

## Rattle And Hum

The 10 originals on the 66-minute *Pay For It On The Other Side* (McCannic Music) by Wisconsin guitarist/composer **Pete McCann**, 52, his sixth album, puts jazz-rock fusion in a blender with instrumental pop, swing and world music. His quintet rattles and hums with elastic electricity. McCann wears his influences on his



PHOTO BY DENNIS CONNERS

sleeve: John McLaughlin, Allan Holdsworth, John Scofield and Pat Metheny. With alto sax, piano, organ, clavinet, accordion, bass and drums, McCann weaves a delicate web through his intricate arrangements yet can blitz when the track calls for such. The highlight has to be "Nikhil." It's a tribute to the sound of India, in the person of classical sitar player Nikhil Banerjee [1931-1986], a piece that veers psychopathically between major and minor keys, buoyed by Henry Hey's tumultuous squeezebox, a drum 'n' bass drone and a rampaging John O'Gallagher alto solo. Bravo!

## Best Boz Yet

Although I've loved his 1976 *Silk Degrees* for 42 years, singer/songwriter Boz Scaggs, 74, might have outdone himself with the absolutely perfect *Out Of The Blues* (Concord Records). It completes a self-styled blues trilogy after *Memphis* (2013) and *A Fool To Care* (2015). It's interesting to note that Scaggs got his '60s start in The

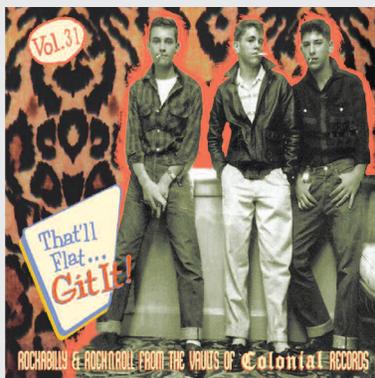


PHOTO BY CHRIS PHELPS

Steve Miller Band, another artist now steeped in the blues. Here, he meticulously picks some discreet sides from the songbooks of The Bobby Blue Bland Blues Band, Jimmy Reed, Magic Sam and that notorious bluesman Neil Young whose 1974 "On The Beach" never sounded better. Neither has his voice. As most of our aging heroes have had to adjust to the inevitable vocal decline, Boz is still totally bad-ass and sounding rejuvenated. It doesn't hurt that a plethora of master musicians -- Doyle Bramhall II, Ray Parker, Jr., Charlie Sexton, Willie Weeks, Jim Keltner, Jim Cox and Jack Walroth (who wrote four of nine) -- have lined up to add their instrumental talents. Wholeheartedly Recommended.

## Not Dead Yet

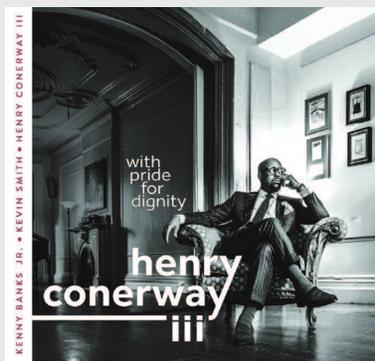
I must admit to having given up on the standard piano trio within jazz years ago. I mean, how much more could possibly be extrapolated from a format that reached its peak in the 1980s? It all started to sound like a rehash. I need horns! Enter Detroit drummer/composer Henry Conerway III, now the man in-demand on the drum stool



in New York City, who, with pianist Kenny Banks, Jr. and bassist Kevin Smith, have self-released created a debut -- *With Pride For Dignity* -- that's almost startling in how far and wide a piano/bass/drums presentation can still be. From stride to gospel, from bop to swing, from ballads to surprises, these three get down on originals plus creative covers of Duke Ellington's 1940 "Cottontail", Phineas Newborn, Jr.'s 1958 "Sugar Ray" and Jimmy Heath's 1964 "Gingerbread Boy", proving that the piano/bass/drums jazz trio format ain't dead yet.

