

Françoise Hardy

★★★★★

Message Personnel

RHINO. CD

Superb repackaging of one of the French singer's finest.



Unlike many of her French pop contemporaries, Françoise Hardy escaped the 1960s on an artistic incline, her final albums for Sonopresse, the brilliant *La Question* and the Americana-influenced *Et Si Je M'En Vais Avant Toi*, securing her a contract with WEA in 1973. Handing over production and – initially, at least – much of the writing to Michel Berger proved both a masterstroke and the cause of tension-packed sessions in which the collaborators were often at loggerheads. As a result, the singer sounds more vulnerable than usual: perhaps that explains why *Message Personnel* was both so successful and – at 28 minutes – so short. The bonuses in this deluxe version are a cut above, too: instrumentals, TV performances, foreign-language alternative takes, the brilliant French 45 *Je Suis Moi* and a German single with the wonderful B-side *Kind Unsrer Zeit* (Child Of Our Time).

David Hutcheon

Juaneco Y Su Combo

★★★

The Birth Of Jungle Cumbia

THE VITAL RECORD. CD/DL

Noisy reissue of the original jungle cumbia release, with bonus tracks.



Most readily associated with Colombia's Caribbean coastline, cumbia blends African rhythms with indigenous

American melodies. The Peruvian 'chicha' style, with its added surf-rock elements, has risen in popularity recently, thanks to a growing number of archive reissues, but the form has precedence in *cumbia selvatica*, aka jungle cumbia, which was pioneered by Juaneco Y Su Combo in the remote Peruvian Amazon. The band released a mini-LP in 1970, and an eponymous debut long-player two years later, both holy grails of the jungle cumbia scene; this two-in-one reissue package has a lavish booklet, but is unfortunately marred by poor sound quality. Nevertheless, the surf-rock guitar lines and cheesy Farfisa organ grooves, underpinned by the shakers, scrapers and graters of classic cumbia, are hard to resist, and titles like *Lamento En La Selva* and *El Forastero* emphasise the Amazonian setting.

David Katz



Snakefinger's History Of The Blues

★★★★★

Live In Europe

PROMISING MUSIC. CD/DL

An unlikely 1983 triumph for the man from Tooting.

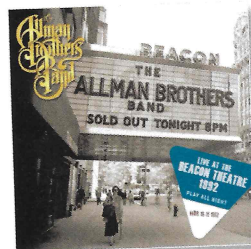
According to Snakefinger, the blues was wiped out by flower power in 1967. But, as he confirms amid the introductory snippets which dissect the 20 tracks of this fascinating 1983 history lesson, it had an influence on just about every form of pop music that followed. The sometime Resident and Chilli Willi guitarist/pianist/vocalist takes Furry Lewis as his starting point in time, then ambles forward punctuating each music extract with such trivia as, "Skip James had his balls cut off in a motoring accident but he still played quite well," before illustrating the various blues styles with considerable expertise, initially working in acoustic mode then presenting some intoxicating big band sounds

licks, outside angst, wizards and demons. From psych-prog mysticism and Sabbath-like doom to biker-thug dunt and stoned blues, although the fidelity occasionally drops a notch there's little let up in quality throughout. Previously destined to languish unheard in thrift stores and collector hoards across the US and Canada, we should praise Sauron that Numero Group have proven brave enough to bring this mighty haul of rough-hewn rock to light.

Andrew Carden

from a line-up fashioned from musicians who'd worked with Beefheart, Iggy Pop etc. Amazingly, everything gelled and the resulting album is an unmitigated joy.

Fred Dellar



The Allman Brothers Band

★★★★

Play All Night: Live At The Beacon Theatre 1992

EPIC/LEGACY. CD/DVD

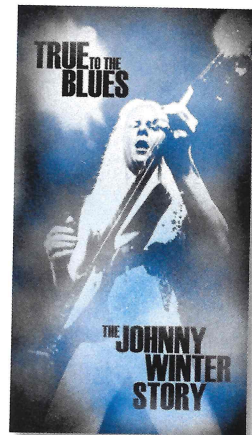
No surprises but still vital on this mid-period live set.

Considering their legendary volatility, The Allman Brothers Band of the early '90s was a fairly stable unit: four original members – Gregg Allman, Dickey Betts, Jaimoe and Butch Trucks – and three new additions – guitarist Warren Haynes, bassist Allen Woody and percussionist Marc Quinones – provided a much-needed injection of fresh blood. *Play All Night's* two CDs recorded at NYC's Beacon Theatre and a DVD from Massachusetts' Great Woods, showcase a still vital, if relatively unchanged band. That's no complaint. Haynes' fiery slide style honours the late Duane Allman without mimicking him, and the new rhythm players more than hold their own. The setlists balance the expected classics (yes, they still did Whipping Post) along with new tunes, primarily written by Betts, and choice blues covers. There are no surprises, unless you count the fact that they were only about halfway into their remarkable run at the time.

Jeff Tamarkin

entirety, spread over six CDs with half-a-dozen fab previously unissued 45s. The discs come wrapped in a hardback folder and accompanied by a 48-page booklet. Like the packaging, the music is full bodied: a coming together of Northern soul, girl group and gospel sounds. Barbara Mason and Kenny Gamble are the big names; the first renowned for 1965's *Yes, I'm Ready*, a sumptuous laying bare of coming-of-age emotions that placed Arctic Records in the US R&B Top 10; the second, with the same year's orchestral swell of *Down By The Seashore*, went on to become one of the main architects of Philly soul, taking the label's house band and sound to Philadelphia International with him. A fledgling Daryl Hall is also present, as lead singer Daryl Hohl with harmony vocal group, The Temptones.

Lois Wilson



Johnny Winter

★★★★

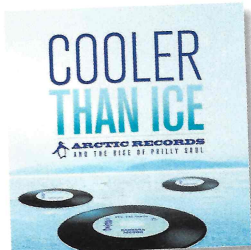
True To The Blues: The Johnny Winter Story

COLUMBIA/LEGACY. CD

Four-CD, career-spanning box for the Texas bluesman.

These 56 tracks draw from no less than 27 albums on more than half-a-dozen labels, three-quarters of the package focusing on the decade after Winter burst into international prominence in the late 1960s. Johnny's blues-rock put more accent on blues than rock, and if he never changed all that much, he made up for it with sheer durable consistency. The highlights are those too-infrequent occasions on which he stretches a bit beyond straight blues, as on Rick Derringer's *Rock And Roll*, Hoochie Koo, Dylan's *Highway 61 Revisited* and his own *I'm Yours And I'm Hers*, which The Rolling Stones played to lead off their 1969 Hyde Park concert. There are just two previously unreleased tracks (both from the 1970 Atlanta Pop Festival), though, and the absence of Jagger-Richards' *Silver Train* (which Winter released several months before the Stones put out their version) hurts.

Richie Unterberger



Various

★★★★★

Cooler Than Ice: Arctic Records And The Rise Of Philly Soul

JAMIE/GUYDEN. CD/LP

Exhaustive anthology of the game-changing Philly label.

Jimmy Bishop's Arctic Records was active from 1964 to '71 and it's all here, in its ice cool



Cumbia combo: Juaneco and friends carry on up the jungle.