

lenting drive. Pumped from a sound system jerry-rigged with home-made microphones and a megaphone, the distorted wall of sound gets torn between modern times and the dawn of time. In that gloriously massive rumble, Africa's future catches up with its past.

Thumb pianos—likembé, in native Congolese tongue; mbira, to Zimbabweans—are the unexpected trailblazers into this brave new world. Far more so than the bass bump, glint of guitar, or even the phalanx of omnipotent drums. Here, erupting atop the big beat, the likembés' typically folksy, metallic chatter is modest no more. Loud and swathed in fuzzed-out watery tones, their newfound power is what shocks mind-blowing headiness into the music.

In a country like the Congo that starves for off-the-shelf equipment, a wickedly ingenious DIY ethos got Konono's revolution started. Telephone wire coiled around crushed magnets dissected from car alternators serve as the electric pickups which enable the three abnormally amped-up likembés to soar. Kitchen implements and scrap metal repurpose themselves into percussion components, which add to the din. Firing off are also whistles, shakers, syncopated hand-claps and call-and-response chants drenched in adrenaline. Plus, this time, Angola-born producer Batida occasionally acts upon his digital impulses, as when seamlessly layering flashes of electronic beats into "Kinsumba." The beast couldn't be more thrillingly alive.

Sprawling and consuming, the eight torrential tracks tend to voyage long and hard, so as not to interrupt dancefloor momentum—or dare break that self-perpetuating juju spell. Mindbenders like

"Kinsumba" and "Um Nzozing" morph into moonshots, despite remaining firmly rooted in terra firma. "Tokolanda" thrusts, orbits, and eventually trances out after 10 minutes. "Nzozing Família" boils over even longer, an extended dance mix straight out of the jungle.

Make no mistake. In no way are these dry, brittle field recordings of an African artifact. Anything but. Around since the 1960s, Konono finally broke free from being a remotely isolated secret with the wonder of 2004's *Congotronics*, the first of their primitivistic masterworks beamed in wraparound fidelity. The groundswell was triggered. Other bands peppered about Kinshasa began tugging between indigenous traditionalism and brazen urban evolution, joining the aptly-dubbed Congotronics movement (over which Crammed Discs curates and cultivates). Abroad, Konono has earned a Grammy; played the hugest of huge Coachella Festival; conquered Europe, in-person, too; shared studios and stages with Björk and Tortoise; amassed a cult following with A-list members from Wilco to Radiohead's Thom Yorke. And deservedly risen to the heights of a global phenomenon. Theirs is the thump heard 'round the world. Because, in this vapid age of technological trickery, encountering sound waves—an album, a band—that directly fires up the primal brain is both a rare and cathartic experience. *Konono N°1 Meets Batida* is full of those vital vibrations.

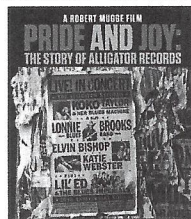
DENNIS ROZANSKI

**VARIOUS**

*Pride and Joy: The Story of Alligator Records*

MVD (BLU-RAY)

**P**ride and Joy is professional home movies from the 20th birthday bash that Alligator Records threw for itself back when Son Seals' *Living In the Danger Zone* and William Clarke's *Serious Intentions* were new spins. (The legendary indie label is now already onto its 45th Anniversary Collection that just arrived in June, via CD and MP3.) The extra-



lively party—headlined by Lil' Ed & the Blues Imperials, Koko Taylor & Her Blues Machine, the Lonnie Brooks Blues Band (bolstered by son Ronnie Baker Brooks), Elvin Bish-

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## BLUES REVIEWS

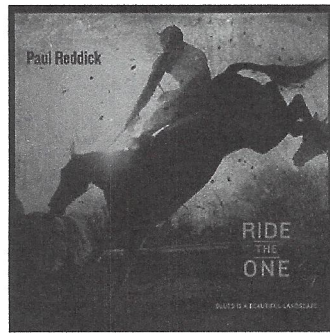
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op, and the double-fisted piano masher Katie Webster—roared into Philly's Chestnut Cabaret on March 12, 1992. And filmmaker Robert Mugge was ready and waiting. His 16mm cameras, still hot from their descent into Mississippi's *Deep Blues* just the year before, began rolling at the opening scream from Lil' Ed's slide slashing into the title track and kept rolling straight through to the final jamathon where the whole caravan gets in their communal licks on "Sweet Home Chicago."

But as the subtitle proclaims, this is *The Story of Alligator Records*. So, in between performances—like Elvin stressing out his Gibson's humbuckers over some "Beer Drinking Woman" shtick, and Lonnie and Ronnie escalating their Fenders through "I Want All My Money Back" with the highest of bent-string drama—the film roves out to the company's headquarters in Chicago. There, the tale gets told by Bruce Iglauer himself, who famously started his label in 1971 simply to record Hound Dog Taylor. For that act alone, we remain houserockingly grateful. But then he kept right on turning other Chicagoans (and outsiders) into idols. Five of them—the show's headliners—also get interview time. That's when talk of "neck bones" and that "gospel feeling" sparks Koko's gold-capped grin to shine, not long after having devastated "I'd Rather Go Blind." Iglauer also personally guides us behind the scenes: a roundtable staff-meeting, the warehouse (remember when, in the 1980s and early '90s, CDs came packaged in those cardboard long-boxes?), and inside the studio when the Blues Imperials go crazy on "Ed's Boogie" for their then-upcoming *What You See Is What You Get*. The most valuable insight, though, is when Iglauer spills the beans on how Alligator got its truly toothy name. Keeping the party chugging well past its 87-minute runtime are ten bonus audio tracks from that show, including Lil' Ed's "Killing Floor."

