

BIG CITY Rhythm & Blues

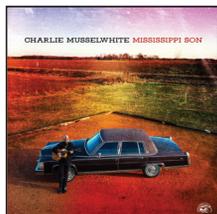
REVIEWS

CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE

Mississippi Son

Alligator Records

Charlie Musselwhite, a country blues artist of considerable insight, ardor and nuance has been recording since the 1960s, cutting nearly forty albums over the years. But this one is particularly memorable. Rather than showcasing his dazzling, ceaselessly inventive harmonica playing backed by a full electric band, *Mississippi Son's* fourteen songs, including eight energetically straightforward originals, feature straight-from-the-heart vocals and arioso harmonica playing that act as the perfect foil to his distinctive, at times mesmerizing, guitar work. On half the titles he is discretely accompanied solely by the alert duo of drummer Ricky "Quicksand" Martin and acoustic standup bassist Barry Bays. Having recently moved back to Mississippi from northern California, Musselwhite recorded these bare-bones, intensely raw performances at a studio in Clarksdale, in the heart of the Delta, commenting in his liners that: "All the tunes I wrote on *Mississippi Son* are based on things I think about and/or witnessed. They all somehow are extensions of me." From the decidedly autobiographical, self-penned opener "Blues Up the River" to the woefully melancholy rendition of Charley Patton's "Pea Vine Blues" to his own, down-to-earth instrumental "Remembering



Big Joe" (where he plays his friend Big Joe Williamson's guitar) each song rings with his Mississippi heritage while pondering his openhanded take on the world around him. Other nuggets encompass vivid covers of both the Stanley Brothers' "Rank Strangers" and John Lee Hooker's "Hobo Blues" as well as the daydream-based "When The Frisco Left The Shed," the too-short, poignant "A Voice Foretold" (from the Blind Boys of Alabama songbook) and yet another Hooker classic—the compellingly cold-blooded "Crawling King Snake." One of those endlessly rewarding personalized projects that bring sage wisdom and reality to the unfailingly honest truth of the blues.—Gary von Tersch

BIG AL AND THE HEAVYWEIGHTS

Love One Another

Vizztone Records

Here's the latest from band namesake and drummer "Big Al" Lauro and his squad of Americana and blues vets, The Heavyweights. Lauro cut some early musical teeth as a member of Outlaw Country star David Alan Coe's band in the late '70s. After a few years playing with guitarist Warren Haynes in a splinter band called the Unknown Blues Band,

Lauro decided to form his own group. Alas, all these years later you find the latest and greatest in "Love One Another." In addition to Lauro, the album also features Wayne Lohr on keyboards/vocals, Marcel Anton on guitar/vocals and Mark Parsons handling bass and singing. They've also got some great guests to help contribute to and navigate through this diverse and action-packed blues, country and roots music



experience.

The album opens with a message song that could not be more apropos. "Love One Another" is a message that is directed at the heart of humanity. And with all the craziness and war going on in the world right now their Canned Heat-flavored ode to peace is right on point. Jason Ricci and Luther Dickinson guest on hellacious harmonica and guitar solos, respectively. "I Need a Fix" is a light-hearted song about looking for love at all costs. It's a swinging mix of jazz, blues and rocking guitar work. Lohr's boogie wogie piano solos are off the hook! "Sweet Louise" changes the mood, with laid back vocals and killer slide guitar. A catchy chorus and interesting bridge modulation captures your attention. They travel down to New Orleans for the infectious beat of "Wild Tchoupitoulas." With its

catchy refrain, crazy rhythms and barrelhouse piano this sounds like the ultimate barroom or festival track. "Guardian Angel" is a slow and burning gospel-tinged number that features plenty of inspired testifying and stellar organ work. "It's Alright with Me" is another swing-oriented piece that spotlights cool riffs, eerie harmonica by Ricci and a jazzy noir-type feel. They shift gears once again for the southern rocker "Stop This Messing Around." It's got a strong Allman Brothers vibe and accessible hooks. Another Jason Ricci feature shines by way of "What Can I Say?" Anton's saturated and soulful guitar and the song's relentless mid-tempo shuffle can't be beat. The band throws a serious-toned curve ball, with the reflective "I'm Your Man." Apparently it seems to depict aspects of a relationship built on the ravages of substance abuse. In the song the protagonist urges his partner to shed those bad habits and let him prove that he's the man for her. This drama is supported by some interesting syn-copation by Lauro and Anton's Carlos Santana/Robbie Krieger-flavored guitar work. "Too Cold" follows and is a nice danceable and funky guitar-fueled track. "Hurricane" seems to address climate change and keeps the groove upbeat. "Everybody Needs Somebody" is a lot of fun and offers some good old-fashioned soul. "Underground" is kind of an oddity and sounds like Captain Beefheart meets Tom Waits. They conclude with another studio track that just begs to be played

live. The Cajun-oriented "Zydeco Love" features guest Gina Forsyth on fiddle and, simply put, is destined to get you on your feet.

