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Posted 02.25.2009

**Umphrey's McGee plus Isaac Hayes, Count Basie and Coleman Hawkins revisited**

By Mike Cote

**UMPHREY'S MCGEE** *Mantis* (Sci Fidelity Records)

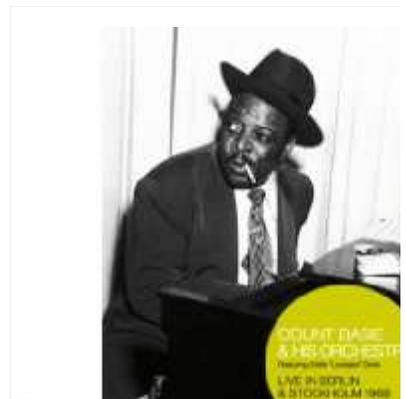
Chicago-based Umphrey's McGee has been branded as a jam band, but that tag—which often represents aimless noodling—doesn't begin to describe what these guys do. While the extended instrumental experiments might win the band the praise of young fans, the adventurous music on *Mantis*, packed with stop-start arrangements, crunching power chords and gorgeous vocal harmonies, will appeal to the classic rock generation that grew up on Kansas, Yes, Steely Dan and Rush. The nearly

12-minute title track takes in all of those influences and more. You can imagine Todd Rundt a piano-based snippet like "Cemetery Walk Two." And the ghosts of the Beach Boys and X over "Prophecy Walk." Progressive rock has long been maligned for pompous excess and ju goofiness (say, the new age nonsense lyrics of Yes). Umphrey's McGee makes it cool again



**ISAAC HAYES** *Black Moses* and *Juicy Fruit* (Disco Freak) (Stax)

My sons know Isaac Hayes as the voice of Chef on "South Park" (including his well-publicized exit over a parody of Scientology that spawned an even more hilarious episode.) Of course, we all remember him for a run of hit singles and albums in the '70s. *Black Moses* was released in 1971 at the height of Hayes' fame, after his work for the film "Shaft" made him a superstar.



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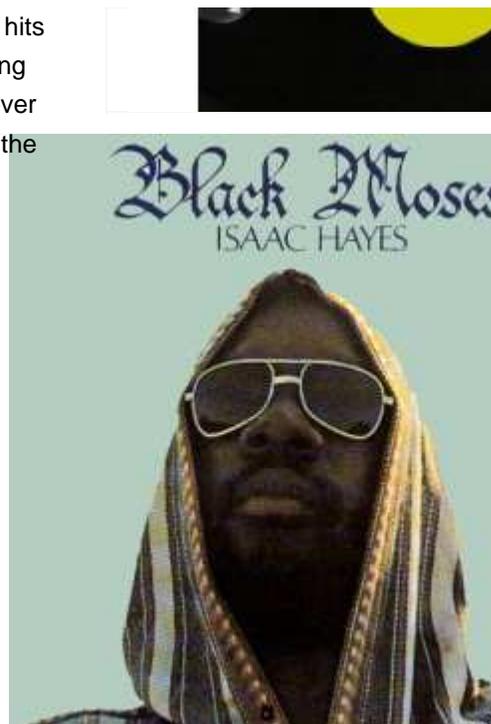
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Hayes, who died in August, specialized in taking hits from the Top 40 and making them his own, making great use of strings and horns. Thus he could cover "Never Can Say Goodbye" and succeed despite the popular Jackson Five version and tackle the Burt Bacharach-Hal David-penned "Close to You" and make you forget the Carpenters. Stax recreates the outrageous original two-LP set package, which folds out into a cross-shaped image of Hayes.

Also reissued Tuesday is *Juicy Fruit* (Disco Freak), an album recorded five years later that makes its debut on CD. This time around, Hayes wrote all the material himself, including the nine-minute-plus title track, which mixes trash-talking party talk with a horn-laced groove for three minutes before Hayes takes over the proceedings with a funky disco tune that epitomizes the era:

"Juicy fruit sure is cute/in your sexy jumpsuit." (Chef, please pass the cheese.) The album all a healthy dose of old-school soul, including the ballad "Let's Don't Ever Blow Our Thing."



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**COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA** *Live in Berlin & Stockholm 1968* (Impro-Jazz) (DVD)

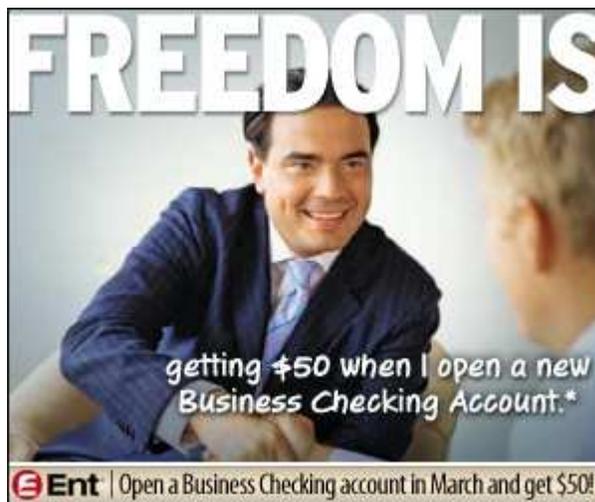
**COLEMAN HAWKINS** *In Europe: London, Paris and Brussels* (Oh!vation) (DVD)

Jazz and blues artists have long been lionized more in Europe than in their native United States; these two DVD concerts compiled from black and white performances taped for television are a testament to that. The two performances on Count Basie's *Live in Berlin & Stockholm 1968* features the jazz icon in an incarnation of his big band performing material written and/or arranged by Neal Hefti ("Wildcat"), Sam Nestico ("Lonely Street") and Basie ("One O'Clock Jump"). Among the band members performing under the piano player's guidance were guitarist Freddie Green, who had been playing with Basie since the '30s, and tenor saxophonist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis. The 18 selections on this disc of previously unreleased material clock in at about 70 minutes.

Coleman Hawkins' *In Europe* compiles more than two hours of performance footage recorded over the decade prior to his death in 1969. All of the material here features the tenor saxophonist in group settings. Accompanists from the various quartets and quintets presented include pianist Alvin Peterson, drummer Jo Jones and alto saxophonist Benny Carter. Selections include standards like "Body and Soul" and "Disorder at the Border."

The video and audio on both these DVDs has been cleaned up, but you have to keep in mind that the material was recorded 40 years ago. The video can be somewhat soft, and the audio warbles occasionally. But the strength of these historic performances makes them worth the price of admission.

Last updated on Feb 25, 2009 at 03:38 PM



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AS my point of view Old is gold these historical dvds will help to understand culture and love and old music is so good now a days music

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**By Anthony on 2009 03 21**

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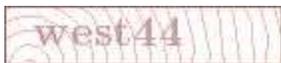
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