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CARLOS DEL JÜNCO

Steady Movin'
NORTHERN BLUES

Northern Blues has treated us to the latest release by the Cuban born, Canadian raised harmonica wizard Carlos del Junco, "Steady Movin'." Del Junco plays a ten note diatonic harmonica chromatically employing the "overblow" technique taught to him by the virtuoso Howard Levy.

This set is produced by guitarist Kevin Breit (Norah Jones, Cassandra Williams) and features him in the context of a blues quintet on a genre transcending set of blues, jazz, funk, folk and more. Obviously the selling point of this album is his harmonica wizardry, but he isn't that bad a singer either. As suggested, this covers quite a range of musical styles from the hot swinging jump harmonica boogie "Diddle It" that opens this with some driving saxophone like lines, followed by Kevin Breit's "Dull Blade" with its Ventures instrumental flavor with del Junco's harp adding a TV theme flavor.

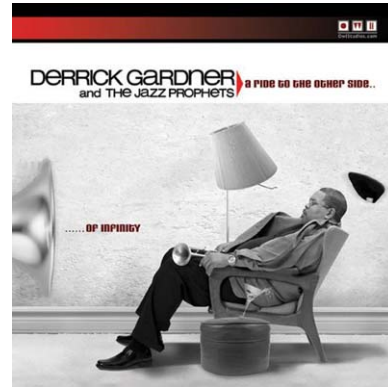
Dennis Keldie adds some nice organ on this track that surprises with its twists and turns. "Jersey Bounce" is a jazzy instrumental that may have come from the Tiny Bradshaw songbook on which del Junco displays his jazzy side. "Mashed Potatoes Canada" with John Dickie's vocal is a tribute to James Brown with a nice funk groove and Carlos being a one-person funk horn section. It is followed by a nice tribute to Rice Miller on "Movin' Down the River Rhine," with him evoking Sonny Boy's harmonica styling and contributing an effective vocal.

The intimate setting is followed by the Latin-jazz flavored "Paradise," with another credible vocal and some country-folk guitar in the backing. A lengthy solo version of "Amazing Grace" with his harp echoing bagpipes near the ear precedes exotic "The Simple Life," with echoes of the music of the Indian subcontinent. "Bailey's Bounce," a tribute to DeFord Bailey, is a marvelous harmonica evocation of a train such that Bailey himself had made famous. The album ends with "Doodle It," with a banjo prominent in the skittle band styled backing that opens at

a slow tempo before the band kicks it into a peppier gear with more swinging harp that closes this excellent album on a very high note.

Del Junco is obviously rooted in the blues, but he goes beyond his blues roots for a stunning recording that demonstrates why he among the most highly regarded harmonica players around, which is helped by the excellent support he receives on this disc. "Steady Movin'" is simply superb.

Ron Weinstock



DERRICK GARDNER AND THE JAZZ PROPHETS

A Ride to the Other Side...
OWL RECORDS

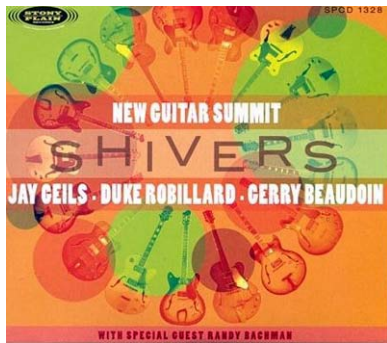
Formed in 1991 when Derrick Gardner arrived in New York, the hard bop Jazz Prophets has hung together since then. This group is heard on this exciting new release "A Ride to the Other Side..."

The core of the band is leader Derrick's trumpet, his brother Vincent on trombone and Rob Dixon's tenor saxophone, rounded out by the rhythm of pianist Anthony Wonsley, bassist Rodney Whitaker and drummer Donald Edwards. Percussionist Kevin Kaiser spices up several tracks with his Latin rhythmic accents. Musically, the Jazz Prophets are inspired by the funky hard bop of the likes of Cannonball Adderley, Horace Silver, Art Blakey and Louis Hayes-Woody Shaw. If Derrick Gardner is the leader, this band sounds like there is quite a cooperative flavor as both brother Vincent and saxophonist Dixon contribute some of the originals. The only performance that is not an original is "Be One," from bassist Bill Lee (Spike's dad).

Whatever the source, this album cooks from the opening "Funky Straight" through the hot Afro-Cuban scorcher "Lazara," the dreamy "Just a Touch" with its stop-time effect and Dixon's spirited "Of Infinity," that closes this disc. "Mac Daddy Grip" is a Blakey inspired number with a loping beat with brother Vincent opening with a strong trombone solo followed by a prancing tenor solo from Dixon before the leader takes the spotlight recalling the likes of Woody Shaw and Lee Morgan with his brash and bright tone. Bill Lee's "Be One" gives Derrick a chance to showcase his marvelous ballad playing on a number some may be familiar with from the sound track of "School Daze."

