list Rawls as playing guitar or singing. It also does not identify guest vocalists on a couple of selections.

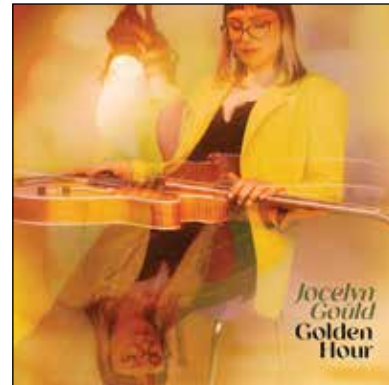
The music on "Going Back To Mississippi" is pretty much what you might expect from a Johnny Rawls record. Tasteful grooves with riffing horns and soulfully sung by Rawls in a slightly raspy, restrained, cool, yet urgent manner. He sings about leaving on the "Midnight Train" and not coming back with some biting guitar set against the brassy horns. "Reap What You Sew" has Rawls dealing with a theme that goes back decades as he tells his woman that she is going to want Johnny back, but it's all right because 'you're gonna reap just what you sew."

The title track is a topical number about wanting to return where he is from as he is tired of the ice, snow, and traffic in Chicago and wants to go back to where the sun shines. Against the chugging rhythm, he lays down a biting guitar solo. It is followed by a tender ballad, "If You Ever Get Lonely," where he sings about never wanting to do or say bad things to his love. Then there is the dance groove of "Noki Noki." "Your Love" is a marvelous duet with a woman singer who may be Linda Francis. Francis co-wrote this number. On the funky "Straight From the Bottle," it sounds like Elvin Bishop has joined Rawls with a couple of spoken asides along with his guitar.

PAGE TEN

A rollicking "Love Machine" with Alberto Marsico contributing some rock and roll piano closes yet another first-rate Johnny Rawls recording. Rawls' body of recordings is pretty consistent and of a high level, and this album is another strong album from him.

Ron Weinstock



JOCELYN GOULD

Golden Hour
SELF-PRODUCED

Canadian guitarist Jocelyn Gould's "Golden Hour" showcases not simply her nuanced and dynamic guitar playing, but also voice on several selections. Inspired by her favorite guitar records, this recording is a mix of originals and standards where she is supported by a superb band of Will Bonness on piano, Rodney Whitaker on bass, and Quincy Davis on drums. Jon Gordon, winner of the Monk Institute Saxophone Competition plays on three selections.

She has a bright, melodic sound that is evident on the title track that opens this album. Her mix of chords and single note runs is matched by Bonness' crisp comping and soloing. Whitaker and Davis provide a swinging groove. Gould says about "Horizons," "Horizons is an open and airy composition about dreaming of new beginnings and realizing those dreams. Her vocal floats over the vocal before Gordon displays his mastery of the tenor sax, before she takes a precious solo. An ebullient samba, "Serendipity," showcases her scatting on a scintillating wordless vocal before some deft guitar and soaring saxophone. One of her inspirations is Joe Pass as reflected in a splendid solo rendition of "Sweet Lorraine." Some gorgeous chords begin a scintillating rendition of "Lover Come Back To Me," that showcase her virtuosity as she ably negotiates the quick tempo with an outstanding solo. This selection is followed by an intimate duet with pianist Bonness that includes her gentle and wistful vocal. Her interpretation of "Willow Weep For Me" reflects Wes Montgomery's inspiration on her.

The other selections are of a similar standard with the album closing on a bright, bebop blues, "Bright Note," that again has her share the spotlight with saxophonist Gordon. It caps this first-rate recording with some stellar straight-ahead jazz guitar backed by an excellent band. Ron Weinstock



MIKE MORGAN AND THE CRAWL

The Lights Went Out In Dallas

M.C. RECORDS

Reviewing Mike Morgan and the Crawl's album "Texas Man" in 2002, I wrote that Morgan "brings together Gulf Coast gumbo and guitar shuffles with a healthy dose of Hound Dog Taylor inspired Chicago slide boogies." A couple of years later, I concluded a review of "Live in Texas," stating, "Morgan is a steady singer and a guitarist who really works the groove while spinning out his lines and the Crawl is rock solid behind him, resulting some entertaining blues." Times have changed, and his old bandmate Lee McBee has passed, as has his musical inspiration, Lazy Lester, to whom this new album is dedicated.