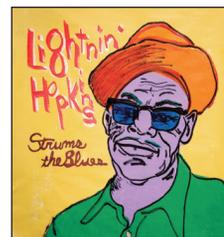
Big Al and The Heavyweights is not your typical roots blues-type band. They drift out into uncharted waters at times and, for the most part, it really connects.—Eric Harabadian

LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS

Strums the Blues

Third Man Records/Universal Music

Originally released in 1958, "Strums the Blues" is a re-issue that was a collection of some of his best work for the Aladdin label. This is another top-notch re-mastered project



lovingly overseen by Warren Defever and Bill Skibbe. From the quality vinyl pressing to the pristine audio quality, the legendary Samuel John ("Lightnin'") Hopkins never sounded so good.

Hopkins was one of the seminal Texas bluesmen that originated the single note country lead guitar approach. His musical style was the template for generations of rock and blues players that followed in his path. He spent some time in prison on an undisclosed charge, worked as a farm hand and was eventually discovered by Lola Anne

Cullum of Aladdin Records while performing on the street in Houston in 1946. The label was based in Los Angeles, so Cullum convinced Hopkins to move there and record. He met and recorded with pianist Wilson Smith while on the west coast. It was a partnership that would bear much fruit over the years.

This 10-song record begins with a loving ode to "Katie May." Hopkins sings, "She's got a body like a T-Model Ford." It's a jaunty little number that features his signature staccato picking style, with piano accompaniment by Smith. Many of Hopkins' tunes are observational and autobiographical. A case in point is "My California." Here he recalls moving out to California to make his home and career. His playing is smooth and clear. "Honey Babe" has kind of a country jump to it. It's very catchy and a nice example of the way in which Hopkins would seamlessly integrate rhythm and licks. "Short Haired Woman" not only covers one of his favorite subjects but reflects his seemingly endless explosion of soloing ideas. "Little Mama Blues" spotlights more of Wilson Smith's boogie piano and that jump blues beat.

Side Two opens with Hopkins defending his woman in "Shotgun." He always seems to sing from first person, but it's also apparent he was singing about the struggles of relationships in a general sense. He sings, "Bring my shotgun and a pocketful of shells. If I got no competition, there's got to be trouble here." And later

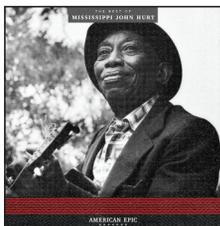
in the same song he shrugs, "The best thing I can do is to leave that woman alone." "Rollin' and Rollin'" is a treatise on masterful fingerpicking and straight ahead traveling blues. Hopkins was always known as a poet and songs like this bear witness to that. "See See Rider" is essentially a traditional folk and blues tune that was popularized by many rock and blues acts, most notably by Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels, The Animals, Elvis Presley, et al. Hopkins chimes in with the tune in, perhaps, its purest form. The final tracks "So Long" and, in particular, "Mistreated" heavily influenced bands like Led Zeppelin, both lyrically and with Hopkins' impassioned vocals and great solo work.

Kudos, once again, to Third Man Records for giving the proper care due such an essential and classic American musical artist.—Eric Harabadian

MISSISSIPPI JOHN HURT
The Best of Mississippi John Hurt

Third Man Records

One of the leading lights in American folk and blues is Mississippi John Hurt. He was born in Teoc, Mississippi on March 8th, 1893. He taught himself to play guitar at age nine and, during his 73 years



on the planet, worked as a sharecropper, recorded for a number of record labels like Okeh and Vanguard, toured the coffeehouse and college circuit in his later years and influenced countless artists in his wake. Bob Dylan, Dave Van Ronk, Jerry Garcia, Beck, Doc Watson, Taj

Mahal and a host of like-minded singer-songwriters have recorded Hurt's songs and owe much gratitude to this seminal icon.

Hurt had a very distinctive approach to the guitar and his vocals. A lot of his material was built off of solo finger-style accompaniment, with his relaxed demeanor defining the intent of the songs. Hurt's overall musical style stayed true to his acoustic country roots and that is reflected in the fine compilation here. Some of his best and most memorable songs were recorded in 1928 at studios in New York and Memphis. In fact, two of Hurt's first recordings, "Frankie" and "Nobody's Dirty Business," were recorded in Memphis when he was discovered by Okeh Records' talent scout Tommy Rockwell. Some of his best signature fare that has stood the test of time are included here. There are murder ballads, in addition to "Frankie," like "Louis Collins" and "Stack O'Lee Blues." There is also a diverse array of work songs like "Spike Driver Blues," blues standards such as "Ain't No Tellin'," gospel numbers like "Praying on the Old Camp Ground" and "Blessed Be the Name," and even playful sexual innuendo, with "Candy Man." There is an unreleased track called "Big Leg Blues" and a homesick ode he dedicated to his Mississippi hometown "Avalon Blues," during winter recording sessions in NYC.

