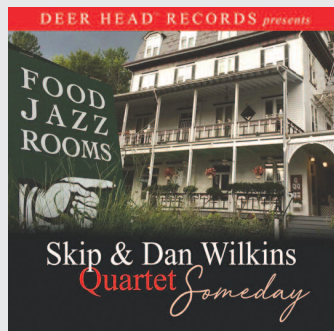


MIKE GREENBLATT'S RANT 'N' ROLL

A Night At The Deer Head Inn

Someday (Deer Head Records), by father-son team Skip and Dan Wilkins, is a love letter of sorts to the hallowed environs of Pennsylvania's legendary Deer Head Inn. Built in the eighteenth-forties, it's been operating as a jazz club since the nineteen-fifties. That makes it the oldest continuously running jazz club in America. Situated within



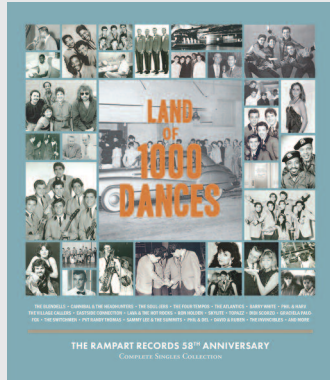
the Appalachian Trail, surrounded by the picturesque Delaware Water Gap bordering New Jersey, the acoustics are superb, the drinks are strong, the food is delicious, there's rooms-for-rent upstairs, yet the essence of this great venue is the feel. People go there to *listen*. The overall ambiance is that of studious jazz concentration like at the Village Vanguard or The Blue Note. And similar to those Manhattan venues, the history in this space is palpable. You can actually sense those who have performed in the past: Keith Jarrett, Paul Motian, Phil Woods, Al Cohn, Dave Liebman, Bob Dorough, Bucky Pizzarelli, and more than a few generations of jazzers who would all congregate here after their gigs elsewhere. Pianist John Coates, Jr., for instance, played here regularly for 50 years.

On *Someday*, the pianist father and the tenor sax son (with bassist Tony Marino and longtime Phil Woods drummer Bill Goodwin) make beautiful music together on compositions by Cole Porter ("Dream Dancing") and the Gershwins ("Of Thee I Sing"), as well as six others. It's a timeless swing-fest. Skip, for the last eight years, has lived upstairs (drummer Goodwin lives here too).

On the night we went, exquisite guitarist Bill Washer led his trio with poppin' bassist Louis Pettinelli and right-on-time drummer Goodwin (whose fills were adventurous, yet, he came back to the beat every single time). Then Skip tickled the ivories behind singer Nancy Reed, whose mellifluous warbling added a distinct Ella/Sarah sense of majesty to the evening. All during the set, musicians could be seen lugging their instruments inside for the Thursday Night Jam Session (with no cover charge). The Poconos were never more alive than on this night! The musicianship on display was, in a word, sterling. I can't wait to go back.

A Big Box

When director Quentin Tarantino needed to conjure up a vision of nineteen-sixties Los Angeles for *Once Upon A Time In Hollywood*, he used "Hector Parts 1 & 2" by The Village Callers. *Land Of 1,000 Dances: The Rampart Records Complete Singles Collection* (Minky Records) is a limited-edition four-CD boxed set with that and 77 other tracks of the kind of West



Coast Chicano rock 'n' roll that paved the way for Los Lobos. It comes complete with a fascinating 102-page book detailing the sixties/seventies heyday of Mexican-American West Coast rock. Consider Rampart a Motown for Chicano performers. One of the bands, Cannibal & The Headhunters, opened for The Beatles on their 1965 American tour (including Shea Stadium and the Hollywood Bowl). Musically, this box is all over the map, drawing from fifties doo-wop, rhythm 'n' blues, funky fatback instrumentals, garage rock, disco, and Latin pop. Another highlight is the Stevie Wonder cover of "La La La La La" by The Blendells. It's a wonder Tarantino didn't use more of this time capsule gem of a box.

