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JULY 2007

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## Veterans Committee

**Koko Taylor: *Old School***  
(Alligator 4915; 63:37)

★★★ For about a half century, Taylor has risen above adversity by wailing the blues. Why stop now? Barely diminished by a recent serious illness, she packs a wallop handling five of her own freshly minted songs and old numbers associated with the likes of Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and Memphis Minnie on a session meant

to summon up the spirit—if not letter—of the golden age of Chicago blues in the 1950s, when she began frequenting South Side taverns. Three groups of tradition-minded sidemen, two of them featuring fire-breathing blues-rock guitarist Criss Johnson, assist the regal 78-year-old vocalist without approaching the improbably high standards set in the past.

Ordering info: [alligator.com](http://alligator.com)

**Bob Stroger: *Bob Is Back In Town***  
(Airway 4762; 56:58) ★★★ Stroger never left Chicago, over the years playing bass for Sunnyland Slim, Otis Rush and the Mississippi Heat band. This locally made album takes the kindly blues elder out of the shadows: His limited but engaging singing (suggestive of Percy Mayfield's) and his instrumental work reflect a relaxed earnestness that's well appreciated by front-liners Sam Burkhardt on tenor sax and Steve Freund on guitar. Assessing a batch of well-turned originals and durable classics, Stroger, like Taylor, is one of the few left who is sensitive to every inflection of the Chicago blues.

Ordering info: [bobstroger.com](http://bobstroger.com)

**Fruteland Jackson: *Tell Me What You Say*** (Electro-Fi 3401; 52:32) ★★★

Forthright and intelligent, singer-guitarist Jackson has the style and improvisational instinct to carry on as one of the premier acoustic blues artists today. On his fourth recommendable album, this Chicagoan shows full awareness of the emotive properties of the blues as they pertain to song topics like war ("Blues Over Baghdad," quietly stunning) and gossip ("It's All Good," steeped in irony). Canadian friends playing piano, cello, trumpet and other instruments deliver the fitting low-spark accompaniment.

Ordering info: [electrofi.com](http://electrofi.com)



Fruteland Jackson:  
acoustic instincts

**Jimmy Burns: *Live At B.L.U.E.S.*** (Delmark 789; 67:43) ★★★ In a hometown Chicago club last August, Burns uncorked party-hearty originals like "Leaving Here Walking" plus crowd-pleasing B.B. King, Little Walter and Elmore James covers with a firm sense of the spirit of the songs and his own self. This 63-year-old singer/guitarist/harp player possesses a sound filled with life experience, in which clichéd licks never feel like clichés. Not so true of band guitarist Tony Palmer, though.

Ordering info: [delmark.com](http://delmark.com)

**Kemp Harris: *Edenton*** (Righteous Mischief 1545; 39:44) ★★★ Music of the African-American church may be a more natural fit than blues for Harris, but this middle-aged singer and pianist from Cambridge, Mass., can reconcile the two musical strains in an insightful, entertaining way that makes the sacred-and-profane Holmes Brothers the perfect choice for backup singing on his breakout recording. One highlight: Harris and his earthy band transform Donny Hathaway's "Tryin' Times" into a haunted communion with Howlin' Wolf.

Ordering info: [kempmusic.com](http://kempmusic.com)

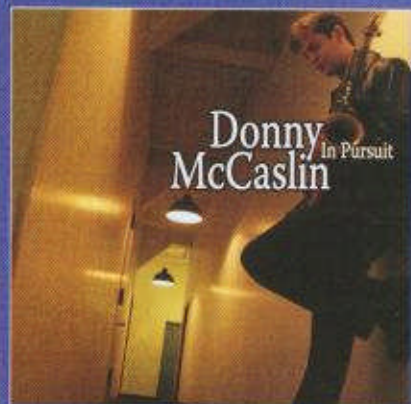
**Jorma Kaukonen: *Stars In My Crown***  
(Red House 202; 52:39) ★★★

Kaukonen, 65, reflects on his satisfaction with life in old-timey originals and long-established music that encompasses Reverend Gary Davis' folk blues and spirituals, American music à la Johnny Cash and vocal-harmony reggae circa 1965. The Hot Tuna mainstay sings charmingly, plays acoustic guitars larded with hushed conviction and curbs most of his sentimental tendencies. His excellent supporting cast includes resonator guitar player Rob Ickes and string bassist Byron House, both Nashville cats.

DB

Ordering info: [redhourecords.com](http://redhourecords.com)

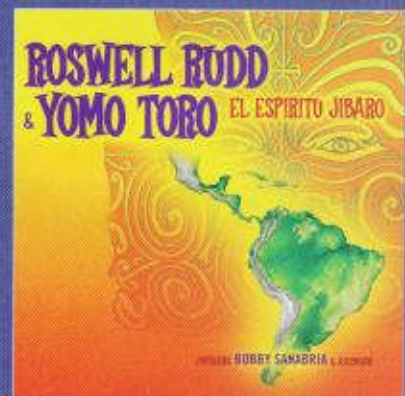
DONNY McCASLIN / IN PURSUIT  
SSC 1169 - In Stores June 6



Produced by Dave Binney — who also plays alto saxophone on this recording — McCaslin is reunited with the musicians from the Soar sessions: percussionist Pernell Saturnino, drummer Antonio Sanchez, and bassist Scott Colley.

The *All Music Guide* correctly sums up this amazing artist by stating that "...McCaslin is equally at home, conversant with the tradition but forging his own compositional and instrumental voice." *In Pursuit* is further proof of that astute observation.

ROSWELL RUDD & YOMO TORO  
EL ESPIRITO JIBARO  
SSC 1174 - In Stores June 26



Roswell Rudd teams up with the legendary, septuagenarian cuatro virtuoso Guillermo "Yomo" Toro, whom the *New York Times* once dubbed, "the Puerto Rican Jimi Hendrix," and delivers Latin jazz-tinged adaptations to Toro's folkloric Jibaro-inspired stylings (the traditional music of rural Puerto Rico).

"What I experienced was life affirming and humbling," Roswell Rudd wrote in the liner notes. "I found myself completely challenged in a unique musical world with its own peculiar language and logic."



Sunnyside

[sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)

