

T-BONE WALKER: I Get So Weary + Singing The Blues**Soul Jam Records 600874 (74:47)**

Here In The Dark/ I Miss You Baby/ Life Is Too Short/ Welcome Blues (Say Pretty Baby)/ I Get So Weary/ You Just Wanted To Use Me/ Through With Women/ Street Walking Woman/ Party Girl/ High Society/ Lollie Lou/ Got No Use For You/ Glamour Girl/ The Hustle/ Alimony Blues/ News For My Baby/ Love Is Just A Gamble/ I'm Still In Love With You/ I'm About To Lose My Mind/ I Got The Blues Again/ Everytime/ Bye Bye Baby/ I'll Understand/ Teenage Baby/ No Reason/ Strollin' With Bones/ Wanderin' Heart/ Pony Tail

T-BONE WALKER: The Great Blues Vocals & Guitar + 16 Bonus Tracks**Soul Jam Records 600875 (77:50)**

T-Bone Shuffle/ I'm Still In Love With You/ Call It Stormy Monday/ I Want A Little Girl/ Bobby Sox Blues/ West Side Baby/ Go Back To The One You Love/ I Wish You Were Mine/ Wise Man Blues/ You're My Best Poker Hand/ Born To Be No Good/ T-Bone Jumps Again/ I Walked Away/ No Reason/ Look Me In The Eyes/ Too Lazy/ My Baby Left Me Blues/ Come Back To Me Baby/ She Is Going To Ruin Me (aka Fast Woman)/ I Can't Stand Being Away From You/ Long Distance Blues/ My Baby Is Now On My Mind/ Doin' Time/ I'll Always Be In Love With You/ Hard Way/ Strugglin' Blues/ Alimony Blues/ News For My Baby

Ok let's get started. A 56 track Jasmine double CD was reviewed in *B&R* 301 by the undersigned and for those that bought it the following information may be of interest to you. On the Jasmine issue 52 tracks were Imperial recordings and the last four were Atlantics. Soul Jam has issued these two CDs with 'I Get So Weary etc' being a 28 track Imperial compilation. Twenty-six of these tracks appeared on the Jasmine issue with 'Through With Women' and 'I'm Still In Love With You' the only 'new' tracks.

On 'The Great Blues Vocals etc' CD the first twelve tracks are Black & White recordings originally issued on a hard to find Capitol LP from 1962. The remaining sixteen tracks are a mixed bag of Imperials of which there are six 'new' titles not included on the Jasmine release. In a nutshell if you purchase these two CDs you will get twelve Black & White 1940s recordings and eight Imperials to add to your Jasmine collection.

Hope *B&R* readers don't mind the reviewer labouring these points but it is important to know what you are getting for your money. Oh and the music – well it's terrific T-Bone Walker displaying all his style and

charisma. As stated in the previous review all T-Bone at one go can be heavy going but sampled appropriately he is just magnificent. The issues are well-packaged, good sound quality and the booklets are a really interesting read with plenty of pictures and posters lovingly put together. We all appreciate what Soul Jam are doing for the music we care about but sometimes it is just small attention to detail that occasionally let's them down. For example Willard McDaniel becomes 'William' in the discography and why are two bonus tracks on 'The Great Blues Vocals etc' a repeat of tracks on 'I Get So Weary etc'? Over to you with the money to decide how you want to purchase what is essential music for any collection.

Keith Scoffham

★ *Alternative* **TAKES** ★

BLUE GLAZE MENTO BAND: We Will Wait
Bilmon Productions (no issue number) (37:54)

A modern recording of Jamaican mento music. Purists may look a little askance at the guest appearances by reggae singers Toots Hibbert (of Toots And the Maytals), Stranger Cole, and Bunny Wailer (of The Wailers fame), but they really needn't worry. Toots convinces on the rousing rustic gospel of 'Great Jehovah', Cole remakes his much anthologised ska hit 'Rough And Tough' in fine mento fashion, and Bunny Wailer adds a Rastafarian flavour to the title track, which sounds like a re-working of an old spiritual number. Blue Glaze themselves worked on a reggae-mento amalgam with singer Stanley Beckford, but on this set their mento is uncompromising.

The band's roots reach back to 1960, though the line-up has gone through many changes, with banjo player Neville Chambers the longest serving member – he was there when the band was resurrected in 1967 (Daniel T. Neely's informative notes give the full story). The line-up for this album is in the classic format of banjo, rhumba box, guitars and percussion, and former Bob Marley harmonica player Lee Jaffe also adds a lovely rural sound to a couple of tracks.

The fourteen songs include such mento classics as 'Wheel And Turn Me', 'Big Boy And Teacher', 'Night Food' and 'Slide Mongoose', which features some fine sax from Dean Fraser, Count Lasher's 'Mo-Bay Chinaman'. Some readers may know 'Mommy Out De Light', from Mickey & Sylvia, others from Marie Bryant's earlier recording, issued in Britain on Lyragon as 'Little Boy', and with somewhat curiously dubious lyrics.

I should add too that this is a beautifully recorded CD, mastered in New Orleans. Lovely packaging complements a very fine set that is certainly recommended to all readers with any interest at all in mento music.

Norman Darwen**RY COODER: Acoustic Performance, Radio Ranch, Cleveland, Ohio, 12-12-1972**
Echoes 2014 (57:48)**RY COODER: Down At The Field Denver, Col, May 16 & 20 1974**
Left Field Media LFMCD523 (72:28)**RY COODER & THE CHICKEN SKIN BAND: Hamburg, Germany, January 26 1977**
Immortal IMA 105017 (47:57)

My wallet is gasping from all the broadcast CDs panting to gratify my collecting jones. I won't admit how many Little Feat broadcasts/boots I have and that's just the ones Lowell George is on. In Cooder's case, I've got a few more that have been given to me, thank goodness. The above, arranged by date, are just some of what you'll find in FOPP or on Amazon.

As some of you know and two of the above CDs attest, Cooder kept faith with Estes, performing 'Floating Bridge' (who knows why he calls it 'Floating Bridge' in 1974), 'Going To Brownsville' and 'Blind Man Messed Up By Teargas', a more recent composition. These he performs on mandolin, on which he is just as adept as the guitar. The Cleveland set is performed solo in the studio and there are seven brief tracks interspersed amongst the songs as he tunes up and explains what he's about to sing. There are four slide features, including 'Tattler' and 'Dark Was The Night' but his guitar is close-miked, the slide rattle on the fretboard is really loud. Overall, with some provisos, it's a good set.