## Juvenile Delinquency

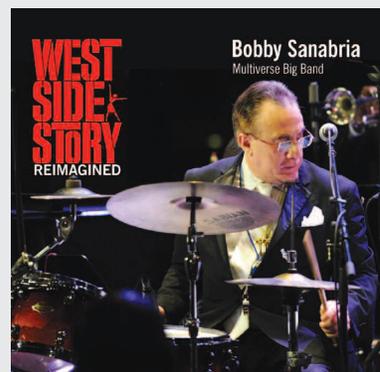
For examples of teenaged youth in rebellious turmoil, you can go see the classic 1955 film, *The Blackboard Jungle*, or you can listen to the mighty compilation *That'll Flat Git It! Volume #31: Rockabilly & Rock 'n' Roll From The Vaults Of Colonial Records* (Bear Family Productions).



Colonial Records was a hot 1950s regional independent label out of North Carolina. These 34 tracks mix the big boom of burgeoning rock -- equated with petty criminality at the time -- mixed with novelty tracks, sometimes within the same song like in E.C. Beauty's "Tarzan" and "Asiatic Flu" by Ebe Sneezer & The Epidemics. This is early white rock 'n' roll in two and three-minute bursts by such long-ago and far-away locals as teen idol George Hamilton IV who went on to have a long country career, Alan & The Flames (check their rockin' variation of "Winter Wonderland") and Hoke Simpson With Ken, Ralph, Roy & Jerry ("Mountain Dew Rock"). Clinkers abound but the gems are so rare and raw that it's worth it.

## A New "West Side Story"

In celebration of the 60th Anniversary of this great American musical and the centennial of Maestro Leonard Bernstein's birth, plus to raise funds for the less-than-



adequate governmental response to the devastation caused by last year's Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, *West Side Story Reimagined* (Jazzheads), by **Bobby Sanabria's Multiverse Big Band**, is a two-disc Latin Jazz interpretation that swings and sizzles with percolating percussion. Recorded live at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola in New York City, drummer Sanabria -- influenced as much by Buddy Rich and Louis Bellson as he is by Tito Puente and Machito -- has taken 20 songs, including "Jet Song", "Gym Scene Blues Mambo", "Maria", "Cool", "The Rumble" and "One Hand One Heart" into the height of bombast like what Lin-Manuel Miranda did when he directed "West Side Story" and made the entire second act in Spanish. No vocals here, just the snap, crackle and pop.

## Greatest Living American Songwriter?

*Bob Dylan Live 1962-1966: Rare Performances From The Copyright Collections* (Columbia/Legacy) shows The Bard in the flush of first legerdemain. We know now he admits to using folk music as a stepping stone to being a rock star but that in no way makes these early performances of his world-changing folk phase no less profound, powerful, poignant and damn revolutionary.

Those who complain about his voice now should hear him then. It was perfect. An outgrowth of the Woody Guthrie sensibility (dig up Woody Guthrie's "Old Man Trump" song if you're interested in knowing where our fake president got his virulent racism). "Masters Of War" seethes with resentment and righteous hatred. "The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll", ripped from the headlines, shines a light into the murder of an innocent black bartender. I remember hearing "Chimes Of Freedom" the night we stood in the 2008 rain to vote for the first black president. Now the song gives me goosebumps. "It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)" is a rap forerunner with line after line a knock-out punch. I once played it for my young hip-hop-loving son back in the day and he said, "Gee dad, that dude's pretty good."

Dylan sings 'em all with fervor and conviction. Who knew he was playing a role? Still, this captures a time and an era where all your frustrations and hopes were housed in the body of a frail, slight self-promoter who changed his name, told journalists false stories about himself (he was fond of saying how he worked in a traveling carnival for years) and, ultimately, wrote, in what's called his "protest" phase, sheer blood on these tracks.

