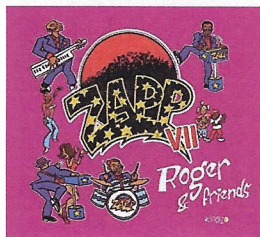


with strings, and over the tense atmosphere of Behind The Shade. Haden's presence is felt over Pink Hearts Across The Sky's upbeat alt.country backdrop of clean electric and acoustic guitars, and across Died A Little Today's sparse, hazy, reverb-drenched instrumentation.

Williamson's bold playing and memorable songwriting unify the proceedings, sounding energised by the clear chemistry of his potent new band. *Rich Davenport*



Zapp

Zapp VII: Roger & Friends

★★★★

Leopard N 78054 (CD/LP)

Much-sampled Ohio funkateers back in the groove

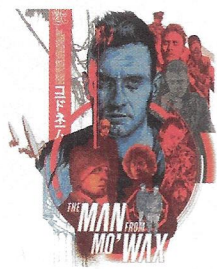
With their penchant for numerical album titles, Zapp never displayed much in the way of imagination when it came to naming their LPs, but live, and in the studio, they showed boundless creativity, serving up lashings of squelchy synth-heavy funk garnished with infectious talkbox vocal lines.

A long queue of West Coast hip-hoppers sampled their music – with Tupac Shakur at the head of it – but the tragic death of mainman Roger Troutman in 1999 from a gunshot wound seemed to signal the demise of the band. Without him, they released one further album two years later, but then, minus their talisman, they fell off the radar.

Now, though, the zany Dayton aggregate are back with younger members of the Troutman family swelling its ranks. The opener, Rock Ya Body, which cannibalises snippets of old Zapp tunes over an addictive dancefloor groove, rolls back the years.

Thanks to technology, Roger Troutman is brought back to life from old demos on several cuts, with Reds & Dollars featuring a cameo from Snoopy Dogg. A mark of the esteem in which they're held, other guest contributors come in the shape of Bootsie Collins, rapper Kurupt, and retro-electro soul duo, Tuxedo, whose presence serves to ramp up the album's celebratory party vibe. *Charles Waring*

Various Artists★



The Man From Mo' Wax

★★★★

Island/UMC 6727904 (CD/2LP)

Top introduction to the world of James Lavelle

In the 90s, James Lavelle's Mo' Wax label was inescapable. Absolutely on trend, with its trip-hop laden catalogue and groovy graffiti artwork, Mo' Wax wasn't incapable of missteps (like the overhyped *Headz* project), but was packed with genuine classics. A handful of those are back in the limelight via this soundtrack to the Lavelle documentary currently doing the rounds.

The peaks include Dr Octagon's psychedelic hip-hop classic Blue Flowers and several from the label's major success story, DJ Shadow. There are also some of Lavelle's influences, including some obscure early Bristol pieces, plus several of the label's earliest, scene-setting releases, and more top-flight hip-hop from Blackalicious and DJ Krush.

In a way, Lavelle's later attempts to blend in rock (with UNKLE and Queens Of The Stone Age) are the boldest of all. The heavily pushed UNKLE project didn't seem to hit the mark at the time, but now looks brave as well as flawed, bringing an element of deconstruction and dislocation into the hackneyed rock mix, with assistance from Ian Brown and Thom Yorke. Summing up Mo' Wax with one release is no easy task, but this is far from a bad go at it. *Phil Smith*

Confessin' The Blues

★★★★★

Universal/BMG BMG CAT 155 (2CD/2X2LP/5X10")

Rolling Stones-compiled blues trope

Confessin' The Blues features 42 tracks of superb mid-20th Century US blues and R&B, including all 12 songs covered by them on 2016's *Blue & Lonesome*. While the music is unimpeachable, some of the choices are over-familiar – is there any blues or Stones fan who doesn't already own Howlin' Wolf's Red Rooster,

Jimmy Reed's Bright Lights, Big City and Muddy Waters' Mannish Boy and Rollin' Stone? They're included, of course, as they played an integral role in the Stones' own history. There are surprises, though: the 1941 title track by Jay McShann and Walter Brown, as covered by the group on their 1964 *Five By Five* EP; Boy Blue's 1960 version of Boogie Children, recorded in the field by Alan Lomax; harmonica ace Billy Boy Arnold's 1956 flip Don't Stay Out All Night, the latter played by the Stones at their first ever gig at The Marquee on 12 July 1962 – all precious nuggets. Available as a 2CD set, two double-vinyl LP sets and lavish five 10" vinyl bookpack (mimicking original 78RPM releases), with notes by Colin Larkin and cover art by Ronnie Wood. *Jon Harrington*



Buried Country – An Anthology Of Aboriginal Music

★★★★★

Flippin Yeah/Mississippi FYR 017/MRP 109 (LP)

Revealing the heart and soul of Aboriginal culture

Originally released in 2000, and then rebooted with an alternative tracklisting in 2015, *Buried Country* – a companion album to the book by Clinton Walker of the same name – traced the heritage and story of Australian aboriginal country music with a fastidious and reverent ear for the culture that it comes from.