'Down At The Field', in front of an audience at Ebbetts Field, is better, with a wider range of material (and fifteen minutes longer). The audience



B&R Archive.

is a bit over-effusive but they clam up during 'I Can Tell By The Way You Smell' when Cooder sings 'she had her hand in her toodlum up to her wrist'. Once again there are four mandolin features and six slide (with a little less rattle), if you add the last four tracks cut at the Bottom Line in New York four days previously.

Three years pass and Cooder's in Germany with his Chicken Skin Band, with accordionist Flaco Jimenez' band and vocalists Eldridge King, Terry Evans and Bobby King. The full band is on the first three and last three tracks with 'One Meat Ball' and 'Fool For A Cigarette' played solo and the singers added to 'Tamp 'Em Up Solid' and 'Let Your Light Shine On Me'. Cooder shouts 'it's polka time! at the start of 'Do Re Mi', while 'Goodnight Irene' is played as a waltz. Jimenez sings 'Volver, Volver', which has a sudden-death ending. It's all just a little too sophisticated for my taste, so my recommendation is 'Down At The Field'.

Neil Slaven

Goin' up the Country



Blind Alfred Reed (centre) with his West Virginia Nite Owls, circa late 1920s.

BLIND ALFRED REED: Appalachian Visionary Dust To Digital DTD 48 (67:00) with hardback book, unpaginated

Is it a book? Is it a CD? Which part of the review section does it belong in? Who cares? It's an outstanding artefact, almost as much a pleasure to hold in your hand, to browse and to read as it is to listen to. The complete works of Blind Alfred Reed, cut between 1927 and 1929, have been around for almost twenty years in a Document CD (and some of us have had the Rounder LP with fourteen of his best for closer to forty years). Never before, though, have we had them sounding as clear and as resonant as they do here. It's astonishing – the old *cliché* about it being like he was sitting in the room with you has rarely seemed more apt. Alfred Reed's songs, while only occasionally specifically religious, tended to consist of little parables or moral homilies. A song like 'Why Do You Bob Your Hair, Girls?' may sound quaint to modern ears, absurd even, but it must have struck a chord with at least some of its original audience (although whether it really had the desired effect on any girl is another matter). 'There'll Be No Distinction There' makes us cringe now with its refrain line 'We'll all be white in that heavenly light', but saying even that was crossing a line that a lot of white people in Reed's day would have found entirely unacceptable. And I can think of few more appealing promises for the afterlife than Reed's assertion that: 'We'll play on golden instruments and shout to beat the band'.

In any case, as an essential core of Reed's art was to shame hypocrites and condemn discrimination, some of his songs can still seem relevant. 'How Can A Poor Man Stand Such Times And Live' and 'Always Lift Him Up' express sentiments that are pretty universal, and it requires no commitment to faith to see the truth in them. 'Money Cravin' Folks' seems no less relevant in 2016 than it did in 1929. Reed, though, refuses to be sombre – even telling a tragic story, his approach is matter of fact, his accompaniment lively and attention-catching. His own fiddle provides comparatively simple harmonies and tags between verses,

while his voice is fine and tuneful, his diction as clear as it surely needed to be to convey his heart-felt messages.

The hardback book is beautifully designed, packed with photographs and other images, biographical information, appreciations and analyses (by Ted Olson), lyric transcriptions and discographical details. The pages are not numbered, but the Dust To Digital website tells me that there's 84 of them. Alfred Reed was an outstanding artist of his time and place and we are fortunate that his work was captured by Victor Records in the 1920s when he seems to have been in his prime, and we're fortunate all over again that a company like Dust To Digital has given it this kind of extra special treatment in the 2010s.

Ray Templeton

★ The LAST Writes ★

DEBBIE BOND: Enjoy The Ride Blues Root Productions BRP1601 (45:26)

Singer and electric guitarist Debbie Bond hails from Alabama and she is co-founder of the Alabama Blues project that seeks to preserve the state's blues heritage. This is her fourth album, which was recorded in the legendary Muscle Shoals studios.

This is not a blues album although there are some blues guitar licks tucked away in some of the eleven songs including good covers of Ann Peebles' 'Love Vibration', Willie King's 'I Am The Blues', and Jody Williams' 'Left Me In The Dark'. The album is an appealing mixture of funk and soul influenced soft-rock ballads and the production is very good. Bond is a pleasant if somewhat limited singer and her accompanying musicians are very much up to the mark. Overall it is an appealing album with some well-crafted songs and it is worth checking out.

Paul Mooney

MIKE ELDRED TRIO: Baptist Town Great Western Recording Company GWRC001 (58:17)

This is the band's fourth album and the release is best summed up in the attached press release 'Baptist Town' (a small shotgun shack neighborhood outside Greenwood Mississippi) paints a musical picture steeped in the rich history of the South and the folklore that is so important to American Culture. It is a monumental achievement in roots and blues storytelling, presented as a multi-layered journey through

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Mississippi juke joints, prisons, churches focusing on the poverty and racism of the past and present etc. etc. etc'

The read is exhausting and mirrored by the majority of the music. This reviewer doesn't agree that 'all thirteen tracks drip with authenticity and soul etc etc again.' However, the title track is saved by Robert Cray's guest appearance playing fine guitar. This is amply displayed on a short documentary at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSLzFBpSEdk&feature=youtu.be>. Anyone sampling this CD can make their own mind up if the version of The Beatles' 'Can't Buy Me Love' is a blistering cover that turns it inside out. Whatever that means? This CD will struggle to find future playtime on the busy turntable schedule at this residence. Any reader wanting to try it for themselves please contact The Review Editor and I will ship it to you.

Keith Scoffham

ROGER HUBBARD: If I Had A Dollar Deep Mud Records DM 013-4CD (60:00)

Roger Hubbard has been around a while. As far back as 1971, he was one of the few artists to have an album on the Blue Goose label (Nick Perls' Yazoo subsidiary) who was not an African-American. Over the subsequent years, his website tells me, he has recorded solo, in a duo and with a band. This one is a solo set, in the sense that his is the only name on the front, but the music within offers a mixture of formats and a range of accompanists. The opener is in a kind of soft-rock style; track two takes us into stripped-back singer-songwriter mode; track three is a solo version of 'Need Somebody On Your Bond', with resonator guitar. That sets the pattern – the rest of the album is a similar mix, a bit folkier here, a bit bluesier there and a bit rockier from time to time. He's a skilled guitar player, a pleasant singer (with slightly mannered mid-Atlantic tones) and he can write a decent song. Overall, the effect is very laidback, with even his evidently considerable instrumental skills worn pretty lightly.

