

BIG CITY Rhythm & Blues

REVIEWS

JIMMY CARPENTER *The Louisiana Record*

Gulf Coast Records

Saxophonist, singer/songwriter and deft arranger Jimmy Carpenter began his musical journey more than 25 years ago. In the 1980s he toured the East Coast with the iconic-clastic blues band The Alka-Phonics and by the 1990s he was a member of the blues-rock band The Believers. He has also toured internationally with the likes of Tinsley Ellis, Jimmy Thackery and Walter Wolfman Washington among others.



Ten years ago, he linked up with the co-owner of Gulf Coast Records Mike Zito and his band The Wheels. Based in the Crescent City for many years, he currently lives in Las Vegas where he not only fronts his own band but is the leader of the Bender Brass as well as the current president of the Las Vegas Blues Society. This is his fourth solo project that finds him exploring his New Orleans roots with creatively alert, stripped down, no frills covers of eleven red-beans-and-rice classics, accompanied by guitarist Zito, keyboardist John Gros, bassist Casandra Faulconer and drummer Wayne Maureau. Particular worthies include a rock 'n' rolling, heraldic version of Smiley Lewis' "I

Hear You Knocking" (with some great piano-work by Gros), a jumping, late-night recall of Peppermint Harris' "I Got Loaded," a terrific interpretation of James Carr's soulfully accusatory "Pouring Water On A Drowning Man" and a knockout rendition of Art "Poppa Funk" Neville's "All These Things," that is the apotheosis of New Orleans soul—simple, melodic, grooving and a nifty song for some neat sax work. Also noted are a finger-popping take on Robert Parker's dance floor-filling "Barefootin'" and the set closing "Rockin' At Cosimo's," a jaunty, sax-studded nod to fellow sax virtuoso Lee Allen. A worthy tribute to the mash-up of blues, soul, rhythm 'n' blues and rock 'n' roll that is New Orleans music.—Gary von Tersch

PATTY TUITE *Hard Case of the Blues*

www.pattytuite.com

This is the latest follow up to her previous 2021 release "Consider This." That was a landmark album that paired her with Grammy Award-winning guitarist and producer Paul Nelson. It featured Tuite's refreshing original songs and diverse musical mix of blues, jazz and rock. Well, she returns with Nelson once again finding herself climbing the blues music charts and receiving well-deserved airplay on Sirius Radio's "Bluesville." And the accolades are well-deserved, for Tuite has been on the national blues scene as a performer for over 30 years. The album opens with celebrity guest Bobby

Rush playing some inspired harmonica on the rootsy and unbridled "Nothing But Trouble." Tuite has some grit in her voice that blends perfectly with Nelson's down and dirty acoustic slide guitar work. "I Just Wanna Play" keeps that upbeat feel going and is funky and fun. Ever the adventurous troubadour, Tuite shifts gears for the female empowering "Glad I'm Through With You." It's kind of a Bessie Smith/Alberta Adams kind of vibe where she embraces a love gone wrong and moves on. Congrats to trumpeter Rico Amero for that spe-



cial sizzle that sparks Tuite's sassy delivery. "Diggin' Up Outta This Hole" continues that early century jazz and blues swing driven by upright bassist Paul Loranger. "I Am Strong Enough" digs a little deeper into the personal empowerment tip. The messaging is all about believing in oneself, with almost a James Brown type of intensity. She does a nice call and response section with Amero that really works. On the majority of tracks Tuite plays rhythm guitars and Nelson plays all electric and acoustic lead and rhythm guitars. However on the instrumental "My Silent Love" Tuite performs all guitar parts. She composes a beautiful melody supported by subtle arpeggios and jazzy riffs. This piece offers a nice mid-album

respite in the vein of Pat Metheny or Phil Keaggy. Tuite is credited with all lead vocals and harmonies, which really comes together on the lush and vibrant "It Ain't Over Till It's Over." This is a song that could easily cross over to pop and modern country radio. It's got a hook as big as all of Texas, with a wonderful melody to match. Its message and theme are heartfelt and beautifully crafted. That feel good spirit totally embodies the next track "Goin' Out to Town Tonight." It's a laid-back jazzy type piece that features trombonist Ozzie Melendez and pianist Brooks Milgate. Tuite wants to hit the town with her friends and that relatable feeling works in making this an ideal live track. "I Want A Lover" is conversely very intimate and shows a vulnerable and very feminine side of the singer-songwriter. She's putting her cards on the table and telling you how she wants to be treated. It's a thoughtful and classic sounding ballad. She totally flips the script on the follow up "Double Down." Nelson cuts through with some tasty hooks and incisive guitar work. This is another catchy single radio should pick up on as well. The title track "Hard Case of the Blues" wraps things on a soothing and minor key note. Tuite seems to tap into her inner Patsy Cline and Etta James for a soulful and torchy kind of feel. Nelson's elaborate, yet somewhat understated acoustic accompaniment gives things a moody Tex-Mex ambience.

