

BLUES FOR SALE

mean to be paying the vet". Hugh again adds his harp to 'Diamonds In The Dark' which has a blues base to a tale of missed opportunities. Again, Steve shows what a good wordsmith he is on this one.

Elsewhere Steve hits an Al Stewart vibe on 'Vitamin M', and in the title track Steve conjures up a great image of the old guitar player for whom "the songs from a forgotten era have his heart for a home". His music clearly strikes a chord with his audience too as "she feels the music flow through her as she glides on the floor, it's all in a night's work for a vintage troubadour". The song is not a blues but a superbly crafted piece of acoustic music played to a slightly latin rhythm. 'Barfly Brotherhood' again features Hugh Budden's harp on a gentle ballad about some of the characters congregating in the pub. Appropriately titled closing track 'Footnotes' is an attractive mid-paced piece with some fine picking from Steve as he sings of the life we all lead, but are we more than simply footnotes in the greater scheme of things.

This is an interesting album to listen to closely as there are plenty of fine, sensitive lyrics and no shortage of instrumental skill. Steve plays everything apart from the harp parts and the album is very well recorded so everything is crystal clear. Not all blues but well worth a listen if acoustic music is your interest.

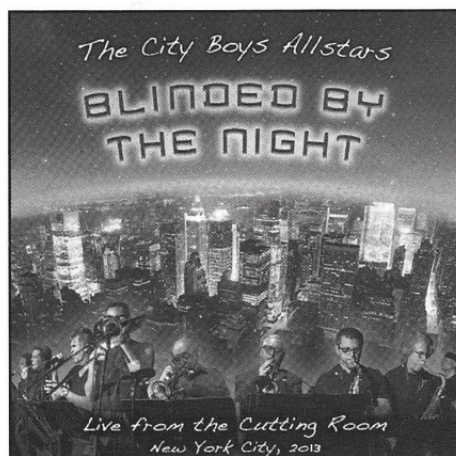
John Mitchell

The City Boys Allstars: Blinded By The Night

Self Release

New York guitarist Mike Merola set up this horn-heavy big band back in the 90's, this live album was recorded in August 2013 in New York, with 11 of the original band members still present. The players include 'Blue Lou' Marini and Tom 'Bones' Malone from the Blues Brothers Band and Lew Soloff from Blood, Sweat & Tears.

With five horn players the sound does recall Blood Sweat & Tears (BS&T), particularly on the fine cover of Billie Holiday's 'God Bless The Child' and the presence among the horn



arrangers of Fred Lipsius (another BS&T alumnus) further reinforces that impression. Soloff plays wonderfully, notably on the instrumental 'Funky Peaches' on which Merola also takes a nice Latin-flavoured solo.

There are three vocalists featured: Angel Rissoff has the toughest voice with plenty of soul grit on his own compositions 'More Where That Came From', with a swinging horn arrangement and a strong alto solo from Marini, and 'Where Have You Been', a soulful piece with Soloff again featuring strongly and a fine solo from pianist Rob Clores. Horace Scott II also composes and sings lead on two of his own songs: 'When You Needed Me' is a slice of modern soul (including a short rap section) with second sax player Andy Snitzer taking the solo honours; 'The Vow' is a ballad that includes vocal contributions from all three singers. Scott's voice is the lightest of the three vocalists and works very effectively on 'God Bless The Child' which is covered beautifully, the horn arrangement not being far removed from BS&T's version all those years ago, Soloff reprising his stellar trumpet work with some high-pitched notes. Bill Kurz leads on three covers: the opening arrangement of Robbie Robertson's 'Testimony' is an effective introduction to the blazing horn section; Frankie Paris wrote 'Strung Out', a graphic account of drug addiction, and the song is dedicated to the former frontman for the band; 'City Boy Blues', a second tune from David Bennet Cohen, former keyboard player for Country Joe And The Fish (who also contributed 'Funky Peaches') closes the CD. This tune brings a touch of New Orleans to the Big Apple and must be the anthem for the band!

If you grew up with BS&T, Chicago and Roomful Of Blues and have retained an affection for big band, horn heavy music, this is a CD definitely worth checking out.

John Mitchell

Aki Kumar: Don't Hold Back

Greaseland Records

akikumar.com

Bombay born Aki Kumar is one of the finest harmonic players in the San Francisco Bay area blessed with a mesmerising command of vintage Chicago blues.

A superb harmonica player with a muscular blues vocal style that has the clarity and phrasing of artists like Sunnyland Slim. Kumar is backed on this set by a "killer" band featuring Little Johnny Lawton, Johnny Cat Soubrand, Chris "kid" Anderson, Rusty Zinn, Bob Welsh and June Core amongst others, and between them they deliver one of the finest Chi-Town blues albums it has been my pleasure to hear in a while.

Kicking off with Snooky Pryor's 'Judgement

Day' where Kumar's chugging harp melody and Papa Lightfoot underpinned by Law Junior Watson styled guitar – Kumar's twelve wonderful slabs of vintage blues ring well-chosen covers with suitably "live" originals.

The classic 'Hoochie Coochie' greasy rocker replete with unremitting rocking piano and Rusty Zinn's Eddie Cochran meets Otis Rush guitar – the title track infectious groover with a strong George Thorpe feel – Slim Harpo's 'Buzzin'" features a bell styled harp with Cliff Gamble influenced guitar – Jimmy Reed's "head-banging" 'She Don't Want Me No More' is pure Lightfoot – whilst 'The Mumbai Express' glorious George Smith styled shuffle with beautifully understated guitar from Anderson.

Kumar is a real talent and if you love Chicago blues then this is a set you can't miss.

Mick Rainey

Red Butler: Freedom Bound

Self Release

Red Butler are a young four piece band from Sussex who have been making good progress over the last year or so with festival appearances coming their way.

The band is Alex Butler on guitar and Stephen Eveleigh on bass, Charlie Simpson on drums and Jane Chloe Pearce on vocals. Jane on two tracks is by Maik Pehrsson and David Vassie adds trumpet to one track.

The general style is blues-rock with strong guitar playing. All the material is original apart from one cover. 'Jaywalker' is the CD with a signature guitar riff from Jane adding some strong vocals. Pehrsson brings some superb slide on a riff that is Son House's 'Death Letter' on a song that, surprisingly for a young band, talks of the hardships faced in old age by some of our people. 'Danger Zone' has another insistent riff time with a catchy chorus that takes the album into more of a pop/rock feel. 'Young And Open' opens with just Alex's guitar, setting up

