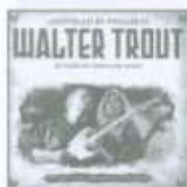
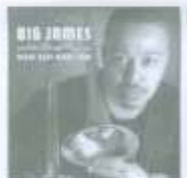


## CD REVIEWS



**Walter Trout**  
***Unspoiled By Progress***  
 Provogue Records PRD7285

Much more than a greatest hits collection *Unspoiled By Progress* is a new album consisting of songs collected over the course of his illustrious twenty year career. Included are three new original tunes plus a pile of previously unreleased live and studio recordings with various bands. Pulling it all together and making it all flow was a massive undertaking, but well worth the effort. From a technical standpoint, this one is amazing. If you like your blues/rock with a bit of a heavy edge, you'll love this one. Regardless of whether you're a fan of his particular style or not, this one is certain to get your attention. It is extremely well put together, very diverse and in every respect, impeccable. Trout's guitar work is second to none and the recording has all the power of a single, uninterrupted live show. If you're a Trout fan, *Unspoiled By Progress* is an absolute must. If not, it's still well worth a good listen. While I prefer my blues a bit more on the traditional side I found this one held my ear from beginning to end. Congratulations on a job well done. It was no easy task! The guitar work throughout the piece was enough to make a diehard fan of even me. Give this one a good listen. – Bill Wilson



**Big James**  
**& the Chicago Playboys**  
***Right Here, Right Now***  
 Blind Pig 5131

Big James and the Chicago Playboys are very much in the vein of Little Milton and the like. This is straight ahead Chicago soul/blues with lots of funk and soul. Phat horns and a richness and depth that is not easily achieved, this is the real deal through and through. One of the reasons I love blues as much as I do is the diversity of styles. Charley Patton and Big James can play back to back and the thread stays intact. Lead vocalist and trombone player, Big James Montgomery is a tremendous showman and bandleader and one great storyteller. This is music that will draw you close to that special someone and turn up the heat exponentially. This is as good as soul/blues gets...smooth, soulful and burning with passion. It feels good to know that someone is stepping up to perform this particular style. As the old guard continues to age gracefully, the young lions are learning their lessons well. James worked with Little Milton for two years, moved on to play with Albert King, Johnny Christian, Buddy Guy and more. This band has all the tools they need to get the job done...well, and are diverse enough to keep it interesting. From hardcore soul/blues, this band can slide effortlessly into straight-ahead Chicago blues. Not unlike fishing with multiple hooks, this band can hook you from any number of directions. One thing's for sure...there'll be no putting this band into a box. Give them a listen. Something here will catch your ear for sure. – Bill Wilson



**Watermelon Slim**  
**& the Workers**  
***Escape From the Chicken Coop***  
 NorthernBlues Music 0054

Watermelon Slim and the Workers are the voice of working men and women worldwide. If you've ever laid hand to tool (any tool at all, so long as at the end of the day you're shot to hell) you will relate to this band. There's no pretense here. What you hear is what you get. Until recently, Bill Homans (Watermelon Slim) was driving truck, hauling industrial waste. Not one of us, if we've got hearts at all, has not passed by the stranger in need, only to feel the regret. I, for one, have been on the other side. May God continue to bless you if you've never had that experience. I keep searching for a simple reason why I have such a soft spot for Watermelon Slim and the Workers. I guess it all comes down to "hope." If Slim can make a go of it, there's hope for us all. What makes him so endearing is that, through it all, he remembers who he is and where he came from. I would not want to leave anyone with the impression that his days of hard work are over. This may well be the hardest working band in the world. Working musicians deserve far more than they get, to be sure. The ability to bring just a moment's comfort to the masses is no easy task...and it's all too often a thankless job. America has many heroes abroad. No less the hero are those bringing that little bit of joy to us at home. *Escape From The Chicken Coop* is pure Americana...the song of the minstrel, keeping the story of the people fresh and alive...and there's no better storytellers out there than *Watermelon Slim and the Workers*. – Bill Wilson



**Tas Cru**  
***Grizzle & Bone***  
 Crustee Tees Records 0901

Tas Cru hits their audience with everything they've got, right out of the chute. This is pure roadhouse blues, using whatever is needed to do the job. They've got the tools they need to do the job properly and do so with power, authority and more than a small touch of fun. This band runs the full range, from hard rockin' to slow, heartfelt ballads that reach straight through to the heart of the listener. Technically flawless and charged with raw emotion, this band walks that fine line as if it were a six lane highway. This is fun to listen to, easy on the ears and sure to get the blood pumpin' and the feet in motion...and the cover is nearly wasted on the CD format size...a take-off on the classic "dogs playing poker." Primarily originals, even the disc's one cover tune is a thing of beauty. The arrangement on "Higher and Higher" is impressive to say the least. This is a band worth searching out. Given the opportunity, catch their show. If that's not possible, buy the disc. You won't be disappointed. This is one band that has what it takes to take you wherever you need to go. Tas Cru have a real edge, perhaps more than one. They can be rough and raw enough to peel paint off the old Studebaker. On the other hand, they can be smooth as silk...and they make the switch seamlessly. This band has something special. You will not be disappointed. – Bill Wilson