

TROMBONE SHORTY

BACKTOWN

"WE WERE JUST MESMERIZED BY HIM."
-THE EDGE, U2

"I'M HIS BIGGEST FAN!"
- WYNTON MARSALIS

New Orleans legend Trombone Shorty and his band, *Orleans Avenue*, make their **Verve Forecast** debut with *Backatown*, an incendiary combination of funk, R&B, rock and sounds of New Orleans. Featuring guest appearances by Allen Toussaint, Marc Broussard and Lenny Kravitz. Available April 20th.

available at **amazon.com**

www.vervemusicgroup.com
www.tromboneshorty.com

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BLUES

by Frank-John Hadley

Slides, Joys and Whiskey

Tas Cru: *Grizzle n' Bone* (Crustee Tees 0901; 58:52)

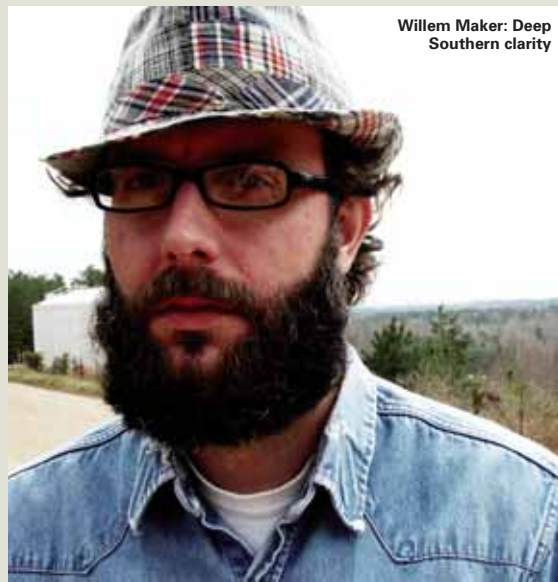
★★★★ Cru, in upstate New York, makes his third album memorable, using the rich tone of his voice and the sharp edge of his slide guitar to give his melodic blues-rock songs a robust fix on the tangle of emotions present. He has the soul of a poet crafting the slow, sad/happy rumination "Let's Pretend" and a stark solo blues fittingly called "Make My Woman Cry." His crackle-jack arrangement of Jackie Wilson's "Higher And Higher" takes him into a slide guitar-induced state of joy only Derek Trucks a few others reach these days. Beyond blues, "The Prophet Of Lynchburg" is his perfectly acceptable digression into Appalachian folk music. Like Leonard Cohen, Cru seems to have cultivated a personal musical vision growing up along the grand Saint Lawrence River in Quebec, his Mississippi. Keyboard player Chip Lamson and the Slow Happy Boys rhythm section have presence without drawing attention away from the bandleader. But no thanks for his chirpy female backup singers.

Ordering info: tasclu.com

T-Model Ford: *The Ladies Man* (Alive Naturalsound 0103; 57:30) ★★★ The 88-year-old whiskey-swilling hero to the alternative/punk blues mob sounds more coherent and competent singing and twiddling guitar here in 2008 than he did during his rabid, unruly Fat Possum days. Ford's still obsessed with chicken heads, hip-shaking women and "kick[ing] yer asses." And he's no more original than he ever was, reprocessing material swiped from Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Little Walter, anyone.

Ordering info: aliveenergy.com

Willem Maker: *New Moon Hand* (Big Legal Mess 0212; 50:38) ★★★★★ Singer-guitarist Maker forges a muddy sort of electric-blues that carries in its bones the raw emotionalism of a deep-thinking Deep South musician who suffered 10 years with toxic metal poisoning (hear his breathtaking "Lead & Mercury"). He's plenty self-conscious and all the better for it, singing lyrics of rare imagery with an inimitable voice that suggests a small mass of acrid phlegm is lodged in the back of his throat. This



Willem Maker: Deep Southern clarity

WILLEM MAKER

Alabaman, in his 30s, benefits from the ferocious musical clarity of his free-spirited friends, among them Mississippi hill country drummer Cedric Burnside and strings specialist Alvin Youngblood.

Ordering info: biglegalmessrecords.com

Mark Nomad: *Soul Proprietor* (Blue Star 71509; 66:20) ★★★ Each of the 10 songs this talented vocalist and guitarist offers on his first concert album—three originals, Chicago blues standards, classics from Smiley Lewis, B. B. King and James Brown—holds a kind of suspense that offsets the predictability of familiar melodies and rhythms. Tenorman Doug Jones has a fresh voice, more influenced by Grover Washington Jr. and David Sanborn than the honkers and bar-walkers of yesteryear. With Ronnie Earl's Broadcasters seldom active anymore, Nomad leads as entertaining a blues band as you'll find in southern New England.

Ordering info: marknomad.com

Billy Lavender: *Memphis Livin'* (I55 Productions 0200; 57:38) ★★★ Lavender, a lefty playing a right-handed guitar upside down, brings the unlearned expressive quality known as Memphis soul to a mix of blues, rock and funk on a session with other local stars like guitarist Brad Webb, drummer Tony Adams and singers Ken Dinkins and Reba Russell (she's worked with U2). This is a good album, despite hot, flamboyant production that incinerates a few tunes; even an exceptional one for the five minutes of Lavender and Webb's slow-sizzling "Tonight," where Dinkins and Lavender make mesmerizing pleas for the rightness of sweet romance.

DB

Ordering info: memphislivin.com