

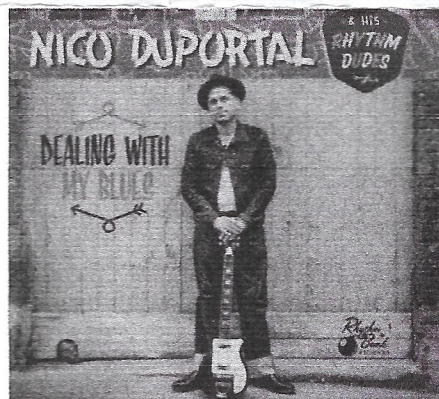
V/A, / [The Texas Box](#), [The Michigan Box](#) & [The Florida Box](#) / Be! Sharp via Bear Family 604352, 606877, 613441

Bear Family is known for a wide range of spectacular box sets featuring the complete – and we mean everything – work by numerous artists, from Country and Blues to Pop and Rock & Roll. This time they are in the distribution business, working with Germany's Be! Sharp on massive overviews of three musical hotbeds in the '50s and '60s that have been out a while in Europe and are now officially for sale in this country. [The Texas Box](#) has 10 discs and 330 tracks, which comes to 900 minutes of music, with everything from Rockabilly to Garage Rock. A few acts, like Country singer Claude King and Swamp Rocker Rod Bernard, went on to success but most of the bands here never made it out of the Lone Star State. [The Michigan Box](#) has 10 discs and clocks in at 400 minutes. Nolan Strong and the Diablos are here while the other performers didn't have any national recognition. But you have to love a band named Zookie and the Potatoes even if they didn't have a hit. [The Florida Box](#) has eight CDs and almost 250 tracks, which equates to 600 minutes of music. Steve Alaimo and Soul singer Clifford Curry had success after moving on from their early groups. All of the packages come with elaborate books that feature numerous interviews with bands, producers and studio operators. It must have taken years to decide what songs to include in these things, not to mention finding pristine copies of what are some of the rarest singles ever compiled during the big box era. -Mark Marymont

**Allen Toussaint / [American Tunes](#)**  
Nonesuch 79467

Just over a year ago we lost music icon Allen Toussaint, who passed away while on tour in Europe. He had just finished recording [American Tunes](#) with producer Joe Henry and it's a beautiful tribute to a man who's written some of New Orleans greatest songs, just think Lee Dorsey's "Working In A Coal Mine" for starters. Toussaint was also a talented piano player who took the musical heritage of his great city blending second-line rhythms and Jazz into funky music often performing solo, but whatever the gig he was without doubt a genius. Fittingly the bulk of the songs here are linked to his musical heroes including Fats Waller, Professor Longhair and Earl King, he's backed occasionally by a small band, an odd guest drops in but ultimately it's just pure Toussaint. From the opening

notes of his own "Delores' Boyfriend" a ragtime burner through to the last, the Paul Simon title track the quality never reduces a notch, Rhiannon Giddens brings her vocal prowess to a couple of Duke Ellington songs "Rocks In My Bed" and "Come Sunday," Longhair's "Mardi Gras In New Orleans" and "Hey Little Girl" are wonderful solo piano pieces as is his own "Southern Nights." He sings on only one the closing "American Tune" which is simply magic. By this time you will have picked out your favorite cut, but play through a couple more times and something else will grab you and you think again. Ultimately this is an album that most readers of this magazine should own and listen to for decades ahead. Nonesuch.com -Rick Meek



**Nico Duportal and his Rhythm Dudes**  
[Dealing With My Blues](#) / RBR 5844

Nico Duportal's new CD is like France's answer to "our" J.D. McPherson. His previous album on Germany's Rhythm Bomb Records was outstanding but more centered around vintage '40s and '60s R&B, and this one is a worthy follow-up! Roots music at it's best! It sounds more contemporary ("I Will Unfriend You" - a Facebook reference of course) with a variation of styles and grooves within the Blues, Rhythm and Blues and Soul genres. Opening with a groovy and rockin' "Don't You See" and the exciting "I Know The Rules" the band kicks ass. Baritone and Tenor Saxophone, sizzling guitar and a more than solid rhythm section keep it hip and interesting with the organ taking on a center spot on quite a few songs. "The One To Blame" has a bit of an exotic, slower groove, very cool with piano. They excel at the highly danceable and fun "Sometimes". Nico Duportal wrote or co-wrote 9 of the 13 tracks and his 5 piece band is excellent with an expressive guitar, especially on the acoustic bonus track, "Mess And Chaos". Their sound is not just fresh and original but also full, rich and exiting. [Rhythmbomb.com](#) - Gaby Maag-Bristol

**John Prine / [For Better, Or Worse](#)**  
Oh Boy Records 044

John Prine needs no introduction, a figure head in Country roots music almost since time began, this is his second forage into duos featuring some of Country's favorite female singers including Iris DeMent, Lee Ann Womack, Allison Krauss, Miranda Lambert and more. Prine has selected a good mix of classic Country both well known and not so, Iris DeMent has great fun with Teddy Wilburn and Johnny Tillotson's "Who Gonna Take The Garbage Out" while Jesse Colter's beautiful "Storms Never Last" is given special treatment by Lee Ann Womack, and Kathy Mattea and Prine's vocals blend beautifully on Scott Wiseman's "Remember Me (When Candlelights Are Gleaming)." Elsewhere Susan Tedeschi pops up on "Color Of The Blues" and Amanda Shires take on the two-steppin' "Dim Lights Thick Smoke And Loud Loud Music" is another winner. Of course what also brings this music to life is the excellent backing band that include Country icons Al Perkins, Tim O'Brien and Pete Wasner, so there you are, really not much to criticize but plenty to enjoy and dance the night away, I bet Gaby and Marc will include some of these. I also love the cover shot with a just married couple sitting on the rear fender of a car with a sign that reads "She got me this morning but I'll get her tonight." Ohboyrecords.com -Rick Meek

**David Bromberg / [The Blues, The Whole Blues and Nothing But The Blues](#)**  
Red House Records 297

David Bromberg, like fellow Blues historians Geoff Muldaur, John Sebastian and Amos Garrett, never let us forget where great Blues songs originated from, but Bromberg also has a contemporary grip and easily moves from old-time songs to those that are not so dated. He sings and plays guitar throughout and has a raspy vocal sound that immediately lends itself to these songs and he and his band are just so in the pocket. One of my favorite Producers' Larry Campbell has created a beautiful sound and contributes guitar and horn arrangements. Robert Johnson's "Walkin' Blues" sets the scene with Little Feat's Bill Payne's piano coming out of the French Quarter and Bromburg sounding reminiscent of Taj Mahal, things move slightly into Jug-band territory with "Kentucky Blues" complete with fiddle and mandolin and Bobby Charles' evergreen "Why Are People Like That" benefits from its great horn arrangement. Ray Charles'