Morgan's vocals and guitar is backed by Drew Allain on bass and Kevin Schermerhorn on drums, along with keyboardists Mike Flanigin, Christian Dozzler, and Matt Farrell. There are guest appearances by Anson Funderburgh and Shawn Pittman (who takes a vocal and also plays some piano). There is a mix of blues, roots, and pop-oriented material, of which Morgan wrote 10 of the 13 tracks.

Channeling Chuck Berry, Morgan kicks off with some rock and roll, "Ding Dong Daddy." He shares the guitar spotlight with Funderburgh on a number that one can envision Morgan doing a duck walk to. He also sings quite convincingly. It is followed by a soulful R&B ballad, "Please Accept My Love," with his heartfelt singing set against backing vocals and riffing horns, along with a nifty guitar solo. Shawn Pittman handles piano while Christian Dozzler adds atmospheric accordion on a sterling cover of Lazy Lester's "A Woman." Along with his heartfelt original, "Lazy Lester," it serves as a moving tribute to the swamp blues legend. On the latter number, Morgan skillfully incorporated lines from some of Lester's recordings in this song.

The one instrumental, "Funkafaction," is an engaging instrumental. At the same time, "The Fracas By the Pecos" is a fascinating bit of storytelling, with the music sounding a bit like an Ennio Morricone spaghetti Western soundtrack. It provides a foundation for Morgan's atmospheric tremolo guitar and Chris McGuire's mariachi trumpet. The title track is an evocative recollection of a storm wreaking havoc in Dallas. Pittman

is showcased in "Working For the Man," a rockabilly-tinged number about the travails of a working man who is doing all the living he can while working for the man. "Out in the Jungle" is an easy rocking blues shuffle that is followed by an intense cover of "Goin' Down To Eli's" from Robert Nighthawk's Maxwell Street Market recording.

Morgan evoked Ennio Morricone on the pop-tune, "Our Last Goodbye," this listener found Morgan's performance suggesting the Beatles in another excellent performance. This track closed another memorable and outstanding blues and roots recording from Mike Morgan and the Crawl.

Ron Weinstock



RICHARD WILLIAMS

Hollywood Christmas

SELF-PRODUCED

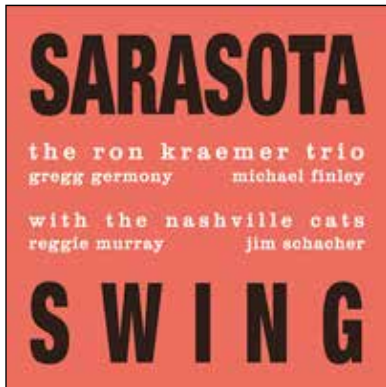
Here is an entertaining album of Christmas standards from composer, arranger, and multi-instrumentalist Richard Williams. Williams is on the piano chair leading a big band with such holiday classics as "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," "The Christmas Song," "Rocking' Around the Christmas Tree," and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." His big band includes saxophonists Eric Marienthal and Brandon Fields, trumpeters Wayne Bergeron and Mitchell Cooper, and trombonists Andy Martin and Erik Hughes. Williams engaged the famed Budapest Scoring Orchestra for strings and additional woodwinds to add an orchestral sound to some selections.

This album is an enjoyable set of performances with well-delivered vocals and handsome arrangements. Alex Styles, with a background chorus, delivers a warm vocal for "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" that might suggest the relaxed crooning of Andy Williams. He also offers a tasteful rendition of "The Christmas Song." Nate Bryant buoyantly sings "The Holiday Season-Pt.1" set against a swinging backing that segues into a brief chorus of "Happy Holidays" with the vocal group Company B. The lovely voice of Taylor Lorenz is heard on cinematic "White Christmas." At the same time, Taylor Miranda revives the big band swing of "Rocking' Around the Christmas Tree" with a booting tenor sax solo in the mold of Sam Butera. Further Big Band cheer surrounds Benny Beneck's outstanding interpretation of "Let It Snow." These are representative of the vocals heard on this CD.

In addition to the vocal selections, the backing tracks

are included after the vocal tracks. In summary, a collection of enjoyable, easy-to-listen-to music that will warm many holiday homes.

Ron Weinstock



THE RON KRAEMER TRIO WITH THE NASHVILLE CATS

Sarasota Swing
SELF-PRODUCED

After relocating to Florida from New Jersey, guitarist Ron Kramer formed a new trio, recruiting Gregg Germony on upright bass and Michael Finley on brushes. Able to work around the Sarasota area, where some outdoor venues remained open during the pandemic, they honed a group sound that brought together swing, blues, bebop, and Latin jazz. For making this record, they recruited Nashville musician Reggie Murray to add saxophone and the Hammond B-3. The four musicians collaborated on the tunes.

