

Various Artists—Carolina Funk

(Jazzman/Now-Again Records)

Various Artists—**Soul Messages from Dimona**

(The Numero Group)

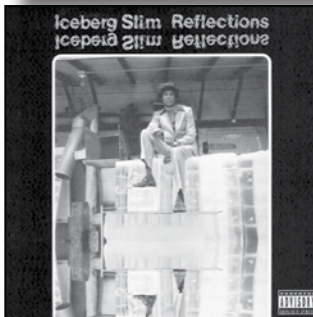
Iceberg Slim—Reflections

(Uproar Entertainment)

If you happen to be one of the tasteful folks who jumped on *Florida Funk* after it was reviewed in the November/December 2007 installment of Roll Back, you best get yo' booty in line for the follow-up, *Carolina Funk*. The party may have moved a little farther up the coast, to South and North Carolina this time, but little else has changed: rare and raw, thrift store-dug funk gems that benefit from the low-rent production of the tiny local labels that released them between 1968 and 1977; yards and yards of psychedelic wah-wah guitar; grunts that pass as vocals; and the occasional blast of P-Funk-esque horns. Titles, artists? Try "Funky Soul Brother" by the Soul Drifters, "Funky Mind" by Donnie Brown, "Funky Party Time" by the J.D.'s. Don't those spell it out? So whatcha waitin' for?

The Numero Group is another fine soul/funk reissue label, and for rare groove collectors its *Soul Messages from Dimona* should definitely qualify as a left-field affair. Recorded in the late '70s by bands comprised of members of a black Hebrew sect that relocated from Chicago's South Side to Israel, the 16 cuts here extol the virtues of their beliefs among torrid tempos and melodies swiped from hits by the Jackson 5 and the like. The accompanying booklet tells the story of the cult and is packed with photos of the mysterious robed and turbaned musicians that made up the Soul Messengers, Sons of the Kingdom, and other bands, adding generously to the overall surrealism. If only all faiths were this funky.

Also hailing from Chicago, Iceberg Slim was anything but



virtuous in the years leading up to his classic *Reflections*. An ex-convict, Slim authored the best-selling autobiography *Pimp* and the similarly sobering novels *Trick Baby*, *Airtight Willie & Me*, *Mama Black Widow*, and *Long White Con*, and his sordid tales of urban reality are the stuff of street legend. Originally released in 1976, *Reflections* was reissued once before, in the '90s on Henry Rollins and Rick Rubin's Infinite Zero label, but has been woefully scarce until now. In a faux-erudite accent over ultra-sleazy blues-funk backings, Slim iambically orates his uproarious, off-color tales of ghetto grit in rhyming couplets. It's no wonder that subsequent artists Ice-T and Ice Cube cite the 'Berg as the inspiration for their very names and tag him as a proto-rap godfather. Down-and-dirty inner-city blues, the kind that really do make you wanna holler. —Peter Aaron

Carolina Funk: www.stonethrow.com.

Soul Messages from Dimona: www.numergroup.com.

Iceberg Slim: uproarcd@aol.com.

Gist—Conversations, Expectations

(Red Stapler Records) College rock is alive and well and living in the hearts and souls of Washington DC-based Gist, a power-pop trio so unashamedly devoted to the glory of chunky riffs and anthemic choruses it's a shock to learn they're not fronted by Bob Mould.

Gist's latest, *Conversations, Expectations*, harkens back to a bygone era when bands like the Hold Steady were still sucking at the teat of earnest, stampeding rock and roll heard through static from the nearest university campus.

Album opener "Hold On" is a stormer, riding the riffs and sing-a-long chorus guaranteed to please. Eight of the 10 songs on *Conversations, Expectations* are in this brains-meet-brawn vein, though a band's primary sound is often less telling than what they choose to do to cleanse the palate.

In this case, it's important to take notice of "Post-It Notes" and "Survival," the two songs where the tempo slows enough for the listener to catch their breath. The former is carried by jungle drums and airy guitars, and features the shaky premise that the next religious treatise will be written on tiny bits of disposable paper, while the latter is simply gorgeous, ethereal and lovely with a distant lead vocal in the tradition of Mark Linkous.

Chris Mahoney Project—Rebirth

(True2urSelf Music) Even without reading the bio on his website, it's clear Chris Mahoney is something of a guitar virtuoso. His debut solo album - recorded in 2004 - is all-instrumental, with the guitar as the centerpiece of a host of texturally provocative songs.

What makes *Rebirth* stand out is its use of electronic elements one might not ordinarily associate with guitar-driven music. The combination is an enticing one, and if the idea of instrumental guitar music appeals to you, *Rebirth* is worth a listen.

Chris Mahoney has apparently since recorded an album called *Appearance*, though his MySpace blog lists "marketing" issues with his label as the reason for its...well...lack of appearance.

www.chrismahoney.com

www.myspace.com/gist