



Omar and the Howlers

Bamboozled: Live in Germany

Ruf

There's nothing fancy about Omar Dykes. He and his Howlers have been serving up high-octane R&B and rock for more than two decades, and the formula is simple—three chords, preferably in E, bang on the guitar, and howl at the moon!

This DVD/CD set shows off that style and shows the band in peak form. "Shake for Me" is the prototypical Howler workout, with its boogie beat and Howlin' Wolf-influenced vocal. The menacing swamp rock of "Mississippi Hoodoo Man" is *nasty*, and makes you wonder how Omar's Strat holds up. He hits it, bends the neck, tugs on the body to create full-step bends... but it takes the proverbial licking and keeps right on ticking.

The show runs through familiar Omar "Wall of Pride," "Boogie Man," "Muddy Springs Road," "Bamboozled," and his flirtation with Top 40, "Hard Times in the Land of Plenty." The über-receptive German crowd appreciates the band's obvious effort.

There's a slight difference between the DVD and CD, tune-wise, but both whet the appetite; the DVD also contains a "travelogue" of the band in various stages of its history. Fans will appreciate that, while unfamiliar will find this a fine introduction. — **JH**



Michelle Mangione

Life Beneath The Sun
Self-distributed

You'd think being one of the best drummers in Southern California would be enough, but Michelle Mangione shows equal strength in her singing, songwriting, and playing guitar and keyboards. And with this, her first solo CD, you can add the titles of producer and label head! Having drummed behind guitarist Robben Ford and woodwind great Buddy Collette, Mangione was part of the nucleus of Orange County's award-winning band Sideswipe. These days she divides her time between acoustic



Mindy Smith, *Long Island Shores*

(Vanguard) Her airy soprano soars above the rootsy arrangements while she combines authenticity with contemporary lyricism. Is her music too calculatedly accessible and facile? Mozart was guilty of similar transgressions, and still managed to make lasting art. On *Long Island Shores*, Smith demonstrates that popular doesn't mean bad. — **SS**



Bill Lupkin & Friends, *Where I Come From*

(Blue Bella Records) Where Bill Lupkin comes from, blues harp rules. A stalwart of the Chicago scene, Lupkin has the tone and the chops, and proves here that he's paid his dues to play some hot blues. — **MD**



George Thorogood and the Destroyers, *The Hard Stuff*

(Eagle Records) A surprisingly diverse record from one of our current kings of boogie. Thorogood rips it up in every way. His records tend to be lopsided with the boogie, but not so here. George and the boys deliver the goods on a set that covers Dylan, Hooker, Howlin' Wolf, and adds some Thorogood originals to the library. — **JH**



Prince, *Ultimate and Diamonds and Pearls*

(Warner Bros.) Two CDs' worth of the artist formerly known as "The Artist Formerly Known as Prince" — with 17 cuts on the first disc, 11 extended mixes of more hits on the second, with no song repetitions. Ultimate stuff, but can he play guitar? Definitely — not to mention Dez Dickerson's

solo work on cuts like "Little Red Corvette." The *Diamonds* DVD includes song videos, interviews, and smoldering live performances. — **DF**



Steve Goodman, *Live at The Earl of Old Town*

(Red Pajamas Records) Though silenced early in his career, Goodman influenced a generation of singer/songwriters. On this disc we hear his polished chops with a dose of improvisation. High points include "Red Red Robin," "City of New Orleans," and the Hank William's classic "Lost Highway." Sound quality is far better than you'd expect from a concert recorded in 1978. — **SS**



Romane, *Gypsy Sound in Nashville*

(Mel Bay) French Gypsy jazzman Romane brought his driving take on Django to Nashville for this 1993 music film, now happily reissued on DVD. The set and pink costumes were a bit much, but the music's great stuff. — **MD**



Mel Brown and the Homewreckers, *Blues - A Beautiful Thing*

(Electro-Fi) Veteran guitarist/singer Brown tells what the blues is, then proceeds to show in song. Most everything here is on-the-money, fueled by Brown's guitar and vocals, including a cover of Stevie Wonder's "Master Blaster" that works surprisingly well. — **JH**



Greg Brown, *The Evening Call*

(Red House Records) Brown's bluesy songwriting, laidback vocal delivery, and minimalist arrangements conjure up images of late night recording sessions permeated

by a light haze of alcohol and cigarettes. Although the set spans a four-year period they have similar emotional textures with moments of regret and loss outnumbering those of ecstasy. Still, despite the generally downcast mood, musical power here captures the imagination. — **SS**



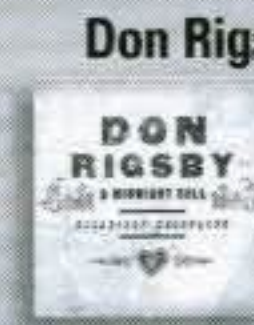
Spencer Dickinson, *Man Who Loves For Love*

(Yellow Dog Records) If you missed out on Muddy Waters and the rest the first time around, this album of "punk blues" is a reasonable remedial surgery. Luther and Cody Dickinson and Jon Spencer rock out the time Delta blues with a mastery and grasp at coolness. — **MD**



The Ides March, *Vehicle and Common Bond*

(Collection Choice) Old folks remember Ides for the hit "Vehicle." I loved "Aire of Good Feeling" and everything else from the first two records. Yes, some songs sound dated, but they hold up better than leader, guitarist Jim Peterik's later work with Survivor. Peterik shines on lead guitar on numerous cuts, including "Vehicle." — **JH**



Don Rigsby, *Call, Hillbilly Heartache*

(Rebel Records) Dedicated bluegrass musicians walk a fine line between new and old. Rigsby's latest release succeeds at walking this perilous path with perfection. His virtuoso mandolin playing, authoritative vocals, and deft song selection makes *Hillbilly Heartache* one of the most satisfying bluegrass albums to cross my desk in some time. — **SS**

Ronnie Baker Brooks, *Torch* (Watchdog Records)