Ray Templeton

MARK MAY BAND AND THE SOUL SATYR HORNS: Blues Heaven Connor Ray Music CRM-1601 (77:38)

This is Mark May's sixth CD and his first for this label. Now based in Columbus Ohio he spent many years playing in Houston (with The Agitators). The press release refers to him as a blues-rock guitarist and that may pigeonhole him in some of the reader's views. He is more than that and you can hear definite country and southern country rock in his style on 'She's A Keeper' for example. He does play some fine blues on this release and for this reviewer 'All I Ever Do' is the pick of the crop with a great hip swaying beat where his simple but so effective guitar playing is supported by an on the button horn section. Good singing with thoughtful lyrics – a winner on these ears. 'Kind Of Girl' has the same feeling where Dave Absalom takes the lead guitar and vocal role. The brass section is used very well and is very supportive throughout with Mark's buddy from The Agitators, Eric Demmer, contributing fine saxophone playing on 'Garden Of Truth' and 'Blues Heaven'. On the latter, which is described as a powerful title track 'the guitar ghost of Jimi Hendrix' is his mellow style and not his firebrand electric stuff. This is not a straight-ahead blues album but deserves our attention and investigation. Some fine music here with generous playing time.

Keith Scoffham

DEKE MCGEE: All Night Long MDM Music MDM001 (35:52)

Eleven-tracker from Glasgow-based sax maestro McGee, who has been a leading light on the scene there for over thirty years as well as touring all over the place backing up numerous blues and jazz artists.

This album – ten years in the making – consists of Deke's own compositions, written in the spirit of classic r&b of the late 1940s, plus a couple of jazz-based instrumentals and slow blues. Deke's tough blowing and pleasing vocals is accompanied by a fine little combo of guitar, keyboards, bass and drums. All fellow Glaswegians I presume.

'Mr Cornbread' is a fine tribute to the honking of Hal Singer, utilising the basic tenor riff before the band jumps in with a rollicking and infectious beat. 'Blowout' is another honking instrumental reminiscent of Big Jay at his best whilst 'Jumpin' Jesus Holy Cow', 'Jumpin' Out The Window' and 'Shut Your Mouth' are further examples of classic r&b/ jump blues.

The best track for me is 'The Sweetheart Blues', a great New Orleans-flavoured number, which would have served Fats Domino proud, with the horns groaning along in fine style with pounding piano courtesy of Daniel Meade.

If you're a fan of classic r&b as put out by the likes of Jordan, Milton, Liggins etc, then Deke's your man.

Tony Watson

TOO SLIM AND THE TAILDRAGGERS: Blood Moon Underworld UND0025 (49:00)

Too Slim is guitarist/vocalist Tim Langford, and the Taildraggers are Jeff Fowlkes on drums and vocals, and Robert Kearns on bass and vocals. All songs on this set are original.

The PR release states '...Langford is a monster guitarist, an unabashed blues rocker whose influences run the gamut from Lightnin' Hopkins and Freddy King, to Duane Allman and Robin Trower' (whoever he is). He's been around for a long time (thirty years it says) but I have to confess I have never heard of Too Slim before.

And yes, it is an unabashed blues rock release, played pretty well I have to admit. He's undoubtedly one of the better blues rockers around. Although he plays guitar well enough and avoids most of the usual shredding and hysterics beloved of certain so-called blues guitarists around, personally it is not my cup of tea. However if you like this kind of thing then this is certainly a CD to check out, but I doubt if it will appeal to many readers of this magazine. www.tooslim.org is the place to go if want to find out more.

Rupert Sheppey

JEFF PLANKENTHORN: SoulSlide Lounge Side LSR0012 (43:55)

Jeff is a singer and guitarist based in Austin, Texas, who has a wide range of musical experience, most of which he brings to bear on this CD. Jeff plays a stand-up lap steel instrument which he designed and which he showcases on this collection of blues, soul, country and rock numbers, though he has consciously looked at adapting the sacred steel sound to many of them. He has also pulled in singer Malford Milligan for an excellent, gritty duet on Sam & Dave's 'You Got Me Humming' (one of two covers on the album) and Ruthie Foster for the Rolling Stones inspired 'Like Flowers'. You have to like it eclectic to appreciate everything on this set, but it is all Texas music, and that should be enough for some readers, at least.

Norman Darwen

SHARI PUERTO: My Obsession BluesRockMusic, no number (44:42)

This is the Los Angeles-based singer Ms Puerto's fourth album and she is joined by over a dozen musicians on this impressive release.

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This is an attractive and varied set of soul and funk influenced ballads with some good guitar and keyboard work. Puerto has a good singing voice and her lyrics on the title track are to do with many women's passions for collecting shoes. She switches to sultry vamp on 'Sugar Daddy', and rock chic chanteuse on the memorable 'All About You'. The closing number is a good rendition of the classic 'When A Man Loves A Woman'.

Whereas it may be a step too far for some *B&R* readers, for those who do venture to hear this well produced CD I am sure that they will be well satisfied.

Paul Mooney

GUS SPENOS: If You Were Gold Baby
Indie release, no number (52:08)

Now here's one that should appeal to a lot of readers. Based in Indianapolis, Gus is a sharp looking singer and sax player with a rather neat line in brassy, jumping, swinging blues. Besides his own originals, writer credits include Lee Allen, Jesse Powell, Jimmy Preston ('Rock With It, Baby', a wonderful duet with young singer Charenee Wade), Preston Love and Todd Rhodes, alongside vocalists Jimmy Witherspoon, Earl Curry and Jimmy 'T-99' Nelson – and there's 'Tequila' too.

All I need to add is that Gus is a warm and fine vocalist, and he and his big band certainly know how to play this kind of stuff well, very well indeed – that should be enough for many. Let's hope he releases a follow-up pretty quickly. Nice! www.gusspenos.com

Norman Darwen

MAT WALKLATE & PAOLO FUSCHI: Kicking Up The Dust
Indie release, no number (46:11)

Recorded at Eve Studios in Manchester, harp player Walklate and Sicilian electric guitarist Fuschi share the vocals. Apart from one joint composition this is a CD of covers however, how this talented duo interpret and refresh them is a musical delight. They include St. Louis Jimmy Oden's classic 'Going Down Slow', Muddy's 'Trouble No More', and Willie Dixon's 'As Long As I Have You'. They also cover a medley of two ska songs 'Oh Babe (Sick And Tired)', and 'Man In The Street'. From the scant on line information that I could find, both men met in 2014 and I believe that this is their first CD.

