

Swing Out Sister ★★★★★
Private View
 Shanachie

Tony Bennett/Dave Brubeck ★★★★★1/2
The White House Sessions, Live 1962
 Columbia/Legacy

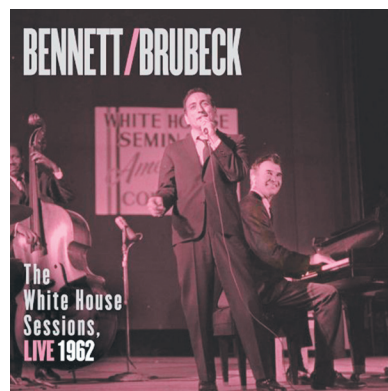
In the UK and Europe, there's a bit less of a "division" between pop and jazz styles—performers from the "pop" side of the fence are a little more eager to mix-up the two than here. Witness the cross-pollinations of Amy Winehouse, Sade, and, of course, Swing Out Sister. The UK combo, essentially singer Corrine Drewery and Andy Connell (the two remain-



Swing Out Sister.

ing original members), has made their first studio set since 2008 and like jazz performers of yore, they've decided to interpret their back catalog. *Private View* finds SOS revising their songs in a subdued, predominantly acoustic setting, at times evoking an un-plugged Steely Dan, albeit with more R&B flavor (and less sarcasm). Breezy, classy, and urbane (sans any smugness), *View* is like an offering of fine wine in a marketplace overstocked with generic soda. shanachie.com

At one time, though, jazz—*real* jazz (pardon my smugness)—was pop music. Fellows such as Dave Brubeck and Tony Bennett topped the charts without a hint of compromise. *White House Sessions* catches both on a rare night—they'd each play with their respective groups, then Bennett and Brubeck would have at it together (and without rehearsal, at that). The Brubeck Quartet featuring alto sax icon Paul Desmond is, as you'd expect, aces—singularly swinging, with that wonderful contrast between Brubeck's gregarious, slightly percussive 88s (with classical music echos) and Desmond's lithe, dry-martini alto. These cats get to stretch out (more than their studio platters), strutting their stuff with no overindulgence. Bennett—his voice looser, wailing like an instrumental-



ist—has this ring-a-ding world on a string, letting loose with some giddy, Sinatra-like abandon. The two together wing it with the aplomb of masters, striking sparks as they go. legacyrecordings.com

Son Volt ★★★★★
Honky Tonk
 Rounder

Wayne Hancock ★★★★★
Ride
 Bloodshot

Call it Americana or roots music, or whatever, but there are performers putting their own spin on classic American sounds based upon/inclusive of country, folk, rock & roll, blues, etc. Son Volt, birthed by the dissolution of proto-roots-punk outfit Uncle Tupelo, is far



Son Volt.

more "country" than most Nashville products, but that's not saying much. Son Volt's *Honky Tonk*, however, says lots—like the title implies, there's a strong leaning toward the classic Bakersfield country style of Buck Owens and Merle Haggard. A set of mid-tempo waltzes (with a hint of Cajun overtones), shuffles, and dirges framed by the yearning whine of pedal steel guitar and moonshine-sharp fiddles, singer Jay Farrar spins tales of stubborn resilience, weariness, and hangdog hope, mixing Dylan-esque poetics and Waylon Jennings grit, singing about "honky tonk angels" and "equilibrium" both. Farrar's vocals, too, evoke those gents (also Neil Young in ballad mode). If Dylan in his youth had gone to Bakersfield instead of NYC, he might've made music like this. rounder.com

Wayne "The Train" Hancock is another matter—without any trendy retro sheen or posing, he sounds as if he could be leading a combo at a Texas oilfield tavern circa 1954. With a yowling, whiskey-potent voice like a young Hank Williams Sr., Hancock's sonic stew includes raw, Williams-style country, the rowdier side of Western swing (country + jazz fusion), rockabilly, roadhouse blues, and even hints of jazz and pre-rock-era pop. While not sloppy, Hancock's stripped-down approach seems to be telling the world to take assembly-line and reality-TV slickness and shove it. Regardless of how you're feeling, *Ride* will treat you like a Saturday night, jovial barroom, vibes and all. bloodshotrecords.com

Dine in Soho



without leaving Lambertville

Every month, two lucky ICON readers win a wonderful dinner for two at Hamilton's Grill Room, one of the region's most glamorous, romantic restaurants.

