

so many influences—Johnny Copeland, Johnny Otis, Otis Redding, Lightnin’ Hopkins, etc.—that it almost makes you dizzy. This is the second time Delta Groove has released Payne and guitarist Steve Edmonson as a duo. The title track is a tongue-in-cheek reference to the many years they’ve lagged behind the blues and soul greats in bands based in the San Francisco Bay Area. As the lyric says, “My school was a one-night stand, my teachers taught me right. They call me an overnight sensation, but it’s sure been a mighty long night.”

Bassist Bill Singletary and drummer Nick Otis (Johnny’s son), along with the Sweet Meet Horns of Carl Green on sax and Lech Wierzynski on trumpet, provide the backing for Payne’s growls and croons and Edmonson’s fiery solos. All of these guys have mind-numbing blues and soul pedigrees. Edmonson says, “...Are we soul? R&B? Blues? We have a strong background in all of them. But the one thing we are adamant about is stylistic integrity...Because people don’t know what we are, it gives us the freedom to be what we want.” For the most part the album alternates between blues and soul, except for Charlie Rich’s passionate gospel closer “Feel Like Going Home.” Though many of the selections sound familiar, the group penned ten out of 13. They prove that when “umbrella” R&B is done this well, it never goes out of style.

—Jim Hynes



RICHIE HAVENS

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Nobody Left to Crown

(Stormy Forest/Verve Forecast)

It’s the late 1960s.

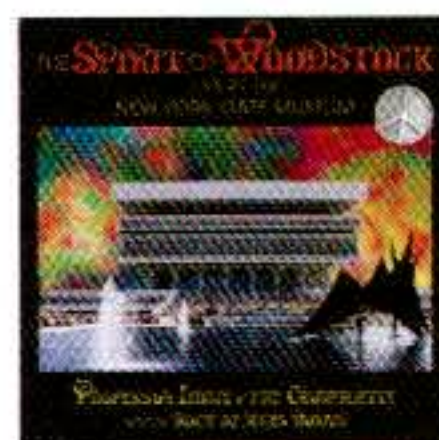
Protests for civil rights, women’s rights and gay rights are on the streets as a Texan president leads an unpopular war. Calls to save the environment abound. *Hair* rocks theater audiences in New York and around the world. Joni Mitchell begins recording stunning, deeply personal albums. And after years of playing small clubs, Brooklyn-born Richie Havens signs with Verve and finds himself on a very large stage at the

1969 Woodstock festival and subsequently recording on his own label, Stormy Forest, distributed by Verve.

Fast forward four decades, and to quote Yogi Berra, it’s déjà vu all over again. War, pollution, injustice and protest against them all go on. *Hair* has briefly returned to New York, Mitchell is still recording and Richie Havens is back on Stormy Forest, distributed by Verve, his voice, guitar and vision intact. He covers timely tunes he loves as much as his fans do, like Jackson Browne’s questioning “Lives in the Balance,” Peter Yarrow’s observant “The Great Mandala” and Pete Townshend’s “Won’t Get Fooled Again,” the latter reminding us that it was originally about the possibilities of political and social change, not a cleverly ironic TV theme.

As Havens breathes new life into these songs, his originals sparkle too. He has always excelled at writing resonant, heartfelt songs. When “The Key” ends with the line “just between you and me,” it sets a tone for the one-on-one communication to follow. As always, Havens achieves a musical trifecta—a wizened, ageless voice, a concern for young people and a firm, sincere belief that we are all in this together.

—Richard Antone



PROFESSOR LOUIE & THE CROWMATIX WITH THE ROCK OF AGES HORNS

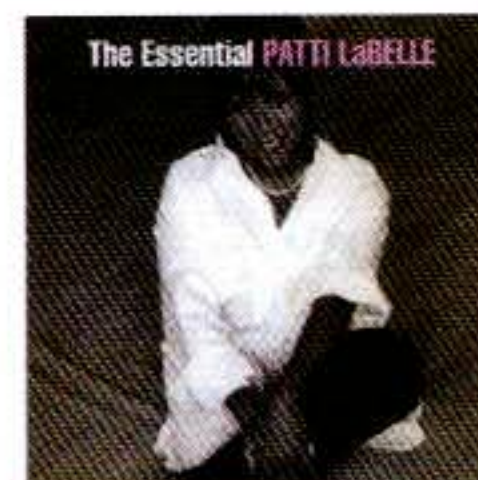
The Spirit of Woodstock
(Woodstock Records)

This 15-song live CD was recorded at the “Music of the Band” concert for the 35th anniversary of the original Woodstock Festival. Back in 1969, the Vietnam War was going on, traditional ways were being challenged and music contained inspiring messages of freedom and change. To celebrate, the New York State Museum showcased an exhibit called “Spirit of the Woodstock Generation,” which revolved around the photography of Elliott Landy (official photographer of the Woodstock Festival), the prevailing rock scene and the era’s turmoil.

After the CD’s introduction, the New Orleans-flavored “Ophelia” gets things off

to a rockin’ start. Songs from Bob Dylan and Blind Willie McTell are included, plus “Forever Young,” other Band favorites, Bruce Springsteen’s “Atlantic City” and unforgettable renditions of many other songs from that era that we all remember and love. Professor Louie, a.k.a. Aaron Hurwitz (on vocals and keyboards), was given his colorful nickname by none other than Rick Danko of the Band. With Louie, Miss Marie, Gary Burke, Frank Campbell, Bobbie Van Detta, Tom “Bones” Malone, John Allmark, Dino Govoni, Larry Parker and Josh Colow, *The Spirit of Woodstock* is sure to keep the memory of those days alive.

—Robin Murray



PATTI LaBELLE

The Essential Patti LaBelle

(Philadelphia International/Legacy)

Live in Washington D.C.

(Philadelphia International)



So many superlatives have described Patti LaBelle that they could take up this entire re-

view. *The Essential Patti LaBelle*, a two-CD, 30-song retrospective, makes clear just how justified they all are. The first disc is filled with Patti’s highest-charting solo hits from the 1980s, such as “If Only You Knew,” “New Attitude” and “On My Own” (with Michael McDonald). The second disc showcases fan favorites, like “You Are My Friend” and “Over the Rainbow,” and two songs from Patti’s first group, the Blue Belles. 1963’s Motown-esque *Down the Aisle* only showed an inkling of what was to come. Her ’70s’ group, LaBelle, exuded gritty, Cajun-favored funk. Nine songs from the groundbreaking trio are included here, like Number One single “Lady Marmalade” and “Isn’t It a Shame.”

Left in the vault for 26 years, *Live in Washington D.C.*, recorded in 1982, reveals Patti in her element: onstage. Performing at two intensities—high and overdrive—she blasted her voice a mere second after being