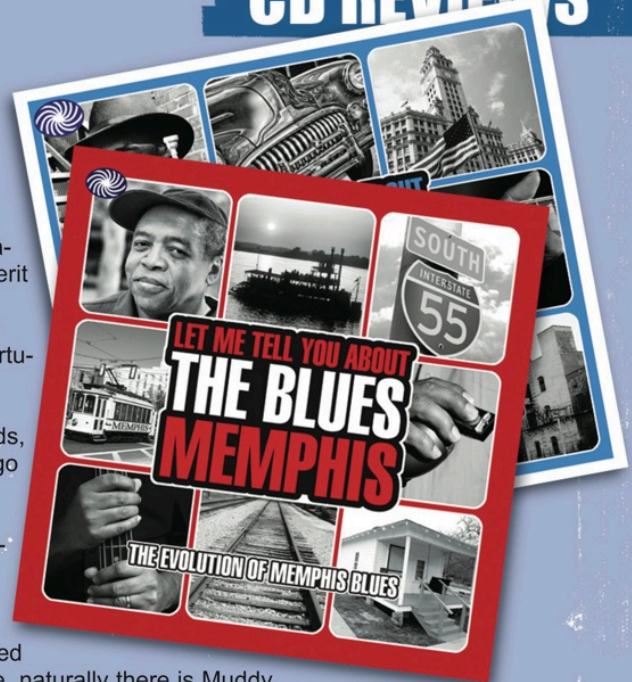


VARIOUS Let Me Tell You About The Blues Chicago Let Me Tell You About The Blues Memphis

Fantastic Voyage

Looking at the tracks listed on these two boxes, you can already hear people complaining: "Not another Blues compilation?!" True, they are compilations, but they both have the merit to offer old recordings which have been particularly well restored and cleaned. These two 3CD box sets will give anybody who wants to find out about the original Blues the opportunity to own the essential pre-war pieces, as well as lesser known tracks. The other interesting thing about these two boxes is the link they make between the two breeding grounds, which gave roots to the Blues and allowed it to grow - Chicago and Memphis, two metropolises from which Bluesmen have drawn inspiration to write their songs; to express their anger, dreams, pains and loves. On the Memphis side, you'll discover, amongst the seventy-five tracks recorded, songs written by the likes of B.B. King, of course, but also Howlin' Wolf, Walter Horton, James Cotton and Ike Turner. There are also a few nice surprises, such as Furry Lewis, and someone called Elvis Presley performing 'Mystery Train'. On the Chicago side, naturally there is Muddy Waters, but also Otis Rush, Buddy Guy and Tampa Red, plus some lesser known names, such as Peetie Wheatstraw or Meade Lux Lewis. Throughout these two box sets, you follow the path the Blues took in these two cities for more than thirty years through its evolution. These two box sets have a historical value, vital to anybody who does not yet have a compilation about the history of Blues made in the first half of the twentieth century.

Frankie Pfeiffer/Nat Harrap



instrumental originals. The tracks are well performed, and come over as very relaxed in manner, almost as though the two are there to satisfy themselves before any paying audience. Lamb sounds on top form throughout, blowing mournful and sad one minute, then breezy and joyous the next. Dickinson, on the other hand, is particularly unspectacular on the guitar, whilst his singing is okay if a little flat at times. 'Lost Lover Blues' is probably the best cut, showcasing Lamb's prodigious talents, and fans of the harpist will want to snap this up, as he's all over this recording.

Andrew Baldwin

JOHNNY HAWTHORN Death & Taxes

Abes

This is multi-instrumentalist Johnny's second album, and whilst the opener is catchy alternative rock - is that a touch of The Boomtown Rats? - the title track recalls the early Rolling



Stones, with its punky, Bluesy energy and wailing harp in the background - though the guitar break is more inventive than anything The Stones ever came up with! Originally from Philadelphia, but now based in Los Angeles, Johnny tours with Toad The Wet Sprocket, whose Todd Nichols helps out with production and engineering.

This short CD - just thirty minutes - is a showcase for his influences and abilities. As a guitar player, he can be awesome, whether in out-and-out country mode (as on 'Loser's Game', with his wistful lap steel playing) or playing full-throttle Blues-

rock - try his cover of Blind Willie Johnson's 'In My Time Of Dying', which owes more than a little to Led Zeppelin. There's some smooth jazz followed by the Blues of 'Cold Hearted Woman' (big rocking and electric) and 'Traveling Roadside Blues' (acoustic and slide guitar), before proceedings close with an evocative mood piece. A lovely, varied set.

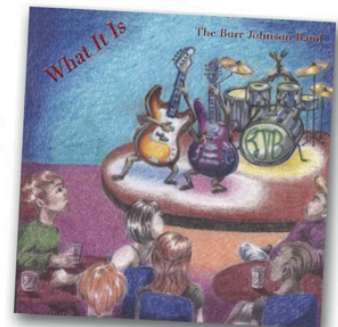
Norman Darwen

THE BURR JOHNSON BAND What It Is

burrjohnson.com

As the quotes on his website testify, guitar people love Burr Johnson. "Intelligent and inspired" according to the late, lamented Les Paul, and "....one bada**ed

Motherf**ker" according to B.B. King - it would be foolhardy to disagree with either. Like Johnson, sidemen Thierry Alpino (drums) and Al Payson (bass) are maestros in their chosen fields, yet in the opposite way that Wimbledon once won the FA Cup by performing in



excess of the sum of the parts, three virtuosos have somehow conspired to produce a slightly dull record. That's dull, not bad - anyone with a yearning for Steely Dan, Average White Band and Robert Cray will be in scrubbed-down guitar sound heaven. Such is the dexterity of Johnson's fretboard gymnastics and the sheer dominance of the chief weapon that you go looking for the rhythm section all the more and aren't disappointed - there are lovely rolling bass lines and delicious drum accents aplenty. This is a fulsome

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