This is one of the best blues albums that I have heard in a long time. The musicianship is first class and Walklate is one of the U.K.'s hidden talents as his harp playing is excellent. Fuschi is a good guitarist who cuts the frills and plays well either when backing his partner or in delivering short but impressive solos. Clearly, both men have listened to and assimilated a lot of good music in their time.

It would be great to see them on the U.K. circuit, but in the meantime do yourself a favour and get a hold of this impressive debut CD and listen to some great music. Available from www.walklateandfuschi.com

Paul Mooney



BIG BILL BROONZY: Sings Folk Songs
Smithsonian-Folkways SFW40023

Side 1: Backwater Blues/ This Train/ I Don't Want No Woman (To Try To Be My Boss)/ Martha/ Tell Me Who – Side 2: Bill Bailey/ Alberta/ Goin' Down This Road/ Tell Me What Kind Of Man Jesus Is/ John Henry/ Glory Of Love

This straight reissue of Folkways FA2328, which has that number on the label as well as the Smithsonian's, has the same number as their previous CD reissue, thus to drive poor discographers mad. Issuing it on LP is no doubt a response to fashion, but the analogue sound is breathtakingly clear and sharp. I am not able to compare this with a CD version, but I get no sense that this is re-recorded from digital masters. It comes in a thick Folkways-type sleeve, which also includes a Folkways-type insert booklet. This reproduces Charles Edward Smith's original 1962 notes and lyric transcriptions of the songs, but supplements them with a 2015 essay by Broonzy's biographer Robert Riesman setting out what is now known about the singer's true biography that was not known in 1962.

In 1962, there was the usual Folkways obscurantism about the actual origins of the material used, an obscurantism which sat very oddly with the apparent scholarly intentions. Smith says the album was "put together from various tapes". Six tracks are said to come from a solo session recorded "not long before his death", after his vocal cords were damaged in an operation. Only four ('I Don't Want' to 'Tell Me Who' and



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Big Bill and Bob Barclay enjoy a small sherry, Manchester, 1957. Photo: Terry Cryer.

'Glory Of Love') actually appear to. They are readily identifiable from the voice quality but are not as inferior as their reputation would lead one to expect. In fact despite occasional roughness and straining they are moving and affecting. Smith comments on the way he makes the strain in his voice contribute to the performance and this is especially true of 'Martha', perhaps because Martha Ledbetter was present at the session.

The remaining tracks come from a 1956 concert at Northwestern University, broadcast and probably recorded by WFMT Chicago. The concert was shared with Pete Seeger, who is heard in various capacities on three tracks. This inevitably gives an emotion-free folksy atmosphere to them, especially noticeable in the politicised version of 'This Train' complete with audience participation. The light-hearted treatment of 'Goin' Down The Road' is utterly at variance with the lyrics, and this 'John Henry', on which Seeger sings, is more skiffle than blues. Of the solo tracks, the storming version of 'Bill Bailey' is altogether exceptional, while 'Backwater Blues' comes from a different aesthetic universe. One suspects that the audience would not have welcomed a performance consistently at this level of intensity. I do not detect much involvement in the religious material, though of course Bill's guitar playing is always uplifting.

'Glory Of Love' is Bill's very last recording and is a worthy showcase for his guitar style. The appropriately gentle vocal works around the vocal deficiencies. If I'm honest I prefer this last session to the crowd-pleasing efforts of the college gig in spite of those deficiencies. This is obviously a long way from being the best Broonzy available but a worthwhile acquisition for those who rate his later work nonetheless.

Howard Rye

FURRY LEWIS: Good Morning Judge

Fat Possum BLM0524 (41:51)

Side 1: Good Morning Judge/ Worried Blues/ Blues Around My Bed/ Why Don't You Come Home Blues/ Furry Lewis Rag – Side 2: Don't You Wish Your Mama/ Roll And Tumble/ Old Hobo/ Farewell I'm Growing Old/ Furry Lewis's Careless Love

NOT THE SAME OLD BLUES CRAP 3

Fat Possum FP10151-1 (45:21)

Side 1: CHARLES CALDWELL: Hadn't I Been Good To You; THE BLACK KEYS: Set You Free; NATHANIEL MAYER: I Found Out; IGGY AND THE STOOGES: You Better Run; LITTLE FREDDIE KING: Crack Head Joe; R.L. BURNSIDE: Goin' Down South; THEE SHAMS: You Want It – Side 2: KENNY BROWN: Cocaine Bill; BOB LOG 111: Boob Scotch; GRANDPA BOY: Vampires And Failures; T-MODEL FORD: Bad Man; ROBERT BELFOUR: Pushin' My Luck; ROBERT PETE WILLIAMS: Goodbye Slim Harpo

When I reviewed the Furry Lewis CD way back in *B&R* 183 I waxed eulogistic (yes, cynics, it happens). And I'll do so again. As idiosyncratic and cantankerous as Furry was, this was one of George Mitchell's best recordings and now, as Decca used to announce as a 'full frequency range recording', it's further enhanced by the sonorous dimensions vinyl can offer. Despite the announcement on the cover that these are 1962 recordings, only 'Why Don't You Come Home Blues' and 'Furry Lewis Rag' were made that year, the rest being cut five years later. The deception is Fat Possum's.

Which in no way diminishes the quality of these performances. Tuning may be approximate, the bottleneck may rattle, but Furry's thumb keeps a dependable pedal bass pulse, even if his slide embellishments play

havoc with the metre. The way he tells it, his guitar is as garrulous as he is; as he says in 'I'm Growing Old', 'guitar talk more than I do! Guitar must be drunk!'. In 'Old Hobo' (which is actually Jimmy Rodgers' 'Waiting For A Train'), he comments, 'I don't drink no whiskey, no beer, wine or gin. But if you ever see old Furry sober, won't you make me drunk again'. It's worth pointing out 'Careless Love' is really 'One Kind Favor' and 'Why Don't You Come Home' is better known as 'Pearline'. None of which will stifle your delight. As I said in the original review, this is 'a must-have'.

