



legends like Robert Lockwood, Jr., Nappy Brown, Pinetop Perkins, Jimmy Rogers, and many other stopped by his station for in studio performances.

Here it's an instrumental buffet offering more than just a dozen harp tunes. Many of the Chess harmonica traditions were birthed by the robust partnership of Little Walter and various guitarists like Jimmy Rogers, Luther Tucker, and the Myers brothers, Louis and Dave. That essential weave of harmonica and guitar is not lost on Corritore. By adding Junior Watson (ten songs) and Jimmie Vaughan (two songs), Corritore has called upon guitarists who can add to this conversation. Fred Kaplan's keyboards (10 songs), Kedar Roy's thumping bass, and the rock solid Chicago time kept by Richard Innes, today's premier blues drummer, provide 45 minutes of the finest traditional blues interspersed with some creative off roading.

The CD opens with Willie Egan's "Potato Stomp" which pairs Corritore with Doug James' guttural sax honks. "Ruckus Rhythm" enlists Watson to handle the Lockwood guitar parts backed by the flat tire shuffle time (heavy accents on the two and four) kept by Innes. Just when you think it's all meat and potatoes, Watson and Kaplan lead off "Harmonica Watusi," a SoCal beach tune. There's also Corritore's delicate slow blues, "5th Position," where his chromatic, Watson's string textures, and Kaplan's trebly piano accents recreate the magic of this music.

When Corritore adds Vaughan, on "Mr. Tate's Advice," Kaplan switches to organ for the three-man swing. Vaughan, James, and Kaplan later contribute to the earthy Texas shuffle, "Shuff Stuff." The CD ends just as you might imagine, Corritore calling on the album's core band for a lonely, late night elixir shared between friends. This is comfort food for any blue lover's soul.

– Art Tipaldi

JANIVA MAGNESS

Original

Fathead

Janiva Magness' journey has brought her to this masterpiece, a stunning set of 11 originals, seven co-written by Magness, that effortlessly combine her life's musical influences into a truly original achievement. Her lifelong affinity with blues and soul music, now combined with a rootsy, songwriter rock provides Magness the palette to tell these stirring stories.

Most women singers in the blues are classified as shouters or belters. Magness can belt with the best, but she also has a very unique ability to rise above that common style with a tone that delicately expresses nuance and warmth. Anyone who has listened to Magness' vocal growth over her decades of toiling can immediately hear the culmination of years of learning what her voice can do. Just listen to her teardrop phrasing of the line "Standing here, I feel the air just leave the room" in the opening song, "Let Me Breathe." It's guaranteed to send a momentary chill down necks. And that's just one line in a beautifully crafted song that humanizes the punch in the gut loneliness anyone who has lost love has experienced. The best songs can offer uncomplicated personal grief that immediately reaches a public audience. This song succeeds.

The rest of the songs showcase Magness' sultry voice in a variety of styles and messages. "When You Were My King" deepens that emotional loss until "Everything Is Alright" is the emotional wake up call to action. Her soul struts on "Twice As Strong" with its message of empowerment, sister to sister. Producer Dave Darling's sparse guitar tones are the slinky underpinning to Magness and Dan Navarro's duet on "With Love." Follow that with Darling and Zach Zunis' twin guitars supporting her aching vocals on "Mountain" somewhat reminiscent of her 2008 "I Won't Be Around." "Who Am I" stands tall with a vehement affirmation of self after a loss of love might have most questioning, "was it my fault?"

The album ends with Magness stretching her voice with powerful resolve on "Standing." Taken as a whole, the songs are a comprehensive record of personal heartbreaks and hopeful



assertions. They build from the ache of loss to the strength and insights gained from experience. The choice of material, arrangements, and range of Magness' vocals puts this record light years ahead of anything Magness has previously recorded. This is a voice to be reckoned with.

– Art Tipaldi

JOE KROWN, WALTER "WOLFMAN" WASHINGTON, AND RUSSELL BATISTE, JR.

Soul Serenading

JK

When he's not off scalding the asphalt with his Roadmasters, Walter "Wolfman" Washington holes up with Joe Krown and Russell Batiste, Jr. for some organic, funky jazz. On their latest, *Soul Under-standing*, there's plenty of funk and a healthy dose of soul as well in the opener, "Trio's Anthem." Krown's B-3 burbles like Jimmy McGriff over a funkscape the Funky Meters would be proud to claim, and rightfully so, as Batiste is their drummer when not engaged with Krown and Washington.

Washington smooths out Johnny "Guitar" Watson's choppy, scat-littered '80's hit "Lone Ranger," turning it onto a smooth ballad, laying down a George Benson guitar groove and harmonizing on vocals with Batiste. The Krown-penned title cut is right out of '60's era Booker T and the MGs down to Washington's Steve Cropper-like picking as he sidesteps nimbly around the organist. The Washington original "Just Us" features smooth Wes Montgomery style jazz punctuated by Batiste's gunshots and Krown skating around tossing klanking clumps of B-3 underfoot.