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Ray Bonneville *Goin' By Feel* Red House/Festival

Juno winning blues poet **Ray Bonneville** still resides in Montreal, although how often he's there is hard to tell. He credits a five-year stay in New

Orleans with influencing the songs on this album, but there have also been extended stays in Arkansas, Colorado, Montreal and Paris, France. Each place has influenced him. His style is that of a one-man band – just an electric guitar, rack harmonica and that wonderful voice. It's very difficult to hold a large audience this way but, by all accounts, he was able to do just that at South By Southwest this year and at the North American Folk Alliance Conference. For the CD, he has some excellent support to fill out the sound. **Gurf Morlix**, who has worked with **Lucinda Williams**, and **Rob Heaney**, who has worked with the **Cirque du Soleil** and **Kate & Anna McGarrigle** co-produced with Bonneville and the result is a gem. His secret is in the groove, assisted wonderfully by master drummer **Geoff Arsenault** on most of the songs, among others. Fellow Red House recording artist **Eliza Gilkyson** provides some of the most effective harmony vocals I've heard. "I Am The Big Easy" is the centerpiece of the disc. Each line begins with "I am..." followed by a well-known image or symbol of New Orleans, set to an infectious groove – a poetic and musical masterpiece. "Crow John", "What Katy Did" and "So Long Blues" are similar gems of lyrics set to music with an exquisite sense of rhythm. Now exclusively signed to Red House Records, his first album in four years is perhaps his best yet – a foot-stomping collection of grooves that'll have you putting it back in your player again and again. There's more info at www.raybonneville.com.



Niagara Rhythm Section *Live at The Anchorage 1.0* Shed

Steve Goldberger is on bass and vocals, **Dave Norris** on drums and **Penner MacKay** on percussion constituting the regular line-up, with **Steve Grisbrook** on guitar and **Herb Nelson** on keys frequent guests. They have been holding forth on Saturday nights at the Anchorage Bar in Niagara-On-The-Lake for several years now, where Goldberger lives and runs his recording studio. They usually invite a guest along for the evening and this CD highlights these guests with the band. It opens, though, with Goldberger on vocals, on a crowd-pleasing version of "Early In The Morning" before **Fathead's John Mays** takes on the **James Cotton** favourite "Georgia Swing". This track also elicits a small complaint in that in an effort to capture the ambience of the live performance, some of the between song chatter is kept but the chatter deals almost exclusively with members of the audience, leaving the listener at home mystified. Perhaps some judicious editing will improve *Version 2.0*. Liquid refreshments notwithstanding, **Johnny Max** does a fine version of "Polk Salad Annie". Grisbrook tackles the **Leiber & Stoller** number "Youngblood" and **Chuck Jackson Wolf's** "Who's Been Talkin'". **Denis Keldie** takes the vocal on "No More Doggin'" with **Neil Chapman** on guitar. **Tony Springer** does a twelve minute "Stir It Up", the **Bob Marley** song and **Lance Anderson** nails "Green Onions" on his B3 before **Bruce Longman** closes the CD with the ballad "Talk To Me". It may not be possible to maintain the cozy, live-in-a-small-club feel that this band into a CD that one listens to in a far different setting. But a second attempt at a song later in the evening might produce a more succinct end result. *Version 2.0* could perhaps also include some women. I don't want to take too much away from this recording, though, because the playing is of a very high standard and I look forward to including The Anchorage in my next visit to Niagara-On-The-Lake. Go to www.stevegoldberger.com.

Geoff Jardine *Once Was A Big Man* RME



That last name may be familiar in that A.J. Jardine was **Dutch Mason's**



drummer for 23 years. Geoff is A.J.'s older brother and he also plays drums. He's been a long time member of the Halifax scene, teaching and playing in a wide variety of styles. As you'll hear, though, he knows all about the blues. There are eight originals and four covers here and it is definitely worthy of its nomination for the East Coast Music Association's Blues Album of The Year. There are also some sidemen here that have not appeared on my radar for a while. It's good to see them still active. After a rousing opener, "Boogie Through The Years", Jardine gets personal, with "It's About Time" dealing with alcohol abuse, songs about loneliness and life with the wrong women. All the songs are delivered with great feeling and intensity in a somewhat limited voice. But he knows his limitations and works well within them. The band smokes, with a full sound of two or more guitars, harp, keyboards, bass & drums. **Bruce Timmins** is the primary guitarist, **Phil Potvin** on harp, **Gerry Carruthers** on keys & **Paul McNeill** on bass. **Roger Howse** on guitar and **David MacIssac** on guitar & fiddle are the guests, with MacIssac's fiddle especially adding a new dimension to a blues band. Highlights are "(I) Gotta Past, People", "Gutter Song", **John Mayall's** "Ready To Ride" and the title song. His web site is www.geoffjardine.ca and I wish him well at the ECMAs on Feb. 7-10.