The marketplace was contracting by the time 'Not The Same Old Blues Crap 3' was first issued in 2004. I wasn't aware of its existence until now but it fails to emulate its forebears. One look at its contents shows the reason why. If you put me in a straitjacket and ripped out my tongue, I would still deny the proto-naked Iggys ability to sing blues, even one by Junior Kimbrough. The same goes for Thee Shams and Grandpa Boy but the idea of a lady-friend stirring my Scotch with her nipple has its attractions and Bo Log 111 is no Stardust Cowboy. The goodies here are by T-Model Ford, Robert Belfour and Robert Pete Williams; Burnside's 'Goin' Down South' comes from 'A Bothered Mind', his worst album for all its scratching and other distractions. The lead vocal is by Lyrics Born (!) with R.L.'s contribution being taken from a previous collection.

Charles Caldwell and the howling Nathaniel Mayer do well enough without raising your temperature. Little Freddie King's opus hadn't been released when this came out. I've never forgiven Kenny Brown for copping the royalties on songs by his mentor, Joe Callicott nor have I been impressed by the Black Keys then and since. The timing above is approximate since this is a shallow cut on green vinyl and virtually every track jumped. It's a battle between show and content which basically makes it hard to recommend anyone to search for. But go get Furry right away.

Neil Slaven

INSTRUMENTALS SOUL-STYLE: Kinda Groovy

History Of Soul HOS4 (43:29)

Side 1: CHUCK BERNARD & THE SATELLITE BAND: Wasted; FREDDY ROBINSON: The Hawk; JIMMY RIVERS COMBO: Closer Walk; BIG BO THOMAS & THE ARROWS: How About It (Part 1); JOHNNY HARTSMAN AND HIS BAND: Besame Mucho (Part 1); EDDIE & THE DE-HAVELONS: Baby Dimplins; LEON FERGUSON: Miss Dolores Funk; THE GAYTONES: LBs Place (Parts 1 & 2) – Side 2; YORK WILBORN: Domino; AL BROWNE'S BAND: Soul (Parts 1 & 2); THE NU-TRONS: Beat; HAROLD SMITH: Skippin'; RAY JOHNSON: Kinda Groovy; THE WRECKING CREW: Soul; BILL DOGGETT: Hot Fudge; HANK MARR: The Squash

THE BIRTH OF THE BEAT!

History Of Soul HOS5 (35:11)

Side 1: HAROLD CURINGTON: One Day Girl; EDDIE SULL: I'm Looking For My Baby; RAMONA KING: Soul Mate; GERRI GRANGER: Ain't That Funny; TOMMY FRONTERA: My Leading Lady; LAROSE PHILLIPS: Wanted; THE QUOTATIONS: Listen My Children And You Shall Hear; LORECE THOMPSON & THE LARGOS: Have No Teardrops – Side 2; THE SALVADORS: I Wanna Dance; SAM REESE: From Friday Evening Til Saturday Nite; CLARENCE REED: Sooner Or Later; MILLIE FOSTER: What A Thrill; SHARON ROBBINS: Good Gracious Baby; MAURICE & THE RADIANTS: Noble The Bargain Man; ROBIN RICE: I've Had It; BENNY FREEMAN: Come On And Tell Her

TEXAS SOUL '65: Duke, Peacock, Sure Shot

History Of Soul HOS6 (35:20)

Side 1: BUD HARPER: Mr. Soul; JAMES LYNN MARSH: You Made A Mistake; VI CAMPBELL WITH JOE SCOTT ORCH: Seven Doors; FRANKIE LEE: Don't Make Me Cry; MR. LEE & CHEROKEES: Take Your Time; JANNIE WILLIAMS: I've Been True; JACKIE HUNT: Security Of Love – Side 2; R.L. GRIFFIN: I'll Follow You; JAMES LYNN MARSH: Searching For My Baby; ERNIE K-DOE: Little Bit Of Everything; BUD HARPER: Let Me Love You; OSCAR PERRY: Face Reality; L.C. STEELS: Go Ahead Baby; JAMES DAVIS: Your Turn To Cry



B&R Archive.

WEST COAST SOUL '65

History Of Soul HOS7 (32:58)

Side 1: COOKIE JACKSON: Love Brings Pain; EDDIE WILSON: Just Call On Me; THE OUTSTANDERS: What A Love; BIG J.D. WRIGHT: Now She Wants To Leave; LEE HARVEY: Prove It; JOE PHILLIPS: Can't Help But To Love You; ART WHEELER: Walk On – Side 2; E. JACKIE HINES: I'm So Glad; TERRY & MARSHA: It's A Possibility; THE UPTONES: Taken For A Ride; LITTLE MARY STATEN: Steppin' Stone; ALEXANDER PATTON: I Knew It Was Wrong; JOHNNY WESLEY & THE FOUR TEES: You Still Need Me; THE SEVILLES: Baby

These four substantial (180 gramme) platters continue the History Of Soul label's release schedule of rare r&b and soul from the 1960s. These latest LPs are 500 copy, limited editions released to coincide with Record Store Day, 16th April.

The pick of the bunch is the Texas Soul '65 collection, which picks up from the previous History Of Soul's Texas Soul '64 reviewed in *B&R* 301. The earlier disc concentrated on Don Robey's Houston-based labels while the second volume also covers other Texas recording centres, Dallas, San Antonio and Fort Worth. The album's title lists Duke, Peacock and Sure Shot but there are also cuts originally released on the Rainbow, Great Scott, Golden Eagle, Jetstream, Gay Shel, Feron and Manco labels, rare labels with equally rare recordings, none of which have been re-issued before. The album kicks off with 'Mr Soul' a great strutting soul number from Bud Harper, sort of Mr Pitiful meets Bobby Bland. This was issued on Peacock 1939 along with the lilting soul ballad 'Let Me Love You' also in a very Blandish mould. The Bobby Bland connection is strong. Joe Scott's band, who supported Bland for many years, is present on Vi Campbell's ballad 'Seven Doors' (Campbell was also part of Bland's touring revue) and it was Scott who produced Frankie Lee's up-tempo beat ballad 'Don't Make Me Cry' featuring Wayne Bennett on guitar.

Jackie Hunt's 'Security Of Love', his sole outing on Jet Stream, is a slow blues with more than a hint of Bobby's 'I'll Take Care Of You' while 'Your Turn To Cry' by James Davis is a crying blues with flowing blues guitar firmly in the style of Bland and Little Milton. More blues comes from Jannie Williams (who also cut for Back Beat as Jeanette Williams) on 'I've Been True' a flowing number with a nice sax break, written by Johnny Copeland. L.C. Steels' ringing guitar is a feature of the up-tempo blues 'Go Ahead Baby' issued on both Manco and his own Steels' label. 'You Made A Mistake' by Dallas vocalist James Lynn Marsh is fine driving soul with a Latin feel but it is his other contribution here that is an absolute killer. 'Searching For My Baby' has fantastically tough vocals and a horn rich driving beat that Willie Mitchell would be proud of, provided by Willie 'Big Bo' Thomas and the Arrows. Big Bo and Co also backed R.L. Griffin on 'I'll Follow You' a mid-tempo ballad with powerful gospel-like vocals and scarifying organ. Mr Lee, Mr K-Doe and Oscar

Perry all present up-tempo dancers with 'Face Reality' by Perry with its blasting horns being the pick of the three.

