

Kay Kay AND THE RAYS

"Its time Texas received a fresh shot of blues and Kay Kay and the Rays are poised to deliver"
San Antonio Express News

"A breath of fresh air in a genre that has maintained the status quo for too long" *Albuquerque Journal*



Produced by Jim Gaines

Kay Kay and the Rays new cd **Big Bad Girl** now available at Amazon.com and DWM.com as well as in record stores or call 1-800-831-9602

Also available
Texas Justice, no. 15 on Living Blues radio airplay chart
in May 2002



"Texas Justice is a seamless blend of blues, soul and funk...one of the most auspicious debuts of 2001" - *Blues Review*

www.kaykaysblues.com



sitions reflecting on the events of 9/11, *Heart of New York* and *Something in the Sky*. The rest of the songs, except for the *Chocolate Cream Jam* (a medley of *Sunshine of Your Love* and *Crossroads* that runs on too long at 10:50), are all drawn from Hill's previous discs and provide a reminder of just how strong a lyricist he is, whether dealing with social issues or age-old blues themes of relations between men and women. There's even a nod to the current soul-blues obsession with cunnilingus on *Undercover*. The social songs include *Monticello Nights* on the Thomas Jefferson/Sally Hemmings relationship ("Can you love your slave? And do you believe that your slave loves you?"), along with several other that are as specific to events in NYC as Sleepy John Estes' songs were specific to his life in Brownsville (*Grandmother's Blues*, *Evil in the Air*). Hill's exposition on troubled love, such as *Terrible Twos* and *Let's Talk About the Weather* are refreshingly free of cliché, and he even manages to write meaningful blues about blues on *New York State of Blues*, *Hard Blues for Hard Times*, and *Young Folk's Blues* ("They reach new people, they may help the blues to thrive/ And maybe someday our heroes will get paid while they're alive").

Of course, Michael Hill is much more than just a gifted songwriter—he has a wonderfully effective voice, light and soaring yet full of emotion—packed (think Magic Sam), and the stripped-down format of this set offers abundant evidence that he's the most inventive of current blues guitarists—so why isn't he famous?

—JIM DEKOSTER

TONI LYNN WASHINGTON

Been So Long

NorthernBlues NBM-0016



Toni Lynn Washington's gift for passionate understatement shines on this set, described in the liner notes as "a reinterpretation of classic blues songs to honor the feminine spirit."

Which is not to say that everything here was originally sung by a woman. Washington digs into *Angel Eyes*, a tune usually associated with Little Jimmy Scott, with a combination of breezy swing and effortless-sounding emotional engagement. Although her phrasing isn't quite limber enough to qualify her as a top-notch jazz vocalist, her dusky alto croon (hurt-sounding yet kittenishly cozy) invokes the hipster's pose of ironic acceptance of dues-paying, and she makes up for her limited vocal range with subtle timbral shifts, modulating from full-bodied declamation to breathy intimacy, with various embellishment and colorations—a flirtatious mew here, a caustic nasal sneer there—along the way. She brings a similar elan to *Willow Weep For Me* which, according to her liner notes, she first heard sung by the late Nina Simone.

Washington sounds effectively downhome on Bessie's *Back Water Blues*, and she oozes gristle-laden funk on Ted Jarrett's joyful ode to lascivious carriage, *It's Love Baby (24 Hours A Day)*. The band funks all over the place on Earl King's *Three Can Play This Game* as Washington deepens into a declamatory alto bellow to tell her two-timing Lothario that he's about to get out-tricked; on *I Don't Hurt Anymore*, a Dinah Washington standard, she sounds joyously liberated by her newfound freedom. *Are You Happy Now*, a swampy grinder originally recorded by the Cate Brothers, modulates trickily through labyrinthine chord and key changes; Washington hangs on with the aplomb of a champion bareback rider, even ascending into a rare (but confident-sounding) upper-register wail. On William Bell's deep soul anthem *Everyday Will Be Like A Holiday* she summons both longing and faith with the spirit of a gospel-honed veteran.