Simply put, Patty Tuite writes great tunes and

producer Paul Nelson continues to bring out the best in her musical personality and the lyrical depth of her material. Bravo!—Eric Harabadian

BREEZY RODIO *Underground Blues*

Wind Chill Records/Bloos Records

Rodio is a young 40-something singer-songwriter and guitarist based in Chicago, but was born in Rome, Italy. Firmly entrenched in the blues tradition, Rodio cut his teeth as band leader with Linsey Alexander. Quickly moving up the musical ranks, he became known nationally and internationally working in various blues, jazz, reggae and rock configurations employing his unique Wes Montgomery-like thumb-driven guitar picking style. The great Anson Funderburgh heard Rodio's unique playing and writing talents and anxiously signed on to produce this latest effort.

Funderburgh successfully captures the overall essence of Rodio, which is based in traditional blues structures and sounds, but incorporates other related and disparate elements that work as well. On one hand Rodio is very hip and urbane in his image and demeanor, yet he can spin stories from a very personal and down-home point of view that get right to the heart of the matter. This hefty 14-song collection features a wide swath of points and perspectives starting with "Half Way in the Devil's Gate." This is the first of two tracks on the album where Funderburgh actually joins in on the guitar fun. However, it's a serious

song that seems to address a tempestuous relationship in a mythic and fanciful manner. It's got a beguiling smooth and relaxed feel, with Lorenzo Francocci's swinging drums and a stinging guitar tag from the producer. "That Damn Cocaine" is another highlight that employs deft passing chord sequences and gritty heartfelt vocals. You really can connect with Rodio's pain as he pleads with his woman to leave those damn drugs



alone. It's a cautionary tale that seems based on real world experience. The title track "Underground Blues" is dedicated to the struggles we have all gone through during the pandemic lockdown and beyond. Via spoken word and vocal passages, Rodio keeps it real in a stream-of-consciousness kind of delivery. The song is a unique blend of somewhat light-hearted fare with serious intent. It addresses the joy of rediscovering why an artist starts playing music in the first place. "C.H.I.C.A.G.O." is more of a straight-ahead blues shuffle that acts as a gushy love letter to the music that Rodio loves and the artist community as a whole. The whole band explodes and really gets a chance to shine. The second guitar collaboration for the leader and producer comes in the

form of "Playing My Game Too." It's a rough and tumble workout for Rodio and Funderburgh. And they utilize their consummate skills in abundance. Here the band simmers and percolates in a torrent of bubbling groove. Rodio's Buddy Guy-like vocalizing is exceptional. "Hello Friendo" rises to the surface as something really different in this package. It's an instrumental that puts the spotlight on Fulero's considerable harmonica skills. The New Orleans feel and atypical solo breaks from Rodio really capture your attention as well. "The Murder" is nice for its free-for-all Chicago shuffle and the leader's John Lee Hooker-like phrasing. "Gerry Told Me" is also significant because it seems to tap into the personal nature of Rodio's writing approach. He always tells it like it is and is not above giving credit where it is due. In this case he sings a song dedicated to a friend that gave him encouragement and urged him to keep going when he wanted to quit. In it, Rodio sings: "Things are out of sight, the future's looking bright, but will I have you in my life, feels like I'm stuck in a losing fight."

Breezy Rodio has dedicated his life to the blues tradition and has done his apprenticeship in support of folks like Linsey Alexander and a host of others. While he is still young and carving out his own niche in this business, it is clear he is a leader, with an individual point of view and an artist with truly something fresh, provocative and enlightening to say.—Eric Harabadian

CHRIS CANAS
Detroit

Third Street Cigar Records

The latest from Detroit's "Prince of the Blues" is a tour de force of original tunes that are autobiographical, revelatory and downright audacious. It's a bold musical statement

rooted in all things blues, soul, rock and guitar-drenched funk.

The title track "Detroit" grabs your immediate attention, with Canas' meaty vocals and personal accounts of growing up in the Motor City; its trials and tribulations and the rich musical traditions he absorbed and adopted in his life. It's a soul-stirring and emotionally charged way to open the album. That makes way for the ebullient "Blues, Blues, Blues." It's just a fun swing and shuffle-induced romp that emanates pure joy and unfettered guitar



insanity. A tad or two down the list "Cookie" shows another side to the bluesman as he mixes reggae, with a thick rhythmic accent. It's a song that's all about holding out for that good thing set to an incendiary horn chart. And then Canas follows that light-hearted track with something like "Queen of My World." This has got to be one of the coolest and most heart wrenching testifying tales you are ever gonna hear! Imagine Latimore meets Buddy Guy and you may have a window into what this man can do with a lyric. It's a smoldering love letter to a relationship that has gone awry, and Canas delivers it with an unbridled mix of passion and pathos. "Good Man About to Break Bad" is a tale about the common man. This is a guy—perhaps Canas himself—having a bad day and trying to make the best of it. He drops some mighty F-bombs in the process and lets those that have wronged him know, in no uncertain terms, he's at the breaking point. It's a mid tempo shuffle, with enough emotional power to light up the entire Southeast Michigan

region. "Smoke in the City" and "Put it in the Pot" stand out as different brands of soul and funk that will get you on the dance floor. Canas' range goes from Ernie Isley-infused riffs to Parliament Funkadelic's Eddie Hazel hysterics. It's a nice cross-section of styles that display the Detroit musician's rich history as a stellar nightclub as well as, now, burgeoning headline act.