The releases and the artists on The West Coast Soul '65 collection, if anything, are even more obscure than the Texas LP but do not have the same cohesion or defining sound. For instance one of the best cuts on board, 'Walk On' by Art Wheeler, is a fine slab of southern soul with archetypal spoken passages that could have been cut at Fame or Stax. Similarly Big J.D. Wright's 'Now She Wants To Leave' and The Uptones' 'Taken For A Ride' might have been created by Curtis Mayfield in Chicago as both are in the Impressions' bag. These two are very nice class as are the swinging 'Love Brings Pain' by Cookie Jackson and Little Mary Staten's only single release 'Stepping Stone'. Both fine singers with Staten's voice sounding a lot like Ann Peebles. The Outstanders and The Savilles are vocal groups just two steps from the church. 'What A Love' is an up-tempo outing while 'Baby' is a great cut in a slow groove sounding like the 5 Royales. John Ridley's detailed notes inform that Eddie Wilson is, in fact, Frank Wilson of 'Do I Love You' fame, here with another up-tempo dancer. The remaining cuts are acceptable though not exceptional, but for sisters Terry & Marsha whose sub Motown 'It's A Possibility' is sung in weak unison fashion. All in all a pretty decent collection of obscurities if not as strong as the Texas LP.

The Instrumental Soul Style LP is a surprisingly interesting and entertaining collection of varied tunes, the majority of which I would class as r&b rather than soul, which for me is primarily a vocal music anyway. The album kicks off with a solid cut 'Wasted' from Chuck Bernard, a good-time groover with ringing guitar and an underlying bass riff to die for, released on the Satellite label from Chicago. Bernard was a vocalist, who started with Ike Turner's retinue, so it's not clear what his roll in 'Wasted' was other than maybe the off-mic party chatter. Eddie Silvers was another associate of Ike Turner and here as Eddie & The De-Havelons on 'Baby Dumplings' he turns in a solid up-tempo organ led groove, spiced by his hot tenor sax.

More hot sax and organ workouts can be heard on Leon Ferguson's 'Miss Dolores Funk' (with little funk present) and Hank Marr's 'The Squash', a pepped up 'Night Train' in which Marr and probably Rusty Bryant on tenor trade solos. Tall Paul Hankins on Hammond B3 mixes it with guitarist Freddy Robinson on the strong groover 'The Hawk'. Jimmy Rivers is something of an underrated New Orleans sax-man who cut with Professor Longhair, Eddie Bo, Earl King, Robert Parker (it's him blasting out on 'Barefootin') and is on loads of Ric and Ron recordings. Here he is teamed with the inimitable and instantly recognisable Allen Toussaint on piano for a classic New Orleans version of the traditional 'Just A Closer Walk With Thee' titled simply 'Closer Walk'.

South American rhythms are featured on Johnny Heartsman's (Hartsman on the Red Fire label) take on 'Besame Mucho Part 1'. Johnny plays the beautifully smooth melody on guitar over the Afro-Latin beat. Also in the Latin camp is 'Soul' by The Wrecking Crew, a bossa nova beat with Ramsey Lewis-like piano played by Leon Russell. He was just one of an ever revolving group of L.A. based studio musicians who were the Wrecking Crew and who played on hundreds of pop records. This cut was released on Phil Spector's short-lived Phi-Dan label. The other tune included here titled just 'Soul' (a two parter) is credited to Al Browne's Band. However, there is no Browne on the recording listed in The Soul Discography and it is southern soul great, Kip Anderson who plays the organ and who also wrote the tune. This is a slow mover with wild tympani, whirring organ, muted trumpet and a gabbing female. York Wilborn's 'Domino' is a tough mid-tempo blues with storming sax. 'Beat' from the The Nu-Trons is a neat guitar/sax workout with driving drum patterns complete with that rarity in soul music, a drum solo, which brings Booker T. And The MG's to mind. However, the absolute killer track is from that man Big Bo Thomas and his Arrows. 'How About It (Part 1)' is a stormer complete with Bo's tough tenor solo followed by an equally hot trumpet passage then topped by a guitar breakout that Ike Turner would surely dig. It's time some one (History Of Soul?) put out an album of Big Bo's sides because everything I've heard is great. This is a super album with not a single weak cut, which, unlike the others, is also available on CD.

Finally The Birth Of The Beat LP is strictly for dancers, mainly up-tempo four to the floor numbers much beloved of Northern Soul fans but not so by me. In fact there are only two or three, maybe four, cuts I would repeatedly play for entertainment. Memphis based Lorece Thompson & The Largos' 'Have No Teardrops' is an interesting pepped up version of The 5 Royales' 'Catch That Teardrop' but nowhere near as good. Sam Reese is a Sam Cooke imitator but turns in a neat dancer with 'From Friday Evening Til Saturday Nite'. Maurice McAlister with the Radiants' 'Noble The Bargain Man' is a novelty item with a pounding beat and nice guitar solo but it's a million miles from 'You Left The Water Running' or 'Voice Your Choice'. 'Come On And Tell Her' by Benny Freeman was recorded at Cosimo's and has that patented New Orleans chugging rhythm and decent sax break to lift it above the ordinary. As for the rest, there are some really awful voices to be heard amongst them: Tommy Frontera, Larose Phillips, Sharron Robbins and Robin Rice to

name four. While I wouldn't necessarily turn the radio off if one of them popped up, I wouldn't seek them out. This is not my kind of soul and isn't in the same class as the other three excellent History Of Soul albums.

