

Local CDs come in shades of the blues

The flood of local CDs continues, with an outpouring in various shades of blue(s).

> TWENTYTWOHUNDRED, "Vintage" (Bear Ass)
Some folks feel the evolution of electric blues into baby-boomer dinner music has led to lots of crowd-pleasing grooves, but a loss of the spirit, passion and raw nerve that made the music so thrilling to begin with. Well, fear not. Those lost qualities are in abundance on this lo-fi, high-impact and aptly titled disc by a crew of early twentysomethings from Lakeville.

The material is taken from two very rough live recordings, including the band's first show ever, opening for Mississippi great R.L. Burnside at the 400 Bar last December. Twentytwohundred seems to take some inspiration from the raucous Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, but this is one of the few local bands that's not afraid to play a long, slow blues standard, however shaky or sloppy.

The band had improved dramatically by March of this year when it recorded a second batch of tunes at Biscuit and Blues in Minneapolis that included two scorching Beatles favorites. The musicians' massacre of "I Saw Her Standing There" and a dead-on remake of "Roll Over Beethoven" are so danceable and distorted you'll think you're back at the Cavern Club.

And talk about your grand finales, "Hooker" is a nine-minute John Lee Hooker rumble that spins off into a ferocious swirl of blues noise craft that would make Jimi and Stevie proud — and envious.

Then just when you think you've heard enough, along comes an amazing hidden track: 16-minutes of gently droning space rock with blues power to the bone. Taken as a whole, "Vintage" recalls the more freeform days of the bulky double-live vinyl albums with four lopsided sections, containing everything from side-long experiments to stacks of short tracks — when the songs were all very moving takes, no matter what form they took.

> VICKI VICTORIA, "I'm Having a Good Time" (Delight Makers Music)

Another dazzling "newcomer" is Vicki Victoria, a rockin' romantic blues and jazz standards singer who claims to be the first local female pop-rock singer. (Remember Vicki and the Tornados?)



Photo provided by DM Music
Vicki Victoria: "Wild Women Don't Have the Blues" and neither does she.

On this, her first album in 11 years, producer Willie Murphy leads a stellar backing band featuring pianist Don Stille, bassist Dave Maslow and saxophonist Rick O'Dell, cutting up fun, frisky vocal pop tunes from various

Crowd surfing

Jim Meyer



Photo by Chuck Winans

Pat Hayes can still turn out a sharp R&B tune as he proves on Lamont Cranston's first new recording in seven years.

decades. Jazz station KBEM-FM is reportedly broadcasting this indie disc, and it's no wonder. Victoria's soft, swinging vocal tunes are right down KBEM's (Tin Pan) alley. The question is: Can KLBB-1400 resist Vicki's version of Peggy Lee's "I Love Being Here with You"? Probably not.

Other artists covered range from Big Bill Broonzy to Alberta Hunter, but Victoria sounds most convincing on the infectious "Wild Women Don't Have the Blues." This wild woman sure doesn't; she's apparently having way too good a time, and so will you.

> LAMONT CRANSTON BLUES BAND, "Roll with Me" (Cold Wind/Atomic Theory)

You can call them the Lamont Cranston Blues Band if you wish, but the outfit captured on the band's 13th album is more accurately described as "Pat Hayes and the Committee of Cranstons."

Hayes wrote all the songs, played most of the guitar, and, of course, still handles lead vocals and harmonica. Ex-Cranston guitarist Larry Hayes and Ted (Lightnin' Boy) Larsen of the Big Bang guest on two songs each, while Cranston alums Bruce McCabe and Andy Bailey are the workhorses of a four-man keyboard rotation. The steady but stiff Jeff Rogers mans the drums on a disc with lots of different line-ups, but little rhythmic variety.

Even after 25-plus years, Hayes can still turn out a sharp tune. The autobiographical opener, "Play the Blues," is a genuine sentiment with a cool swing, in which Hayes states his lifelong mission, and underlines it with stinging harp and guitar. "What a Party" is exactly that. The pop-savvy "Hold On" is a vivid

reminder of how prime Lamont Cranston could craft an original upbeat R&B winner — even if it does borrow heavily from "Lookin' for a Love"). "Don't Take Me Down Again" is a tender send-off.

However, the middle eight songs sag under the weight of trite themes, and too many automatic lyrics and beats. (Not to mention a distant, dull sound mix.) "Roll with Me" may not uphold the quality of the Cranstons' late '70s classics, but diehard Pat Hayes fans who feel any new Cranstons is better than none will cheer the end of the local blues institution's seven-year recording drought.

Lamont Cranston performs a CD release party Saturday at Whiskey Junction, 901 Cedar Av. S., Minneapolis.

Crowd noise

Their leader, Shannon Selberg, has moved to New York, in part to pursue acting, but the Cows are very much still a band. The group is recording in Minneapolis next month with Melvins guitarist Buzz (King Buzzo) Osbourne producing. The band is aiming for a spring release and tour. Later this year, Thick Records of Chicago will release a 10-inch EP (with picture disc) of a '96 Cows session at Pachyderm Studios in Cannon Falls. Local tech-pop group Sukpatch has expressed interest in working with the band on rearranging or remixing old Cows songs. Stay tuned for numerous other pending Cows side-projects.

There are many reasons not to miss this week's episode of the music talk show "Sound Opinions" (6 p.m. Saturday, KSTP, 1500 AM). City Pages writer Simon Peter Groebner and Fresh Air Radio's local-music host Mark Wheat will sit in to examine whether the Twin Cities music scene is as depressed as some fans and analysts claim it is. This is one of the last episodes before host Jim DeRogatis returns to Chicago for a second stint as pop critic at the Chicago Sun-Times. (Word is, Jim may continue the show from Chi-town. Stay tuned.)

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Sound sampler

To hear excerpts from the artists mentioned on this page, dial 673-9050 and, when prompted, punch in these numbers:

Twentytwohundred:	
"Roll Over Beethoven"	5440
"Hooker"	5441
Vicki Victoria	5442
Lamont Cranston Band	5443
The Siren Six!	5444
Sandwiches	5445