The source material for this album was taken from the original tracks that were featured as part of the "American Epic" documentary series by director Bernard MacMahon. The restoration of these tracks was done by Peter Henderson, Duke Erikson and Joel Tefteller. The songs sound as fresh and vital today as ever. Third Man Records has done a brilliant job bringing the legacy of Hurt to a whole new audience. The album is pressed on heavy top

quality vinyl, with the finest frequency response and lowest excess surface noise possible.—Eric Harabadian

JONNY T-BIRD & THE MPs
Play Time

www.jonnybird.com

Jon "Jonny T-Bird" Neuberger is a Milwaukee-based guitarist/singer/songwriter who also plays a pretty good harmonica. "Play Time" follows his 2020 release "Common Cents." The only MP holdover from that album is "Cadillac" Craig Carter, who received that nickname because his stage presence is so smooth. The newest and youngest member of the group is the multi-talented Jenna Kopitske, who not only



plays drums on nine of the ten tracks, but also plays keyboards, specifically Wurlitzer electric piano and B3 Hammond organ. All the songs were written by Jonny T-Bird, except "No Guarantee," which was co-written with Jenny Abbott Goodell, who also supplies tasty lead guitar to that track. Neuberger plays all the other guitar parts on the album. His tone and styles are varied from song to song: the fuzzy, tremolo slide on "Take Me Home With You," the clean hybrid picking on "Grown Man Blues," the overdriven grunge on "I See You" to the wah wah on "Quittin' Time." In fact, his different approaches are largely what makes the album such a nice listening experience: no two tracks sound alike. T-Bird stretches things out in the seven-plus minute slow blues "Love Is A Four Letter Word," while the album closes with the autobiographic "Rockin' In

the music GETS US THRU

BRAD VICKERS
and his Vestapolitans

www.BradVickers.com

BRAND NEW RECORDING!

Even More Great Blues, Jump, Roots 'n' Roll

Book the band NOW!

MAN HAT TONE 2010

Vision561.com
harab1@comcast.net

Lisa Hagopian
Eric Harabadian
award winning filmmakers

Nothin' but Music Paradise Boogie

Vision 561 Productions

facebook.com/vision561productionsllc 313 516 5937

Always looking for interesting projects

Blues NYC

Blues TV Show and NYC Based Blues Band

Guy Powell
Producer/Drummer/Writer
917-825-2400
Guy@BluesNYC.com www.BluesNYC.com

Wisetree Entertainment

Dirk Wissbaum

Guitarist/Storyteller. Blues-Folk-Pop. Blues History. Festival services, volunteering in backstage hospitality. Experienced Master of Ceremonies, DJ, and blues society member. Live Jazz and Blues photographer and writer.

captdirk@hotmail.com
231-883-3888

Waukesha,” a highlight, featuring a swingin’ horn chart and some powerful backing vocals from Monica Barden. Indeed, there’s some nice work all around on an album named “Play Time.” — **Bob Monteleone**

EMMA WILSON
Wish Her Well
EmmaWilson.net

Emma Wilson is a British soul/blues singer originally from Teesside in the North of England. She’s been a familiar face among UK festival goers and notably appeared with an all-star group including guitarists Mick Taylor, Steve Hackett and others in 2016’s “An Evening For Jack,” a tribute to the late, great Jack Bruce. “*Wish Her Well*” follows 2019’s EP “*Live & Acoustic*,” a set of mostly covers. However, her latest is comprised of



ten original songs written by Wilson or co-written by bandmate Mark Neary and a couple with Neary and guitarist Adam Chetwood.

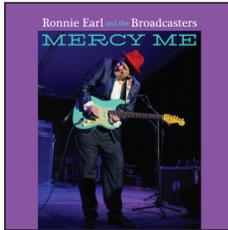
The three musicians backing the entire album include some of the UK’s most prominent sidemen: bassist Mark Neary (Noel Gallagher), drummer Mat Hector (Iggy Pop), and guitarist Chetwood (Mark Ronson). The three musicians, along with Wilson, share production credit with the mixes done by Neary, who also handles keyboards along with his bass duties. The album was recorded in a traditional “live” setting at Jackdaw Studios in Kent, England. The title track starts things off with a low sizzle, leading to “Mary Lou,” sort of a Memphis-style soul rocker, which features some tasty picking by Chetwood. The

rock ballad “Little Love Bite” has some nice production flourishes: an eerie slide guitar that pops in and out along with some ethereal backing vocals by Hector tucked in the corners of the mix. “She Isn’t You” is based on a bluesy minor chord progression, in which Emma’s powerful voice soars above Chetwood’s wah wah guitar licks. In fact, Wilson’s influences include such American stars as Ann Peebles, Aretha Franklin and Mavis Staples, but the more sultry songs on “*Wish Her Well*” might remind one of her fellow Brit Dusty Springfield, when she worked with American producers like Jerry Wexler. “Not Paying” explodes with a Led Zeppelin “How Many More Times” feel before the slinky “Nuthin I Won’t Do” follows, with Mark Neary’s James Jamerson-style licks leading the way. All in all, “*Wish Her Well*” is a fine effort from across the pond, with Emma Wilson’s distinctive voice front and center. — **Bob Monteleone**

RONNIE EARL & THE BROADCASTERS
Mercy Me
Stony Plain Records

Ronnie Earl, a four-time Blues Music Award champion as “Guitar Player of the Year,” follows up the critical and commercial success of his last album, *Rise Up*, with this invigorating twelve-track mix of originals and covers with his long-serving band, the Broadcasters, featuring Dave Lamina on Hammond B3 and piano, vocalist Diane Blue, drummer Forrest Padgett and electric and upright bassist Paul Kochanski in tow—all backing up Earl’s startlingly stirring guitar work that fellow scribe Ron Weinstock colorfully describes thusly: “Earl is a master of tonal dynamics, phrasing and solo construction—building each one like smoldering coals in a charcoal grill that burst into flame when fat

drips down.” Guest musicians include pianist Anthony Geraci (on four numbers including a great, high-wire recall of Muddy’s “Blow Wind Blow”) along with an inspired two man sax duo on seven tracks (Mark Earley and Mario Perrett) and guitarist Peter Ward on five numbers—including the nine minute, ultra moody tour-de-force “The Sun Shines Brightly.”