Fred Rothwell

★ BOOKS ★

THE BANJO: America's African Instrument

Laurent Dubois

Cambridge, Mass. and London, The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2016; 364 pages; ISBN: 978-0-674-04784-6; \$29.95/£22.95/€27

Laurent Dubois is a player of the banjo, and by his own admission, an obsessive about its music and history. Hence this volume, at first sight an unlikely production for the Marcello Lotti Professor of Romance Studies and History at Duke University. I wondered, on receiving it, what 'The Banjo' was going to add to an extensive literature, which includes works like Cecelia Conway's 'African Banjo Echoes in Appalachia', Karen Linn's 'That Half-Barbaric Twang', and the foundation text, Dena J. Epstein's 'Sinful Tunes and Spirituals'. Indeed, Dubois makes extensive use of these and many other secondary sources, although his own research in Haiti, Senegal and elsewhere is important to the work, which is well and fully annotated, although the absence of a bibliography is regrettable (and if Harvard needs to cheese pare like that, there is no hope.)

What Dubois has set out to do, and – I may as well say now – largely triumphantly succeeds in doing, is to write a history of the cultural and social meanings of the banjo, particularly, but not only, with reference to the lives, folkways and societies that kidnapped Africans and their descendants perforce had to create for themselves in the Caribbean and North America. He begins with a consideration of the banjo's African ancestors, noting the widespread use of skin heads, in contrast with the wooden bodies commoner in colder climates, because they are easier to keep in tune there. This, as he rightly observes, is a fundamental aspect of the banjo ('a drum on a stick') and its sound.

Enslaved populations in the New World had to create a society in which they could bring together their disparate cultures, languages and ways of being, which of course included music. Among other strategies – and this is perhaps the central idea of the book – it was necessary to invent the concept of Africa, as a place from which they had all come, and which they all had in common. Part of this process was the creation of the banjo (or banger, banjaw, bonjoo, and many other spellings before it stabilised) as, in the book's subtitle, an African instrument, whose creation and sound signified African-ness in and for the emergent, creolising cultures that were its home(s).

Subsequent chapters consider the social and spiritual functions of the banjo during slavery; the encounter between the banjo and blackface minstrelsy (a particularly assured and nuanced discussion); the technical development of the instrument in the nineteenth century, and its popularisation – which often involved claims that white musicians had 'redeemed' or 'elevated' its status, or alternatively that it was not really an African-American invention at all. The spread of the banjo into Appalachia, and its eventual identification in popular culture as, ironically, the archetypal instrument of the rural white working class, are discussed, as is the continuing presence of the banjo in twentieth-century African-American life and music.

Dubois rightly notes, following Tony Thomas, that the assumption that African-Americans virtually abandoned the banjo because of its associations with minstrelsy and racists is not supported by testimony from musicians or other evidence. Nevertheless, things that are believed to have been real can have real consequences, and it's not insignificant that a recent CD by black musicians was called 'Recapturing the Banjo'; I could have done with more discussion of the roots and fruits of the recent black banjo revival; Dubois is obviously well aware of the phenomenon, but it receives little more than passing mentions here and there.

The way to make room for such a discussion would have been to recast the final chapter; it includes three pages about bluegrass, for which much thanks, but is mostly a schoolgirl-ish mash note to Pete Seeger and his politics, including a shifty account of the Almanac Singers' objective support for Hitler in 1939-41, and the ridiculous assertion that 'Pete Seeger saved the banjo.' Seeger has to be included in the story, of course, but an index that finds no room for Pete Steele or Dock Boggs is an indication of a certain lop-sidedness. Readers who don't see Seeger's music as cultural appropriation in the service of an unsavoury power-worship will not have the problems that I do with this

chapter, but they may still find it simplistic, and sometimes banal, by comparison with the brilliantly achieved narratives and discussions that precede it.

I should qualify my view that 'The Banjo's scholarship is mostly both remarkable and remarkably readable by pointing out a few errors, in ascending order of significance: Orlando Kay Graham, author of 'Old Massa's People' (1931) was not a woman; Suriname did not become the British colony of Berbice (which was a separate Dutch colony until ceded to Britain in 1815); jug bands did not feature half-full jugs (whiskey-and-spit, mmm, delicious); 'the Cannon's Jug Stompers' [sic] did not record 'often with several banjos'; and as the late Tom Freeland and I have pointed out elsewhere, Alan Lomax's account of Sid Hemphill's 'The Strayhorn Mob', on which Dubois relies, is inaccurate at best and distorted at worst: the mob's intended victim was white, not African-American, and he was not lynched, although the sheriff who resisted the mob was killed, and his murderers were indeed acquitted.

Despite these mistakes, and subject to the reservations I've expressed about its (anti)climax, 'The Banjo' is an outstanding piece of scholarship; it's also disarmingly enthusiastic, very reasonably priced, despite being the product of an academic press, and commended to your attention.

Chris Smith

THE MUSIC OF MULTICULTURAL AMERICA: Performance, Identity and Community In The United States

Kip Lornell and Anne K. Rasmussen (editors)

University Press of Mississippi, 2016; 425 pages; ISBN 9781 4968 03740; £57/£31.20 Kindle

This is only very partially relevant to the coverage of this magazine, but will no doubt be of interest to some readers. The editors have brought together fifteen chapters from fifteen writers (or in two cases, pairs of writers), exploring that number of different musical traditions in the U.S., for example Czech polka music in Wisconsin, Irish in Boston, the Klezmer revival in New York, West Indian steel bands in Brooklyn, North Indian classical dance in San Francisco, and Native American powwows in the Midwestern plains. The book (which is a new edition of a slightly differently-titled volume published in 1997 – it was formerly 'Musics of...' rather than 'The Music of...') has very specific academic purposes, among which are to provide a framework for further projects, and this is set out in the authors' introduction, which posits a list of thirteen unifying themes which can be applied across the book's fifteen chapters, as well as an organising approach to future studies.

Most relevant to us here is a chapter on gospel quartets in Memphis, by Lornell himself, and one by Mark F. DeWitt on Cajun and Zydeco in California. Lornell's is based on work that he carried out in Memphis thirty-plus years ago, and outlines the history of quartets in that city, and how they came to organise and present their work, and train their singers. One of the greatest quartets of all was the Spirit of Memphis, but Lornell is as concerned with the less celebrated groups. It's a very interesting twenty pages, and you can feel the frustration the author expresses at the fact that all these years later, so little further research on quartets has been published. He was fortunate that when he was doing his work, there were still informants around who were able to offer some real historical perspective.

DeWitt looks at the range of Louisiana French music and sketches out how it came to be so popular in California, looking at factors such as migration, key animating figures, important bands, mentoring etc. His emphasis on its role as dance music seems important, not least as this has added greatly to its appeal across a wider audience than it started out with back in Louisiana, and he concludes that: 'the dance floor serves as more than a place to have fun; as an egalitarian social realm where people watch after one another, it becomes a model for how we would prefer to live the rest of our lives'. Quite a claim, where most of us would see only a bunch of people leaping about to accordions.

