

**The O'Jays**  
**Together We Are One**  
(Philadelphia International/  
The Right Stuff)

Kenny Gamble & Leon Huff have uncovered 12 previously unreleased O'Jays recordings dating back to the trio's last early '80s days at the company that made them superstars. For leftovers, they are surprisingly

listenable. All the great producer/composer/arrangers are represented, including **Thom Bell, Bunny Sigler, Dexter Wansel, Jack Faith** and **Gamble & Huff** themselves. Founding members

Eddie Levert and Walter Williams attempted legal action to keep this music from being released, but it is hardly the

embarrassment they've claimed. You don't even have to be a longtime fan to get lost in the beauty of songs like "Ruler of the Universe" and the title track, the churchy blues of "I Know

What You're Doing (But I'm Too Scared To Do Something About It)" or the nightclub croon of "When Sunny Gets Blue." Sure,

they may have been able to top these performances given more time, but it is a testament to all of the talent involved

that they could polish even just o.k. songs (and "just o.k." is on another level when we're talking PIR) into such pleasurable

listeners. My suggestion is that all parties "give the people what they want": 12 vintage O'Jays performances that feels as cozy

as an old velour sweater.



**Duane Roland**  
**Love is Music**

(indie)

When a very good friend

hit me with a copy of this Detroit gentleman's previous CD - clearly a home-

made affair yet one from the heart - I was astounded to discover a song that

I could play over and over... a little something called "So Little Time." I

have found yet another on his lovely, new sophomore disc. Roland is a charmer, a

heart-tugger and a dreamer in a way that is all but vanishing in today's times. Sure, his sole

accompaniment is a Roland 1000 keyboard (a neat twist of fate), yet he and producer Paul Cochran bring much orchestration out of

that bad boy to go with classic repertoire and the fragile, love struck crooning of a man who has known and remembers romance.

And out of the 12 songs which include his first duet ("Teach Me Tonight" w/ a sassy **Michele Nicole**), a dramatic "I Wish You Love" (compete with spoken intro) and something for The Lord

("How Long Has It Been"), I found another Duane Roland chestnut on which to hit repeat: the **Clint Eastwood**-penned "Why Should I Care" (f/ **Mario Gordon** on sax). Contact: 323.216.0410



**Raymond Jones**

**So Amazing (The Music of Luther Vandross)**

(UEG Music)

Raymond Jones' previous three albums were fully produced amalgams of poetry, songs and rhapsodic soul compositions. His fourth and latest is a solo piano meditation centered on songs recorded by the ailing Luther Vandross.

It is initially puzzling because many of the songs are pieces Luther "covered"

(as opposed to composed) in his own way. It is in that interpretive spirit that Jones approached this music. Many of the titles such as

"Anyone Who Had A Heart," "Superstar" or "Creepin'" - familiar to most listeners in versions by so many people - flow seamlessly from one into-

mate rendering to the next. "Here and Now" is pure Jones in the quietly reverent places he goes with the melody. Best of all is a shocking

reassessment of "Killing Me Softly" in a bouncy, jazz spirit that surely would have Vince Guaraldi's moustache turned up in a bow. If you come

to this expecting to hear shades of Vandross, you'll have to take those moments where you find them. Ultimately, this is about the man at the

piano and his own singular innervation into the subject with which they both share such an affinity: love. Contact: 818.313.8973



**Jazz Legends DVD Series**

Quantum Leap Home Video

These individually sold concert DVDs capture

contemporary jazz artists in sizzling live sets from the '80s. This series includes drummer **Billy**

**Cobham** and his band doing seven mind-boggling fusion performances (including his classics

"Crosswinds," "Stratus" and "Red Baron"), flugelhornist/composer **Chuck Mangione** in sex-

ret mode (playing best sellers such as "Feels So Good," "Land of Make Believe" and Chase The

Clouds Away") and the legendary drummer **Art Blakey & The Jazz**

**Messengers** circa 1982 sharing a bill with sax man Johnny Griffin and tackling tunes such as "My Ship," "A Monk's Dream and "Miz B.C."

**Swing Era DVD Series**

Idem Home Video

This series of DVDs encompasses collections of

classic black and white "short" music films and "soundies" from the old movie theater era. The

generous discs include a 35-song set on the ever electrifying **Louis Jordan** and his **Tympani**

**Five** (f/ "Jack You're Dead," "Caldonia," "Five Guys Named Moe" and "Salt Pork, West

Virginia") the smooth and swingin' tones of the early **Nat "King" Cole Trio** (27 numbers ranging

from the hot "Come To Baby, Do," "Frim Fram Sauce," "The Trouble With Me Is You" and "Got A Penny Benny" to the unfortunately stiff "Mona Lisa," "Nature Boy" and "Too Young"), and a vocal compilation featuring **Sarah Vaughan, Lena Horne, Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters, Ida Cox** and the **International Sweethearts of Rhythm**.

