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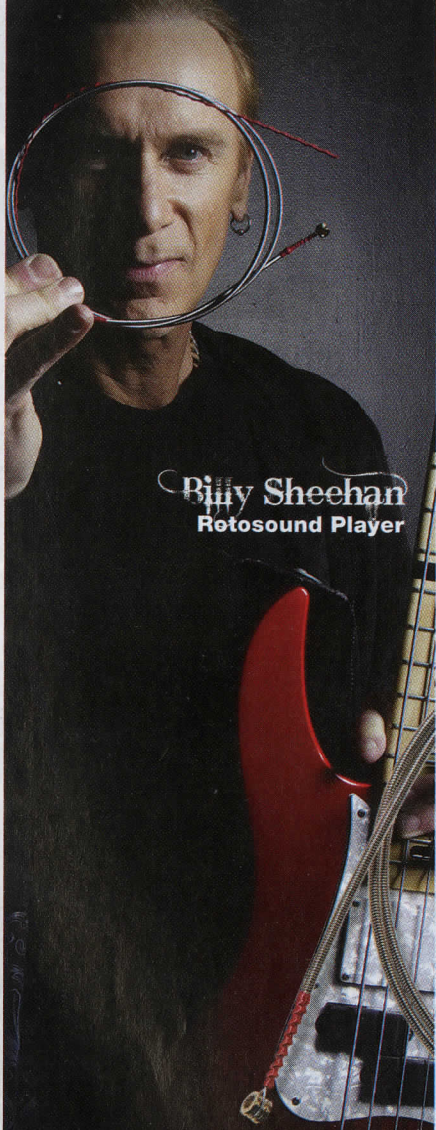
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BASSNOTES

moments that linger after the CD is over.

Shortly after the release of *Stratosphere*, Earl took over for Roscoe Beck in Robben Ford's the Blue Line, and then joined Cleto and the Cletones, the house band on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*, a gig he holds to this day. As successful as he's been, however, these two solo albums hint that there's more to this flexible, imaginative maestro than first-call sideman. Here's hoping that these reissues are appetizers for the next entries in Jimmy Earl's catalog. —E.E. BRADMAN



GARY HUSBAND

Dirty & Beautiful Vol's 1 & 2
 [Abstract Logix]

The super-talented Gary Husband, a first-rank drummer, keyboardist, and composer, gathers eleven elite plectrum pals, including John McLaughlin, Allan Holdsworth, Mike Stern, Wayne Krantz, Jimmy Herring, Robin Trower, and Steve Hackett (as well as six bassists), for a classic fusion foray. On the bottom, **Jimmy Johnson** adds growling groove beneath McLaughlin's tornadic solo on "Dreams in Blue" (plus his own soaring solo turn), fill-peppered feel for Holdsworth's ringing "Fred 2011," and deep, sustaining fretless on "Boulevard Balonyeo." Elsewhere, **Laurence Cottle** is both rooted and reactive behind Herring on "England Green," and Steve Price pushes and probes "The Maverick." Most eye-opening is **Mark King's** superb support and interaction, with fingers on "Alverstone Jam," and with thumb and fingers on "Sulley." —CHRIS JISI



JACK BLADES

Rock N' Roll Ride
 [Frontiers]

On *Rock N' Roll Ride*, songs like "Back in the Game" and "Born for This" feature the types of hooks and melodies that catapulted bassist/vocalist **Jack Blades** to stardom—and keep him in demand as a songwriter-for-hire. But what's perhaps most impressive about this latest solo offering are his bass lines. Rich and warmly recorded, they dance around the chord progressions with nuanced rhythmic and melodic sensibility—the obvious result of years spent grooving like hell back in the '70s with Rubicon, a vicious funk rock act featuring former Sly Stone band members. *Rock N' Roll Ride* may be an unabashed AOR

record, in the vein of Night Ranger and Damn Yankees, but Blades' thumpin' bass keeps the grooves percolating. —FREDDY VILLANO



MISTER BARRINGTON

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 [misterbarrington.com]

With just their second release, Mister Barrington (keyboardist/vocalist Oli Rockberger, drummer Zach Danziger, and bassist **Owen Biddle**) has pulled ahead of the pack when it comes to the myriad musicians merging man and machine. That's because each member is a first-call player fluent in improvisation and feel across numerous styles, each has a producer's ear for sonics and song construction, and all three have the gift for musically melding the human and the electronic pulse.

The disc opening quasi-shuffle, "Only a Fool," in which Biddle's bass is seamlessly composited with synth bass; the new jack-nodding "See Your Face" (with Biddle stomping his Electro-Harmonix Bass Micro Synth pedal); and the old school "I Remember You" all summon Barrington's signature song sound: Rockberger's vocoder vocals delivering knockout hooks over the bionic brilliance below. Similarly, on the instrumental side, transcending throwback is the magic formula, as with the slap bass-led "PRG" (a play on the '80s contempo jazz label, GRP) and "Frank's Drebin," which recalls early-'70s Billy Cobham, thanks to Danziger's dazzling drum work. The experimentalism reaches an extreme on "Helter's Kelter," where Biddle's ten tracks of bass ideas are pruned to perfectly-panned peak-outs; the oozy "Landing," with Owen unleashing free-flowing fills in his trademark R&B/Roots style; and the deep, 6-string throb of "Rawzz." Who knew futurism could groove so hard? —CHRIS JISI



AMANDA RUZZA

This Is What Happened
 [amandaruzza.com]

The Brazilian-born and raised **Ruzza**, who has been plying her plucking skills in New York for the last four years, delivers a robust Latin-jazz debut centered around her multilingual, pervasive bass. "Larry and I" rides a serious slap groove with global implications. A reading of the traditional chorinho "Pagão" finds bass and 'bone locked in unison bliss. Elsewhere, the surging, odd-meter hybrid feel of "Costanera" culminates in an expansive solo, while title track shows off Ruzza's savvy samba support. —CHRIS JISI