Further choice cuts include the see-sawing acoustic instrumental “Blues for Ruthie Foster,” an intense tribute to John Coltrane titled “Alabama,” an ardent, slowly unwinding, eleven-minute rendition of Percy Mayfield’s classic “Please Send Me Somebody To Love” and the late-night, shadowy “A Prayer For Tomorrow,” a Geraci composition. To quote another music writer, Ted Drozdowski: “What Ronnie, the son of two Holocaust survivors, pulls from wood, wire and old Fender amplifiers isn’t so much the notes as the sound of the human heart beating with you, crying under the world’s weight or acknowledging the inevitability of another sunrise.” Amen.—**Gary von Tersch**

SUGARAY RAYFORD
In Too Deep
Forty Below Records 2022

Caron Rayford has come a long way from his impoverished Texas roots. Raised by his grandmother, he was playing drums and singing in church by age seven. After a stint in the service, he relocated to San Diego and provided lead vocals for funk and R&B bands, before falling in love with the blues. A stint with the popular Aunt Kizzy’s Boyz

was followed by the singing gig with super-group The Mannish Boys. Since branching out on his own, he has performed in plays, provided studio vocal work, and released lauded albums. His album “*Somebody Save Me*” was nominated for a Grammy, and in both 2019 and 2020, he won the Blues Music Award from the Blues Foundation for Soul Blues Male Artist of the Year; in 2020 he also won the BMA as B.B. King Entertainer of the Year.

“*In Too Deep*,” his sixth solo album, was produced by guitarist and Forty Below label honcho Eric Corne, who also wrote all the tunes. An array of West Coast musicians give sturdy backing, the most recognizable name being guitarist Rick Holmstrom, formerly of



Rod Piazza and the Mighty Flyers and for the last decade guitarist for Mavis Staples. Violin, cello, and a robust horn section add welcome color.

The set of ten tracks stays solidly in the soul blues area; no Mississippi Delta or Chicago twelve bar forays here. The set percolates from the first bars of the opener, “*Invisible Soldier*,” the jaunty horns introducing Sugaray’s powerful vocal. A brief mid-song bridge exposes the talents of bassist Taras Prodaniuk and drummer Matt Tecu. Later in the set, three more songs reveal Corne’s interest in topical issues: “*Miss Information*,” “*United We Stand*,” and “*One*.” The latter song is particularly uplifting: “One message, one voice/Singing for peace.”

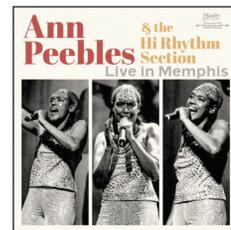
As expected, there are several tracks delving into the funk realm, and “*Please Take My Hand*” is

a gospel tune replete with hand claps and Corne on backing vocal. There is a moving love ballad, “*Golden Lady of the Canyon*,” and Sugaray shines on the title track, “*In Too Deep*,” a lament for self-induced hard times.

Sugaray Rayford has become one of today’s preeminent blues vocalists, and this album will do nothing to diminish his credentials.—**Steve Daniels**

ANN PEEBLES
Live In Memphis
Memphis International Records

Singer/songwriter Ann Peebles gained renown for her Memphis soul albums in the 1970s for Hi Records. Two of her most celebrated songs were “*I Can’t Stand the Rain*” (which she co-wrote) and the hauntingly moody “*I’m Gonna Tear Your Playhouse Down*.” This recently unearthed “live” recording dates from February 1992 at Memphis’ legendary Peabody Hotel and presents Peebles accompanied by the locked-in, celebrated Hi Rhythm Section (Leroy Hodges, Charles Hodges, Howard Grimes and Thomas



Bingham) on nine numbers including the two titles mentioned above. Peebles, originally from St. Louis has made her home in Memphis since her early Hi sessions and speaks of the thrill of performing before a hometown audience. Concerning “*Playhouse*,” she discloses; “*I got into it as if a movie was playing inside my head*.” A convincingly salutary point-of-view approach that carries over to other gems such as a salubriously intense, earth-rumbling cover of

Little Johnny Taylor’s “*Part Time Love*” as well as reflective takes on both the rambunctious “*I Didn’t Take Your Man*” and Johnny Adams’ tired-of-being-alone testimonial “*I Feel Like Breaking Up Somebody’s Home*.”

Peebles’ soulfully mesmerizing voice also shines on a couple other co-writes, “*Let Your Love Light Shine*” as well as a captivating, open-hearted version of “*If I Can’t See You*.” Sadly, Peebles gave up performing after a debilitating stroke in 2012. Hats off to Bob Merlis for bur-nishing her memory with this rewarding project.—**Gary von Tersch**

DOUG MACLEOD
A Soul to Claim
Reference Recordings 2022

All right! Here is another Doug MacLeod album, his 22nd, and it’s a cause to rejoice, because like



every other in the last couple of decades, it’s terrific. MacLeod began playing bass in his teens around St. Louis, and after moving to the West Coast played bass and rhythm guitar for such legends as Pee Wee Crayton. He then formed his own electric blues band and eventually segued into his maximum comfort zone as a solo artist, crafting his own songs. He is a perennial Blues Music Award nominee and has won seven BMAs, including five as Acoustic Blues Artist of the Year.