Few, if any, hard bop enthusiasts will be disappointed by the spirited and thoughtful playing here by an excellent ensemble that bring some fresh voices to this jazz tradition.

Ron Weinstock



NEW GUITAR SUMMIT
Shivers
STONY PLAIN

Stony Plain recently issued "Shivers," the second collaboration of New Guitar Summit, comprised of guitarists Jay Geils, Duke Robillard and Gerry Beaudoin, Guitarist-vocalist Randy Bachman (of Bachman-Turner Overdrive and Guess Who fame) guests on two Mose Allison songs included among the eleven selections.

While I have not heard the prior recording, my familiarity with Robillard led me to expect a swing-based session and obviously the earlier collaboration was successful enough to justify this sequel. And one can understand, as all three obviously love the easy swinging groove throughout this collection of jazzy blues, swing classics (the title track is from Charlie Christian and Lionel Hampton), and the pair of Mose Allison numbers.

One hears echoes of Christian and Grant Green (listen to the opening of Beaudoin's original "Blue Sunset"). They take the old Thurston Harris R&B hit "Little Bitty Pretty One" and turn it into a swing romp, followed by a spiffy jam on "Flying Home," and they really rip into the old swing romp, "Broadway." Bachman's low-key vocal delivery really contributes to the mood of the two Mose Allison numbers, "Your Mind Is On Vacation," and "Everybody's Crying Mercy" and adds a distinctive style with his guitar on these selections. "Honey Suckle Rose" may be taken a bit too slow, but that is more a matter of preference and the playing here is very lovely, as it is non the closing "Mediterranean Nights."

This album just brings some friends together for a blues-tinged, swinging disc that will deservedly have wide appeal.

Ron Weinstock

BEBO VALDÉS & JAVIER COLINA
Live at the Village Vanguard
CALLE 54 RECORDS

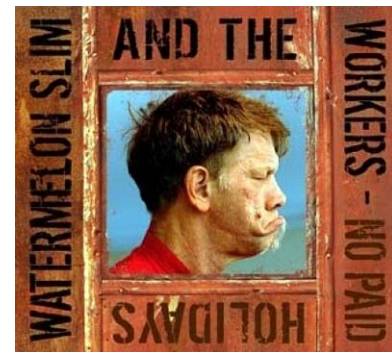
Pianist Bebo Valdés, accompanied solely by double bassist Javier Colina, performs 14 standards and Latin jazz classics in this duet set recorded live in November 2005 at New York's Village Vanguard, Valdés' first New York club engagement.

The impeccably recorded acoustic date features compositions by Valdés ("Con poco coco," "Ritmando el cha-cha-cha," and "Bebo's Blues") as well as classics by Ernesto Lecuona, familiar boleros, a pop composition by Jerome Kern ("Yesterdays") and, the closer, Bill Evans' "Waltz for Debby." Valdés doesn't miss a beat or chord and Colina plays in tight unity throughout.

Valdés was born October 9, 1918 in Quivicán, Cuba. After acquiring the keyboard skills that enabled him to perform in a series of local bands, Valdés left his birth town for Havana, where he became musical director at a famous Havana night club. He was one of the primary forgers of *descarga*, the Cuban jam session, alongside bassist Israel "Cachao" Lopez. Valdés defected from Cuba in 1960 and by 1963 settled in Stockholm. He is the father of renowned Cuban pianist Chucho Valdés.

The CD is a delightfully light and melodious listen. Valdés has previously won two Grammy Awards and five Latin Grammy Awards, so it's no surprise that this recording—released shortly before the pianist's 90th birthday—has been nominated for a Latin Grammy for Best Instrumental Album.

Nancy Ann Lee



WATERMELON SLIM AND THE WORKERS
No Paid Holidays
NORTHERN BLUES

Watermelon Slim has followed his acclaimed album "The Wheel Man" with this new disc that is sure to please fans and critics alike. Backed by his tight band The Workers, he brings his multi-instrumental skills and raspy, gritty vocals to a collection of provocative originals mixed with some choice covers.

The album kicks off with some slide guitar on the driving "Blues For Howard," followed by the by the relentless vamp and groove of "Archetypical Blues No. 2" which cleverly incorporates some traditional blues stanzas. He shifts to harp while the band kicks into a fast boogaloo groove for Detroit Junior's "Call My Job," with his crisp machine-gun delivery of the lyrics being very effective. "You're the One I Need," with its Latin-shuffle rhythm, is effective with its lower-key delivery. Perhaps a bit too hard driving may be "Bubba's Blues" with a guest appearance from Leroy Parnell on slide guitar. An interesting performance is Laura Nyro's "And When I Die," which Slim accompanies only with his harmonica, a far cry from Blood Sweat & Tears hit of the song. "Gearzy's Boogie," is a frenzied harp feature that features some crisp playing but perhaps a bit too frantic a tempo, which contrasts with the sparse field holler opening of "This Traveling Life," on which the starkness is broken up by some crying harmonica.

