

Love," "White Room" and the obligatory unplugged "Layla" reside. The studio segment offers a decent but often yawn-inducing glimpse of Clapton's more manicured ballads, shuffles and AOR rock tunes, but it's the blues disc that reminds us why this artist mattered so much in the first place. While the fire and rage of the Cream/Derek days has long since been replaced by reliable professionalism and predictable tameness, Clapton still has it in him to burn brightly when he remembers where he came from and channels that inspiration. *Jeff Tamarkin*

JJ Cale

Ebbets Field: The 1975 Broadcast

SMOKIN'/MVD



By Valentine's Day Eve in 1975, JJ Cale had perfected his signature blend of mellow country, folk, blues and jazz with his third full-length, the previous year's *Okie*. And as a live act, the guitar great transitioned that Tulsa, Okla., sound to the stage just as smoothly as this excellent performance at the tiny Denver, Colo., rock club Ebbets Field displays. Sadly, only nine cuts from the concert were broadcast over the air on local AOR station KCUV-FM 102.3. Yet while none of the *Okie* cuts performed that night survive, we are treated to great, loose-limbed renditions of Cale classics such as "Lies," "Call Me the Breeze" and "After Midnight," not to mention a killer cover of Muddy Waters' standard "Got My Mojo Workin'" for good measure. To split the difference, the Smokin' label has augmented this collection with a little treasure trove of early singles from a young Johnny Cale (as he was called back then). Spanning the years from 1958 to 1961, these rare sides showcase Cale's roots on the West Coast surf-and-streetcar instrumental rock scene. Listen hard enough and you can hear a semblance of that signature "Breeze" about to redefine the direction of American rock a decade later. *Ron Hart*

Willie Nile

The Bottom Line Archive BFD

The Brecker Brothers

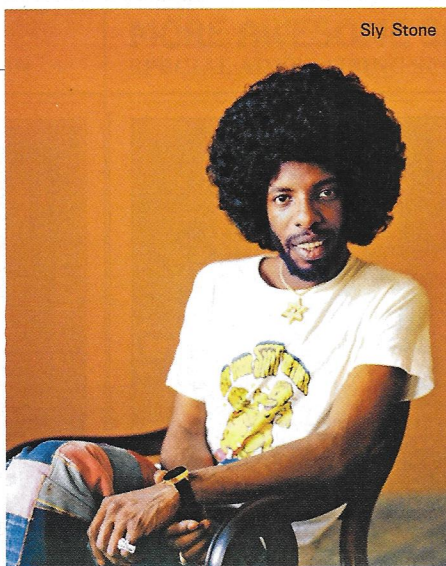
The Bottom Line Archive BFD

Kenny Rankin

The Bottom Line Archive BFD



For nearly 30 years—1974–2004—the Bottom Line, in Greenwich Village, was arguably the best intimate sit-down music venue in New York City. Although it only seated 400, the club, started by entrepreneurs Allan Pepper and Stanley Snadowsky, hosted thousands of top-shelf artists as well as rising singer-songwriters, reggae, jazz, country and soul bands and, of course, rock of every description. Truthfully, there's never been anything of the caliber in the city since. Fortunately, it turns out that tape machines were often rolling. Hundreds of Bottom Line performances were captured and now Pepper has begun to release



Sly Stone

them. (Snadowsky died in 2013.) Plans are to release a couple dozen shows over the next two years, but for now, these first three make for an excellent initial representative sampling. The Willie Nile package is the only double-disc set, one show from 1980 when this seriously underrated rocker was just getting started and the other from 20 years later. On both, Nile displays an innate gift for delivering nuanced material—some of it is blistering, streetwise rock while other songs, like his "On the Road to Calvary (For Jeff Buckley)" are more contained—with panache and charisma. For their set, **The Brecker Brothers**, at their peak in 1976 and featuring an all-aces band, exemplify the funk/fusion mix so popular at the time. Of course, both trumpeter **Randy Brecker** and saxophonist **Michael Brecker** take multiple opportunities to strut via solos, and three numbers, including the Tower of Power-esque "Sneakin' Up Behind You," also feature the soaring alto sax of **David Sanborn**. The **Kenny Rankin** disc has been out previously but it's worth revisiting. Here, the supremely underestimated vocalist brought a jazz singer's sense of phrasing to his own compositions as well as several Beatles classics and a "Why Do Fools Fall in Love?" like it'd never before been imagined. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Sly & the Family Stone

Live at the Fillmore East October 4th & 5th 1968

LEGACY



"Don't hate the black/ Don't hate the white/ If you get bit, just hate the bite" are the opening lyrics to **Sly & The Family Stone's** "Are You Ready," which was their show opener at the Fillmore East on Oct. 4, 1968—their first of two concerts that day. The line doesn't carry the simplistic prowess of "different strokes for different folks" or "You can make it if you try," but **Sylvester Stewart** (aka **Sly Stone**) was only months away from penning those everlasting truths. Sony Legacy's new four-disc box set, *Live at the Fillmore East October 4th & 5th 1968*, exhibits one of the great geniuses of modern music on the brink of his creative breakthrough—one that would not only change the landscape of pop music but would also bring hope to a rapidly evolving socio-political atmosphere.