A few years ago, MacLeod relocated from California to the Memphis area, where he allied with renowned producer Jim Gaines and recorded this set of a dozen original songs in January 2022. On five of the tracks he is accompanied by some of

the best musicians of the area: drummer Steve Potts, bass guitarist Dave Smith, and Rick Steff on keyboards.

The hour-long set showcases MacLeod's strengths: compelling vocals, superb guitar wizardry, and songs which fill the gamut from droll wit to stinging sarcasm to emotionally moving reverie. An added bonus are the liner notes, which contain MacLeod's terse but illuminating explanations of each song.

In the caustic song category, we find "Money Talks" (Doug's pithy liner note: "It sure does") and "Dodge City," a take-down of shifty and dissembling politicians. Words of wisdom are dealt in "Be What You Is" (a song that would be great in introducing children to the blues, with MacLeod on slide meshing especially with Steff's piano); "Grease the Wheel," about taking responsibility for one's own fate; and "Only Porter at the Station," about dealing with a partner who carries past traumatic "baggage." The compassion inherent in the latter song is also prominent in "Where Are You," a plea for respect and support for homeless service veterans.

Humor? Check out the set's longest track, "Dub's Talking Disappointment Blues." The protagonist encounters a woman at a bar: "I asked her what sign she was/And could I buy her a taste/ She said 'My sign is 'Slippery when wet'/Let's go to my place.'" In short order the singer finds out to his dismay that he has met a shockingly bionic woman.

There are two nostalgic songs: "Smokey Nights and Faded Blues" and "Somewhere on a Mississippi Highway." The latter is a fine example of MacLeod's guitar talent; with his rock-steady left hand rhythm base and right hand lead notes, it's hard to believe that he is the only musician playing.

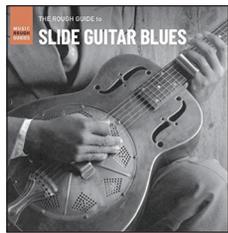
Not to be shortchanged is "Mud Island Morning," the only instrumental of the album, a beautiful and meditative salute to his new Tennessee home. The set closes with "There Is Always Love," inspired by his son Jesse's successful fight against cancer. The song moved me to tears, confirming that MacLeod is a master at playing heartstrings as well as guitar strings.—**Steve Daniels**

SLIDE GUITAR BLUES

Various Artists

Rough Guide CD

The World Music Network has stepped up their game lately (as far as blues goes anyway) with this 25-track compila-



tion that highlights the groundbreaking country blues musicians who pioneered this most arresting of styles during the early recorded heyday of the blues. The vividly incandescent tones of slide playing have duly become one of the most long-lasting "special effects" associated with the guitar while underlining the organically emotional power of the blues. The hypnotic sound energized by a slide guitarist was swimmingly first verified by the composer and self-lauded "Father of the Blues" W.C. Handy who, while waiting for a train at the station in Tutwiler, Mississippi, heard the eerie melody of a guitarist playing with a knife, which in his words created the "weirdest music I had ever heard." The economical yet enlightening sleeve notes by compiler Neil Record that "the use of the slide guitar enabled the creation of supple melodies

and runs at heightened speed like Kokomo Arnold's "Feel So Good," while also allowing guitarists to play slowly and take advantage of its ability to sustain notes, beautifully illustrated by Tampa Red's closing track "Moanin' Heart Blues." He continues: "Picking out a melody on the top strings with greater resonance lent itself perfectly to gospel tunes through the playing of guitar evangelists such as Blind Willie Johnson and Reverend Edward W. Clayburn." He further: "All these tracks prove how the player's ear, and not eyes, was central to the art of playing slide, as pitch intonation depends on touching the strings in exactly the right place. In essence, the slide guitarist must play more like a violinist, always acutely conscious of pitch." Nearly eighty minutes of slide guitar heaven from well knowns like Charley Patton, Son House, Furry Lewis, Leadbelly, Bukka White and Blind Willie McTell as well as lesser knowns such as Barbecue Bob, Bobby Grant, Black Ace, King Solomon, Fred McMullen, Casy Bill Weldon and Blind Joe Reynolds. I'm ready for a Volume Two.—**Gary von Tersch**

JIM DAN DEE

Real Blues

Self-produced 2022

Based in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, over a thousand miles from the mythic Deep South "where the blues was born," the quartet Jim Dan Dee has melded Mississippi hill country blues and power rock-and-roll into a roiling musical stew that has garnered them a devoted following. Bassist Dwayne "Gameshow" Lau and drummer Shawn "Stix" Royal lay down the foundation, saxophonist Jason Sewerynek adds spice, and vocalist and guitarist Jim "Dan Dee" Stefanuk metes out the crunching chords and stiletto-sharp

guitar high notes and gritty vocals. "Real Blues" is the group's second album, a full-throated romp through ten original tunes and one cover, with barely any let-up in intensity.