In addition to Canas playing guitar, singing and composing all 11 of the tunes here, he also arranged all the vocal and horn parts. And kudos could also be extended to photographer Amber Cross and graphic designer Ellen Koerberlein for their simple and lean, yet vibrant and colorful album layout. Canas dedicates this record to those that have been through hard times. And the blend of various moods, both light and dark, is visually, as well as musically, evident to that end. Let the musically provocative experience of Chris Canas and his ensemble wash over you and enjoy!—Eric Harabadian

DEMETRIA TAYLOR
Doin' What I'm Supposed To Do

Delmark Records

Demetria is the seventh child of the talented Taylor family from Chicago. Her father, Eddie Taylor, played on most of Jimmy Reed's classic recordings and her mom, Vera, was a noted blues vocalist in her own right. Demetria's older sister Brenda is a formidable



singer and records for Wolf Records. Other siblings include drummers Tim and Larry, and the late Eddie Jr. who, like his father, was a guitarist.



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Doin' What I'm Supposed To Do is Demetria's second Delmark release, following 2011's *Bad Girl*. In the interim she has been a fixture at top Chicago blues clubs like Blue Chicago, Kingston Mines, Legends and B.L.U.E.S. On Halsted while raising eight kids. Winning the coveted Koko Taylor "Queen of the Blues" Award this year shows the great respect the Chicago blues community has for her. Doin' What I'm Supposed To Do is a mix of traditional blues and modern R&B. The team of Mike Wheeler and Larry Williams, the guitarist and bassist on the album, wrote half of the twelve songs. Demetria's father, mother and brother Eddie Jr. each wrote one song with Demetria contributing two. The lone cover is a scorching version of Magic Sam's "You Belong To Me." A highlight is Vera Taylor's "Blues In The Morning," a duet with singer Deitra Farr, who wrote the liner notes for the CD package. Another guest is Billy Flynn, who brings his formidable lead guitar talents to the opener, "83 Highway," along with "Blues In The Morning." Even though the album was recorded via five different sessions at Delmark's Riverside Studio from October 2019 through January 2022, the album sounds remarkably consistent with Williams and drummer Melvin Carlisle holding down the rhythm section, Brian James on keyboards and Carlos Showers handling guitars along with Wheeler (except for two songs). Of course, the common denominator is the smooth and sultry vocals of the leader, Demetria Taylor, always staying cool and collected, and generously letting her bandmates show off their considerable talents. Hopefully we don't have to wait another eleven years for the next release from this fine singer. —**Bob Monteleone**

BOB CORRITORE & FRIENDS
You Shocked Me 2022
SMAF/Vizztone/Sumac Records

Harmonica ace Bob Corritore has a lot of friends! (and that's not even referring to Facebook).

The harmonica ace, based in Phoenix, AZ, has accolades galore, including a Blues Music Award and multiple nominations, and a Grammy nomination. During his decades in Phoenix he has collaborated with



innumerable blues artists, many as they passed through the city to play at his own venue, the Rhythm Room. He has released his own praised albums, as well as specific endeavors with Henry Gray, John Primer, Kid Ramos, and Louisiana Red.

Obviously, though, Corritore enjoys releasing compilations from his extensive recorded archive; by my count, this is his ninth edition of "Bob Corritore & Friends." All the tracks on "You Shocked Me" were recorded between 2018 and 2022. The names of no less than thirty-seven musician friends appear on this album. Some names you will readily recognize - Primer, Ramos, Johnny Rawls, Sugaray Rayford - others may be new to you. Corritore has chosen well, since all of the sixteen tracks, which encompass more than an hour, are distinguished by adept playing.

Corritore's harmonica is present on every track, but he is clearly no egomaniac; his playing is always supportive of the song and the other musi-

cians rather than a flamboyant display of his own formidable talent. Stellar musicians such as guitarists Primer, Ramos, and Bob Margolin and pianists Fred Kaplan and Anthony Geraci ply their gifts on the set of tunes, which adhere mainly to a basic twelve-bar, electric Chicago-style blues format, with enough variation never to become monotonous.

Not to be shortchanged is the singing. Of the dozen vocalists, two represent the distaff side of the blues: award-winning Texas blueswoman Diunna Greenleaf distinguishes herself on the shuffle "Sunny Day Friends" and the album's title track, and Francine Reed does equally well on "Don't Need Your Permission," a romp spurred by Corritore's wailing harp and the dual guitars of Ramos and Johnny Main. That same guitar pair mesh well on "Josephine," fronted by Sugaray's powerful vocal.

Oscar Wilson, lead singer of The Cash Box Kings, croons notably on the slow blues "Blue Blue Water," Corritore dealing out some of his best licks over the laconic guitars of Margolin and Jimi Primetime Smith. It's a number whose brevity is a disappointment; give us more! Until we're jolted into pleasure by the ensuing upbeat "Train Fare," singing done by nonagenarian legendary bassist Bob Stroger. Also worthy of accolades is Alabama Mike, who sings on four tracks, which range from gut-bucket gritty ("Squeeze Me Baby") to pensive ("Somebody Stole My Love from Me") to lilting and perky ("Blues for Hippies," with Kaplan on tinkling piano).

