

new releases

both the humorous wordplay and vocal cadence of Delbert McClinton. The playful *The Prophet* also carries a McClinton-esque vibe ("Confucius and Mohammad / they got nothin' on me").

Taylor adds some sizzling, smoky guitar on the slow burn *I'm Not Giving Up*, one of the album's deepest tracks. Taylor returns on the seven-minute jam *Her and My Blues*, which also benefits from Karp's tasty slide

flourishes. Karp duets with Leanne Westover on *Kiss the Bride*, a song that reprises the format Karp employed on the two well-received albums recorded with Sue Foley on Blind Pig Records. *Nobody Knows Me* is a mellow cool ode to anonymity that's bolstered by a sophisticated arrangement. The acoustic ballad *I Walk Alone* features just Karp and Hudson on a sweet tale of loss and remembrance.

Produced by Karp and longtime collaborator Dae Bennett, *Alabama Town* proves that the genre-bending Karp's blues cred is legit.

—Rod Evans

CHAMPION JACK DUPREE

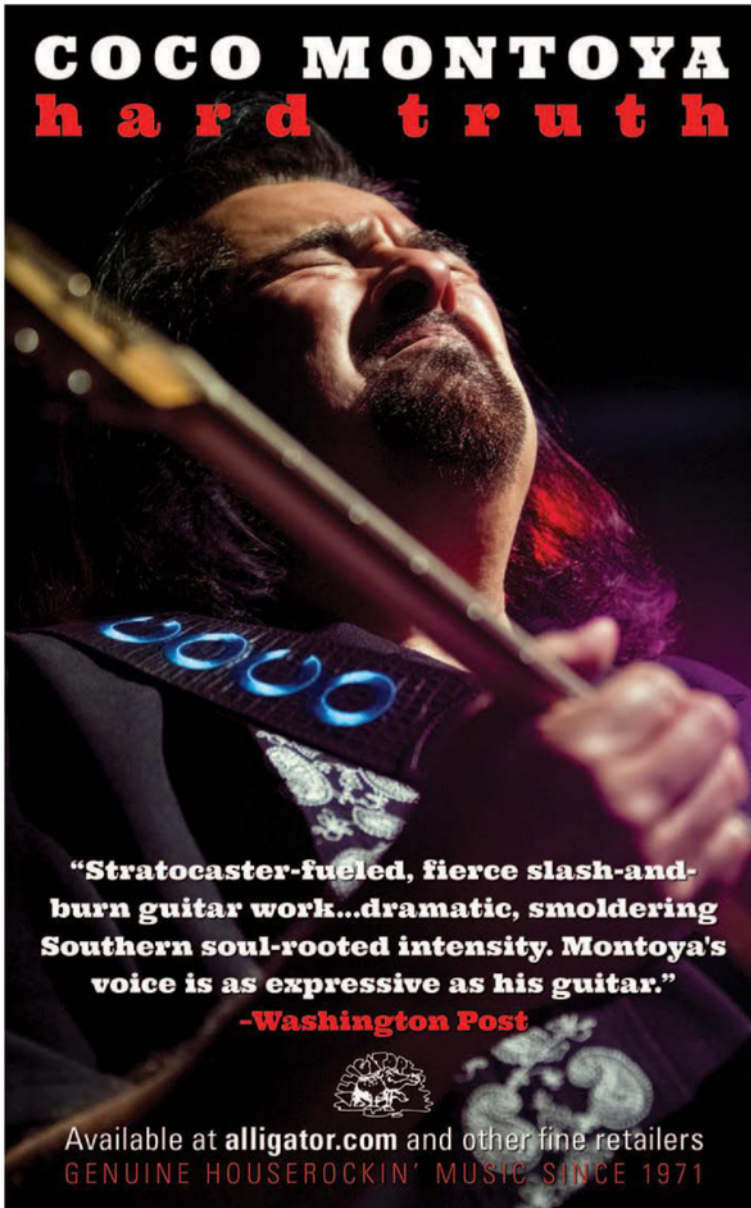
*Live at Rockpalast—
Cologne 1980*

MIG - 90642

As far back as 1940, New Orleans native Champion Jack Dupree was sharpening his recording skills as a boogie-woogie piano player after learning the instrument in a New Orleans Colored Waifs Home (he lived in the same one as Louis Armstrong) and serving apprenticeship with local barrelhouse players. Upon leaving the South to visit parts of the Midwest (Indianapolis, Detroit and Chicago), Dupree ultimately established a career as a Golden Glove-winning lightweight boxer, which earned him his moniker.

In similar fashion as John Lee Hooker and Lightnin' Hopkins, Champion Jack recorded for a wide variety of small labels (Continental, Groove, King, Harlem, Derby, Vic, Red Robin and others) before establishing a home with Atlantic Records and strong footing with the album *Blues From the Gutter* in 1958, which contained the 1955 hit *Walking the Blues* (originally recorded on the King label). After later recording for Horizon while still in the United States, he eventually left the states and traveled throughout the United Kingdom, finally settling in Germany and Scandinavia.

Founded in 1974 by Peter Rüchel for WDR station in Germany, the television show *Rockpalast* ("Rock Palace") became a visual staple for rock, blues and jazz fans of imported artists from America. *Live at Rockpalast* provides two full CDs and a complementary DVD concert of the entire affair. Dupree sits front and center at the piano, and, other than the supplemental role of the capable guitarist Kenn Lending (interspersing blues licks), it's every bit of a solo concert. There is, however, a surprise guest appearance by Ramblin' Jack Elliott, who was one of the original Greenwich Village stalwarts during the birth of the beat era. When Elliott arrives to do an extremely loose arrangement of Louis Jordan's *Salt Pork, West Virginia*, the performance sounds as if it's two distinct versions at once—the song



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form is often elongated or truncated at random as Kenn Lending wisely aborts the lead blues lick role and shifts to a walking bass line on guitar.

