

# BLUES WATCH

BY MARK SMITH

**New Release blues....** The release schedule is heating up already as bands are trotting out the discs they will be featuring at the summer festivals that are on the horizon....**Roomful of Blues-** *Raisin' A Ruckus*; **Eric Lindell-** *Low on Cash, Rich in Love*; **Ray Bonneville-** *Goin' By Feel*; **Betty Harris-** *Intuition*; **Elliot Sharp's Terraplane-Forgery;** **B.B. King-** *B.B. King & Friends*; **Otis Taylor-** *Recapturing the Banjo*; **Greg Koch and Other Bad Men-** *Live on the Radio*; **Bob Hite-** *Dr. Boogie Presents Rarities from the Bob Hite Vaults*; **Etta James-** *Live in New York*; **Bob Brozman-** *Post Industrial Blues*; **Guitar Mikey and the Real Thing-** *Jam Zero I*; **Carlos Johnson-** *Live at B.L.U.E.S. on Halsted*; **Robert Cray-** *Live at the BBC*; **B.B. King-** *Live*; **Anthony Gomes-** *Anthony Gomes Live*; **Sean Costello-** *We Can Get Together*; **Ray Reed-** *Where the Trinity Runs Free*; **Kevin Mark-** *Cuttin' Loose*; **Bernard Allison-** *Chills & Thrills*; **Popa Chubby-** *Deliveries After Dark*; **Harrison Kennedy-** *High Country Blues*; **Rory Gallagher-** *Live In Europe*; **Little Arthur Duncan-** *Live at Rosa's Blues Lounge*; **Carolyn Wonderland-** *Miss Understood*; **Piano Red-** *Diggin' The Boogie 1950-1956*; **Tommy Castro, Deanna Bogart, Ronnie Baker Brooks & Magic Dick-** *Legendary Rhythm & Blues Revue*; **Kelly Richey-** *Have you experienced The Kelly Richey Band....Live?*; **North Mississippi Allstars-** *Hernando*; **Sharrie Williams-** *I'm Here to Stay*; **The Reverend Peyton's Big Damn Band-** *Big Damn Nation*; **Al Basile-** *The Tinge*; **The Blind Boys of Alabama-** *Down in New Orleans*; **Michael Bram and the Alternators-** *Self Titled*; **Jubal Kane-** *Flying High*; **Catherine Russell-** *Sentimental Streak*; **Luther Allison-** *Underground*; **Randy McAllister-** *Dope Slap Soup*; **Webb Wilder and the Rednecks-** *Born to be Wilder- Live*; **Jacob -Alex Mason-** *Town and Country.....* **A Smaller Room blues....** Sadly, as we went to press, I learned the Bob Enos, Trumpet player for **Roomful of Blues**, passed away on January 11<sup>th</sup>, from an apparent heart attack on the eve of the band's departure for the Ultimate Rhythm and Blues Cruise. I had the great good fortune of interviewing Bob a couple of times over the years and found him to be witty, thoughtful and full of mischievous energy. His high notes floating above the horn-driven roar of the band were always a major feature in Roomful's sound. I'm sure he will be greatly missed by the band and fans alike. He is survived by his wife Jill, sons Louis, Jude and Joseph and daughter Elizabeth. Contributions for his children's education can be sent to Bob Enos Memorial Scholarship Fund, c/o TD Bank North, 127 South Street, Wrentham, MA 02093. ....Rest in Peace Bob.... That's it for this month. See ya!

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## PHANTOM BLUES BAND Footprints DELTA GROOVE

The Phantom Blues Band has returned with a new disc full of bluesy old school sounds.

First attracting notice for their work with Taj Mahal, their Delta Groove debut, *Out of the Shadows*, drew further attention, while the band's members are in demand for various touring acts and recordings, so guitarist Denny Freeman, now part of Bob Dylan's touring band, only appears on several of tracks here. The rest, Mike Finnigan, vocals and keyboards; Johnny Lee Schell, vocals and guitar; Larry Fulcher, vocals and bass; Joe Sublett, saxophone; Darrell Leonard, trumpet; and Tony Braunagel, drums, are still such a strong unit even without Freeman's fine playing. The rhythm section lays down the groove, the horns mix taut riffs and the soloists keep things fresh and concise.

Despite the name, this band mixes in southern soul along with straight blues. It opens with Finnigan covering Howard Tate's *Look at Granny Run*, while displaying his versatility on the classic ballad, *Cottage For Sale*. His rendition of Ray Charles' classic blues, *A Fool For You*, is nicely done although not far removed from Charles' original. He shows himself to be quite a good interpreter of Ray Charles here. Schell reworks Freddy King's *See See Baby* as well as a nice bit of Rufus Thomas funk, *Fried Chicken*, although not as strong a singer here. Exceptional is his vocal on Darrell Leonard's *A Very Blue Day*, with a fine trumpet solo and an evocative melody that evokes Horace Silver and Herbie Hancock. Fulcher treats us to Earl Randle's deep soul ballad, *Leave Home Girl* and his reggae-flavored *When the Music Changes* is a stunning closer.

Not a weak track to be found here, and some exceptional ones by a band that sounds incapable of putting out a poor disc.

**Ron Weinstock**

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