

Hit List

Jerry Shirley held down the beat for some of the biggest names in the '60s and '70s, and has the stories to prove it. Shirley got his start with guitarist/vocalist/front man Steve Marriott in 1965 and stayed with him through a succession of bands culminating with Humble Pie. Those early bands were some of the most influential in England through the period, spinning off Rod Stewart and Ronnie Wood from Small Faces, and Peter Frampton from Humble Pie. Shirley also did session work at the time, including contributions to solo albums by Pink Floyd alumnus and inspiration Syd Barrett, as well as George Harrison, B.B. King, and John Entwistle. Shirley's best memories involve large paychecks from record deals, memorable guitar players, and the routine of touring and recording to which it seems all bands at the time were subjected. And while there was partying, for Shirley, it involved only some booze and pot, so his memories are clearer than others. Most of those

revolve around the development of Humble Pie into the chart-topping juggernaut it became. Featuring, as Shirley puts it, "two Jimmy Pages" in the form of Marriott and Frampton, the band epitomizes early-'70s rock concert performance in their '71 double-live *Rockin' the Fillmore*. Humble Pie was not the opening act the night of the recording, but such was their strength.

Also compelling is the fact that when Humble Pie was at its peak, Shirley was only about 20 years old – and was close to becoming a millionaire. The fact he kept his head and has been able to turn out such a readable memoir is no mean feat. Later, he knew when to slow down and focus on other aspects of life, so this book's focus on the period from 1965 to '75 makes it more interesting and provides an ending to the narrative. It's an excellent document of the period, highly readable, and filled with entertaining stories about other great musicians. – **ECS**

DVDs



Pat Martino Unstrung

Sixteen Films

A departure in that it's as much about Pat Martino's medical history as it is about his music, this film documents his 1980 brain aneurysm and the years it took him to re-learn the guitar. You even see Martino getting an MRI and X-rays of the damaged section, lending an idea of how music and medicine are intertwined. There are, however, ample clips of Martino playing guitar and full concert clips in the bonus section.

Also interesting are interviews with Carlos Santana and surprise fan Pete

Townshend, as well as actor Joe Pesci, who knew Martino when they were nightclub musicians 50 years ago. While much of the discussion alludes to his guru-like persona, in one candid moment, producer Joe Fields says he doesn't buy the mystique – he suggests Martino is quite conscious of this perception from his fans and milks it for all its worth; scenes like this take *Unstrung* to a new level.

There's no denying Martino went through hell in the '80s. Fortunately, his skills came back, post-surgery, and, oddly, much faster than his memories, some of which never returned. Watching *Unstrung*, it's apparent his guitar work remains intact and inspirational.

Perhaps the coolest scene is watching him re-string a Gibson archtop while sitting on the couch of his South Philly home. It's moving because, despite his obvious musical genius, Martino strings his guitar just like you, me, and every other player. Given the title of the

extra! EXTRA!



BEVERLY MCCLELLAN, *Fear Nothing* (Oar Fin Distribution)

Great originals, a rich and soulful voice, and help from musicians like guitarist/co-producer Keb' Mo', bassist Hutch Hutchinson, and drummer Tony Braunagal make this a perfect introduction to the uninitiated. Billy Vazquez and Josh Sklair handle most guitar work with flair, always highlighting the song and the singer, not the player. – **JH**



SUGAR RAY AND THE BLUETONES, *Evening* (Severn Records)

This pairing of harp man Sugar Ray Norcia and guitarist "Monster" Mike Welch adds up to an album of hard-driving Chicago and West Coast blues. Welch's fret work ranges from lowdown and gritty to smooth and stylish. On the finale, "XO," the band delivers a morning-after slow jam that would have Pee Wee Crayton moaning with joy. – **MD**



STU AND THE GURUS, *New Car Smell* (Self-distributed)

Foggy-voiced harp man/vocalist delivers good country-flecked blues. But this one's a showcase for Philly guitarist Millard Brown, who produced, co-wrote the title cut, and plays acoustic and electric guitars throughout. Peter Hayes' Dobro makes "Ice Cream And Cake" a big treat, too. – **RA**