The group has been compared with Canned Heat, Rory Gallagher, and even the Rolling Stones. Perhaps its closest kinship is with George Thorogood and the Destroyers, demonstrated by "Two Timing Woman." Over blistering guitar licks, including some slide, Stefanuk sings "Got loose change in my pocket/ Got a rattlesnake in my jeans/Ain't nothin' you can slip by me/Seen all there



is to be seen." Thorogood vibes are again present in "Weep for Me," a danceable shuffle driven by Sewerynek's blaring sax, and that sax is prominent in "Two Shakes of a Lamb's Tail," with some pithy back-up singing in the mix.

The band is also able to stretch from its basic groove, as evidenced by a trio of tunes with a slower tempo: "The Doctor," "T for Trouble," and the title track. Stefanuk's passionate vocals and no-holds-barred guitar are the continued focus, but in the title track he also furnishes some six string passages of emotional lyricism. "Money Don't Work on the Devil," the album's closing track, roams with good effect into John Lee Hooker boogie territory.

The only cover of the set is "The Things That I Used to Do" from the 1950s, one of the most famous numbers of the late Guitar Slim (Eddie Jones). Jim Dan Dee's version opens with a passionate unaccompanied vocal intro by Stefanuk and deals out stinging

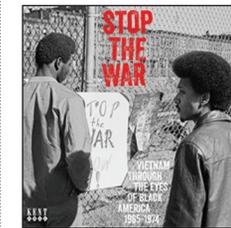
heat rather than the sultry smoothness of Slim; it's Jim Dan Dee playing to its strengths.—**Steve Daniels**

STOP THE WAR

Various Artists

Kent CD

This final installment in Kent's trilogy spotlighting black America's involvement in the Vietnam war is every bit the equal of the pair of collections that preceded it. Featured artists include Top 40 stars such as Marvin Gaye (with the heart-rending "I Want To Come Home For Christmas"), the Impressions (with the bitter title track), William Bell (with the somber "Lonely Soldier"), Dionne Warwick (with an upbeat "I Say A Little Prayer") the



Shirelles (with "My Soldier Boy Is Coming Home"—the follow up to their hit "Soldier Boy") and the Staple Singers with "John Brown," one of the most desperately chilling songs Bob Dylan ever wrote - all alongside lesser known but equally worthy artists including Artie Golden (with the optimistic "I'll Be Home"), R.B. Greaves (with the provocative "Home To Say"), The Sensational Saints with some blistering testifying on "The War Is Over My Brother," The Mighty Hannibal (with the unrelentingly stark "Hymn No. 5"), Dr. William Trully Jr (with a accusatory indictment "The Two Wars Of Old Black Joe") and Allen Orange with his uncompromising "V.C. Blues." Liners author Tony Rounce comments at the outset of his informative notes: "Here are 23 more essential musical statements on aspects of the

Vietnam War as fought on the battlefield and on the home front. The chronology is loose, but the selections do endeavor to tell a complete story, from shipping out to coming home."—**Gary von Tersch**

120 YEARS OF THE CADILLAC CAR

Various Artists

Atomcat CD

RHYTHM AND WESTERN— VOLUME 1

Various Artists

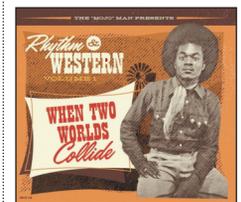
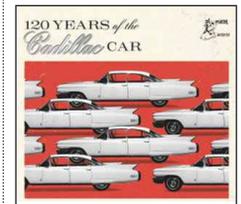
Koko Mojo CD

DANCE CRAZE-A-RAMA VOLUME 1

Various Artists

Atomcat CD

Cadillacs were the capstone symbol of America's post-war prosperity—Sam Phillips, for example, promised a brand-new



caddie to the first one of his Sun artists to sell a million records with Carl Perkins winning the prize for his hit "Blue Suede Shoes." This 30 tracker features titles from 1948 through to 1962 that encompass rhythm & blues, doo-wop, blues, rock 'n' roll and hillbilly plus groups named after the tail-finned, power steering-equipped auto-

mobile and songs with Cadillacs in the lyrics. The R&B and blues artists include the likes of Jimmyiggins and His Drops of Joy ("Cadillac Boogie"), Maurice King ("I Want A Lavender Cadillac"), Jerry McCain ("Courtin' In A Cadillac"), Buddy Johnson ("A Pretty Girl, A Cadillac & Some Money") and yet another "Cadillac Boogie" by Willie Brown. The eight "Rockers and Hillbillies" section features full-speed-ahead numbers from Baker Knight ("Bring My Cadillac Back"), Bob Luman ("Red Cadillac And A Black Moustache"), two versions of "Black Cadillac" by Sonny Wallace and Joyce Green respectively and Donnie Huffman with "Pink Cadillac (And-A-Red-Headed Girl)." Not to overlook combos named after the car including the Eldorados ("Rock 'n' Roll Is For Me" and The Cadillacs with "Speedoo." Lastly there are seven songs that feature Cadillac in the lyrics—from the Medallions ("Coupe De Ville Baby") and Young Jessie ("Mary Lou") to Bo Diddley ("Hey! Bo Diddley") and Vernon Green with "Push Button Automobile." All presented in sharp, re-upholstered sound that will shake your speakers. Let me quote the opening paragraph by aces-high compiler Little Victor (aka "Mojo" Man) regarding the debut of Koko Mojo's fascinating *RHYTHM & WESTERN* series: "This album opens with a fantastic doo-wop version of the first #1 Hillbilly-Honky Tonk hit ever, 'Pistol Packing Mama' by the Hurrricanes, followed by Long John Hunter's rendition of Grandpa Jones' classic 'Old Rattler' before moving to Titus Turner's 'A Knockin' At My Baby's Door' - a song that I believe would have been regarded as C&W if only a white singer instead of Turner had recorded it." This great 28 tracker focuses on black artists doing Country & Western