All it takes is an email:
Write GLORIOUS FOOD in the subject line
then write your full name
and send to trina@icondv.com.

Just one more good reason
to read ICON.

← 38 / KERESMAN ON DISC

Ron Oswanski ★★½
December's Moon
Palmetto

There are jazz organ discs and then there's this Ron Oswanski's debut platter. Whereas most jazz organists take their cues from the soul-jazz style exemplified by Jimmy Smith and Charles Earland, Oswanski takes his from pianists most closely



Ron Oswanski.

associated with the ECM label—Keith Jarrett, Bobo Stenson, those cats, applying their spare, sometimes enigmatic approaches to the organ. And it works—instead of “cooking” like most jazz organists (not that there's anything wrong with that), RS is moodier, more reflective, but still knows how to stoke the fires. The opener roils and seethes as such that it wouldn't be out of place on Santana's *Abraxas*; Led Zeppelin's “Rain Song” (you read right) gets transformed into a restless mid-tempo number evoking late '60s/Blue Note-era Wayne Shorter (especially with Tim Ries' bittersweet soprano sax soaring/singing therein), albeit with distant

jangly folk overtones. Jay Azzolina and John Abercrombie alternate contributing tasty and varied guitar. While this *Moon* is definitely in the jazz orbit, Oswanski judiciously employs rock-style dynamics (but not bombast) and melodiousness. This isn't organ jazz inspired by the 1958-1972 epoch, but by sounds and inspirations of more recent vintage. Rock- and fusion-bred novices to jazz might do well to start here. palmetto-records.com

Kim Richey ★★½
Thorn In My Heart
Yep Roc

Ohio-born Kim Richey is a hard one for the marketing types to, uh, market—she first established herself in country music but grew beyond it, now dwelling in that gray area between “singer-songwriter,” “Americana,” and “adult album alternative.” Her “problem” is she has a winsome, honey-and-lemon voice and sings exquisite songs about affairs of the heart and the gray (again) areas therein in a style that draws almost equally between country, folk, rock, and mature pop. Richey is melancholic and introspective but she never comes across as whiny or a capital-V victim. “London Town” has a dandy Burt Bacharach-evoking French horn motif, and “Breakaway Speed” is a shimmering, twang-laced mid-tempo rocker about, well, breaking away. The pensive, blues-tinged “I Will Wait” is Richey's own “Fever,” a beat-ballad with haunting steel guitar sounding like a midnight wind cutting through the woods. The only downside of the otherwise very fine *Thorn* is it could've done with a few truly up-tempo tunes—but as this writer sees it, a new Kim Richey opus is a good thing in and of itself. If you value Dar Williams, Rosanne Cash, and/or Mary Chapin Carpenter, hear her. yeproc.com

Various Artists ★★½
Remembering Little Walter
Blind Pig

Little Walter Jacobs was one of the primo movers of blues harmonica—he emerged from the Chicago electric blues scene with a unique, innovative style that impacted nearly every blues or blues-rock performer whether s/he played harmonica or not (Eric Clapton, for one). *Remembering* finds *five* harmoni-cats paying tribute to Little Walter in a live setting: Charlie Musselwhite, Billy Boy Arnold, Mark Hummel, Sugar Ray Norcia, and James Harman. (Musselwhite and Arnold knew and were friends with LW.) Enumerating the particular high points is a waste of print, as there are so darn many—suffice it to say this platter brims over with electrifying, serrated harmonica playing and hearty, from-the-gut vocalizing. True, the lyrics are mostly of the “You're so fine/How I wish you were mine” variety—Jacobs wasn't Cole Porter, so what? It's the *feeling* of late-night, embrace-that-catharsis-and-STROLL blues, ladies and germs! Pick up *Remembering Little Walter* and turn your abode into a South Side bar that transcends Time and Place, pilgrims. blindpigrecords.com ■