This extensive array of blues performers should be grateful that they have such a good friend as Bob Corritore, who presents them to us in top form. —**Steve Daniels**

VARIOUS ARTISTS
That'll Flat Git It Vol. 10
Bear Family CD

Musically speaking, rockabilly was the white Southerners' version of rock 'n' roll. It was, basically, a lively meld of the honky-tonk and juke-joint music of the early 1950s



South—where the garishly lit juke-boxes spun 78's and energetic dancing was all the rage. From the Western-swing, country boogie, jump blues and Hank Williams-influenced hillbilly music of the whites came the basic instrumentation of the acoustic guitar and the incrementally-rhythmed bass work, while black rhythm 'n' blues and boogie supplied the Big Beat drum sound alongside a variety of dynamic lead electric guitar styles, with sparkling solos aplenty. At times piano, steel guitar, fiddle and saxophone would be added but essentially rockabilly was a fresh acoustic rhythm with a heavy back-beat and piercing electric guitar solos. During the idiom's heyday—between 1954 and 1958—independent and major companies alike recorded the style profusely. This 31-track compilation focuses on material that Chicago's Chess label either recorded themselves or bought up masters from smaller labels—there are 45's here from Nashville, Cincinnati, Houston, New York, Oakland, Shreveport and Cleveland. A 52-page booklet, authored by Bill Millar, features a track-by-track explication, with a profusion of detail and lots of images. Can't-sit-down favorites include G. L. Crockett's "Look Out Mabel," a couple by Rusty

York ("Sugaree" and "Sweet Talk"), another couple by Lou Josie ("Vacation's Over" and "Why Did You Leave Me"), Johnny Fuller's song-dropping "All Night Long," Dale Hawkins' follow-up to "Suzie Q" titled "La-Do-Dada," a pair by Eddie Fontaine ("Nothin' Shakin'" and "Don't Ya Know") and Bobby Dean's immortal "Just Go Wild Over Rock 'n' Roll." Git it!—**Gary von Tersch**

JOHN PRIMER
Hard Times
Blues House Productions

John Primer is an artist that defines the classic blues man. He's not "typical" by any means, but certainly a man that has paid his dues and a veteran that has established himself with many of the greats. Often artist credentials can be tedious and boring, but Primer's associations are certainly worthy of note. He's backed or shared the stage with blues and rock royalty like Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon, The Rolling Stones, Junior Wells, Magic Slim and many others. He's



also garnered two Grammy Award nominations. He brings all that incredible experience and gravitas to this latest venture.

"Hard Times" is a straight-ahead Chicago-based blues album that is rife with tradition yet has a contemporary spin to it as well. This particular work embodies the spirit of the recently departed Chicago nightclub called B.L.U.E.S., and is dedicated to its memory, which has been a launching pad for so many Windy City blues greats. Primer sings and plays in a non-

sense and workmanlike manner that is simple and direct, yet intricate and engaging. This thirteen-song original Primer-penned collection kicks off with "You Got What I Want." It's an up-tempo shuffle that is easy to grasp and highlights the band in a big way. "Don't Wait Too Long" follows in a similar manner, but ups the ante, with solos by guest Johnny Iguana on piano and Primer's "Real Deal Blues Band" regular Steve Bell on harmonica. The title track "Hard Times" addresses current events. It's about getting through the rough patches in life. Songs like this are emblematic of Primer's philosophy and musical approach. This features excellent slide guitar work and effortless piano. Again, simple messages and themes really seem to connect and get the point across. "Blues-Blues-Blues" talks of being hooked on blues music, as Primer sings "the blues is where I belong...it makes me happy and going strong." "I Won't Sweat It" is a nice workout for bassist David Forte and drummer Lenny Media." The addition of Bell's incendiary harmonica makes this a scorcher. "Chicago" is a tune that furthers the pride Primer feels for his city and the blues community there. He sings with such conviction and love that it, indeed, qualifies him for blues ambassador status. "Tough Times" is a nice star turn for Primer's daughter Aliyah. She does a nice job singing about all the struggles society has been through in dealing with the pandemic. In doing so, she reminds us how important social interaction and connection truly is. "All Alone" is a nice slide guitar spotlight for Primer. He's a master in a subtle and somewhat understated way. Iguana answers in kind and keeps things cooking on the keys. "My Sugar Mama" is a real jumping tune. In particular, Media offers a nice back-

beat and hi-hat figure that locks in the groove. “You Mean So Much To Me” is kind of a swing number, which leads into the minor blues “Trying to Make You Mine.” This a real guitar showcase featuring some of Primer’s best vocals. On “Hot Meal” the leader doesn’t mess around with the messaging. In no uncertain terms he lets his woman know what he likes: “if I clean my kitchen would you come over and cook something good for me? Cornbread, neck bones and black eyed peas. I like it hot, I don’t like it cold. I like it hot, right off the stove.” It’s a slow blues, with some fancy slide work that gets to the heart of the matter. “Whiskey” almost seems like a complementary piece espousing the joys of booze and reefer. A strong Muddy Waters vibe seems apparent here. If traditional blues is what you seek, look no further.

