

Collins and Kenny Poole while living in Cincinnati. He lists his major influences as Benson, Broom, Wes Montgomery, Grant Green, Kenny Burrell, Barney Kessel, Jim Hall, Pat Martino, and Joe Pass. His main setup is his blond Guild X-500 through a Music Man 2x10, although his ES-335 pops up on a couple of tracks, as well as a borrowed Gibson Heritage acoustic.

The tone he achieves is warm, but very present and intimate. Likewise, at times you can hear the singers breathing.

The only criticism would be that the vocals are a bit too Singers Unlimited when some oomph a la Mavis Staples (who, ironically, lives right there in Chicago) would serve certain songs better. — **DF**



Rory Block

Shake 'Em on Down: A Tribute to Mississippi Fred McDowell

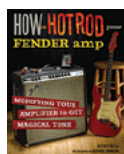
Stony Plain Records

With *Shake 'Em on Down*, Rory Block continues her Mentor Series albums, paying tribute to the artists who inspired her and, in certain cases, some she came to know. This one works well for various reasons, including how she imbues the songs with her own ideas, on occasion.

The disc starts with a couple of original pieces. "Steady Freddy" is spoken in McDowell's voice, while "Mississippi Man" is an autobiographical boogie with fresh changes and soaring slide from Block. She also uses her guitar to keep the cover tracks from becoming set-in-cement tributes. In the liner notes, she notes how "The Man That I'm Lovin'" was difficult to capture. But you'd never know, given its spirited vocals and stomping, layered guitars. The erotic side of the blues appears both through the lyrics of "Kokomo Blues," "Good Morning Little School Girl" (with gender switched to boy), the title cut, and the stinging slide-guitar on every song. Block also displays the powerful connection from the blues to gospel in the wonderful "Woke Up This Morning," with stunning layered vocals.

Influential artists have provided the inspiration for Block's Mentor Series. Here's hoping she's got more heroes. — **JH**

Books



How to Hot Rod Your Fender Amp

By Jeffrey Falla

Voyageur Press

There are many books intended to help players who enjoy tweaking their guitar amps, but this is the first to focus on Fenders.

Showing the basics of simple and advanced modifications like selecting tubes, capacitors, pots, and other electronic equipment, as well as biasing and setting

up an amp, it also covers hot-rodding enhancements such as converting one channel to an overdrive, modifying tone controls, or changing preamp and tone arrangement on a channel. And it covers more than electronics — speakers and their mounting receive attention, as do footswitches and cables.

Modding an amp isn't as easy as it once was, when wiring was "point to point" and a good tube-and-circuit manual could help a knowledgeable neophyte learn the routing of wires and chain of components. Now, there are circuit board, resistors, and other components to deal with, and this book covers them with clarity and detail. Part of what makes this book so intriguing is the fine close-up photography and diagrams that accompany each of the steps; the user can see which components to address, as well as which solder traces to avoid

Kudos to the author for recognizing the need for the book, and to the excellent photography and production that make it all possible. — **Eric C. Shoaf**



Stratocaster Guitar Book

By Tony Bacon

Backbeat Books

Tony Bacon has written books on Gretsch, Rickenbacker, Gibson, and, of course, Fender. In his latest, on the Fender Stratocaster, he offers new interviews with important players and those on the production side to illustrate the Strat's versatility and continuing importance. Beginning with a history of Fender, the book describes how the Strat led to the success Fender continues to have today.

Among the many books on the Strat, this one fits in with its large format providing a frame for its lavish illustrations, including original photos of instruments and musicians, and catalog reproductions. The book is completely up-to-date, with information about recent auctions and some of the newest offerings from the Fender Custom Shop. Instead of an identification manual, the reference section provides an alphabetical listing of various versions with production dates and special features. It's a handy addition to the wealth of material available on the Stratocaster. — **ECS**



A Dead Boys Tale

By Cheetah Chrome

Voyageur Press

Seriously, has there ever been a cooler name in rock music? Calling one's band the Dead Boys is certainly a good start, and having a bandmate called Jimmy Zero also doesn't hurt.