Big Mike

This Song's For You (Red Tint Records), by Big Mike & The R&B Kings, combines the Chicago and New Orleans styles of blues, funk, soul, pop, and rock. Singer/songwriter/bassist Mike Perez has two rampaging electric lead guitarists in his grab-bag of tricks



as well as two sax men, two keyboardists, and two drummers. One of their in-concert show-stoppers, "Save The Funk For Sunday," is a highlight, as is the 1987 Tyrone Davis smooth soul hit "Are You Serious." Influenced

by Buddy Guy, Big Mike tore out of Chicago to settle in New Orleans where his band has become a must-see on Bourbon Street, playing five nights a week... and now in your own home.

Big Bad Mama

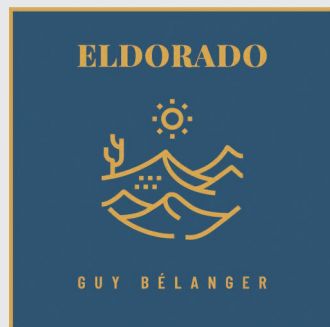
Rae Gordon is akin to Big Mama Thornton of the nineteen-fifties, a serious bad-ass of hard-charging proportions, who will knock you down and blacken your eye (musically, that is). Now, on the heels of her promising 2017 *Better Than I Was* album, she's



considerably upped the ante and is all in with her self-released *Wrong Kind Of Love* by The Rae Gordon Band. And what a band it is! They rock the blues into submission while puttin' out the funk for happy feet and tugging at the heartstrings on deeeeeeeep soul ballads. Her septet is like a second skin complete with horns. As good as this disc is, I've heard their live show will leave you panting like a dog in heat.

Quebec Bluesman

On *Eldorado* (Bros Records), Guy Belanger's sixth album, the Quebec bluesman sings, writes, produces, blows some cool harmonica, and plays piano. The 11 tracks contain his witty originals and surprising covers of "Sign O' The Times" (Prince), "Bright Side Of The Road" (Van Morrison), and "Ganga" (an interpretation of one of India's grand masters, L. Subramaniam). Four decades on, this



Guy continues to satisfy. With liner notes in French and English, the package comes complete with nifty little stories behind each song. Highlight "Hummin'" is his tribute to his hero Big Moose Walker and others like Muddy Waters and John Lee Hooker.

The Dirty Thirty

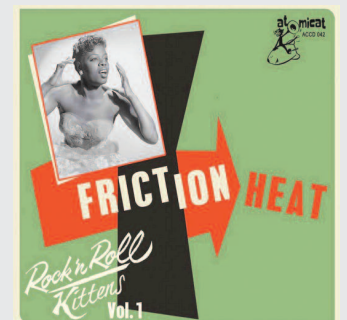
Thirty years of traveling up and down the autobahn in Germany has resulted in *Dirty Thirty: 30 Years Of Blues Since 1989* (Rhythm Bomb Records), an ambitious package of 49 songs on three discs all recorded last year by German blues band BB & The Blues Shacks. Lead singer/harmonicist Michael Arlt, his lead guitarist and brother, Andreas, keyboardist Fabian Fritz, bassist Henning Hauerken, and powerhouse drummer Andre Werkmeister love American blues to the point where you'd swear they were either from Chicago, Louisiana,



Memphis, or California. They've got those four schools of blues down pat. The paucity of covers is amazing. They may do Johnny "Guitar" Watson's "Raise Your Voice" but these two brothers write as well as they perform.

Rock 'n' Roll Kittens

The 25 tracks of smoldering intensity that make up *Friction Heat: Rock'n'Roll Kittens Volume #1* (Atomicat Records) are befit to swoon over. This one's a keeper! Sure, you may know Etta James, Big Maybelle, Patti Page, and Rosemary Clooney (who all, at one time, played some down 'n' dirty rock 'n' roll and gutbucket blues) but wait until you hear Little Gracie ("You're My Tarzan"), "Able" Mable Scott ("Googie Woogie"), Erline Harris ("Long Tall Papa"), Rosemary McCoy ("Dippin' Is



My Business"), Ella Mae Morse ("40 Cups Of Coffee"), Lizzie Miles ("Salty Dog"), and—my personal favorite—"The Rockin' Boogie Shuffle" by The Morrison Sisters! Where did Atomicat find all these almost-unknown pure gems?

—Greenblatt