Bharath and His Rhythm Four *Friday Night Fatty Self*

Montreal's **Bharath Rajakumar**

will be celebrating the release of this CD here at the Silver Dollar on January 5th. The evening is a **Tribute to Little Walter**, 40 years after his death and on his induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. This CD is Bharath's personal tribute. Those of you who remember his winning performance at the Talent Search in 2004 will also recall how well Bharath re-created the style of the Chicago blues we know and love. To that end here he has recorded in the Griffintown Café in Montreal where he has a weekly gig. He invited **Junior Watson**

to play required guitar parts and a better choice would be hard to find. Joining his regular band here are other guitarists, acoustic bass players and drummers in addition to a piano here and there but overall he has captured the essence of the Chess Studio sound. **John Dodge's** recording lacks only a bit of presence on Bharath's vocals. The Rhythm Four, plus guests, do the **Aces** proud. There are several Little Walter songs, and several on which he played in the original version as well as some Bharath compositions. "I Don't Have To Hunt No More" is one of the latter and is 'entirely inspired by and dedicated to the man who taught me so much.' More to the point of the tribute is Bharath's harp work, virtuosic and full of energy. For all his importance in blues history, there are only a couple of Little Walter CDs in print. Bharath's CD and the Tribute evening will certainly help fill a void.

Priscilla's Revenge *Built For Speed Spiritwalker*

This trio from Yellowknife was here for the Canadian Aboriginal Awards show at the end of November and left behind an impressive CD. The name comes from an album by an earlier band of which drummer **Norm Glowack** was a member. Glowack is from Yellowknife and is of Metis ancestry. **Greg Nasogaluak**, from Tuktoyaktuk, is on guitar and Yellowknife-born **Blair Brezinski** is on bass. A defining feature of their blues-rock style is their extensive use of group vocals. They claim **Jimmy Reed**, **Bo Diddley** and **Cream**

as influences and for their first CD, they've written twelve original songs. The opener is the title tune, a driving rocker that should go over well in the bars. "What's Going On Around Here?" slows things down a bit, with some fine harp work. "Show Us What You Got" is an acoustic effort whose harmony vocals bring to mind British groups from the sixties, a notion reinforced by the **Yardbirds**-like "She's Got Me Rockin'", again with great harp work. "I Start To Burn" and "Don't Look 'Em In The Eyes" are perhaps the bluesiest tracks here, power trio workouts with fine playing to go with those group vocals. I should think that on the strength of this disc that they are doing very well on the Yellowknife bar scene. Perhaps this calling card will get them on more trips out. Samples are at their web site:

www.priscillasrevenge.com.



Roomful of Blues *Raisin' A Ruckus* Alligator/Fusion

"Lower On Your List Of Priorities" may not seem like much of a song title, but new singer and harp man **Dave Howard**

has come up with a striking rocker. After almost forty years, this famous horn band obviously has no intention of doing anything else. They remain true to the late forties and early fifties R&B hits, with fine versions of "Black Night" and "Boogie Woogie Country Girl" and there are some nice, jazzy solos on "I Would Be A Sinner" but I like the new band originals better. Howard is a major find, perhaps their best all-round singer in some time. Chris Vachon remains the guitarist and bandleader and he has brought along **Bethie Vachon**

who wrote and sings a delightful duet with Howard, "While I Can". There isn't much left that's new to say about the horn section, they play magnificently and I doubt there are better arrangers anywhere. If evidence is needed, cue to **Rich Lataille's** "Raisin' A Ruckus".

A final word goes to **Nathaniel Mesner**, who created the artwork that heads this column. It was originally done for a display at Tower Records, where he worked in the art department. Unfortunately, I lost track of Nat and his name after Tower closed. He has now been found. Thanks, Nat.

- John Valenteyn, jvalenteyn8724@rogers.com

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