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Music/Theater/Dance



Article published September 20, 2009

Phish celebrates happy reunion

JOY
Phish (Jemp)

Vacations can do wonders. And so it goes with Phish, five years removed from its last studio album and an amicable split. After a brief reunion tour earlier this year, the Vermont jam band makes a welcome return to record stores with its latest release, "Joy."

From the bouncy-pop of opening track "Backwards Down the Number Line," through the 13-minute-plus joyous prog rock epic "Time Turns Elastic," the record is a musical celebration by a group clearly happy to be together again.

Released on the band's own record label, "Joy" is airy and free, like the uplifting "Light," and showcases a group having fun again (check out the rocker "Kill Devil Falls") - a noticeably absent trait from Phish's previous studio effort, the moody and contemplative "Undermind."

- By KIRK BAIRD

MUSIC FOR COUGARS Sugar Ray (Universal/Fontana)

OK. So Labor Day is fading in the rear-view mirror. Don't bum out and let summer vibes be a distant memory. Take heart. Take action. Slap this first new CD by Sugar Ray after the band's five-year break into your CD player - better yet, the car CD player - and crank up the opening track.

It's "Girls Were Made To Love" featuring a sample of 1962's "(Girls, Girls, Girls) Made To Love," and with its reggae groove and umbrella-in-the-drink ambience, you can almost feel the sand between your toes.

The guys in Sugar Ray may be getting older, and frontman Mark McGrath may be better known to some as the host of TV's Extra, but they still just wanna have fun. Even when summer's done - the lyrical focus of the lead single, "Boardwalk" - times still feel good.

So shake it to the pop/rock of "She's Got The (Woo-Hoo)," enjoy the wall of guitar sound of "Going Nowhere," smile at the retro pop confection "Love 101," and dig the message of "Rainbow" - you know, you've gotta go through rain to see a rainbow.

- RICHARD PATON

SOUL BLUE 7 Al Basile (Sweetspot Records)

Al Basile wields a pretty mean trumpet and cornet, but the former Roomful of Blues musician has a number of other talents. A poet and fiction writer, he has a master's degree from Brown University's creative writing program.

On his seventh solo album since 1998, he delivers another fine blend of original blues, swing, jazz, and soul songs. Most songs feature Basile on vocals, with various Roomful of Blues alums sitting in with him.

Among them is the group's founder, Duke Robillard, who also makes a return appearance as Basile's album's producer. Basile has a somewhat sly and foxy voice to go with his slow-groove, rootsy style.

His songs, while not necessarily of the rip-snortin' variety, offer anything from melancholy blues to a tongue-in-cheek, irreverent look at growing old.

- TOM HENRY

RADIO BLUES Steve Guyger (Severn Records)

There are no fancy harmonica tricks here, just some solid, straight-ahead, traditional blues. The 14 tracks are rooted in Chicago blues/rock,

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punctuated by Guyger's down-home vocals and some fine guitar work by Johnny Moeller of the Fabulous Thunderbirds.

Guyger has immersed himself in these basic blues styles for the past 40 years, keeping his music unadorned and sort of plain, while retaining excitement and interest. There's not a drop of boredom in more than 53 minutes of music here, ranging from bold to tender.

- KEN ROSENBAUM

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September				November		
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

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