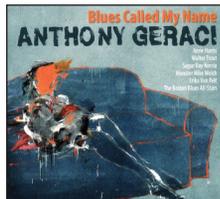
music before the Civil Rights era and by the emergence of artists like Charlie Pride and Linda Martell made it ACCEPTABLE to the VAST MAJORITY of the white audience for an African-American to perform this type of music in the late 1960s. A lot of the tracks here are covers of "classic" C&W songs while many are numbers that were released as R&B only because they were not sung by a white artist and, most delightfully, quite a few are "novelty" type efforts with a strong Country feel or just a C&W twist to them. The best known is probably "Maybelline" by Chuck Berry—the EPITOME of a C&W song by an African-American artist. Other Rhythm & Western eye-openers feature the likes of Fats Domino, Scatman Crothers, the Coasters, Mercy Dee, Esther Phillips, Brook Benton, Koko Taylor, Chuck Willis, Solomon Burke and King Curtis among others. DIG IT! The edifying dance craze album focuses on the late fifties/early sixties as the pop music industry was exploring ways to sell more 45's by inventing new dance crazes, hoping they would sell a million copies. Some of the earliest dance moves like the Chicken, the Horse or the Hitch-Hike are less well-known today, but they remain relevant, while others such as "Shout," "The Bird" and "Willie And The Hand Jive" are well known. Madcap titles abound from the Rivington's "Mama Oom-Mow-Mow," Dee Dee Sharp's "Gravy (For My Mashed Potatoes)" and Donnie Elbert's "Let's Do The Stroll" to the Teen Beats with "The Slop Beat," Clifford Scott's "Kangaroo" and Jimmy McCracklin's "The Wobble." Sides by the likes of The Isley Brothers, The Crystals, The Champs, Chubby Checker, Earl Hooker, Steve A'aimo and Don Covay also impress. And

don't worry, if some of your favorites aren't here they're sure to show up on future *Dance Craze* volumes. Express yourself!—**Gary von Tersch**

ANTHONY GERACI
Blues Called My Name

Blue Heart Records 2022

Keyboard expert Anthony Geraci is on a hot streak, to put it mildly. A mainstay of the New England blues scene for over four decades, Geraci has a stellar career resume, and was an original member of both Sugar Ray [Norcia] & the Bluetones, and Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters, two



premier - and still thriving - blues bands. He has recorded with Big Walter Horton, Muddy Waters, B.B. King, Big Mama Thornton, Otis Rush, and Big Joe Turner, among others. However, national recognition of Geraci was stimulated by the 2015 release of his album "Fifty Shades of Blue," which led to multiple Blues Music Award nominations. He has since accrued fifteen BMA nominations, for his band, his songs, and his keyboard talent, and he won the 2021 BMA as Pinetop Perkins Piano Player of the Year. He is also a past Grammy nominee. In addition to fronting his own Boston blues band and playing keys in the supergroup The Proven Ones, Geraci continues to release

his own albums. This latest, produced by Geraci, renews his partnership with several long-time musical partners as they deftly handle ten of his compositions. Present on all but the final track are drummer Jeff Armstrong and bassist Paul Loranger.

The set contains an array of delicacies, from boogie to ballad, from rave-up to reverie. It kicks off with the upbeat "That Old Pine Box," Charlie O'Neal making one of his four appearances on electric guitar, and with vocal provided by Sugar Ray Norcia himself. Norcia's singing is superb, as it is on two other tracks, including the title tune, which is also enhanced by Monster Mike Welch on guitar. It's a slow number with a nice long Geraci piano solo mid-stream. Following are two of the five instrumentals of the set. "About Last Night" plies the jazz realm, Geraci switching to organ while O'Neal plays some lyrical leads. Then "Boston Stomp" is a trio outing, Loranger's upright bass and Armstrong's steady percussion given equal exposure to Geraci on the 88s.

"Corner of Heartache and Pain" reintroduces O'Neal, and a singer with whom I was unfamiliar, Erika Van Pelt, who adds depth to this emotional number. Then "I Go Ooh" adds some humor and eroticism in its lyrics, and is abetted by guest John Vanderpool on saxophone and with Geraci doing the vocal; it's an amalgam of 1940s big band and 1950s rock sounds. "Into the Night" is over six min-

utes of meditative, slow blues, with some of Anthony's most sublime piano playing and with guest guitarist Walter Trout delivering meditative licks reminiscent of Ronnie Earl.