Chrome was the lead guitarist for the short-lived but seminal punk band that burned hot from 1976 to '79, and the book collects his memories beginning with a Sekova guitar and small Gibson

amp. Considering their habits in the '70s, it is amazing there are memories at all, but Chrome describes the paces leading to the punk-music sound and style; of course, the band didn't just show up one day with torn jeans and Converse shoes. But they did make it big, and Chrome's stories include some well-known names including John Belushi, Nico, Johnny Ramone, Keith Richards, and a cast of characters, many no longer with us.

The book is heavy on narrative and a bit short on photos. Stories weave along a general timeline moving forward, but do read much as if Chrome simply dictated the book onto the page. The book will certainly appeal to fans, and the stories are fairly ribald. But if you like the sort of thing where someone overdoses, is pronounced dead, but lives to tell the tale, it's an easy read. — **ECS**



Zen and the Art of Mixing Mixerman

Hal Leonard

The artist known as Mixerman's second book on the production of music, he turns his razor-sharp gaze to the art of mixing and gives followers and the uninitiated reason to hope — if not for logic and civility in the recording studio, then at least for a good-sounding record.

Though an interesting read for musicians, the book does assume a certain amount of technical knowledge about the recording process if not the specific equipment used. And for those who don't really understand the difference between mixing and mastering, it's explained here (mixing happens first and can affect or embellish any and all individual tracks, while mastering is the process of making adjustments to the final musical product, essentially the "final mix"). Obviously, the mixer controls more of the variables, though poor mastering can make a great mix sound bad. But with a firm commitment to art over technology and maintaining a grasp of each, the author outlines his approach, based on years mixing all genres for various artists, often under trying circumstances. — **ECS**



Hüsker Dü

By Andrew Earles

Voyageur Press

"What would Hüsker Dü?," read stickers included in this new bio from journalist Andrew Earles.

Hüsker Dü was a punk band that formed at the end of the '70s, but moved to alternative rock. Guitarist Bob Mould had a moderately successful solo career following the band's breakup in the late '80s, and formed Sugar in the '90s. The band is often cited as influential to everything indie and alt-rock stylists to hard rock and speed metal.

Taking a rare approach for a music/

band bio, the author focuses not on day-to-day travails, artistic differences, drug use, or other drama that fuels the narrative of many tell-all books. Instead, Earles unravels the mystery of the band's breakup as it seemed on the verge of making it big (on a major label, no less), and interviewed members, managers, and musical contemporaries, and others.

The book is well-researched and well-written. Fans interested in debauchery may be disappointed, as that is not the focus of the book. But they will revel in the appendices, which list and annotate the band's singles and EPs, albums, compilations, and video releases. In addition, he documents artists who have covered Hüsker Dü songs and a list of bands claiming influence by them. A bibliography and index round out this complete work. Oh, and there are those two stickers with every book... — **ECS**

DVDs



Soulive

Bowlive: Live at the Brooklyn Bowl

MVD Visual/Royal Family Records

Bowling for Music

It's a wonderful thing to have a visual and audio record of what transpired during Soulive's 10-day residency at the Brooklyn Bowl in March, 2010. For the past decade, the band has released great records that run the gamut from rock to blues to jazz to soul to funk with a soulfulness that belies the great chops the three possess, and here, with a host of famous friends they put on a display of unmatched musicianship.

The trio is Eric Krasno on guitar, and brothers Neil and Alan Evans on Hammond B-3 and drums, respectively. All three are at the top of the list on their instruments. Eric Evans covers a lot of ground, stylistically, and does it with feel. Neil Krasno is an organ master with an amazing left hand, while his brother dazzles whether throwing down James Brown funk or swinging jazz.

The folks they invited match their sensibilities perfectly; brothers Kofi and Oteil Burbridge rip it up on "Butter Biscuit," with Oteil stretching out in ways his "day job" with the Allman Brothers doesn't often allow. It's an amazing display of virtuosity and soul. Robert Randolph joins the band for a blues and supplies a great explanation of what music should be in a relaxed interview segment that appears to have been done after hours. The sublime Raul Midón is remarkable both as a vocalist and player, as he uses his guitar to play jazzy chords and as a percussion instrument. Derek Trucks and Susan Tedeschi help deliver a burning cover of "Soul Sernade" that features stunning solos by both Krasno and Trucks. And, Trucks' fellow Allman Brother Warren Haynes shows up for a loud "Born Under a Bad Sign."

There are other great performances by the likes of Ivan Neville and The London