



Robert Charles
Everything I Say
Self-distributed

The latest batch of songs by jazzier Robert Charles is mostly instrumental and delves into more familiar melodies typified by the opener, "Moon River," where Charles uses heavy vibrato, lots of whammy bar, and monstrous volume swells. It works beautifully, and as in most songs here, he sticks close to the cuff, melodically, while adding grace notes when and where needed.

The same can be said for his arrangement of "All of Me" where Charles stays away from the norm by using a tougher sound and a bluesy lilt with open-string hammer-ons and double-stop licks that give a different feel to what could easily become a cliché.

There are several original pieces here too, with "Dexter's Song" being the best. A jazzy blues shuffle, its cool head has a huge hook. The solos complement that intro nicely and he gets very jazzy with some fine octave soloing thrown in for good measure.

If there is a complaint it would be the length. There are only six songs, and while they all are on the money, the time comes in at just a little over 30 minutes. Another cut or two might have given us some more insights into his playing. But, on the other hand, there's never a dull moment. — *JH*



Guy King
Livin' It
IBF Records

Though young, Guy King has had a long, heralded career in blues. He served as Willie Kent's lead guitarist for some time, and the confidence and taste displayed on *Livin' It* prove he is comfortable in his own skin.

This record reflects King's interest in a variety of blues styles and allows he and his band to explore them all. He's more than comfortable in the classic Chicago style, as is obvious on the title cut and several others. He also shows an "uptown" side, with a number of songs containing jazzy changes and turnarounds. His take on the T-Bone Walker classic "I'm Still In Love With You" is perfect. It's jazzy and soulful with a vocal by Guy to match. His punchy solo features the same soul and feel. Same can be said for the boogie of "I Got A Break" and the slow blues "Alone In the City." The solo in the latter,

with its great bends, give a tip of the hat again to Walker.

King's taste and flair especially shine on cuts like "Go Out and Get It," an original with a laid-back feel and jazzy changes that complement his fine vocals and tasty soloing. King's sound is pure Fender — a biting Tele feel that digs in without hurting. If this record is any indication, King will be a staple on the Chicago blues scene for awhile. — *JH*



Stan Martin
Love Ain't That Tough
Gibraltar Records

Like Rodney Crowell, Martin is a country artist who owes a clear but honorable debt to the Beatles and the British Invasion. You hear it in "Blue, Blue Tears," and like those artists, Martin is a fan of Roy Orbison. He doesn't have Orbison's voice (who does?), but in his pacing, dramatic arrangements, and heartfelt singing, you hear the echoes. He also knows his way around a guitar neck and has affection for deliberate, fat-toned, low-register Telecaster solos that add texture and depth. That mature, disciplined-but-not-constrained approach works especially well on the mid-tempo swing of "Missing You Blue," and in tandem with co-producer Michael Dinallo's empathetic rhythm guitar.

All 11 tracks on the disc are Martin originals, and though he sometimes settles for the easy lyric, he is so fresh and adept at moving from style to musical style that he reduces that fact to a quibble.

Martin and Dinallo come from a young-ish Boston/New England music scene that has simultaneously embraced both country and blues, and produced authentic, satisfying examples of both. That authenticity may mean Martin will find himself exiled from mainstream country radio, where he'll be in good company with people like Crowell, Kate Campbell, and Jim Lauderdale. — *RA*



Los Carnales
Los Carnales
Los Carnales Records

Los Carnales is a St. Louis-based blues band, and numerous cuts here — including the opener, "East St. Louis" — feature blistering guitar from Texas native Elliot Sowell. Fans may also know bassist Preston Hubbard from

Pioneer of the Electric Guitar

PAUL BIGSBY WAS a 1920s version of the guys on the reality show "American Chopper." Like them, he was passionate about motorcycles, and he made things by hand after conceiving them in his mind.

Though guitarists may be familiar with the ubiquitous Bigsby vibrato unit and some of the guitars he built for artists like Merle Travis, most do not realize the impact Paul "P.A." Bigsby had on the development of the solidbody electric guitar. This book explores his life and creations.

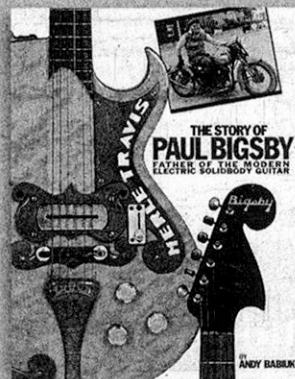
Bigsby quietly pioneered ideas that others, particularly Leo Fender, used in the development of the modern electric guitar. Put succinctly, Bigsby built the first modern solidbody electric guitar for Travis in 1948 and his six-on-a-side tuner arrangement was copied almost exactly by Fender. Though it was Travis who sketched ideas

for a solidbody guitar, Bigsby took them and created the guitars that changed ideas about electrically amplified instruments. He continued on this path, designing the first pedal steel with the same elegance and attention

to detail. By the 1960s, even P.A. was becoming overwhelmed with demand for his vibrato tailpieces. He knew Ted McCarty, having done business with Gibson, and sold his company to McCarty in 1965.

Today his name lives on, and the brand is now owned by Gretsch. Author Andy Babiuk spent years researching this book, and it shows; it's a deluxe work, full-sized, with high-quality photography and more than 300 photos, including 50 Bigsby guitars, many unique and never before seen. An accompanying recording of Bigsby was captured in the late '50s, where he recalls his years in the business. Now, if only Bigsby had made those tailpieces a little lighter in weight...

Highly recommended for the importance to the history of the electric guitar, this book will enthrall and entertain any enthusiast. — *Eric C. Shoaf*



The Story of Paul Bigsby
By Andy Babiuk
Hal Leonard Publishing