—Eric Harabadian

WALTER TROUT *Ride*

Provogue 2022

Renowned blues rocker Walter Trout has established his legacy as a blues rock icon over more than five decades. Prior to beginning his solo career in 1989 he enjoyed stints as guitarist for legends John Lee Hooker, Big Mama Thornton, Canned Heat, and John Mayall. This is his 30th. solo album, but perhaps most astonishing is that it is his seventh since 2014. That was the year that he received a liver transplant, barely averting death.

Trout is just embarking on his eight decade on the planet. His close brush with mortality seems to have redoubled his productivity and creativity!

Consistent with his other post-transplant albums, “Ride” reprises the theme of memories, both those that are recalled fondly and ruefully. Recorded during the Covid pandemic, the set also stresses the philosophy of

carpe diem: none of us is here for long, so seize the day. Sharing Trout’s musical journey on “Ride” are keyboard artist Teddy Andreadis, bassist Jamie Hunting, and long-time drummer Michael Leasure.

The full hour is comprised of twelve tracks, all



written by Trout. The only co-written song is “High Is Low,” written with his wife Marie. It’s a rocking lament for the contentious times in which we live: “We’re livin’ in a time, baby/When low is high and high is low/People filled with venom/And they’re the ones that run the show.” As are many tracks, this one showcases Trout’s undeniable skill at cruising the guitar fretboard for crisp chords and stinging single note runs. He sings with gritty gusto and deals out some assured harmonica fills as well.

There are interesting echoes of other performers on several tracks. The title cut, “Ride,” for example, is five minutes of rollicking blues rock with zesty keyboard accompaniment that recalls the classic 1970s Allman Brothers tune “Jessica,” with Walter sounding much like guitarist Dicky Betts. “Fertile Soul” again evokes Allman Brothers vibes, as well as 1970s Doobie Brothers, with Trout delivering some of his best singing, aided by the vocal harmonies of producer Eric Corne.

There is also a tender love ballad, “Destiny,” and a song forgiving his late mother, who failed to protect him from an abusive step-father: “My love for you is strong/Some folks say you let me down/I tell them they are wrong/I know you did your best.../We were victims of circumstance.”

Yes, a certified blues rocker unafraid to reveal his emotions. They are most overtly present on the two numbers which satisfied my insatiable desire for fine slow blues, “Follow You Back Home” and the sublime “Waiting for the Dawn,” a six-minute poignant agonized cry of an abandoned lover. You got me, Walter; well done!— Steve Daniels

DANA FUCHS *Borrowed Time*

Ruf Records 2022

Born in New Jersey and raised in Florida, powerhouse vocalist Dana Fuchs has mined her personal history on previous confessional albums. By my count, this is her eighth album, and this time, as she reveals on her website, she decided to go full blast into her southern rock roots while exploring the life experiences of others. She certainly has the vocal chops to accomplish her goal, having successfully portrayed Janis Joplin on the New York stage. She is one of the few who can match Joplin’s rasp,



raunch, and raucousness.

The dozen songs were all co-written by Fuchs and Jon Diamond, with occasional help from others. The band is composed of guitarists Kenny Tudrick and Diamond (who also plays harmonica), bassist Jack Daley, drummer Todd Glass, and keyboard artist Jordan Champion. Tudrick and Bobby Harlow co-produced. Fuchs plays two instruments: tambourine, and...her potent voice.

The opening track begins with a little tease, acoustic and electric guitars lyrically and lazily entwining with the rhythm section until thirty seconds in, when a fusillade of

drumbeats prods the song into rock territory. After I sat down from dancing, I was led by Diamond’s acoustic guitar introduction into “Blue Mist Road,” which reminded me of an amalgam of Bobbie Gentry’s “Ode to Billy Joe” and Cat Stevens’ “Cat’s in the Cradle.”

There are several tracks attesting to Fuchs’ ability to sing adeptly in the country music genre. Particularly moving are “Call My Name” and “Lonely Lie,” the latter enhanced by acoustic guitar and some fine harmonica courtesy of Diamond. (Fuchs cites “Lonely Lie” as her tribute to Lucinda Williams.) Dana goes into full Joplin mode on “Curtain Close,” wrings emotion from “Nothing You Own,” and in “Hard Road” gives us a rocker a la 1970s Rolling Stones.

The remaining tracks are unabashed and unfiltered hard rockers, at which Fuchs and this band excel. The only track that failed to captivate me was the long closer, “Star,” replete with lots of Jimi Hendrix-style screeching guitar and wah-wah pedal, but on it Fuchs’ singing is undiminished.

“Borrowed Time” as a whole gives ample opportunity to bop around on the dance floor, and to recover your breath while appreciating a skilled singer in full flight.—Steve Daniels

JOHN NEMETH *May Be the Last Time*

Nola Blue Records 2022

Over the last two decades Idaho native John Nemeth has cemented his place in the top tier of blues. He has collaborated with the likes of Elvin Bishop, Anson Funderburgh, and Junior Watson, and released multiple highly regarded albums. Nominated for over two dozen Blues Music Awards, he has won as Soul Blues Male Artist of the Year, and this year as Best Vocalist of

2022.