There is nothing profound musically here, just solid soul-jazz-styled performances with doses of rock and roll and blues. Kraemer comes off as a fleet, capable guitarist whose jazzy-blues licks evoke Kenny Burrell and other guitarists who also spanned jazz and blues worlds, such as Bill Jennings, Tiny Grimes, and Billy Butler. With Murray, a good portion of this album captures the feel of some of those classic organ jazz recordings by the likes of Jimmy Smith, John Patton, and Jack MacDuff. Murray is a robust saxophonist who gets down with blues while getting tender with a ballad in the vein of Houston Person, Clifford Solomon, Harold Ousley, Plas Johnson, and Percy France.

The opening “Junior Steps” is an easy swinging blues-tinged bop number that allows Kraemer and Murray to show off their chops and ability to craft their solos. Murray’s organ helps provide the foundation for the performance, and he has a wonderful tone on his sax solo. Then with Kraemer and Murray’s organ comping, Murray takes a stellar solo on “Siesta Afternoon,” with its lazy groove. He also solos on organ on this number. “The Craw” is a superb steamy blues instrumental with Kraemer showing off jazz-blues chops like Duke Robillard, the late Charlie Baty, and Ronnie Earl.

Other selections of note include “At the Blasé Café,” with Kraemer’s marvelous fleet jazzy playing, and “Bo Knows,” built upon the Bo Diddley beat that opens with some raucous saxophone before some

interaction between the leader’s guitar and Murray’s sax. “Fred’s Bop” is a delightful bop-tinged swinger with Kraemer ably shaping a bop-inflected solo. At the same time, “Gone Gulfin’g” is a shuffle with a melodic line evoking classic Bill Doggett instrumentals. “Hampton Roads” is a sultry blues that evokes Magic Sam’s “All Your Love” and has a more stunning yet uncluttered guitar from Kraemer and some top-flight bluesy saxophone.

The rest of the album is on a similar level, with consistently strong playing. The duo of Germony and Finley propel the music with firm, but relaxed swing, while Kraemer and Murray are terrific. The music may not break new ground but undoubtedly will delight jazz and blues lovers.

Ron Weinstock



ROBERTA DONNAY

Blossom-ing
VILLAGE JAZZ CAFE

Veteran singer, composer, and producer Roberta Donnay has put together a celebration of the music of Blossom Dearie. She was mentored by the likes of Bob Dorough and Dan Hicks. Dorough, a former collaborator with Dearie, provided Donnay with a close linkage to Dearie. Donnay has previously recorded songs associated with the legendary Dearie. Still, the present album is entirely devoted to Dearie. The album has her interpreting 16 songs associated with Dearie for the album, a few written by Dearie and others written by diverse composers and lyricists. For this album, she gathered some of Northern California’s finest jazz musicians, including Mike Greensill (piano), Ruth Davies (bass), Mark Lee (drums), Jose Neto (guitar), David Sturdivant (harmonica), and Los Angeles-based MB Gordy (percussion).

Blossom Dearie has been described as a minimalist with a kittenish voice and a playful style. Donnay sings similarly with a delicate, soft tuneful voice marvelously backed throughout. The rhythm trio of Greensill, Davies and Lee stands out with the nuanced, sophisticated backing. Things start with “Roberta’s Blues,” Donnay’s take on Dearie’s adaptation of a Billie Holiday recording. It is a likable performance, even if she does invest the lyrics with a deep blues feeling. Greensill’s piano solo is of note. A delightful flirty vocal marks her take of “Peel Me a Grape” with a neat guitar solo.

Donnay duets with Ruth Davies to open “Just One of Those Things,” and the tempo accelerates when pianist Greensill enters. He takes a lively solo.

Neto’s striking guitar provides a spare accompaniment for the beginning of “Inside a Silent Tear.” Sung in French, “Plus Je T’Embrasse,” Donnay displays clean enunciation and phrasing backed by a swinging accompaniment. The rest of the performances have similar qualities with her easy-to-listen, melodious voice and the understated accompaniment, such as on “Someone To Watch Over Me.” Then one gets the blues-rooted take on “The Party’s Over,” the coquettish feel of “If I Were a Bell,” and the lyrical romanticism of “I Wish You Love.” Her vocals and marvelous backing result in a thoroughly delightful vocal album.

