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Lookin' the World Over

Dom Martin: *Buried In The Hail* (Forty Below; ★★★★★ 40:02) British blues fans and award shows are all in, agreeing that ex-Belfast pub performer Dom Martin as the guitarist on the current London scene. His third and best album isn't so guitar-centric, though. Martin's sincere feeling and sharp musical intelligence in using electric guitar in empathic blues-rock are on display, praise be, but he's just as involved with his singing (sometimes in tortured-soul emulation of Scottish blues-folk iconoclast John Martyn) and his ace songwriting. Favoring sardonic and dark lyrics, the 33-year-old salves old emotional wounds with brave resolve.

Ordering info: fortybelowrecords.com.

Mathias Lattin: *Up Next* (VizzTone; ★★★½ 34:12) The big winner at the 2023 International Blues Challenge was a 20-year-old bluesman on the Houston scene, a former jazz studies student in high school. Mathias Lattin now takes the next step on his career path with his first album. His guitar playing isn't too far from having an authoritative presence, spurred as it by his ever-growing confidence, and he's a smooth singer working through the influence of various r&b artists in the past. Lattin, too, is making strides as a composer of tunes that spring from life experience. Along with his working band, the young man invites the specter of Stevie Ray Vaughan to "Party," cranks out ominous blues-rock on "Second Degree" and makes pop-blues "I Tried So Hard" upliftingly special.

Ordering info: vizztone.com.

David Bennett Cohen: *Seems Like A Good Time For The Blues* (self-release; ★★★½ 41:51) David Bennett Cohen doesn't impart the wisdom of the late great Mose Allison yet he has a lot to say as one of the very few piano-playing blues sages active today. Wryly in tune with his surroundings, he weighs in on cooking, aging, neighborliness, modern malaise, matrimony, walking the streets of New York. Once you get used to it, his precise singing takes on a certain charm. The real pleasure of Cohen's music is his activity on the 88s, especially when he transports listeners to Fess Longhair's New Orleans. And it's to his advantage that Greenwich Village comrade Arthur Neilson supplies fine, decisive guitar solos. Worth noting: Cohen, Neilson and the rhythm section develop an elevated level of collective empathy reviving "Flyin' High," a trippy tale Cohen originally played with 1960s political-psychedellic rock band Country Joe & the Fish.

Ordering info: davidbennettcohen.com.

Various Artists: *Parchman Prison Prayer* (Glitterbeat; ★★★½ 37:26) Well-regarded producer Ian Brennan travels the world recording albums that document mu-



Dom Martin's sharp intelligence

sic performers of what he calls "under-represented and persecuted populations." Notorious prison-without-walls Parchman Farm in Mississippi — once temporary home to Bukka White, Son House and R. L. Burnside — received a visit by Brennan and his rudimentary electronic gear in early 2023. (Ninety years earlier folklorists John and Alan Lomax first began taping Parchman inmates.) He set up at a Sunday morning chapel service and coaxed nine very good or fairly decent feature singers and the Prison Choir to stirringly pledge their faith via standard gospel repertoire and originals. (A few guitarists and pianists had minor roles.) Hope, joy, shame, remorse and sad acceptance of their lot are part of their emotional makeup. Holy eeriness haunts "Solve My Need" as prisoner M. Palmer's deep bass vocal tones are engulfed by a torrent of reverb.

Ordering info: glitterbeat.com.

Candice Ivory: *When The Levee Breaks—The Music of Memphis Minnie* (Little Village; ★★★ 45:59) An early link between urban and country blues, singer-guitarist-songwriter Memphis Minnie has great stature in the blues story. Candice Ivory, a St. Louis-based jazz-and-more singer with Memphis roots, knows it and celebrates Minnie with an album that has her treating a dozen songs recorded by her foremother in the early 1930s. Ivory's appealing, heartfelt voice goes at the lyrics with determination to assimilate Minnie's dramatic sense. Still, *Levee Breaks* is a bit of a letdown. As producer, arranger and guitarist, Charlie Hunter does not achieve blues feel; his modern blues worldview is skewed by awkward involvements of African percussion, steel guitar, Rasta rhythms, etc. Better had Ivory partnered with a Minnie enthusiast like Bonnie Raitt, Maria Muldaur or Alvin Youngblood Hart.

Ordering info: littlevillagefoundation.org

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