Currently Nemeth is battling a major health challenge, a tumor that in May necessitated removal of part of his jaw and almost all of his teeth. Whether he will again be able to ply his stellar singing and harmonica playing is uncertain. Recorded just prior to his surgery, this album reflects the strong support



of his fellow musicians. Bishop handles the lead guitar chores, and his Big Fun Trio mates Bob Welsh on guitar and piano and Willy Jordan on drums cohere well with producer Kid Andersen, who plays bass and some guitar. Group vocals, which augment Nemeth’s typically powerful and emotive singing, are by Welsh, Jordan, and Alabama Mike.

The set has a gospel and soul presence, augured by the opening track, “The Last Time,” whose theme fits with Nemeth’s current medical plight. The theme is reprised in “Rockbottom,” a 1972 Bishop tune with some of Nemeth’s best mouth harp renderings. “Sooner of Later” benefits from Welsh on acoustic guitar, and the ensemble hits a high point on the cover of J.B. Lenoir’s “Feeling Good,” with Andersen’s bass prominent and Nemeth’s harmonica backed by the soulful vocal chorus. The set hits its halfway point with Bishop doing the singing and providing greasy guitar on his popular tune “Stealing Watermelons,” Nemeth again shining on harmonica.

Soul blues and a lighter touch are embodied by covers of Wilson Pickett’s “I Found a Love” and Hank Ballard’s “Sexy

Ways.” Nemeth then takes on “Come on In This House,” most notably done in the past by Junior Wells. It’s a daunting task to cover a Wells vocal, but Nemeth meets the test capably. His own “Elbows on the Wheel,” a six-minute mid-tempo road song shuffle, sounds like the band really enjoyed creating it. They then attack “Shake Your Hips” by James Moore, who performed as Slim Harpo, goosing it from a languorous tune of insinuation into an irresistible rocker. The album closes with a third Bishop track, “I’ll Be Glad,” which can be classified as a gospel rave-up.

We all wish John Nemeth a full recovery so that he can continue his career as a topflight singer and harmonica player, which this album exemplifies.—Steve Daniels

ORPHAN JON AND THE ABANDONED *Over the Pain*

Vintage LaNell Records 2022

This is the second album release by singer Jon English, originally from Bakersfield, CA, and now apparently a resident of Wichita. As delineated on his website, he has adopted his moniker and his band’s from his sad and stressful childhood in



which he was abandoned by his parents and abused by his foster parents. However, he relates that his abusive foster mother did introduce him to music, which has become his salvation.

“Over the Pain” musters the strengths of drummer Jason Blakely and bass player Ray Sadolsky and the rock blues guitar potency of Alastair Greene, who also

produced the album. To my knowledge, this is Greene's first foray into production, other than of albums of his own band. Working with engineer Brian Boozer, the result is laudable: individual instruments are easily audible, and the sound mix is crisp.

The result is focus on Jon's vocals, which are impressive. He sings powerfully in a tenor range, with occasional excursions into falsetto. Even when reaching for emotional heights, his tone is pitch-perfect.

The dozen songs fill an hour with energetic and sometimes explosive blues rock. Most tunes are originals penned by English, in cooperation with Greene and/or Jon's former guitarist Bruce Krupnik. The only cover tune, "Going Down to Mobile," employs a ruse found in several other tracks: a slow opening, here replete with some nasty Greene slide guitar riffs, that then morphs into a full-on rocker. Then there are other tracks, like the first, "Tight Dress," and "Got No Name," which are uninhibited rockers from bar one. The latter song describes children in need of love and succor, inspired by the life experiences of Jon and his sister Amy Marie, to whom it is dedicated. (The entire album is dedicated to foster children. Renowned blues chanteuse Janiva Magness, an advocate for foster children who also was one, will appreciate the sentiment.)

Orphan Jon's vocals share the spotlight with Greene's lead guitar. Greene, who has hit the high echelon of contemporary blues rockers in the last couple of years, is equally adept at carving out thunderous chords and scorching single note runs. He can also slow it down, as demonstrated on the only acoustic number of the set, "Redheaded Woman Blues," which is buoyed by Jon's passionate singing combined with

some stretches of talking blues.

The album ends on a surprising but very satisfying note with "There's No Need," a rousing gospel number aided by uncredited organ and by the vocal harmonies of guests Rebecca Aguilar, Michael Leasure, and Mike Malone.—**Steve Daniels**

RONNIE HAWKINS & THE HAWKS *Red Hot Rockin'*

Bear Family LP, CD, 10 inch, 45 RPM

Recently deceased Ronnie "Mr. Dynamo" Hawkins was an American/Canadian rock 'n' roll singer/songwriter and pianist whose career spanned more than half a century as well as more than 25 albums. Often cited as the last of the original rock 'n' rollers he found widespread success in Canada and resided there for most of his life. In retrospect, Hawkins' lack of chart



success wasn't really his fault—he was just a victim of bad timing as squeaky-clean teen idols (Frankie Avalon, Paul Anka, Bobby Rydell) replaced the first generation rockers that popularized the music a few years before he emerged in the late 1950's. By the time Roulette Records signed the charismatic Rompin' Ronnie in the spring of 1959, there was only time for him to post two chart hits (covers of Chuck Berry's "Forty Days" and Young Jessie's "Mary Lou") which were both powerhouse rockers in a soft-rock era. Also important, his band, the Hawks, once included drummer Levon Helm and guitarist Robbie Robertson who formed the basis of The Band—in 1963, Hawkins'

