

June 2008
DownBeat

BLUES

by Frank-John Hadley

Jump For Joy!

David Bennett Cohen: *Cookin' With Cohen* (Core 8422; 54:40) ★★★½ New Yorker Cohen—once a member of the late-'60s political hippie band Country Joe and the Fish and early this decade with Bill Perry's blues band—delivers a start-to-finish satisfying album. It reveals a blues-and-boogie pianist of bountiful musical imagination capable of bringing freshness to Professor Longhair's gumbo of blues, ragtime, jazz and Afro-Cuban dance music. He writes songs with staying power—the trump ace is a Latin blues-rock instrumental "The Cool Fool"—and even plays some fine acoustic guitar. Cohen deserves the lion's share of the credit here, but soloing guitarist Chris Carter, drummer Kenny Soule and bassist Tim Tindall don't strike a single false note either. Bobby Day sings four songs, fun despite wear on his tires.

Ordering info: core-records.com

Preacher Jack: *Pictures From Life's Other Side* (Cow Island 006; 68:40) ★★★½ On formerly unavailable studio tracks from 1982 and 1996, Jack the maniacal solo boogie-woogie man displays such extreme passion playing the keys they become his second heart pumping lifeblood. The eccentric Bostonian's gutsy blues singing comes with the texture of years spent breathing vile smoke in piano bars, while his wild off-the-cuff spoken song intros make clear who he thinks has the power to walk on water: Hank Williams, Fats Domino and Jesus Christ.

Ordering info: cowislandmusic.com

Pinetop Perkins: *Pinetop Perkins & Friends* (Telarc 83680; 41:29) ★★ The Chicago blues elder statesman, 94, sings and performs on the 88s with surprising alertness and energy as B.B. King, Eric Clapton, Jimmie Vaughan and other folks show they truly care about him. But "Hoochie Coochie Man," "Sweet Home Chicago" and eight more of similar species had seen better days when Perkins was doing them as a mere kid 30 years ago.

Ordering info: telarc.com

Pete York: *Pete York & Friends* (Inak 9082; 73:46/68:10/46:53) ★★★ This triple-disc set featuring the Spencer Davis Band drummer and other British rather obscure rock musicians of the 1960s and '70s in concert in the mid-1980s has two CDs of decent



Henry Butler: plaintive wail

electric blues surrounding a more intriguing one titled *Steaming*. The latter finds York teaming up with Colin Hodgkinson on bass and Brian Auger on keyboards for an oddly cohesive batch of unconventional reevaluations, including the Chicago blues "Going Down Slow," one-man-band Jesse Fuller's "San Francisco Blues" and the Auger-orgy "Compared To What."

Ordering info: in-akustik.com

Geraldine and Donald Gay: *Soulful Sounds* (The Sirens 5016; 54:23) ★★★½ Like all true gospel legends, gifted pianist Geraldine Gay and her brother minister Donald with his strong, compassionate baritone offer pointed suggestions about how we should manage our lives and look for heavenly reward. Change the lyrics from religious to secular and you'd have a vastly entertaining blues act, including bass and drums, that might be as popular as the Blind Boys of Alabama.

Ordering info: thesirensrecords.com

Henry Butler: *PiaNOLA Live* (Basin Street 0803; 63:40) ★★★★★ Everything this New Orleans piano master sings and plays while seated on his stool—here, 11 concert tracks from the 1980s and '90s—tells of a hyperactive musical mind directing lightning fingers and a thunderous foot. He's unstoppable solo, a perfect match of the quirkily histrionic and the virtuosic, stomping the blues on "Let 'Em Roll," reconfiguring "Tipitina" with glee and fusing his rich voice and piano in the plaintive wail of "Old Man River." Be thankful Butler and these tapes escaped the floodwater.

DB

Ordering info: basinstreetrecords.com

with
John McNeil trumpet
Bill McHenry tenor
Joe Martin bass
Jochen Rueckert drums

BILL MCHENRY

JOHN MCNEIL

REDISCOVERY
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