The album concludes with a varied trifecta of tracks. "I Ain't Going to Ask" is a rocker with Norcia again singing effortlessly and guest Barrett Anderson on guitar, and "Wading in the Vermillion" reverts to instrumental mode, the basic trio joined by violinist Anne Harris in the only track of the set that to me sounds a little disjointed and enervated. Redemption is swift, though, as Geraci closes the set prettily on solo piano with "Song for Planet Earth."—**Steve Daniels**

SHARI PUERTO, FEATURING BLUES ALL-STARS
Lightning's Lessons, Vol. 1

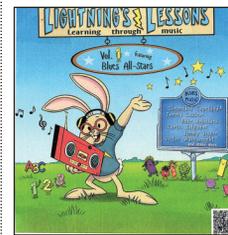
Self-produced 2021

There have been several blues albums directed specifically at children. The best of them attempt to achieve several objectives: to introduce kids to blues music, to teach children some basic life lessons, and simultaneously to provide an entertaining listening experience. Gaye Adegbalola's "Blues in All Flavors" from 2012 is an example that fulfills all three aims. "Lightning's Lessons" is now another.

The endeavor is a project of southern California singer Shari Puerto and her partner, trumpeter Doug Woolverton, both award-winning musicians with sterling resumes. Here they have presented eleven pithy original songs, substantial enough to deliver effective messages but brief enough to maintain the interest of the kindergarteners and first graders to which they aimed. (Presumably further

volumes addressed to older children will follow.) There is an accompanying book available, but the album may be enjoyed by itself.

Obviously, this is not a blues album of twelve bar tracks intended to fill a dance floor. For the sake of simplicity and comprehension, most tracks have only two or three musicians involved. Those musicians, though, comprise a list of the elites of the blues world. With Tommy Castro, Curtis Salgado, Duke Robillard, Shemekia Copeland, John Nemeth, and Victor Wainwright among the principals, it's hard to go wrong.



Among the lessons presented: days and months; numbers/counting; the ABCs; the four seasons; directions. There is a song about the power of imagination: "My Big Blue Tractor." A track about kindness and honesty, "Peter Polite Piggy," is especially noteworthy. Puerto supplies the vocals on five of the tracks, sometimes accompanied by Woolverton, and he renders trumpet on several. In addition to Castro on guitar, ace six-stringers Jimmy Vivino, Laura Chavez, and Chris Vachon (of Roomful of Blues) make nice appearances.

The album closes on an especially high note. The penultimate track, "P-ewe," is hilarious, with Big Lou Johnson doing the vocal and Vanessa Collier adding saxophone, and the set ends with Copeland, Vachon, and organist Mike Dansereau collaborating on "Freddie the Frog." By the end, as an adult, I hadn't learned any new concepts, but I had learned that the blues can be a teaching tool as well as a source of pleasure to all ages.—**Steve Daniels**

Roman Sobus Photography
 www.romansobus.net
 Roman Sobus FB

13 3rd St Clarksdale www.deakharp.com

DEAK HARP

Deak's Mississippi Saxophones and Blues Emporium

HIT THE ROAD ENTERTAINMENT & MISSISSIPPI DELTA BLUES, INC.

Two Companies with a common goal—teaming up for special occasions.

Making Your Event the BEST EVENT POSSIBLE !

Peggy Brown Carol Marble

Peggy Brown, Hit the Road Entertainment & Carol Marble, Mississippi Delta Blues, Inc. team up to pool their individual experience and resources for your benefit.

We have it covered—we know where to find the right band, the right musicians, performing the kind of music you need for your event. Blues, R&B, Roots, Jazz, Funk, Gospel, Reggae, Soul we look throughout Mississippi, Nationally and Internationally for the perfect fit for your needs.

If you are planning a wedding, corporate party, festival—then give one of us a call.

www.hittheroadent.com and www.mississippideltabluesinfo.com

The Blues Mamas—Peggy Brown—601-613-7377 Carol Marble -662-347-2869
 BluesMamasManagement@gmail.com

Legendary Communications and Promotions

Rosalie Daley
 Legendary Communications and Promotions
 legendarycommunications.com
 rolegendarycommunications@gmail.com
 330-321-7676

we make your message memorable

The blues reviews in this issue and previous issues are also online at bigcity bluesmag.com

PJ'S LAGER HOUSE

CORKTOWN DETROIT
 LIVE LIFE LOUD™

LIVE ORIGINAL MUSIC
 GREAT FOOD
 OPEN 7 DAYS

M-F 7am-2am
 S-S 9am-2am
 1254 Michigan Ave.
 Detroit's Best Music Bar
 Since 2007
 pjslagerhouse.com

Good Blues to You

Carlin "C-Note" Smith
 Vice – President

Atlanta Blues Society / Writer BCRB

Phone: 678-427-1552
 bluescnote@cs.com bluescnote@gmail.com
 4200 Morning Dew Dr., Powder Springs, Ga 30127

SIBLUES.COM

SCRAPBLUES101@gmail.com
 DOWNLOAD THE APP
 SCRAPIRONBLUES.COM

FOR THE VERY BEST IN ALL BLUES AND OLD-FASHIONED GOSPEL
 CEO

THE AMBASSADOR OF THE BLUES FOR THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

FRANK "SCRAP IRON" ROBINSON III 901-453-9430
 THE BEST IS YET TO COME