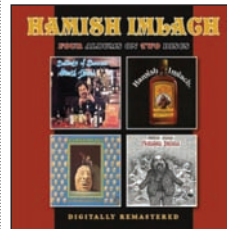
classic version of Bo Diddley's "Who Do You Love" employed near psychedelic lead guitar work from Robertson. Hawkins also favored an intense, over-the-top vocal style with his strong voice often utilizing an ear-splitting style to great effect. The vinyl LP of this project contains twelve of his best R&R songs with the CD adding an abundance of additional powerhouse covers and originals—from "My Gal Is Red Hot," "Honey Don't," "Hey, Bo Diddley" (whose "beat" he often employed) to "Thirty Days," "What'cha Gonna Do (When Your Baby Leaves You)" and "Hey Boba Lou" along with versions of same by some of his contemporaries like Chuck Willis, Carl Perkins, Cliff Richards and the Shadows, Chuck Berry, Buddy Knox, Bo Diddley, Billy Lee Riley and Bob Luman. Well worth tracking down.—**Gary von Tersch**

HAMISH IMLACH *Ballads Of Booze/ Old Rarity/ Fine Old English Tory Times/ Murdered Ballads*

BGO Records CD

Hey, look sharp! This one will take your breath away and have you chuckling at the same time. As accomplished liners author John O'Regan puts it in the opening paragraph of his lengthy essay: "The legendary Scottish singer/songwriter Hamish Imlach was a larger-than-life character, a singer and guitarist who pioneered the idea of folk singer-comedian through his talent, wit and charismatic persona. He could make an audience collapse with laughter one minute with an uproarious sense of humour, then the next he would nail them to the walls with socially conscious observations and dexterous guitar playing. He was the ultimate all-round folk entertainer." He was also once described by Ewan

McVicar, the esteemed Scottish storyteller and singer as "a raconteur who taught Billy Connolly, a singer who taught Christy Moore and a blues guitarist who taught John Martyn. The four albums collected here were all originally released on Transatlantic Records from 1969-1973. *Ballads of Booze* certainly lives up to its title and features thirteen songs by the man who was known in every alcohol ward in the country as the Hogshead of Song. Exceptional numbers include "The Moonshiner," "Drunk Drunk Again," "Beer Is Best" and "Little Maggie." *Old Rarity's* song haul contains three transcendent traditional ballads—the dauntless "Long Johnny Moore," a great calamitous romantic ballad titled "Baron of Brackley" and "Kilbogie," that derives from the Bothy oral literature. *Fine Old English* continues the



trawl through the historic songbooks, this time with the accent on protest songs and material with a decided political undercurrent. Picks include "Forty Pence Butter," "Pie In The Sky," "Twelve Pence Ain't A Shilling" and "Down Trodden Landlord."

Murdered Ballads isn't a collection of murder ballads as the title suggests but a group of songs from traditional sources and authors like Shel Silverstein mixed with spoken-word sketches that combine daydreaming romanticism, keen observation and black humor. Nuggets encompass a cover of Silverstein's "Cornflakes, Sugar, Teardrops," a slice of folk-pop called "Bluebird" and the tradi-

tional "Jenny Jenkins" that mixes Scottish folk and Appalachia in a brew of old-timey Americana. All killer no filler.—**Gary von Tersch**

THE ROCK HOUSE ALL STARS *Let It Bleed Revisited: An Ovation From Nashville*

Qualified Records CD

Let It Bleed is the tenth American studio album by the Rolling Stones, released on November 28th, 1969. The album charted top ten—reaching number one in the UK and number three in the States. The album marked a decided return to the group's more blues and roots-based approach that proved prominent in the pre-*Aftermath* period of their career, drawing heavily from not only gospel ("Gimme Shelter" and "You Can't Always Get What You Want"), Chicago blues ("Midnight Rambler") and Hank Williams/ Jimmie Rodgers ("Country Honk") as well as country blues ("You Got The Silver" and Robert Johnson's "Love In Vain") and country rock ("Let It Bleed"). On this fascinating revisit of *Bleed* the Franklin, Tennessee-based, Band-sounding quartet, composed of leader and multi-instrumentalist Kevin McKendree, drummer Yates McKendree, bassist and co-producer John Heithaus and guitarist Rob McNelley along with guest musicians on the order of James Pennebaker, Luke Bella, Jimmy Hall and Stephen Hanner pretty successfully reinvent this landmark recording with not only freshly imagined arrangements but a different vocalist for each song. Affairs commence with an impassioned, screaming-and-all opening track, "Gimme Shelter" (with Hall and Bekka Bramlett) followed by "Love In Vain" (with Emil Justian on

vocal), a hard-driving "Live With Me" (with Seth James' spot-on Mick Jagger feel), the laid-back, dynamic entreaty "You Got The Silver" (with Nalani Rothrock on vocal), the poignantly emotional "You Can't



