

Blues | BY FRANK-JOHN HADLEY

Shout Bamalama

Black Joe Lewis & The Honeybears: *Scandalous* (Lost Highway B0015215; 38:45 ★★★½) Lewis' blast furnace of an album explodes with ragged shards of Chicago and Mississippi blues, Memphis soul, classic funk and garage rock. The bandleader built up pressure singing and playing lead guitar in a wicked sweat and implored the rhythm section and horns to follow his example. A breakneck talking-blues with a touch of Magic Sam wail, "Memphis Ranch" concerns "ham glazing" at a brothel on the road. "I'm Gonna Leave You" lurches to a droning groove out of R.L. Burnside's Mississippi hill country. Crazy, man.

Ordering info: losthighway.com

Julius Pittman & The Revival: *Live Tonite* (EllerSoul 1101; 56:41 ★★★½) Southern soul with robust infusions of the blues is the forte of this eight-piece band in

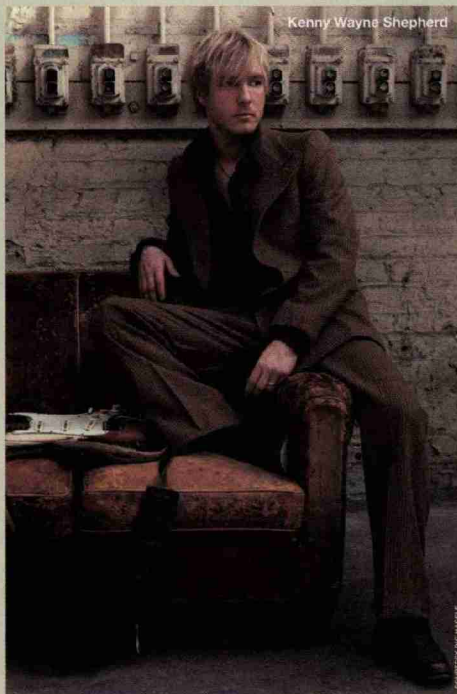
Richmond, Va., heard here at a local pub. A strong and unaffected singer, Pittman leads the charge on entertaining original songs and arrangements of Albert Collins' "A Good Fool Is Hard To Find" and Sam & Dave's "You Got Me Hummin'." With the sheer force of the horn section quelled, Pittman shows fortitude of character empathizing with the sad-hearted character in his ballad "Miss Lovin' You."

Ordering info: ellersoulrecords.com

Kenny Wayne Shepherd: *How I Go* (Roadrunner 1686; 59:53 ★★★½) Shepherd's mass-market blues-rock sounds genuine in its excitement. The 35-year-old Louisiana native is more than a focused guitar virtuoso, writing good songs and true to the original spirit of Albert King's "Oh, Pretty Woman" and, tougher yet, Bessie Smith's "Backwater Blues." Shepherd has a more than capable band vocalist in Noah Hunt.

Ordering info: roadrunnersrecords.com

Various Artists: *R&B Hipshakers, Vol. 2—Scratch That Itch* (Vampisoul 126; 52:45 ★★★½) Plucked from obscurity by radio DJ Mr. Fine Wine, 20 songs issued by King Records and its subsidiary Federal between 1956 and '68 are manna from heaven for the targeted audience—dance club revelers in Spain—and for fans of vintage r&b everywhere else. Well-known performers Otis Redding, Willie Dixon and Johnny Watson shout or twist in an inclusive mix with unrecognized singers like Mary Johnson, Lula Reed and Rudy Ray Moore (many years later affiliated with Big



Kenny Wayne Shepherd

Daddy Kane). The label guitarist is Mickey Baker, a wonder of rock 'n' roll history.

Ordering info: vampisoul.com

C.J. Chenier: *Can't Sit Down* (World Village 468109; 45:17 ★★★) Chenier, an anachronism, stays true to his father's zydeco legacy on his latest dance party in the studio. His vocals and accordion continue to drip with top-line Louisiana hot sauce, keeping the good times rolling with energized adaptations of blues and Creole r&b classics.

Ordering info: worldvillagemusic.com

Alberta Hunter: *Downhearted Blues* (RockBeat 3024; 71:29 ★★★½) In her eighties, Hunter uses simple artistry and a room full of charm to seduce the NYC audience on one of her fabulous nights at the Cookery jazz club in 1981. Supported by string bassist Jimmy Lewis and pianist Gerald Cook, she shows her special way with the Great American Songbook and risqué blues first introduced by her in the 1920s. The album could only be improved upon if Doc Cheatham had stopped by and played Gabriel's horn.

Ordering info: rockbeatrecords.com

Various Artists: *Blues And The Alligator* (Gazell DVD 7006; 52:00 ★★★) Jim Downing's 1991 film, re-released, gives a good accounting of Bruce Iglauer's Chicago-based record label in its first 20 years. What really sticks in mind: Koko Taylor singing the national anthem at a White Sox game and slide guitarist Hound Dog Taylor in black-and-white performance. **BB**

Ordering info: gazell.com