I suspect that putting a chapter at the end of the book about music which is not defined by ethnic aspects (it's about women's punk) is academically controversial, but presumably it offers a model for looking at a wider range of music scenes, which – increasingly, no doubt – have few such characteristics. If we define the word 'multicultural' differently in future, there's no end to what could be fitted in.

Ray Templeton

SAM PHILLIPS: The Man Who Invented Rock 'n' Roll

Peter Guralnick

Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2016; 752 pages; Illustrated; ISBN 978 0297 85653 5; £30/£14.99 Kindle

The stories of producers and label owners have tended to figure quite largely in writing about the music that I've spent much of a lifetime



Sam Phillips (right) recording with Elvis Presley, bass player Bill Black, and guitarist Scotty Moore at Sun Studio. From the B&R Archive.

reading about, as well as listening to. While I acknowledge my gratitude for the fact that these men and women were responsible for helping to ensure that this music was recorded and so preserved, I've not always come away with much sense of empathy for the people themselves. In some cases, the music that was made for the companies they owned had nothing much to do with them – more like a happy accident. Not that they were all the same, far from it. Syd Nathan was as different from Lillian McMurry as Bob Geddins was from Leonard Chess. Some seemed to have cared only about their bottom line; others had a better understanding of the link between business and people, so built relationships with their artists. Some respected them for who and what they were and became real friends. But very few seem to have come to the job with anything that might be described as a musical or artistic vision.

Sam Phillips is certainly one exception, and that alone makes him an especially interesting subject. Peter Guralnick shows us quite clearly a man for whom the music mattered. Of course, he wanted it to be his living, and to live well, but the primary motivation seems to have been his pursuit of something – a sound, a new kind of music, an art. This

comes through even before he was doing anything to do with recording. Phillips had a good education; he understood art, was familiar with literature, with different kinds of music, from the old time music and gospel quartets of his childhood to the work of the composers that he played in his high school band. At the same time, he had a deeply-rooted instinct for fresh ideas, for different ways of looking at things. He was enterprising in every sense of that word. Opening a recording studio was a business decision, but it was also a creative one, using the custom recording service to support his own more exploratory work in the studio. He was close to the music in a way that many of the other record men simply were not; also his experience in radio had given him insights into the potential of studios and recording technology. This was a powerful combination.

One by one, great artists graced his little storefront at 706 Union in Memphis with their presence. The time and the place had a lot to do with this, of course, as the city (and its hinterland) was full of young (and some not so young) musicians bursting with energy, with new and different influences and with ideas of their own. The list of blues and r&b artists is a remarkable one, and for most readers of this magazine it will seem unnecessary to name them all, but savour just a few – Sleepy John Estes, Walter Horton, Ike Turner, Junior Parker, Rufus Thomas, Howlin' Wolf, Roscoe Gordon, Jimmy DeBerry, Little Milton. The author sets off on separate threads to fill in the background of these and many more, cleverly weaving their stories into his central narrative.

At first, Phillips leased the recordings to established labels, scoring his first hit with Jackie Brenston's (and Ike Turner's) 'Rocket 88' with Chess, who came back for more and picked up artists as diverse as Harmonica Frank, Doctor Ross and Howlin' Wolf for release. It was inevitable that success would take some of his artists away – Wolf moved to Chicago and cut out the middleman. B.B. King, whose recordings at 706 Union had been made as part of a deal with the Bihari brothers and issued on their RPM label, soon moved on to work with them through other studios. Roscoe Gordon did likewise. Junior Parker moved on to Duke Records. Others, like James Cotton, made the migratory trip to Chicago, although it would be some years before he made another record under his own name.

Phillips, of course, had started his own label and recorded much immortal blues and r&b for it. Some was released on Sun, a lot was not (although most has subsequently appeared one way or another). For all his hard work and his artistic commitment, few of these sold in very large quantities. That would change when Elvis Presley came along. Presley was certainly a phenomenal talent, but it was the recognition of his potential, on the part of Sam Phillips, and the latter's determination



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to work with the younger man's potential in order to realise it – his very particular grasp of what it was that he had – that made all the difference. If Presley had, instead, run into one of the other record men active in the South at the time, things might have turned out quite differently. After that, young white artists were banging on the door of 706 Union, and some would make hits for Sun Records. But again, one by one, they all – or at least the more important ones, like Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison etc – moved on to bigger things. Phillips himself also moved on to other things, not least in going back to one of his first loves, radio; he owned more than one radio station.

Sam Phillips insisted to Peter Guralnick that he should tell the whole story, and it seems that the whole story is what we get, not just in the sheer substance of this work – 763 pages, including index and appendices – and its remarkable attention to detail, but for example in laying out the complexities of his intimate relationships and his various affairs ('... no matter what he did, he never lied about it,' his wife told the author). There's no shortage of extraordinary stories of other kinds, too. Just one example: after the Bay of Pigs fiasco in 1961, Phillips called Fidel Castro on the telephone one night (although he spent most of the time talking to Fidel's brother Raul). Sam's rationale is typically individual – he wasn't a communist, but he respected Castro for what he had done in getting rid of his corrupt, mobster-implicated predecessor, and felt that conflict between the U.S. and the island nation in the Caribbean was in nobody's interests. And he wanted to tell him so.

The author himself becomes a character in the story, as he moved from becoming a fan and a researcher, to being a friend and confidante of Phillips. There's a quote on the cover from novelist Roddy Doyle, to the effect that Guralnick deserves to live in Graceland. I'm not sure I'd inflict that on anybody, to be honest, but I loudly echo the sentiment behind it. I'd go as far as to say that Guralnick could well be the greatest of all the music writers. His evocative skills are put to the service of raising, in our imaginations, real places and times and the people who inhabited them, not to tickle our fancies with spurious mysteries and

half-baked mythologies. Nor is he the gunslinger type, always trying to impress us with how cool he is – there's no show-off prose in a Guralnick book, no hip posturing. And yet not only is he a compelling stylist, but something unique arises from his pages – a sense of what it might have actually felt like to have been there; what those streets felt like; the atmosphere in a room; the relationships between real people. He taps into our familiar emotions, rather than our fantasies. At the same time, the book is informed richly by his primary research, his long discussions not just with the man himself, but with many, many others with parts in his story, as well as his explorations of everything from unpublished company archives to the wealth of other published material that has accrued around Phillips and his work. Sam Phillips has certainly got the biographer he deserved.

Ray Templeton

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