Dupree still displays much of the charm, humor and rough-edged barrelhouse blues piano he was best known for when he established his reputation as a musician in Chicago following his boxing days. The artful storytelling is there as well, woven throughout the 18 performances, and whatever you might have missed on hearing the discs can be seen on the videos—he puts a large green kerchief on his head, drapes it around his ears like a woman's head scarf, makes a large Grinch smile and asks the audience, "Have you ever kissed a woman [who has only] two teeth?" which cracks up the audience, and when a stagehand arrives with a drink for him, he responds, "Thank you, I hope all your children are born naked!"

As for the remainder of the music, more than a few classic tunes are here, including numerous standard piano boogie-woogies, along with pieces that represent his primary stops in Chicago (Muddy's version of *Baby, Please Don't Go*, Hooker's *One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer* and New Orleans standards *Down By the Riverside* and *When the Saints Go Marching In*).

Dupree might be described as a cross between the piano shouter Sunnyland Slim and Otis Spann, both from Chicago. And much like John Lee Hooker, his boogie-woogie left- and right-hand patterns don't always follow the standard 12-bar form in either length or chord progression. It's no matter though, and actually that's part of the charm. Indeed, the DVD literally makes the music on the two CDs come to life, and is a much more pleasurable experience because of it—quite a joyride, in fact. Though it's been 25 years since his passing, this set brings his highly entertaining delivery back to life. Now's your chance to catch his act, since most of us missed it the first time around.

—Wayne Goins

LARRY GRIFFITH BAND

Shake It Loose

No label – No #

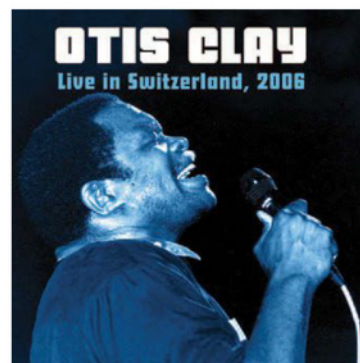
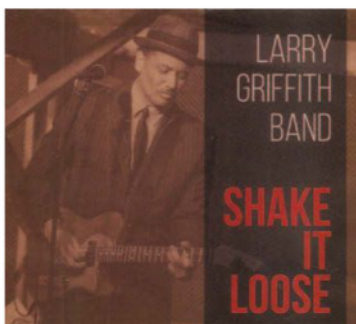
This self-produced CD by the Larry Griffith Band, out of Smyrna, Georgia, is more the length of an EP than a full album. The soul/R&B-flavored disc has clever lyrics that will probably go over fairly well with a live audience in the right mood for what he has to offer. The band's website says it's a party band that can deliver a variety of styles. Although Griffith himself doesn't do any of the lead solos, Mike Lowry seems more than happy to handle the responsibilities.

The opener, *Keep Ridin'*, is a gritty, medium-funk tune with cheeky lyrics about ridin' and drivin' (use your own imagination for the tongue-in-cheek details) with a quartet of background female voices and a pretty nice lowdown baritone sax line serving as anchor. *Every King Needs a Queen* and *All I Really Wanna Do* are both medium-tempo tunes that play it a bit too safe to leave a distinct impression, while the gospel-tinged *Our Love Is In Good Hands* simmers down even more.

Ain't Puttin' Up has a bit of a New Orleans flair, ornamented by sax section and the backing female chorus. The title track, *Shake It Loose*, finally picks up the pace and adds a big burst of energy. The pensive boogie guitar riff gives way to a big-band burst that serves as a welcome blast that comes almost too late—this track definitely should have been the opening act.

Overall, the album has solid vocals from Griffith, good guitar solos from Lowry and nice horn arrangements, all played by Tom Regeski. With the entire disc clocking in at barely over 30 minutes, it would be nice to see what else Griffith has in store. Guess we have to tune in next time for the second half.

—Wayne Goins



OTIS CLAY

Live In Switzerland, 2006

RockBeat Records – ROC-CD-3337

According to its mission statement, "RockBeat Records is committed to quality entertainment, the preservation of the sounds and images from your past, and dedicated to making those memories easily available."

To date, the label has done a good job of resurrecting live rock, rockabilly, folk, country and blues recordings from the likes of Mississippi Fred McDowell, Lowell Fulson, Otis Rush, Albert King and Bobby Bland, to name a few. One of the imprint's most recent restoration efforts is a 2006 Bellinzona, Switzerland, concert by the late, great Otis Clay.

As with several of the other more recent blues efforts from RockBeat, including live performances from Junior Wells and J.B. Hutto, this recording seems to be not much more than a glorified bootleg. Sound quality is about eight out of ten. It's very listenable, but less than stellar. As with other RockBeat releases, general details of the evening, such as show location and band personnel, are thankfully documented. There is little in the way of information or extras beyond that, however. These are stripped-down, budget CDs of live shows, plain and simple.

The night's performance itself, by Clay and one of his large, traveling bands of the period takes a while to get cooking. Part of the problem may be that it is a festival performance and rain that day seems to have been prevalent. The crowd starts out lackluster and the band seems to have to work itself into an appropriate lather before their leader can work his charms to the fullest.

By track four on the first of the package's two discs, *I Can Take You to Heaven Tonight*, Clay and band have hit their stride, and their