

Moss may not be a great singer, but his affinity for this style of music is more than adequate. It's good to hear him expand a bit. — JH



The Stairwell Sisters Get Off Your Money

Yodel-Ay-Hee Records

Old-timey music is like the taste of Sweet-Tarts — when you combine old-time funk with mellifluous female vocals, it just sounds tastier than the same parts mated with gruff male voices.

As you might suspect, the Stairwell Sisters (who aren't really sisters) play old-timey music, but they do it with a twist. Unlike Uncle Earl (another all-female old-time band) who specializes in making the music palatable for contemporary listeners, The Stairwells include as many radicalizing non-traditional influences as possible. When's the last time you heard a Tanzanian song combined with a Virginian fiddle tune? Not recently I'll wager.

Get Off Your Money is the Sisters' third release, and their music has a cohesive, tribal quality. The arrangements aren't about lead vocals accompanied by a musical background. Instead, they create a rustic wall of sound where the backing rhythms are as important as the principal melodic line. This group music approach makes every song they perform, whether it's an interpretation of a Roscoe Holcomb blues or one of their own original tunes, sound organic and ancestral. Want a tonic for modernity? The Stairwell Sisters have a cure for what ails you. — SS



Vince Seneri The Prince's Groove

Prince V Records

Few sounds match that of a B-3 combined with a six-string, and the latest from organist Vince Seneri gives Paul Bollenback, one of today's best jazz guitarists, a chance to shine.

Musically, there are few surprises here, but the execution of originals and chestnuts by the likes of Johnny Mercer and Jerome Kern bring goosebumps to the flesh. The take on "Dearly Beloved" is a perfect example; played fast in essentially a classic organ trio setting, Bollenback shines while offering the works — single-line solos, octaves, chords, and everything in-between. He even trades eights with the organ



Double Dose of Ford (& Friends)

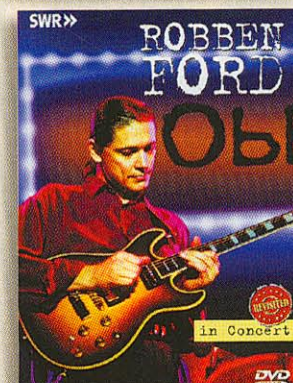
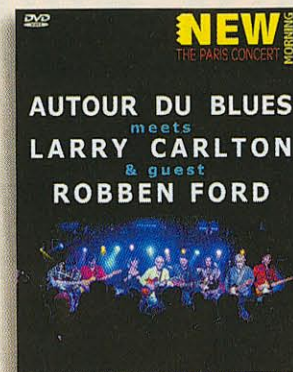
THE PREMISE OF THE *Autour Du Blues* DVD was to stage a transatlantic blues summit for the 25th anniversary of Paris' New Morning club in December '06, teaming the group of France's studio players with American guitar legends Larry Carlton and Robben Ford. If the cover photograph, showing seven guitarists onstage at once, sets off an alarm (as it should), be informed that that cluster pluck was only for the finale — although the number of six-strings playing musical chairs at any given time fluctuates between three and four (which I think we can all agree is at least one too many).

The players all exhibit enough taste to match their chops, though, and stay out of each other's way. The Parisian guitarists — Danys Lable, Claude Engel, Michael Jones, and Patrick Verbeke — are obviously first-rate, as is singer/keyboardist Slim

Batteux. The problem is the repertoire — varying from "standard" to tired. Yet another version of "Stormy Monday" or "Rock Me Baby" is almost by definition doomed to descend into the dreaded "blues jam." Because of that, the more atypical numbers, like J.B. Lenoir's "Down In Mississippi," Francis Gabrel on vocals and acoustic, come off best.

And, ultimately, jamming on a bunch of blues standards isn't much of a challenge for Carlton or Ford, although Carlton transcends Ray Charles' "Blackjack" and Ford pushes the envelope on "Reconsider Baby." The pair easily demonstrates who the legends are onstage. It would have been nice if more time had been invested into choosing material and arrangements.

The "Revisited" in the title of the Robben Ford DVD refers to the fact that a separate installment of the same German TV



Autour Du Blues Meets Larry Carlton & Guest Robben Ford

New Morning: The Paris Concert
Robben Ford
In Concert Revisited
Inakustik/MVD

show, "Ohne Filter," has already been released. In fact, this 1997 appearance falls between Blue Line's 1993 *In Concert* and a 2001 *New Morning* DVD, all on Inakustik (distributed by MVD).

Having just recorded *Tiger Walk*, the set is evenly split between its instrumentals and vocals from 1995's *Handful Of Blues*. Fronting a quartet (with drummer Gary Novak, bassist Chris Chaney, and keyboardist Deron Johnson), Ford turns in his best performance of any of the DVDs. Instrumentals like the energetic opener, "Just Like It Is," show off his jazz and funk sides, while vocals like the melodic "When I Leave Here" (reminiscent of "Little By Little") give full rein to his second-nature blues chops — although Robben has always blurred the lines between those camps.

"The Miller's Son," the one instrumental from *Handful*, is an unabashed reworking of "Steppin' Out," in homage to Eric Clapton. As usual, Ford pulls out all the stops, and the band alternately hangs on for the ride and pushes him ever higher. — Dan Forte