

Consequently, although these songs are familiarly canonical (except the self-penned pair that fit seamlessly into such illustrious company), they sound fresh and stimulating in Prestage's tender hands. And the Joe Sacco-like cover art for *Real Music* is so absorbing that this is an album that you can judge by its cover. Rating: **8** -

Jonathan Blackstaffe

www.myspace.com/benprestage

Thorbjorn Risager - Here I Am

Cape Records COPECD 138

I reviewed Dane Thorbjorn Risager's last CD about a year ago. Now here is his latest one, which finds him with much the same backing band of six musicians including guitar, keyboards and horns. Thorbjorn himself handles the vocals and some of the guitar duties. The styles touched on include r'n'b, 'Blue Eyed' Soul and New Orleans r'n'b (with a *souppçon* of funk!). All ten songs are originals.

The title track, which opens the CD, is an absolute cracker! It has everything, funky keyboards, punchy horns, tasty slide guitar all overlaid with some heartfelt vocals, really liked this one! The up-tempo "All I Want" is a radio friendly soul boogie tune with Thorbjorn taking the guitar break. The pace slows for the ballad "Heart Of The Night" with tasty guitar from Thorbjorn over a riffing horn section. Vocals here reminded me of Joe Cocker. There are good band dynamics on the chugging "From Now On" with piano and sax to the fore; I liked this one. We move into an early jazzy r'n'b style for "You Better Pay Attention" which featured a trumpet solo and a nice piano coda. There's a good bass line riff to "Take It Off" which pushes this song along, another highlight for me. There is a funky beat and Joe Cocker-like vocals on "Down Home Blues". "Johnny Called The Whole Thing Off" is another top-notch song with a hint of Tony Joe White about it. It has a slinky, swampy slide guitar riff and a cracking vocal performance, excellent stuff! The CD closes with a quiet, understated ballad. "I Won't Let You Down" which creates a nice contrast.

Thorbjorn has a great voice (and as I said previously with no trace of an accent), gravelly and powerful and Joe Cocker was brought to mind more than once. Having a horn section means the band generate a big full sound but without the horns taking over. In fact the emphasis is on the band as a whole and not on individual performances so there is no epic soloing just short, to the point breaks. The song writing standard is good and the songs fit well into the style of music. I thoroughly enjoyed this CD and it gets a 'Recommended' sticker! Someone should get this guy and his band to a festival over here. Believe

me, this is a CD that is well worth tracking down.

Rating: **9** - *R. Jim Greaves*

e-mail annika.westman@bredband.net

The Spoon Benders - Resurrecting the Giants

The facts: one debut album, eight original songs and 32 minutes of power blues-funk. Now, the quotes... The Spoon Benders, 'are a power trio in the classic sense... [who] strive to hit you in the gut, the heart, the head, and the feet all at once so that you don't know whether to dance, sing, laugh, cry, or just listen. At their increasingly wild and unpredictable shows, you can usually find somebody out in the crowd doing all five at once.'

'Stylistically, I guess we're a hodge-podge of classic rock and American roots music,' is the view of frontman and chief song writer Matt Winfree, 'try to imagine Albert Collins, the Funky Meters, Paul Simon, Jeff Buckley, Jimi Hendrix, the Police, U2 and the Black Crowes all peeing into the same bucket. Our pee would smell something like that.'

The assessment: terrific, invigorating, simple, brave and very heavy. Winfree's vocals are as rich and smooth as traditional Italian hot chocolate and his lead is devastatingly elegant, like a forest fire. Brian Bennett drums as Muhammad Ali punched while Yves Giraud's bass has more funk than a lavatory cleaner on a Monday morning. Hitting you like a shot of adrenaline, *Resurrecting the Giants* rarely strays from either uniquely luminous. Rating: **8** - *Jonathan Blackstaffe*
www.thespoonbenders.net

Various - House Rockin' and Blues Shoutin'! Blue Witch Records 103

Blue Witch Records follow up their fine Big Pete Pearson CD with a set that is aptly described in the title – *House Rockin' and Blues Shoutin'!* – subtitled *Celebrating 15 Years of The Rhythm Room*. And that is exactly what this set delivers – a stomping set of live blues from The Rhythm Room in Phoenix, Arizona.

The set opens with the first of three tracks from the Fabulous Thunderbirds – Jimmy Rogers' "Goin' Away Baby" recorded on 2001. This number finds Kim Wilson and co in a deep blues mode on a "Rollin' n' Tumblin'" clone replete with declamatory vocals and churning harp riding Troy Gonyea's hypnotic Muddy influenced guitar riff. The other tracks are the funky horn fired Crescent City R&B of "Rich Woman" (2004) – which I can only describe as Bo Diddley New Orleans style – and the frantic harp fired shuffle