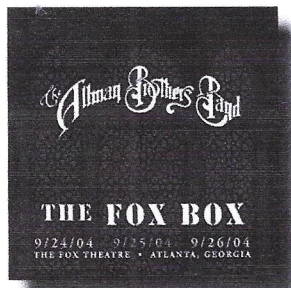


crooning poignantly and playing the perfect lead notes in just the right places. Versatility, vivacity, and virtuosity, without vanity or showboating velocity. Great stuff!

– Dan Stevens

THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND
The Fox Box
Peach Records



On these three September nights in 2004, Atlanta's ornate Fox Theatre took on the feel of The Allman Brothers Band's storied Beacon Theater residency in New York City. The Brothers were in rare form, touring behind *Hittin' The Note*, their first studio album (and ultimately, last) in nine years. *The Fox Box* holds every minute of the stand spread over eight CDs in pristine sound. The Allman Brothers Band – vocalist and B-3 player Gregg Allman; drummers Butch Trucks, Jaimoe and Marc Quinones; guitarists Warren Haynes and Derek Trucks; and bassist Oteil Burbridge – hit damn near every note brilliantly throughout the 50 different songs they played. They reprised only one, Gregg Allman's illustrious "Dreams."

Each night, in addition to Allman's monumental expressions in voice, that pinnacle blend of sorrowful blues, rock, and soul featured an altered, soaring guitar solo from either Haynes, Trucks, or former Allman Brother Jack Pearson, in the house as a special guest. Pearson's jaw-dropping facility and sweet, powerful tone, capped an opening night that found the Brothers roaring through a mix of new songs, covers, and well-known classics like "Midnight Rider," "Melissa," and "Southbound."

That modus operandi played out wonderfully each subsequent evening. The improvisational jazz chops of these highly talented men arose radiantly during *Hittin' The Note's* "Instrumental Illness" and time-honored "Les Brers In A Minor," while brand new doses of soulful consequence were administered via the fragile "Old Before My Time" and rocked-up "High Cost Of Low Living." Several surprising covers rounded out the mix, such as Bob Dylan's "Don't Think Twice, It's Alright," sung with tenderness by guest Susan Tedeschi, as her husband, Mr. Trucks, pulled melancholy slide notes beside her. Burbridge led the charge on

the Grateful Dead's "Franklin's Tower," and Allman sounds equal parts angry and mystical growling Dr. John's "I Walk On Gilded Splinters."

The Allman Brothers were a band that ran through the blues like no other. Muddy Waters' "Trouble No More" was the first song the late Duane Allman ever led the band through in 1969. Thirty-five years later, his successors nail it for all it's worth, which amounts to oodles of funkiness in just over three minutes. Trucks plays Duane's slide bits with uncanny reverence and style, at the same time complimenting Haynes' robust, fluid approach. Haynes leads the band on Howlin' Wolf's "Who's Been Talking," one of several great examples of his, and the Brothers' ability to remake a blues into something entirely new but real. There's an uncanny mercury flow to Allman Brothers music, and some of the best guitar slinging ever put to tape. This set chronicles one of the prime points in their 45-year history.

– Tom Clarke

SOUTHERN AVENUE
Southern Avenue
Stax



Guitarist Ori Naftaly came to Memphis in 2013 from his native Israel and briefly toured the United States with his own blues band. A few years later he met vocalist Tierinii Jackson, a Memphis native with gospel, concert, and theater experience, and the duo were soon writing songs together. They then formed Southern Avenue with drummer Tikyra Jackson (Tierinii's sister), bassist Daniel McKee, and keyboardist Jeremy Powell.

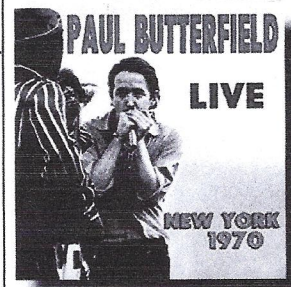
Southern Avenue's eponymous debut on the revitalized Stax label is an infectious hybrid of blues, country, gospel, rockabilly, swamp pop, various shades of soul, and even a touch of jazz with the breathy "Wildflower." It consists of nine well-crafted originals and a lively cover of the Clarence Carter Southern soul classic, "Slipped, Tripped, Fell In Love." The album is bookended by two tunes that are redolent of the Staples Singers with their jangling guitars and soulfully mellow harmonies: the opener, "Don't Give Up," an uplifting message of hope and resolve, and the closer, the equally uplifting "Peace Will Come."