(Along with *Pride and Joy*, Mugge's *Zydeco Crossroads* (2015) and *The Kingdom of Zydeco* (1994) also just debuted on Blu-ray.)

DENNIS ROZANSKI

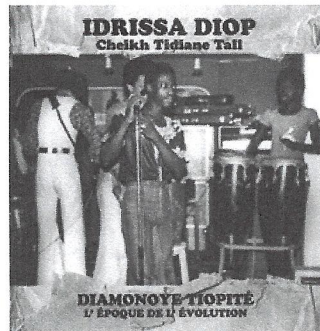


**PAUL REDDICK**  
*Ride the One*  
STONY PLAIN

Time had come to really shake things up. After 25plus years of devotional blues, Paul Reddick radically resets his sound here, plunging his fourth solo album off into the deep end of groove. The kind of consumptive blues-rock grooves specifically bred to swallow up rooms, whole. The Canadian harpist certainly outdid himself building the juggernaut that is *Ride the One*, a phenomenal sonic monster intended to be saddled-up. Hence, the project's apropos title and fitting artwork. By special design, "Shadows," "Celebrate" and every single one of the roaring rest are flashfloods. Dense and aggressive is their flow. Loud, too. And made so from the harsh blast of, well, everything: Reddick's sandpapery bark, his locomotive harp, the caked-on dirt, the two-ton band. Lured into this massive whoosh is disciple Steve Marriner, a perfect guitarist (one of three here) for the job, having assembled his own rocket engine, MonkeyJunk, in reaction to Reddick's 1990s-era Sidemen. Bonded by momentum, the squalling compresses out the psychedelically iridescent "Diamonds," and then keeps slamming one howler into the next—"Living in Another World," "I Tried to Tell You," "It Goes with You"—until finally crashing down upon "Moon and Star," which leaves Reddick alone with just his brooding thoughts and the hugest, wheez-

iest of harmonicas. Although the session's overarching focus is to maximize rhythmic propulsion, Reddick's penchant for wry indictments of love, death and desperation keep you attentively thinking while being forcefully swept downstream on quite the intense experience.

DENNIS ROZANSKI



**IDRISSA DIOP**  
*Diamonoye Tiopite*  
TERANGA BEAT

This was once the future, the outer bounds. During those tumultuous 1960s and '70s, Senegal, a longtime powerhouse of West African music, was no less immune to sonic upheaval. But rather than blues or rock being the overwhelmingly transformative force, strong rhythms that had been blowing in from Cuba began hybridizing with native styles, developing an alternate heartbeat to the ancient classicalism of kora and balafon. That era of modernizing evolution yielded the distinct sound of Senegalese mbalax, the nation's signature sound. Its pioneering catalyst was a singing percussionist by the name of Idrissa Diop, and *Diamonoye Tiopite* paints his early portrait during that formative span of 1969-1976 using excruciatingly hard-to-find sides, both with and without his most famous groundbreaking band. (Actually being homed in Senegal enables Teranga Beat to gather tremendous collections like this one, using intrepidly deep pulls from archives long privy to, essentially, only local ears.) Le SAHEL was that famous groundbreaking groove band, stacked high with punchy horns, flighty electric guitar, slinky keyboards (perfected by the great Cheikh Tidiane Tall), and, of course, poly-rhythmic percussion that bubbles over with imported congas and

indigenous talking tamams. Dancing is still what you do in the presence of all 12 historic tracks. No wonder "Yaye Boye," tumbled out from guitar and breezed by sax, became the equivalent of "Wipeout" around the capital city of Dakar, one of those repertoire essentials for all 1960s bands. Or that 1975's "Bamba," credited as the first recorded mbalax song, erupted into an anthem on the thunder of sabar drumming. While the Latin fever working up "Cintorita" and "Con el SAHEL" into brassy froths would sound comfortably at home in Havana, the intense Afro-beat beneath an organ-snaked "Massani Cissé" assured that the changeover to mbalax was complete. Diop recently reunited the old SAHEL gang (YouTube; terangabeat.com) for successful sets, but these are the very songs that originally launched the revolution.

DENNIS ROZANSKI

**JOHN LONG**  
*Stand Your Ground*  
DELTA GROOVE

After a 10-year recording abreather, old-soul John Long sounds suitably refreshed for rolling back the clocks anew. Since 2006's *Lost and Found* debut, the only concession *Stand Your Ground* cedes to encroaching modernity is the amplifier into which his trusty Washburn Montgomery archtop guitar and equally curvaceous wooden resonator now get plugged. Luckily, even with that capitulation, it's still only early 1950something in his mind, throat and 66-year-old fingers. Turns out that a shot of voltage running through the Denver man's time warps only heightens the experience, beautifully capturing that golden sound when rural blues began leaving the fields to feed upon urban elec-

