

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 #

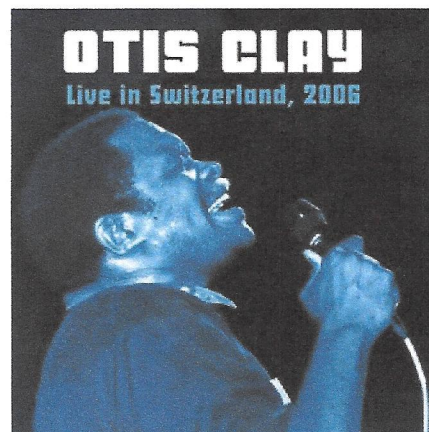
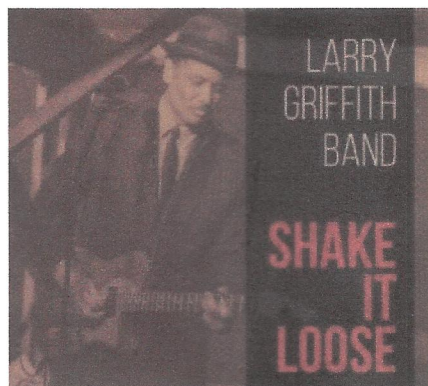
This self-produced CD by the Larry Griffith Band, out of Smyrna, Georgia, is more the length of an EP than a full album. The soul/R&B-flavored disc has clever lyrics that will probably go over fairly well with a live audience in the right mood for what he has to offer. The band's website says it's a 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

front man is exhibiting why his rich voice is always mentioned among the greatest in the history of soul blues and gospel. As the ensemble continues to generate musical momentum, the backing vocals from Diane Madison, Diunna Greenleaf and Theresa Davis shoot chills down the spine. Drums are manned by Clay's son, Mark, and the fantastic Willie Henderson blows his almost comically large baritone sax.

The up-tempo cover of *A Nickel and a Nail*, track five, has the crowd enthralled and band thoroughly warmed up, and the remainder of the night flows with the solid soul Clay created until the time of his passing early last year.

The cover photo of *Live In Switzerland, 2006* bears resemblance to Blind Pig's 2005 release of Clay's *Respect Yourself*, a live recording coincidentally from Lucerne, Switzerland. This may lead to consumer confusion between the two. The soul aficionado and/or Clay completist can rest assured, however, they are different shows—just from the same era and country. The personnel of the bands used by Clay for the two performances are vastly different, as well, but both consist of stellar Chicago talent from rhythm section, to horns, to backing vocals.

Tyrone Davis' popular tune of the time,

Sho' Wasn't Me, gets the Clay treatment here. This is special because it is one of the few times the number makes it into the official Clay discography.

His performance of Kris Kristofferson's *For the Good Times*, popularized early on by country crooner and Cherokee Cowboy Ray Price, shows Clay's ability to cross musical genres with ease and his skill at making almost any song his own.

There were so many great moments in the shows delivered by Otis Clay over the years. One of the highlights of almost all his concerts was his masterpiece of compassion, *If I Could Reach Out*. The deeply touching and timeless song was one of Clay's favorites to sing, and it was as at-home in his gospel performances as it was in his soul revues. In Bellinzona, Clay offers it with his usual verve, with Madison, Greenleaf and Davis providing piercing, church choir harmonies, while the horn section belts out accents. This serves as a true, mid-show moment of ethereal beauty.

When Hearts Grow Cold kicks off the second disc in the set and shows the strength and dynamics of Clay's voice after almost 50 years on stage.

He then points the band toward the finish line, but it will take them almost a half-hour to get there, as they vamp through a sterling medley containing their show staples *Love and Happiness*, *Soul Man*, *I Just Wanna Testify* and *Respect Yourself*.

—Steve Sharp

THE MAXX Funk Box

Cadabra – CDB-197603

The Maxx, a seven-piece show band whose career dates back to 1980s-era Atlanta, bill themselves as "A Band that Never Quit," and their 35-year-plus track record of grinding it out on stages at conventions, corporate gigs and other private events (according to their online bio) would seem to justify that claim. Their discography is difficult to assess; their bio doesn't mention any previous recordings, but their booking agency, EastCoast Entertainment, cites at least one earlier outing, a Christmas album titled *For the Holidays*, on its website.

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