Tierinii's soaring vocals define

the band's sound. In between, there are two neo-rockabilly rompers "80 Miles From Memphis" and "The Rumble" with Tierinii's vocals evoking the puissant dynamism of Imelda May and Nikki Hill. On the soul side, there is a slightly mid-tempo shuffle-bump ballad "Love Me Right" evocative of Al Green's mid-period and the muscular horn-propelled funk grinder "No Time To Lose," reminiscent of Lydia Pense & Cold Blood. Fans of roots Americana and other strains of Southern music will find a cross-section of familiar sounds performed with freshness and youthful energy with Southern Avenue. Fans of roots-rockers like the Blasters, Imelda May, and the Reverend Horton Heat may find much to enjoy on Southern Avenue as well.

– Thomas J. Cullen III

PAUL BUTTERFIELD
Live in New York City 1970
Rock Beat



Music fans lucky enough to live near a good record store, as well as those who trawl websites for new albums, probably know a trove of vintage live recordings have surfaced on European labels, often in deluxe vinyl form. The EU's copyright laws make it fair game to release performances that aired on radio back in the day. Musicians who played the shows aren't likely to receive remuneration, and the same goes for the record companies to which they were signed. The rule seems to be if it was on radio back then, it's public domain now.

The problem, other than once again artists are short-changed, is a lot of these decades-later releases sound as though they have been mastered off ancient cassettes at least 10 generations down the daisy-chain of tape traders. But a new vintage release on vinyl that does sound good and treats the featured artist with dignity is a double-LP of the Paul Butterfield Band from a show on a New York City station in December 1970.

This 83-minute performance over WPLJ-FM catches the group still at a peak despite the loss of guitarists Mike Bloomfield and Elvin Bishop. Butterfield's harp and voice are in fine shape, and the band's playing is drumhead tight from being long on the road.

The set opens with a blistering cover of Albert King's then relatively new

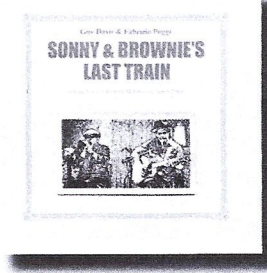
"Born Under A Bad Sign" that clocks in at 12:11, followed by a nearly as lengthy "Play On" to fill up side one. The flip gives us a 15-minute take of Charles Brown's "Drifting Blues" and a revamping of the old blues warhorse "Everything's Gonna Be Alright," which Butterfield played at Woodstock the previous year.

The second LP shifts from covers to the band's own songs: Butterfield's "Stuck In The Countryside" and "Back Together Again," along with tenor saxman Gene Dinwiddie's "Love March" and bass player Rod Hicks' "The Boxer" and "So Far So Good."

Listening to these songs 47 years later, it is clear that, despite the departures of Bloomfield and Bishop, the lineup was still plenty potent with Ralph Walsh on guitar, Dennis Whitted on drums, a horn section with a young David Sanborn and Steve Madaio joining Dinwiddie, and bassist Hicks. Butterfield's son Gabriel, nearly five decades later, gets a producer title for overseeing this warm-sounding vinyl release.

— *Bill Wasserzieher*

GUY DAVIS & FABRIZIO POGGI
Sonny & Brownie's Last Train
 M.C. Records



Having seen Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee thrice in the '70s, I couldn't wait to set my ears on Guy Davis and Fabrizio Poggi's homage to their songs and musical style. I have listened to this CD over and over as they exceeded my expectations. Sonny Terry was blind, and his unique harp playing had him slapping his hand over the back of the harp while playing. He frequently let out whoops and hollers to punctuate his playing. Brownie McGhee was smooth and suave and his steady guitar work gave Terry a safety net that allowed him the freedom to journey all around each song.

This is deftly captured on 11 songs recorded over the years by Sonny

and Brownie. Setting the tone of the recording is the opening tune, "Sonny And Brownie's Last Train," Davis' homage to their lives. After hearing the entire CD, I repeated this song again as it is just as lovely and meaningful at the end of their songs as it was at the beginning. This CD was crafted with love as New Yorker Davis met Poggi in Milan, Italy, last year to make this recording. These songs are not just replications of the originals, but finely polished compositions that reveal the facile guitar talents of Davis and Poggi's accomplished harp playing. Notable songs include "Evil Hearted Me," "Goin' Down Slow," "Walk On," and "Midnight Special."

I trust our readers will seek out copies of *Sonny & Brownie's Last Train*, which includes all the lyrics to encourage others to learn these songs (It is also available on vinyl.) as well as some of Sonny and Brownie's recordings and Guy Davis'. Thanks to Davis and Poggi for keeping the legacy of Terry and McGhee alive and offering your own blues torch, which will surely be passed on to the future.

— *Pete Sardon*

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