In her own low-key way, Toni Lynn Washington has ascended to the front line of contemporary blues vocalists, and this is her most fully realized outing yet.

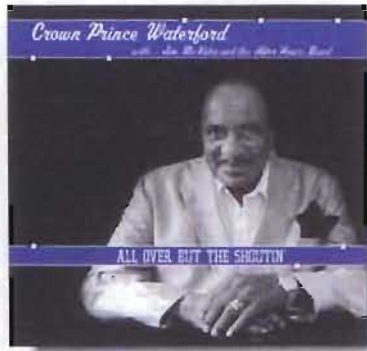
—DAVID WHITEIS

CROWN PRINCE WATERFORD

All Over But the Shoutin'

Springing the Blues (no #)

Charles Waterford, born in Arkansas in 1916, began his singing career at age 20 with Leslie Sheffield's orchestra in Oklahoma City and gained stature when he followed Pha Terrell with Andy Kirk's *Clouds of Joy* and then replaced Walter Brown with Jay McShann's band in 1945. After cutting some sides with McShann, his



recording career peaked with sessions for Aladdin and Capitol in 1947, but he soldiered on with sporadic singles on such labels as King, Excello, Orbit, and Stampede until 1965, when he left R&B for the church.

Incredibly, Waterford has resurfaced at the age of 86 with this new CD. Recorded in Jacksonville, Florida, in May 2002 with a quintet fronted by pianist Jim McKaba, it finds the great shouter in fine fettle on ten selections that mix blues standards like *Roll 'Em Pete*, *Piney Brown Blues*, *How Long Blues*, *Confessin' the Blues*, and *Worried Life Blues* with remakes of his own *Move Your Hand, Baby* (Capitol, 1947) and

Time to Blow (King, 1950) and two more that he recorded with McShann in 1945, *Merry-Go-Round Blues* (Philo) and *Garfield Avenue Blues* (Premier). Despite his years, Waterford proves that he can still carry a jump number or put across a slow blues. McKaba's combo provides sympathetic backing, and the package is enhanced by autobiographical notes and nine vintage photos. The only complaint is the playing time, which is too short at 33:08.

With all the ersatz jump-blues that's come on the market in recent years, and with virtually all of Waterford's peers gone, it's a blast to hear the real deal again. This one should be a leading contender for the year's best comeback recording.

—JIM DEKOSTER

TAJ MAHAL AND THE HULA BLUES

Hanapepe Dream

Tone-Cool/Artemis 751 173 2

Continuing the exploration of Hawaiian-informed styles that Taj Mahal initially sparked with *Sacred Island* in 1998, *Hanapepe Dream*

delivers some standout moments. Still, the album is, overall, unexceptional.

The traditional *Black Jack Davey* (nee *David*) and Richie Havens' *African Herberman* are done in a lilting reggae style, and the dreamily mellow *Moonlight Lady* features some nice Hawaiian guitar, hinting at several excellent Caribbean-styled numbers to come. The first real stunner is Mahal's mambo-inflected take on *Stagger Lee*, which features some nice saxophone and a tremelo-spiked guitar. He strikes gold with his own *Living On Easy* and Mississippi John Hurt's *My Creole Belle*, the former featuring beautiful melodic steel guitar and harmony vocals, while Hurt's melodic sensibilities and Mahal's sympathetic treatment lend the latter an immediacy lacking on the rest of the album. On Dylan's *All Along The Watchtower* sax and slide guitar create a pleasant, if perhaps not sinister enough sound. The title track, an instrumental built around a skilled Hawaiian guitar riff, closes the album on a relaxed, moody note. A stronger focus on the true Hawaiian style that Mahal hits on occasionally here would have made for a more cohesive flow and, hence, a better album.

—MICHAEL HURTT

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