Ron Weinstock



THE HOGTOWN ALLSTARS

Hog Wild
STONY PLAIN

The Hogtown Allstars is a Toronto-based band led by the vocals and harmonica of former Downchild member Chuck Jackson. Other members include former Downchild bassist Gary Kendall, Pat Carey (sax), Jim Casson drums), Tyler Yarema (piano/organ), Teddy Leonard (guitar), and Howard Moore (trumpet). This album is the debut of the band that formed in 2013. It has eight originals (mainly by Jackson) and two covers. The album was recorded throughout 2021.

Jackson is an appealing, gravelly-voiced vocalist kicking off with the Crescent City-styled grooves of “Mr. Lucky” with clever lyrics about having the world on a string, and no matter what happens, he always comes out smelling like a rose. The horns are punchy, the rhythm is spot on, pianist Yarema gets that rumba rhythm down, and Moore adds gutbucket trumpet. The title track has a driving rhythm, with Leonard playing some incendiary guitar. Then there is a relaxed shuffle, “Real Good Night,” with a celebration of good times when everything is just right. Other selections include “Angel in My Bed,” with a swamp pop flavor with Jackson’s tear-in-his-beer singing. The Little Feat evoking “Subway Casanova” puts the spotlight on Leonard’s slide guitar and Yarema’s jangly piano. “Biscuits and Beans” is an acoustic feature for Jackson (who adds crying harmonica) and Leonard’s guitars.

One can readily understand the appeal of this Cana-

dian band. With some excellent original material, a tight band with exceptional soloists, and Jackson’s straight-forward vocals, “Hog Wild” is an album that blues and roots music lovers will go ‘wild’ about.

Ron Weinstock



THE COMET IS COMING

Hyper-Dimensional Expansion Beam
IMPULSE

This set of ostensibly electronic dance music plays out as a series of engaging human/machine encounters as group member Shabaka wields a tenor sax (and a shakuhachi on one track) in the face of an array of electronic gear generating insistent beat patterns and elementally ferocious soundscapes.

The saxophonist’s stance ranges from percussive pugilism to fiery spirituality accordingly and the trio overall achieves variation and even notions of “swing” one might not expect from this genre. This is a set that pays delightful dividends to open ears. *Duane Verh*



THE MIGHTY SOUL DRIVERS

I’ll Carry You Home
HOG HEAVEN RECORDS

The New England-based The Mighty Soul Drivers are inspired by the classic Soul sounds of Memphis, Muscle Shoals, and such performers as O.V. Wright, Percy Sledge, and Otis Redding. The band brings together covers with original tunes written in the classic style. According to the band’s website, they “turn every venue they play into a Soul Dance party.” The Mighty Soul Drivers’ members are vocalist Bob Orsi; River City Slim (Peter Rost) on drums; Larry Wiley on guitar;

Tony Delisio on bass; Steve Donovan on keyboards; John Smayda on saxophones; and Neil Tint on brass. Paul Gabriel and Michael St. George guest on guitar on some tracks, and some selections have backup singing. Orsi and Rost each wrote three songs, and Orsi and Donovan collaborated on one original.

The band's strength is vocalist Orsi who establishes himself as a noteworthy blue-eyed soul singer. The band is a solid, idiomatic one with the horns as prominent as the guitar and keyboards. Things start with a tough cover of the old Temptations hit "Can't Get Next to You." Orsi soulfully sings convincingly on the title track, an original soul ballad where one of the background singers handles one verse with Tint adding some flugelhorn. Rost's "Party By The Tower" musically suggests the Tommy Ridgely recording "The Girl From Kooka Monga," as Orsi sings about James Cotton playing the legendary Shaboo Inn with a booting tenor sax solo and twisting, slashing guitar.

Paul Gabriel contributes some dirty, fuzz-toned guitar to "A Little Bit of That," with riffing horns and organ contributing to the brooding feel. Orsi also does a most credible rendition of the Solomon Burke hit, "Cry For Me," based on the slower recording by Betty Harris, which is followed by a vigorous cover of Bobby Bland's "I Wouldn't Treat a Dog." They suggest Bland's Malaco recordings with Wiley's guitar standing out on this last number. The other cover is Clarence Carter's "Tell Papa," which most may know from Etta James' "Tell Mama." Orsi's fervent singing is complemented by the Soul Drivers, who come across like the Muscle Shoals studio band. "Piece of My Pride" is built upon Donovan's rollicking piano with a rambunctious baritone sax solo.

