



Jonn Del Toro (left) and Rich Del Grosso

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Global Affairs

Rich Del Grosso & Jonn Del Toro Richardson: *Time Slips On By* (Mandolin Blues 10002; 63:33 ★★★★★) Del Grosso confidently matches his plugged-in resonator mandolin to the electric guitar of Richardson on an impressive bunch of original songs that could only come from the marshlands and bayous of Southeast Texas. That old string-band instrument has an air of gracefulness about it. Above-average singers, the two share the ability to convey boundless joy ("She's Sweet") and romantic uncertainty ("Hard To Live With"), supported by their crackerjack rhythm section, the Texas Horns and local guests.

Ordering info: mandolinblues.com

Latvian Blues Band: *Unreal* (Blue Skunk 4520; 66:37 ★★★) These young northern Europeans, merging blues, soul and r&b, appear to have a stronger congenital sense of style and form than many of their roots-music brethren in the States. They impress with their imagination, individuality, musicianship and songwriting. Though no songs are really outstanding, LBB has made a strong debut record with guidance from Duke Robillard.

Ordering info: latvianbluesband.com

Arsen Shomakhov: *On The Move* (Blues Leaf 9845; 40:09 ★★★) Shomakhov's strengths, apparent on his second album released in North America, are his formidable guitar playing across the spectrum of blues and r&b styles, his songwriting and his knack for finding good obscure material to cover like Detroit blues great Eddie Burns' "When I Get Drunk." Tolerate his inexpressive singing and be thankful for four rock'em-sock'em instrumentals.

Ordering info: bluesleaf.com

Lynwood Slim & The Igor Prado Band: *Brazilian Kicks* (Delta Groove 141; 53:25 ★★★★★) Slim is at the top of his game as an entertainer in the São Paulo studio, singing and wailing Chicago-style harmonica with a smooth swagger in the fast company of ace

guitarist-songwriter Prado and four other young musicians based in the largest city in South America. They revive Chicago blues, Western swing and Tin Pan Alley songs probably found in their record collections.

Ordering info: deltagroovemusic.com

Ana Popovic Band: *An Evening At Trasmimeno Lake* (Artist Exclusive 001 DVD; 72:33 ★★) Slavic vocalist-guitarist Popovic, performing with her hyper-dramatic band at a medieval castle in Italy, has the crowd of 5,000 at her mercy for the duration of 14 songs. Her grandiose blues-rock proves excitement isn't necessarily a pleasure for those of us not lake-side. Bonus: uninteresting acoustic solo performances and an interview.

Ordering info: artistexclusive.com

Andrea Marr: *Little Sister Got Soul!* (Blue Skunk 4524; 41:24 ★★★) Reminiscent of early Susan Tedeschi by way of the Stax grooming school, Marr has won several Australian blues awards in a singing career begun in the late-1990s. Her first North American release (and fourth overall) finds her successfully bridling and harnessing her passion in suggestive originals like "Steam Up The Windows" and in classics identified with Etta James and Dinah Washington. But locating the emotion in religious rocker Glenn Kaiser's "If I Leave This World Tomorrow" eludes her. The band makes up in professionalism what it lacks in inspiration. Rather than producing herself again, Marr would be smart next time to enlist an American like Dennis Walker or Robillard.

Ordering info: blueskunkmusic.com

Joanne Shaw Taylor: *Diamonds In The Dirt* (Ruf 1164; 45:21 ★) This British singer and guitarist has been described as the "new face of the blues." Oh sure, and so's deep-wrinkled Pinetop Perkins, bless him. Overblown, ponderous and pointless blues-rock typified by the unimaginatively titled "Let It Burn." And that's being charitable.

DB

Ordering info: ruffredcords.de



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One of the more difficult aspects of being a modern musician is acknowledging forebears while developing a unique identity. Trumpeter/composer Diego Urcola pays tribute to his heroes and contemporaries on his new recording, *Appreciation*. He shows his recognition not by imitation but through compositions inspired and dedicated to heroes and friends, including Freddie Hubbard, Hermeto Pascoal, Paquito D'Rivera, and Guillermo Klein. Urcola presents his original compositions with the help of an amazing ensemble, featuring pianist Luis Perdomo, bassist Hans Glawischmig, and drummer Eric McPherson.

DIEGO URCOLA APPRECIATION

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