HOUSTON PERSON, *So Nice* (HighNote) For 45 years,



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jazz saxophonist Person has been recording albums that show his equal ease with romantic ballads and soulful blues. His impressive ensemble here includes Howard Alden, who reveals his inner T-Bone on Shirley Scott's "Blues Everywhere," then feeds Person's tenor and the other soloists with perfect chords, lines, and little touches on Duke Ellington's beautiful "All Too Soon." – **DF**



FREEDOM HAWK, *Holding On* (Self-distributed)

This trio's material owes a bit to '70s stalwarts like Black Sabbath and Uriah Heep, but with fresh arrangements and tight song structures in fairly complex patterns. Crisp guitar leads and driving percussion propel the proceedings, and the sound is full even with few guitar overdubs. Standouts include "Edge of Destiny" and "Standing in Line" which both offer a hummable chorus. – **ECS**



RECKLESS KELLY, *Good Luck & True Love* (Self-distributed)

With guitar work by Willy Braun and David Abeyta, Reckless Kelly unleashes a collection

of solid country rock and roots Americana. The dueling guitars are the perfect accents for each other, crafting a full sound. And the inspired CD packaging with its old-time carnival sideshow chic and wheel-of-fortune spinner is the coolest thing going. – **MD**



JAMES ARMSTRONG, *Blues At The Border* (Catfood Records)

The blues veteran hasn't had a new release in 11 years, but his return is a strong one, featuring sophisticated funk in the cautionary "Everything Good To Ya," rock-tinged blues with "Good Man Bad Thing," and some light swing with "Brand New Man." Every cut features his stinging leads, reminiscent in many ways of Robert Cray, and soulful vocals that make it easy to feel the frustrations the title cut highlights. – **JH**



MARK MOSLEY, *TLC* (Self-distributed)

D.C.-based Mosley has backed such jazz luminaries as Gary Bartz, Lou Donaldson, Lonnie Smith, and Keter Betts. His sophomore release ranges from funk to Latin to smooth jazz, proving that the latter can be more than background music. George Benson is an obvious influence, although

he tips his hat to Albert and B.B. King on "The Real Deal," a swinging 12-bar blues. – **DF**



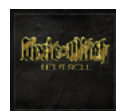
HANS THEESSINK, *Jedermann Remixed: The Soundtrack*

(Self-distributed) To accent a modern film of a 15th-century morality play, Theessink stepped into the past, playing slide guitar, banjo, mandolin, mandocello, mandoguitar, and other arcane instruments. Blending Delta blues with originals, Rolling Stones and Tom Waits covers, his deep vocals and precise fret work are the perfect movie accompaniment. – **MD**



SULTANS OF STRING, *Move* (Factor)

Exotic music done by four stringed instrument players and a percussionist, along with a handful of friends, this is a broad palette; Gypsy jazz dominates "Andalucia" and a Celtic feel sneaks into "Emerald Swing." Bonus points for turning Neil Young's "Heart of Gold" into a rumba. – **JH**



DIXIE WITCH, *Let It Roll* (Small Stone Records)

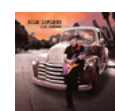
With a new guitarist, this venerable Texas band continues its trade-

mark with its foot-stomping boogie punch. These tracks would be at home on any modern-rock radio station. Top cuts are "Anthem" and "Automatic Lady." – **ECS**



THE FALLEN STARS, *Heart Like Mine* (Self-distributed)

Led by Bobbo Byrnes' sizzling guitar, the Fallen Stars prove themselves with their stellar country roots rock. With a tight rhythm section backing him, Byrnes unreels hot licks with a thick tone, laying down an album of originals that are catchy and cool. – **MD**



NILS LOFGREN, *Old School* (Vision Music Inc.)

Always a fine songwriter and player, Lofgren's talents in those areas are sometimes overshadowed by his longtime sideman status. *Old School* features urgent pop-rock, reflective acoustic ballads, and stomping 21st Century blues, all powered by his fret work, whether rough and ready slide or soaring, melodic soloing. – **JH**



ARMEN HEITZ TRIO, *Blue In Green* (Acoustic Music)

German Gypsy Heitz is back with another album that blends the styles of Django Reinhardt with the understated finesse of Wes Montgomery. On Miles Davis' "Blue in Green," his electric guitar work is smooth and sensuous while his original "Didi Valse" is a finger torturing acoustic workout, played with impressive precision. – **MD**