The strong playing and Orsi's formidable vocals make for a thoroughly engaging album of blue-eyed soul that exhibits why this band is such a regional favorite.

Ron Weinstock



THE ROCK HOUSE ALL STARS

Let It Bleed Revisited - An Ovation From Nashville QUALIFIED RECORDS

"Let It Bleed Revisited" is a tribute album to one of The Rolling Stones' most celebrated albums from several Nashville area roots and country rockers. The Rock House All Stars consist of producers John Heithaus on

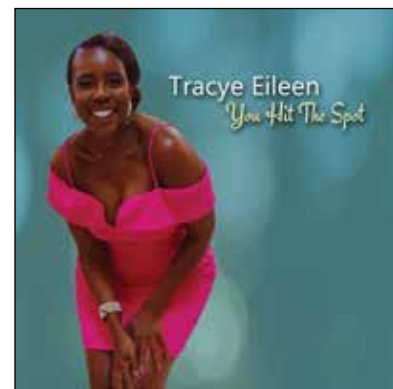
bass and Kevin McKendree on piano, guitars, backing vocals, and percussion, along with Yates McKendree on drums and Rob McNelley on guitars. There are many guest musicians as well as featured vocalists, many of whom will be mentioned below.

While the brief liner notes talk about freshly reimagined arrangements for the songs, the performances sound patterned after the originals. I was impressed by Jimmy Hall's terrific vocal, supported by Bekka Bramlett, on the opening "Gimme Shelter," on which Hall adds harmonica. James Pennebaker contributes the mandolin behind Emil Justian's vocal on the country-tinged cover of "Love in Vain," which is not as compelling a vocal as Jagger. Pennebaker also contributes guitar to Lee Roy Parnell's interpretation of "Country Honk (Honky Tonk Blues)."

Seth James delivers an energetic vocal of "Live With Me," while Emil Justian and Greg Mayo revive the title track. Stephen Hanner adds harmonica behind Rick Huckaby's vocal for "Midnight Ramble." One of the most appealing vocals is Nalani Rothrock's soulful singing on "You Got the Silver." Mike Farris handles the animated rendition of "Monkey Man Blues" with considerable energy, while Wendy Moten and Sarachel are the vocalists on a solid cover of "You Can't Always Get What you Want."

A rendition of "Wild Horses" with the vocals of Lilly Hiatt and Luke Bulla is included as a bonus track (it was not on "Let It Bleed"). Hiatt's singing is particularly attractive. It closes an enjoyable, if not profound, tribute album. I note this album won an Americana Music Award for a rock album.

Ron Weinstock



TRACYE EILEEN

You Hit The Spot HONEY CRYSTAL RECORDS

I am familiar with Chicago singer Tracye Eileen from being on her email list, where she details her monthly performances at Buddy Guy's Legends and other matters. This CD allowed me to hear this talented vocalist at last. This release, her fourth, is the first to focus strictly on her straight-ahead jazz roots as she interprets eight jazz standards. Five selections were recorded live at Piano Forte Chicago with a backing trio of Dennis Lexicon on piano, Paul Martin on bass, and Linard Stroud on drums. The other three studio

recordings have a larger band: Jeremy Kahn on piano, Jon Deotemyer on drums, Stewart Miller on bass, Steve Eisen on reeds, Raphael Crawford on trombone, and Victor Garcia on trumpet.

The studio recordings sandwich the five trio performances. All the tracks swing, although in different ways. The brassy fuller ensemble helps showcase her tonal and dynamic range along with her exquisite phrasing and delivery of the lyrics kicking off with the exuberance of “I Love Being Here With You.” Garcia is showcased in addition to her powerful vocal on the title track. Besides her full-throated singing, Eisen, Crawford, and Kahn deliver concise, strong solos. Her singing for the trio performances displays a more intimate, alluring quality. This is particularly evident on a sterling interpretation of “The Very Thought of You.” Pianist Lexicon channels Count Basie for the introduction to “This Can’t Be Love.”

There are uncredited strings that join the sextet backing Eileen on “The End of a Love Affair,” which closes this album. Tracye Eileen cites Sarah, Billie, Ella, and Dinah as inspirations, and her vocals with the excellent backing have resulted in exquisite listening on a brief but outstanding recording.