Eleven songs long, this new vinyl iteration is much shorter than those previous releases, but is no less important, containing as it does some incredibly rare tracks and also extensive sleeve notes and interviews with the artists involved, individually tracked down by Australian folk musician Darren Hanlon.

The result is an album which offers insights into the music's various permutations. There's the joyful ditty, Dougie Young's They Call It Cut A Rug, the sorrow-filled, a cappella folk of Maisie Kelly's My Home In The Valley, and the rumbling, ragged emotions of Black Allan Barker's Take Me Back. A wonderful primer for a continent of overlooked music and culture. *Mischa Pearlman*

Space Is The Plaice

★★★★★

Pussyfoot PUSSY 052 (2CD/3LP)

Howie B good on 3LP OLP

There be downtempo in the air: with Thievery Corporation releasing some of their best work of late and Kruder and Dorfmeister reuniting, it's little wonder that Howie B has reactivated his Pussyfoot Records to mastermind this fantastically ambitious 35-track triple album – an aquatic space opera, no less.

Space Is The Plaice is a fabulous couple of hours that circumnavigates the globe, with artists from the UK, Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, USA and Europe. There is much to enjoy: a lovely cameo from Luke Haines (Deep Space Junk); the blunted beats of Sunny Levine's Moon Hung. Timothy Fife and Deadly Avenger's Anemone Mine is one of the best Tangerine Dream homages yet. Blood Wine Or Honey's Brilliant Pebbles provides the most overt musical reference to the Sun Ra album that the set's title parodies. Jackknife Lee's Overview, with its Stephen Hawkins-esque computer voice, is a standout, and reminds you how euphoric the best of Lee's works can be. Though lengthy, *Space Is The Plaice* retains your attention. Godley & Creme's intention for their ill-fated 1977 album *Consequences* was to be an "ear movie"; in many respects, *Space Is The Plaice* achieves just that. *Daryl Easlea*

Down Home Blues: New York, Cincinnati & The North East States

★★★★★

Wienerworld (4CD) WNRCD 510

Blues comp fixes up a feast from the Northeast

Well, hot dog! Wienerworld is back with another round-up of post-war blues, this time focusing on artists from New York, Cincinnati and the North Eastern States. Peering under the bluesy awning that stretches across all tracks, the third volume in this series is stylistically varied, inclusions ranging from barnstorming full-band R&B numbers like 'Guitar Crusher's I Got To Know to the stripped-back punchy pep of Guitar Nubbit. Nubbit's six tracks are imbued with a gritty guitar tone and rich, characterful vocals. Georgia Chain Gang is pithy, with an infectious riff that recalls Robert Petway's Catfish Blues, over which Nubbit declares, "On Saturday night I was arrested/On Monday I will fry". His stuttered vocal phrasing of "Ch-ch-ch-chain gang" over buoyant, brooding guitar is simple – but hooks you like an

unsuspecting minnow.

There's likely to have been a fair few night owls among the contributors to this set, but the delightfully named Skoodle-Dum-Doo is the only one to actually sound like a real owl. Backed by Sheffield (that's his harmonica player, not the entire Yorkshire city), Skoodle's whoopin' and hollerin' has a distinct woodland vibe, and his tracks are full of zeal. Well known bluesmen like Sonny Terry also feature, but it's the more obscure artists like Square Walton, with the likes of Pepper Head Woman, that provide the highlights. With 110 tracks in all – some previously unissued – this is another solid entry in a series that asserts that home is wherever you lay your blues. *Alun Hamnett*

Boppin' By The Bayou: Flip, Flop & Fly

★★★★

Ace CDCHD 1529 (CD)

More Cajun seasoning on the blues

The 20th CD in the *By The Bayou* series takes its subtitle from Gene Terry's fantastic version, which closes this compilation. It's one of many fine sides here, gathered mainly from the studios of JD Miller and Eddie Shuler. We're in Louisiana and south-east Texas and it's a good-time experience, though with the occasional quality dip. There's plenty of unreleased material, including Frankie Lowery & The Golden Rockets' Goin' To Louisiana, a rocking marvel where Frankie avers that he's not heading North any more but going back to where rock'n'roll was born. Yeah! Other highpoints include Jimmy Newman's superbly constructed H-Brown Shuffle from 1951, which sounds way ahead of its time. Similarly impressive is Al Ferrier's tough and disciplined Blues Stop Knocking, in a previously unreleased version. And there's plenty of gas left in the tank for gems like Ken Cameron's The Snake.

Ragged sound quality and erratic recording blunt the impact of some songs, though in the case of The Tune Tones' gloriously berserk attack on Tutti Frutti, you can excuse it. Collectors will relish the mystery of the unidentified singer on the quirky, cantankerous I'm A Man but the best musical moment is Lenny Capello & The Dots' Cotton Candy. Here, the backing band includes Huey 'Piano' Smith and Charles 'Hungry' Williams, the latter giving a drumming master-class. Great period photos and informative sleeve-notes from compiler Ian Saddler top it all off. *Steve Burniston*