

TROMBONE SHORTY

Backatown

VERVE FORECAST

Since emerging nationally as a member of Lenny Kravitz's Band, and his appearance on a nationally televised Hurricane Katrina, Troy 'Trombone Shorty' Andrews has emerged as a favorite band on touring and festival circuits with his blend of funk, Brass Band riffs and some hip-hop & soul seasonings. He is a member of a musical family as his older brother James was a founder of the New Birth Brass band and recorded a brassy album that was produced by Allen Toussaint. Another brother, trumpeter James helped mentor him and Troy's grandfather was the late Jessie Hill who had a major hit with the New Orleans R&B classic "Ooh Poo Pah Doo."

Busy beyond his years, Troy has recorded a CD with his brother, and a previous CD with his band Orleans Avenue along with plenty of studio work. Now he has a new release, "Backatown" (Verve Forecast), that seems destined to increase his fan base even more.

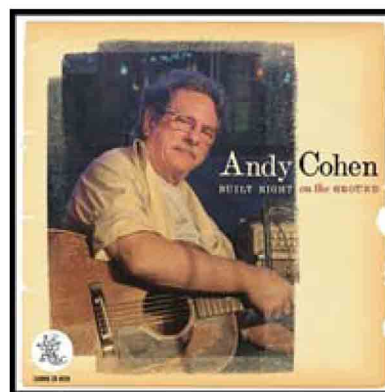
The title of this album refers to the area of New Orleans that includes Tremé, the historic neighborhood where so many great musicians came from and which was devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Produced by Galactic's Ben Ellman, Troy's band, Orleans Avenue (Mike Ballard on bass, Pete Murano on guitar, Joey Peebles on drums, Dwayne Williams on percussion and Dan Oestreicher on baritone sax) is the core behind him with special guests that include Allen Toussaint, Kravitz, Marc Broussard and Charles Smith (Orleans Avenue's original drummer playing synth bass). Troy wrote all except one of the 14 numbers on this.

The tone is set with the opening "Hurricane Katrina," with its hip hop rhythm mixed with a funk up brass band sound, followed by Allen Toussaint's "On Your Way Down," where the legendary pianist plays as Troy delivers the message that the folks you see on the way up are the ones you will pass on the way down. After another funk up instrumental, Kravitz joins on guitar and backing vocal on "Something Beautiful," as he asks "Can You Show Me Something Beautiful," which is quite catchy. The title track opens with some dark sounding synth bass from Smith before Troy enters with some buzzing trombone, with some ripping baritone from Oestreicher as the horns weave around each other. Broussard adds a vocal to "Right to Complain," with a message about all who complain but no one wants to do anything. The instrumental "Neph" has a mesmerizing

cowbellish groove before Troy on trumpet conjures up a strong Spanish tinge with stirring interludes of his trumpet soaring over the percussion. "Suburbia" opens with some metalish guitar before Troy adds some trombone and trumpet playing that suggest a call to arms. The groove of "In the 6th," with the baritone helping set the funk riff, sounds like a homage to the Dirty Dozen and other modern New Orleans Brass Bands that his music is rooted in. "Where Y'At," is a composition that originated in some onstage jamming with "new ideas coalescing out of improvised sections of existing pieces." Troy credits Marvin Gaye as inspiration for the ballad "Fallin'."

Anyone who has seen Trombone Shorty and Orleans Avenue know how electric the performances can be. A studio recording can only go so far in capturing this aspect of his music, but "Backatown," is a recording that undoubtedly will increase his growing visibility (his appearances on the HBO series "Tremé," also contribute to this) and certainly please his many fans.

Ron Weinstock



ANDY COHEN

Built Right On The Ground

EARWIG MUSIC

Andy Cohen has been playing older music styles on guitar, piano, dolceola and assorted instruments for several decades now and has a number of recordings over the year. His latest disc is "Built Right On The Ground," on Earwig, ranges from stomping boogie-woogie, Reverend Gary Davis influenced guitar rags, Memphis Minnie songs to a Woody Guthrie talking blues. On several tracks his is joined by his wife, Larkin Bryant on vocals and mandolin, or Kurt Anderson on vocal and guitar. As William Lee Ellis observes, "He had certainly been every bit the standard-bearer, if not an outright genius, when it comes to the interpretation of prewar blues and gospel music."

And what a choice of songs starting from the opening title track which was recorded eighty odd years ago from Blind Teddy Darby that captures the flavor of the original recording, but with his deft picking and wonderfully delivered vocal it comes out as his own. His updating of Sam McGee's old-timey blues, "Railroad Blues," features impressive picking along with an amusing lyric about voting for Obama because his mama told him to. I wonder how many who do their flashy Robert Johnson covers could do such a nice rendition of Henry Spaulding's "Cairo Blues," which is wonderfully paced and as well as sung. There is a credible, if hardly spectacular, rendition of Meade Lux Lewis' "Honky Tonk Train Blues," which illustrates his versatility as a musician. Cohen especially is

adept at numbers that features fingerpicking in the vein of the Piedmont tradition, but also he is able to channel the facile, rhythmic playing of a Furry Lewis and Memphis Minnie as displayed on his interpretation of "Soo Cow Soo."