Ron Weinstock



THE TEXAS HORNS
Everybody Let's Roll
BLUE HEART RECORDS

It says so much about The Texas Horns' place in the blues and roots music scene that so many guests joined them on this new recording. They have added their sound to numerous recordings and performances for 25 years. The Texas Horns is comprised of Mark 'Kat' Kazanoff on tenor sax, John Mills on baritone sax, and Al Gomez on trumpet. There is quite a crew of musicians backing them, and I will only list some of the more notable ones. These include Carolyn Wonderland on vocals, Anson Funderburgh on guitar, Mike Zito on guitar, Johnny Moeller on guitar, Matt Hubbard on keyboards, Michael Cross on vocals, Guy Forsyth on vocals, Jimmy Vaughan on vocals and guitar, Mike Flanigin on B-3 organ, Carmen Bradford on vocals, and Marsha Ball on keyboards.

Musically, this is a varied set of performances ranging from Louisiana boogies, rock and roll, funk vamp numbers, and more, with the Horns supplying emphatic ensemble

horns and spirited solos. The vocalists vary from the superior vocals of Carolyn Wonderland, Mike Zito, Mike Cross, Guy Forsyth, and former Basie singer Carmen Bradford to the credible singing of Jimmy Vaughan and Kat Kazanoff.

Wonderland kicks off on a high note for the title track that celebrates The Texas Horns. Other selections of note include the instrumental “I Ain’t Mad With You” with Johnny Moeller’s incendiary guitar and Matt Hubbard’s organ interlaced with some raspy sax solos. This tune sounds based on Huey Piano Smith’s “Roberta.” “Alligator Gumbo” is a rollicking New Orleans flavored party number with Anson Funderburgh shining on guitar. Guy Forsyth sings robustly on “Die With My Blues On,” with atmospheric solos from Kazanoff and Moeller. An instrumental interpretation, “I Want You (She’s so Heavy),” places the spotlight on trumpeter Gomez as well guitarist Moeller.

While Jimmy Vaughn may have limits as a singer, his guitar and John Mills’ booting baritone song lift up “Too Far Gone.” Carmen Bradford’s singing on “Watcha Got to Lose” may be the album’s high point, with her shouting set against a hot swing and shuffle. Kazanoff plays harmonica on this selection. Mills also gets down on the baritone sax before Anson Funderburgh takes an inspired solo. One would love to hear a whole album of Bradford with the Texas Horns. This track is that good. Gomez’s instrumental “Apocalypso” takes out down to the Caribbean with the sailed crew. Moeller’s twisting, unpredictable guitar playing is matched by Gomez’s fiery Mariachi-tinged trumpet and Mills’ barreling baritone.

This album closes with a spirited rendition of J.B. Lenoir’s “J.B.’s Rock,” with Jimmy Vaughan’s guitar playing off the horns and Kazanoff’s riveting tenor sax. The music ranges from simply solid performances to several inspired performances. This album is a most entertaining disc that is perfect for listening to or having a party with

Ron Weinstock



CORKY SIEGEL'S CHAMBER BLUES
More Different Voices
DAWNSERLY RECORDS

Best known to rank and file blues fans as the harmonica half of the Siegel-Schwall Blues Band, Corky Siegel has long had another side- adding his harmonica to classical music. Over the years he’s played with 38 symphonies including New York, Boston, Philadelphia and NHK Japan. This disc features a Chambers Blues

ensemble with violins, viola, cello and Tabla accompanying Siegel and a host of vocalists.

While Siegel's harmonica is a frequent feature in the tunes it gets a more prominent role on the Marcella Detroit penned "There Goes My Man" where both Detroit and Siegel play with gusto. In a similar vein, Siegel goes deep into the harmonica trick bag on "Joyful Jambalaya" for a hard hitting counter-point to the violins and electric Viola laid down by Chihuan Yang. Jazz saxophone enters the mix compliments of Ernie Watts on Oasis where Watts leads the chamber ensemble in a wide-ranging sonic exploration over the insistent Tabla groove laid down by Kalyan "Johnny Bongo" Tathak. Siegel takes the microphone on his own "Twisted" which finds the original version getting wrapped in the ensemble's classical strings for a decidedly different twist. Country blues singer Tracy Nelson is featured on "Down So Low" with her stark piano chart given additional depth by the string quartet. "Hine ma Tov Blues" is a timely call for peace from Ukrainian Cantor Pavel Roytman.