Taking up the dobro, Slim has a playful tribute on "Max The Playful Clown," which might not be a blues, but is a damn fine song and performance. Its playful mood contrasts with his stark eyewitness protest of the brutal oppression by the military rules in Miramar, "The Burmese Blues." Not sure who decided to follow this with his talking blues "I Got a Toothache," with guitar and foot stomping, but no pos-

sible fault can be found with his moving rendition of Mississippi Fred McDowell's "Everybody's Down On Me."

There are a few flaws but overall "No Paid Holiday" is a highly satisfying recording, full of some exceptional new songs and thoughtful, yet impassioned performances.

Ron Weinstock

LIONEL HAMPTON ORCHESTRA Live at Mustermesse Basel, 1953 (Part 2) Swiss Radio Days, Vol. 18 TCB RECORDS

For this concert performance live-recorded on September 25, 1953 in Switzerland, Lionel Hampton leads an orchestra that includes trumpeters Art Farmer, Clifford Brown and Quincy Jones (also piano), trombonists Jimmy Cleveland, Benny Powell, bassist Monk Montgomery, drummer Allan Dawson, and other ace instrumentalists. Like all its successors, this was a short-lived band.

The rousing charts make this an exciting listen. All but four of the nine tunes (45:02 total time) are Hampton compositions. Familiar include "Flying Home," "Air Mail Special," "Hamp's Boogie Woogie" and "On the Sunny Side of the Street." You don't hear much of Hampton's vibes playing until track 7 ("Kingfish/Drinkin' Wine"). One drawback is that liner notes (by Kurt S. Weil) don't list soloists.

Never released before, the historic material on this Part 2 disc captures all the fun of a live performance, especially Hampton's "Hey-Baba-re-Bop," in which the audience engages in a call-and-response with vocalist Sunny Parker (or Hampton) against pounding traps work. Part one, released in October 2007, included a ten-track mix of mostly standards.

Nancy Ann Lee

CHRIS JAMES AND PATRICK RYAN Stop and Think About It EARWIG

Guitarist Chris James and bassist Patrick Ryan have been working together for quite some time, playing the clubs in Chicago, and touring with Sam Lay for several years as well. This writer saw them as part of Jody Williams' backing band at the 2007 Pocono Blues Festival and had a chance to chat with Chris, finding him as knowledgeable as he was a marvelous player. Earwig has just issued a release by the duo, "Stop and Think About It," which is a terrific recording of old school Chicago-styled blues.

James fronts the recording with his powerful vocals and his terrific guitar (evoking the late Robert Lockwood and Williams). He and Ryan are joined by a variety of backing musicians including harmonica player Bob Corritore, with whom they have toured Europe, pianist Dave Maxwell, drummers Sam Lay and Willie Hayes and saxophonist Jonny Viau.

They mix in some wonderful originals that suggest John Brim and Little Walter along with covers of songs from Elmore James (four numbers, of which only "Hawaiian Boogie" may be well known), Jay McShann, Bo Diddley, and Snooky Pryor. Check out the title track, a strong shuffle taken a relaxed tempo; a remake of Jay McShann's "Confessin' the Blues," with a terrific tenor

solo from Carla Brownlee and strong piano from Julien Brunetaud; and "Mister Coffee," an easy rocker with hints of Jimmy Rogers and John Brim as James sings about being man who grinds so fine," with Corritore adding harp.

"Early in the Morning," is one of the Elmore James covers here with some nice slide along with horns using the "Fannie Mae" riff. While "Hawaiian Boogie" often is played with a manic tempo, the performance here benefits from James' restraint, which does not diminish the power of this rendition.


"You Got to Move" is one of the songs Elmore recorded for legendary Harlem record man Bobby Robinson, and with Brownlee's baritone helping to give bottom to the performance, James lays down a first-rate vocal and takes a terrific solo. It's so refreshing to hear someone put his own stamp on Elmore's music, yet remain true to the music's essence.

James perhaps is a bit out front with the vocal on Snooky Pryor's "Someone to Love Me," but it still is a solid performance. "Relaxing at the Clarendon" is a fine instrumental that displays more of James' strong slide style taken at a walking tempo. Mix in the fine rendition of "Bo Diddley's "Mona" and one has little to find fault with on this disc.

When I saw James and Ryan backing Jody Williams, I could appreciate how good they were as musicians, but this stellar release shows even more, how good they are out in front. This was an unexpected blues delicacy and highly recommended.


Ron Weinstock

LIL' ED AND THE BLUES IMPERIALS
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