



pyrotechnics and tongue-in-cheek lyricism that are a staple of most contemporary blues artists are nowhere to be found on this album.

Fortunately for listeners, a number of lighter tracks help alleviate the bleak mood that permeates much of this recording. On the driving shuffle of “Pocket Full of Money,” the 72-year-old King manages to pump a lot of swagger and bravado into his voice. “King Freddie’s Shuffle” flourishes as a spirited jam, giving King plenty of room to stretch out on guitar while guest pianist Greg “Laid Back” Shatz fleshes out the arrangement.

*Chasing the Blues* is certainly not fare for a Saturday night party. Still, listeners who can appreciate brutally honest blues with few concessions to commercialism will want to give this collection a listen.

JON KLEINMAN

## RICKY SKAGGS

*Music To My Ears*

(SKAGGS FAMILY/FONTANA)



Skaggs played Bill Monroe’s mandolin on stage at age six and debuted on

the Grand Ole Opry at age seven, followed by an extended turn with Flatt & Scruggs. Later, along with his guitar-playing buddy Keith Whitley, Skaggs joined Ralph Stanley’s Clinch Mountain Boys. After stints with J. D. Crowe & the New South, Emmylou Harris’ Hot Band and finally the Grand Ole Opry itself, he ultimately earned 14 Grammys and numerous other distinctions, including being credited with “single handedly saving country music” by Nashville icon Chet Atkins.

Paying tribute to bluegrass legends, this 11-track album begins with a stirring version of Monroe’s “Blue Night” and also contains a tribute to the recently deceased Doc Watson followed by a rendition

of “The Tennessee Stud.” Carter Stanley’s “Loving You Too Well” completes the homage. “You Can’t Hurt Ham,” written by Skaggs and album co-producer/songwriter Gordon Kennedy, is a delightful musical recollection of the old wisdom of the road about the indestructibility of country ham.

In stark contrast to the bluegrass pioneer generation he has replaced, Skaggs’ willingness to explore new musical territory is illustrated here by his collaboration with Barry Gibb (of Bee Gee’s fame) on “Soldier’s Son.”

SCOTT PEAVLER

## VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR

*Recorded Live In Concert At Metropolis Studios, London* (CONVEXE)



Van Der Graaf Generator burst upon the world like an under-sea earthquake

generating a tsunami. A reflection of the turmoil and havoc of the ’60s and early ’70s, VDGG’s cataclysmic, intense, intolerable-to-some-people music created a watershed event in the music world. Some hated their music, others saw it as destructive and still others saw it as the lone candle in a dark room. Whatever the reaction, the world both was and was not ready for it. This reunion concert brings back those memories for many, while for others it’s a curiosity. Regardless, it’s an impact.

Back in 1971, *Mojo* called VDGG “compelling, claustrophobic, carefully-hewn chaos.” That summation stands today. You get two CDs and a DVD to boot. How cool is that? It doesn’t much matter whether you were born in 1955 or 1995, this package is a sure winner for prog rock fans of all ages in between. Warning: strap yourself in securely before listening.

LOU NOVACHECK

Sunflower/I Know You Rider” allowed the band to stretch out and deliver their trademark musical fireworks.

Don’t listen to this collection one downloaded track at a time. Put away that smartphone, fire up the lava lamp and forget about the 21st century for a while.

JON KLEINMAN

## The New Christy Minstrels

*A Retrospective 1962-1970*

(REAL GONE)



Before folk-rock exploded in the mid-1960s, a handful of young folk groups briefly enjoyed commercial success and the faithful following of college students. The folk group fad didn’t

last long and many of the groups quickly fell out of favor. Rock history has not served these groups well and most are only remembered for the various individuals who later turned up in such groups as the Byrds, the Buffalo Springfield, the Mamas and the Papas and the Lovin’ Spoonful.

Some of the folk groups from the late ’50s and early ’60s might be due some reconsideration and this retrospective may help. The New Christy Minstrels scored such hits as “Green Green” and “Chim Chim Cher-ee,” with the kind of lush, echo-laden overproduction that characterized middle-of-the-road music and wouldn’t be out of place on a Mitch Miller album. “Chim Chim Cher-ee,” however, was recorded twice by the group and it’s the second version that’s included here. The first version was a far different, stripped-down track featuring Barry McGuire on lead vocals just before he left the group; others who passed through the group include Gene Clark and Jerry Yester. The group’s guiding force, Randy Spears, was the visionary behind the group’s early success and the music the group made while at its best.

STEVE MATTEO

## Judas Priest

*Screaming For Vengeance Special 30th Anniversary Edition*

(COLUMBIA/LEGACY)

With its melodic riff, the anthemic “You’ve Got Another Thing Comin’” cemented 1982’s *Screaming For Vengeance* as a certified metal landmark, moving the genre from its