While this adventurous marriage of the blues and classical music may not be everyone's cup of tea, it provides a welcome vacation from the standard boogies and shuffles that make up much of the blues. Throw this into the mix once in awhile and flex a different part of your blues muscles.

Mark Smith



MUD MORGANFIELD

Portrait DELMARK

"Portrait" is a rerelease of Larry 'Mud' Morganfield's second album, "Son of the Seventh Son," which was initially issued on Severn Records. The recording, by the eldest son of the legendary Muddy Waters, is augmented by a previously unissued track from the original 2011 sessions and a newly recorded gospel song. Morganfield's vocals on this recording were backed by a stellar studio band of guitarists Rick Kreher and Billy Flynn, pianist Barrelhouse Chuck (Goering); bassist E.G. McDaniel with Kenny 'Beedy Eyes' Smith on drums. Producer Corritore and Harmonica Hinds share the harmonica duties for these February 2011 recordings. On the recently recorded track, Morganfield is on bass and joined by guitarists Kreher and Mike Wheeler, keyboardist Luca Chiellini, and drummer

Cameron Lewis.

About the music on "Son of the Seventh Son, I wrote in 2012 "From the opening notes of the reworking of J.T. Brown's "Short Dress Woman," to his own "Blues In My Shoes," celebrating his father's legacy, Mud Morganfield evokes his legendary father. The performances are solid blues in the style of his father and the backing band does a solid job of evoking the Muddy Waters Band sound of the mid-sixties through the end of Waters' celebrated career. This is a solid band that sounds so at home playing in the style of Waters.

"Mud may not quite match his father's style, but he comes close. The level of the performances are solid throughout although several stand out including the opening reworking of his father's recording of "Short Dress Woman," Studebaker John's "Son of the Seventh Son," the amusing "Catfishing," (where he goes all the way to the bottom because that's where all the fat cats go) on which Barrelhouse Chuck is on organ and Harmonica Hinds is on harp, and "Health" on which Corritore shines in his harp accompaniment as Mud strongly sings about having money and fame don't mean anything if one does not have good health. The playing is strong throughout and certainly captures the flavor of Muddy Waters recordings from the seventies. I am not sure who takes the guitar solo on "Loco Motor," but the guitarist does a good job of evoking Jimmy' Fast Finger' Dawkins in his guitar solo."

Listening to these selections today, I am again struck by how fresh they still sound. Furthermore, one is reminded just how great Barrelhouse Chuck was, especially on piano. The aforementioned "Loco Motion" has one of his several dazzling solos on this album to go with some spectacular harmonica from Corritore, who produced the original album. The new song, "Praise Him," is a heartfelt thanks to the Lord, although different in tone from the rest of the music. Previously unissued is a solid rendition of "Good Morning Little School Girl," with Corritore on acoustic harmonica with some tasteful backing.

As I wrote in 2012, "Mud does a strong job of conjuring up his late father's blues and the backing band certainly contributes to the overall feel of this band." Delmark has remixed the previously issued recordings, and even if this were a straight reissue of the earlier album, it would be quite welcome. Hopefully, it will bring Mud Morganfield's blues to the fore. That will be a very good thing.

Ron Weinstock

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MATHIEU SOUCY

Recollecting INNER-BOP RECORDS

The debut album, "Recollecting," from Canadian guitarist Mathieu Soucy, displays his considerable talents as a player and composer. He composed six of the nine tracks. Joining Soucy are pianist Gentian MG, bassist Mike De Masi, and drummer Jacob Wutzke. Caity Gyorgy adds vocals to two selections.

Soucy's composing, and playing talents are evident on the opening "Lennie's Changes," a composition inspired by Lennie Tristano. The performance over the intriguing melodic line also showcases the considerable solo skills of Soucy, MG, and Wutzke in a free-floating fashion. Gyorgy's lovely voice enlivens the Rogers & Hart standard, "Where or When," with a scintillating guitar solo and some superb scattling. Soucy's mix of chords and single note runs, as well as the development of his solos, impresses. Gyorgy contributed the lyrics to "Thinker and a Fool," a bossa nova flavored composition about a mismatched couple with a marvelously lyrical piano solo. Other tracks include a light swinging "Blues For Barry," a Monkish blues, "5th Avenue," and a sterling solo rendition of Monk's "Reflections."