The Family Stone entered Bill Graham's East Village auditorium in the fall of 1968

with the intention of cutting a live album, a plan thwarted by the success of their first No. 1 hit "Everyday People" several months later, which in turn would be followed by their first of several studio masterpieces, 1969's *Stand! For the Fillmore* shows, the band was fresh off the release of *Life*, their third studio album, a commercial disappointment but a solid album that continued the upbeat trend of the early Sly LPs—positive soul music infused with rock and funk beats, loud guitars, wailing organs, a blistering horn section and gospel vocals.

Up to this point, they only had one song enter the charts, "Dance to the Music," the title track off their second album, released five months prior to *Life*.

Live at the Fillmore East October 4th & 5th 1968 presents four shows from start to finish (an early show and a late show from each day), consisting primarily of songs from *Dance to the Music* and *Life*, as well as a couple of covers, such as "St. James Infirmary" and Otis Redding's "I Can't Turn You Loose." It is startling to think that this is only the second official live album in the Sly catalog since the energy on these tapes is undeniable, displaying one of the most formidable bands ever assembled. The beauty in this set, aside from the preserved *au naturel* moments of Sly's stage banter and the technical difficulties inherent in the early days of rock concerts, is hearing how the band extends or shortens certain songs from show to show. Whereas the "Are You Ready" opener clocks in at five minutes, the performance from the last show on October 5 is extended by three more, forecasting what's to come with the euphoric psychedelic-soul jam "I Want to Take You Higher." Ultimately, this box set is a must-own for any Sly aficionado and poses a strong argument that early Sly is truly underappreciated, almost as much as the latter part of his canon (e.g. *Back on the Right Track*). One can only hope that more live Sly gold resides in that amazing, and seemingly infinite, archive over at Sony Legacy.

Jesse Lauter

The Everly Brothers

The Complete U.S. & U.K. Singles As & Bs & EPs 1956-1962

ACROBAT



This three-disc set of everything **The Everly Brothers** recorded during their most fertile years is an essential collection for any rock-and-roll music lover. It begins with two songs from their first recording session, a Wednesday morning date in November 1955 at the Castle Studio in Nashville, Tenn.'s Tulane Hotel. The roots of their sound—the great country duos like Webb Pierce and Kitty Wells—are evident on their own composition, "Keep A-Lovin' Me," as well as the Jerry Organ/Don Everly piece "The Sun Keeps Shining." It didn't take long, however, for the Everlys to

translate their country lineage into the new sound of rock and roll. Tapping the songwriting genius of Felice and Boudleaux Bryant, they tracked "Bye Bye Love" and "Wake Up Little Susie" at their second and third sessions in 1957, then recorded "All I Have to Do Is Dream" and "Devoted To You" the following year. In '59 and '60, there was "(Till) I Kissed You," "Cathy's Clown" and "When Will I Be Loved," followed by "Crying in the Rain," "Ebony Eyes" and "That's Old Fashioned." By the time they recorded "Don't Ask Me to Be Friends" in LA in September 1962, they'd tracked a total of 75 songs, all of which are included here. The influence of The Everly Brothers is well-documented and their effect is felt by everyone from The Beatles to The Milk Carton Kids. This collection goes deep and wide into their catalog, and every student of popular music should own their own copy. *Michael Verity*

Gov't Mule

Dub Side of the Mule Stoned Side of the Mule: Vol. 2 Sco-Mule EVIL TEEN



Gov't Mule's archival live reissue series continues in 2015, showcasing the jam legends in all their varied moods. The second installment of *Stoned Side of the Mule*, culled from a Halloween 2009 show in Philadelphia, focuses on Rolling Stones covers—with mostly imaginative results. The clear highlight is an expansive, eight-minute version of "Can't You Hear Me Knocking,"

which climaxes in a funky jam and **Warren Haynes'** elastic guitar solo. While the shoddy fidelity—namely the distant bass and keys—tarnishes the replay value, the band's palpable Stones zest makes this essential listening for diehards.

Sco-Mule captures a pair of 1999 Georgia gigs with the original Mule lineup—Haynes, late bassist **Allen Woody**, drummer **Matt Abts**—joined by jazz guitar whiz **John Scofield** and keyboardist **Dr. Dan Matrazzo**. While the long-winded arrangements may even test the patience of seasoned jam fans, there are plenty of tasteful instrumental fireworks to savor—from Matrazzo's seductive Latin-jazz solo on Wayne Shorter's "Tom Thumb" to Scofield and Haynes' white-lightning interplay on the title-track.

But the most exploratory title in Mule's reissue series is *Dub Side of the Mule*, a three-hour set recorded on New Year's Eve 2006 at New York City's Beacon Theatre. The deluxe edition's first disc boasts an array of explosive covers, including a Southern-rock take on The Beatles' psychedelic masterpiece "She Said She Said," while disc three features guest vocals from Haynes' Allman Brothers pal **Gregg Allman** and Blues Traveler's **John Popper**. But the centerpiece is the groove-heavy second disc, which features Toots and the Maytals frontman **Toots Hibbert** adding his reggae yelp to epic versions of Al Green's "I'm A Ram" and Radiohead's "Let Down." Dub-licious. *Ryan Reed*