On "Jim Dickinson Stomp," dedicated to the late musician and producer, he plays some lovely guitar in the Memphis style as well as the dolceola, followed by the sentimental Jimmie Rodgers tune "My Old Pal," where Kurt Anderson takes the vocal (and the two collaborate on another Rodgers sentimental tune, "Miss the Mississippi and You"). "Temptation Rag" was a piano piece (also recorded by reed players, Sidney Bechet and Benny Goodman), that gets a lovely and adept guitar treatment in the manner of Gary Davis, which Cohen also gives to Jelly Roll Morton's "Grandpa's Spells." There is also a jaunty take on Big Bill Broonzy's "Mopper Blues." He returns to piano for a lively "Shake-a-You-Boogie," which he learned from Blind Jim Brewer, "Shake a Boogie" (which likely was derived from John Lee 'Sonny Boy' Williamson, and "Too Fat Boogie"). Cohen treats us with the amusing Woody Guthrie "Mean Talkin' Blues," before he and his wife (who is on mandolin) close out this CD with a marvelous rendering of the late Bobby Charles' "Tennessee Blues."

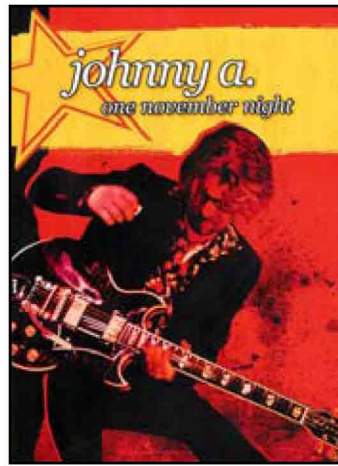
I agree with William Lee Ellis that in a perfect world, Andy Cohen would be as famous as Taj Mahal and Ry Cooder. "Built Right On The Ground," showcases not simply how good a player he is and the extensiveness of his repertoire, but also the warmth and genuineness of his vocals. This recording is a must for lovers of acoustic and traditional blues. **Ron Weinstock**

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JOHNNY A. One November Night AGLAOPHONE

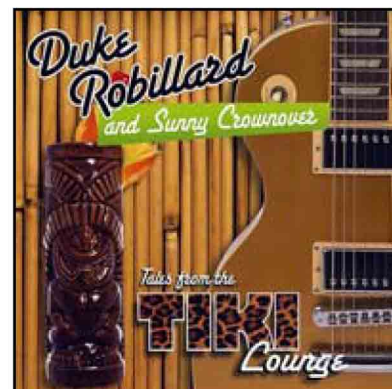
A live recording by Boston jazz rocker Johnny A., best known for his playing with Peter Wolf from the J. Geils Band's solo work, ONE NOVEMBER NIGHT is a two headed monster, one disc of the live performance and a DVD of the same show. Backed by bassist Jesse Bastos and drummer Chris Farr, both have the sweet picking of "I

Had To Laugh" and a touch of flamenco on "Lullabye For Nicole" as the recorded disc only includes a handful of covers like a playful take on the Beatles' "The Night Before" and a reflective mood during Jimmy Webb's "Wichita Lineman." The pair of presentations spotlight most of the guitarist's best known work including the foreboding "Get Inside" and his smoking fast "Ignorance Is Bliss." The bonus on the DVD is Johnny A. playing the Left Banke's "Walk Away Renee" to a fading sunset out in a field somewhere.

So the big question here is "which disc is better?" Depends on what you like, I'd guess.

If you are into the music without the visual, there is the cd. If you'd rather look at the band playing the music, there's your second option enclosed. Both are souvenirs of the same live show in Boston last November, so do you want to listen to it or look at it? If in charge, my call would have been to record a brand new set of originals for the disc and have the live DVD cover Johnny A.'s previous work. He even says in the bio "For me, ONE NOVEMBER NIGHT is a special way to end the chapter of my career that (his earlier cds) represent."

Peanuts



DUKE ROBILLARD AND SUNNY CROWNOVER Tales From The Tiki Lounge BLUE DUCHESS RECORDS

The ever prolific Duke Robillard follows up last year's successful pairing with vocalist Sunny Crownover, *Sunny & Her Joy Boys*, by pairing with her again for this tribute to Les Paul. Modeled loosely after Paul's recordings with Mary Ford, Robillard provides a jazzy, backdrop to Crownover's