Closing this recording is the title track, with unexpected twists and turns and more inspired playing. The superb ensemble playing needs to be stated as another factor making "Recollecting" an auspicious debut recording by Mathieu Soucy. **Ron Weinstock**

RORY BLOCK

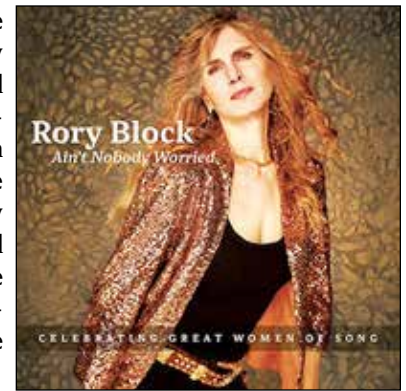
Ain't Nobody Worried

Celebrating The Great Women Of Song STONY PLAIN

After numerous discs honoring the legacy of blues legends such as Skip James, Robert Johnson, Son House, Mississippi Fred McDowell and, more recently, Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey and Memphis Minnie, Rory Block turns her attention here to women with a more contemporary impact on modern music. While there are some that fall easily into the blues category such as Elizabeth Cotton, Koko Taylor, Etta James and Bonnie Raitt, half of the artists represent a stylist stretch for Block who has built a career on her knack for breathing new life into blues history.

There is gospel compliments of the Staple Sing-

ers classic, "I'll Take You There", soul by way of Gladys Knight and the Pips and their massive hit, "Midnight Train to Georgia", a slice of Motown on Mary Wells' "My Guy" and the big party groove of Martha and the Vandellas' "Dancing in the Streets"



While these cuts hew close to the blues in inspiration if not structure, Block also adeptly tackles folk rock on Tracy Chapman's powerful "Fast Car" and Carole King's sing-along classic, "You've Got a Friend." Her own "Lovin' Whiskey" fits comfortably into the mix of these classics. Unifying this broad swath of styles is Block's tasteful guitar which honors but does not get held captive to the original charts and her powerful vocals- on both lead and harmony! **Mark Smith**



VANESSA RACCI

Jazzy Italian ZOH0

Of Italian-American descent, vocalist Vanessa Ricci's new album focuses on songs associated with many of the Italians and Italian-Americans who have left their mark on jazz.

She is joined by a pair of gifted and accomplished pianists/arrangers, Steven Feifke and Glafkos Kontemeniotis, whose horn writing and harmonic and metric alterations make even century-old songs sound contemporary. Feifke and Kontemeniotis also play piano on this recording. Others heard backing Ms. Racci include Mark Lewandowski on bass, Charles Gould on drums, Sam Dillon on sax and flute, Max Darche on trumpet and flugelhorn; Alex Jeun on trombone; and Danny Conga Valdez on congas.

This writer is unfamiliar with "Betcha I Getcha," penned by Joe Venuti and Box Beiderbecke, but one cannot imagine the original recording having the stutter step rhythm of Kontemeniotis's arrangement and whose horn lines are far removed from the horns that would have been heard in early jazz. Ms. Racci establishes herself as an outstanding singer with her pitch,

diction, phrasing, and melodious voice, delivering the lyric along with her horn-like phrasing. "Volare" is a more familiar number, and Feifke's spicy Latin arrangement frames the Italian lyric. Punchy horns accent Racci's superb singing. Kontemeniotis provides another Afro-Cuban arrangement for another zesty performance, "Make Love To Me," with its tempo changes. Kontemeniotis also takes a lively piano solo on a song that has its roots in the traditional jazz standard, "Tin Roof Blues."

Jean's low register trombone and Gold's drums help Racci introduce the swinging reinvention of the Original Dixieland Jars Band's early composition, "At the Jazz Band Ball." In addition to her terrific vocal, each band member gets to take short breaks. Kontemeniotis's horn voicings, along with Dillon's excellent flute, support Racci's splendid singing on "Moon River." Other updated vintage numbers include a 1928 Guy Lombardo hit, "Coquette," with a bump and grind feeling and a growling trumpet solo. Racci displays her expressive powers in a dramatic fashion singing "I'm a Fool To Want You." The other selections are of similar high quality, including the dazzling hot Latin take on Chick Corea's "You're Everything."

"At Last" is a number that has likely been over-recorded. Ms. Racci adds an original opening verse, while Feifke's arrangement again takes a familiar number and makes it sound like a new song. With superb ensemble backing, the song closes an album of jazz standards that are given contemporary interpretations. The terrific arrangements, excellent backing ensemble, and Vanessa Racci's superb vocals result in a stellar jazz vocal album.

Ron Weinstock



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