Always Get What You Want" (featuring the duo of Wendy Moten and SARACHEL) and probably my favorite recall—a resiliently wide-vista rendition of "Wild Horses," with Lilly Hiatt and Luke Bella soaring high. Vocalists Lee Roy Parnell, Rick Huckaby, Mike Farris complete the singers' roster. Five stars!—**Gary von Tersch**

JOSEPH VELOZ *Joseph and the Velozians*

Big-O Records

Joseph Veloz is a Detroit-based bassist who has spent years touring with blues greats like Matt "Guitar" Murphy, Lucky Peterson and recorded with British guitar slinger Joanne Shaw



Taylor, notably her live album "Songs From the Road". Veloz currently plays with guitarist extraordinaire Larry McCray as well as Detroit's own "Queen of the Blues" Thornetta Davis. *Joseph Veloz Presents - Joseph and the Velozians* contains an eclectic mix of styles: funky jazz fusion, rockin' blues, soulful pop. "Pretty Is As Pretty Does" starts things off

with a moody intro featuring John Rickert's trumpet before getting funky with keyboardist/co-producer Jim Alfredson's clavinet, setting the stage for guest Larry McCray's soulful vocal and then later Larry's stirring guitar solo. The Muddy Waters standard "I Got My Mojo Working" follows with Thornetta Davis singing along with some tasty guitar leads throughout the seven-and-a-half-minute long workout by Carlton Washington. The band offers a nice spin of this oft covered classic. Thornetta also does her thing on the Gnarl's Barkley hit "Crazy," a decidedly more soulful version than the original, no doubt thanks to Thornetta's peerless delivery and the gospel-tinged harmonies of Roseann and Rosemere Matthews. The revolving door of vocalists keeps the listener on their toes, Tim O'Donnell sings and plays some great guitar on his rocking original "Mr. Cooper." The leader of the session, Joseph Veloz, finally steps to the mic on his song, the final track "Up In My Ear," a 12 Bar that features longtime Bob Seger guitarist Drew Abbott (remember "from Royal Oak, Michigan...?") Team player Veloz lets everyone get in the spotlight, I don't think I heard a bass solo throughout the entire session, but it's Joesph's muscular and inventive playing that ties the whole record together. Of the eight tracks on the album, three are instrumentals, of which longtime Thornetta keyboardist Phil Hale shines on "The Velozian Shuffle" and "Just Jammin' (Again)". Joesph and the Velozians is a fun grab bag of fine music played by excellent musicians having a good time and there's just about something for everyone! — **Bob Monteleone**

JANIVA MAGNESS
Hard to Kill
Fathead Records 2022

One of the standout artists of contemporary blues since the beginning of this century, Janiva Magness informs us in her own words of what to expect of this new album, her sixteenth, and her first since 2019's "Change in



the Weather," a compendium of John Fogerty songs. "I feel like it's a retrospective - not just of my musical life, but of my life...what I've been through...top to bottom...the gloves are off..." She has certainly faced massive challenges: abuse, the suicides of both her parents, foster care, substance use, teen pregnancy, depression. She has been open about her life publicly and has been a fervent spokeswoman and advocate for foster children. This album is her most forthright in addressing her personal history.

The album is a fervent testament to resilience and fortitude. Its message is declared in the opener of the dozen tracks, "Strong As Steel," as she declares "I'm bad business for the devil 'cause I'm so hard to kill/I turned and faced my fire.../And let it burn all the way singin'..." Sing she does! The power, range, and conviction of Magness's singing on this song, and throughout the set, is better than it has ever been.

During the last several years Magness has begun to write her own songs, and four of these are hers. Several others are penned or co-written by her long-time producer Dave Darling, who shares

guitar duties with Zach Zunis and John Schroeder, while seasoned bandmates Matt Tecu on drums and Gary Davenport on bass cohere smoothly. Jim Alfredson metes out some fine organ support, notable especially on "Fireman," a song about the persistent pull of addiction and stress ("There's fires there and they're burning bright/So I put 'em out one by one...") and "The Last Time," a cover of a John Hiatt tune.

A quintet of vocalists, including Janiva and Darling, lends fine backing to many of the tracks, including the set's one uninhibited rocker, "Don't You Forget About Me." There are no duds, and many highlights. "Lover Girl," a percolating shuffle driven by the coordination of guitar, drums, and bass, is about an abandoning beau who wants to return; Magness commands him "Don't you go mess with my head/Before you get in my bed..." "Closer" is a slow blues about the wisdom gained from painful experience: "I'm a little bit older - a little bit wiser/Earned the grey's in my hair..." The song commences with guitar and vocal echoing each other gracefully.

Magness's singing is beautiful on every track, but it and the album reach its peak in the closing number, its longest, "Pearl." The song is written to Janiva's daughter, presumably the one she gave up for adoption as a teenager. The lyrics are poignant: "Oh Pearl, I wrote this song for you-I hope your dreams come true/My mother failed me too/Oh Pearl, maybe you're better off without me/As long as you're free." The singing is sublime and heart-wrenching. Every time I have listened to this song I have started to cry. "Hard to Kill" is an album that reaches deep.—**Steve Daniels**

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