

Thorogood Blues

**George Thorogood
and The Destroyers**
Stockade

George Thorogood is a white American kid from Wilmington, Delaware, who's sort of a throwback. He plays blues. Not blues-based rock music, not slick urban shuffles, but stone blues, circa 1955, electrified country blues, like Elmore James and John Lee Hooker.

He first began to contemplate a music career after seeing John Hammond Jr in 1970, and there is more than a passing similarity to his hero, who is also an acknowledged favourite of Rory Gallagher.

Thorogood's reputation has been spread by the likes of Nick Lowe. Lowe's comment was, "He's just one of those guys you get a feeling about — you think, 'Yeah, he's got it.'"

He's got it alright. A slurring snarl over a bitch of a beat, searing slide guitar, and a stomp it to the bricks approach that doesn't quit.

His debut album, *George Thorogood and the Destroyers* fully endorses the hearsay. The ferocity of the opening cut, Earl Hooker's "You Got to Lose", will rock you in your socks.

Thorogood has mastered the whine of the Elmore James bottleneck style and he includes two of James' pieces. "Madison Blues" is done to a turn, the "dance" style lyrics being more suited to Thorogood's punky slur than James' tense wheeze. James' "Can't Stop Lovin'" is also rendered admirably.

The show stopper on the album is an elongated (eight and a half minutes) version of John Lee Hooker's jivey "One Bourbon, One Scotch and One Beer." It's maybe a mite long, but Thorogood's got the humour to carry it through.

His affection for fifties R&B is displayed in Bo Diddley's "Ride On Josephine." It's a long time since anyone dared work out the old "shave and a haircut" rhythm. To use a favourite expression of Diddley's, the album's a "pumper."

To close the record, Thorogood trots out a slide guitar workout, "Delaware Slide", a real bag of tricks showstopper.

The Destroyers are a small unit, just guitar, bass and drums, but it's a one-man show. The drummer's okay and the bass player no more than adequate, but Thorogood doesn't need them. His careering energy drags along the other two (Jeff Smith on drums and Billy Blau, bass), but there is a certain bareness here and there on the record.

While he's an ace on electric guitar and has a sure touch on acoustic, Thorogood's two acoustic numbers, Robert Johnson's "Kind Hearted

Woman" and the traditional "John Hardy" (featuring Dylanish harmonica) lack authority. Both sound prim and a little fussy, worlds away from the ginmill swagger of his band songs.

He's the hottest white bluesman since Johnny Winter came out of Texas, but Thorogood's decision to work in a relatively esoteric field may keep him from the wider audience.

Of course, what the future holds for Thorogood remains to be seen. He's young (barely 20, according to some sources, but there is confusion) and plays with an uncompromising energy uncommon in any age, let alone the soporific seventies.

He leaves the notes ringing in the air, this boy, and if his rhythm section could foot it with him this debut album could have been as good as anything you ever heard. As it is, it's just short of brilliant. A real mutha.

Ken Williams

Steel Pulse
Handsworth Revolution
Island

Handsworth, Birmingham, is the home of Steel Pulse. The roots are African, the upbringing is, of necessity, British. Steel Pulse make reggae music that melds the two influences into

something very potent indeed.

Handsworth Revolution is a milestone in music, since it establishes a sound that is both black and British. What it lacks in raw energy that can only come from Trenchtown, it makes up for in its relation to its surroundings; terraced homes, allotments, fish and chips, betting shops.

The debt that Steel Pulse owe to the Wailers manifests itself in lead singer David Hinds, whose phrasing and delivery strongly recall Marley. This is not criticism, since what this world needs is more vocalists who can emote in the same way as Ras Bob. Hinds can move just as profoundly, at his best.

But don't go expecting another *Natty Dread* here. Steel Pulse aim for the head, rather than the feet. Rhythm is not neglected, but it takes repeated listenings to appreciate the strong points of this album.

Lyricaly, Steel Pulse recall Gil Scott Heron and other musical philosophers. They have a strong Biblical message and while their Rasta faith comes across strongly, they manage to avoid clichés adroitly.

Their melodies etch themselves on the brain very easily, with Hinds' superb vocals emphasising their strength. Ace producer Karl Pitterson does his thing with inimitable style, stamping 'Quality' all over this disc, and making it well worth everyone's time.

Duncan Campbell

Dire Straits
Vertigo

Formed last year by brothers Mark and David Knopfler, Dire Straits have since attracted considerable attention, particularly around London, for their brand of laidback confederate rock. When anger and aggression were drawing record contracts guitarist Mark Knopfler was writing J.J. Cale influenced songs and playing his Stratocaster as if the so called new wave didn't exist.

On this their debut album Muff Winwood has been unjustly criticized for his over clean production and subdued mixing of David Knopfler's rhythm guitar. The album has its faults but they don't lie in the production, they lie instead in the weakness of the songs on the first side which can boast only the snappy "Down to the Waterline" and the brooding bluesy "Six Blade Knife" as effective tracks. Side Two is a different story; beginning with their anthem "Sultans of Swing" which proves they are just that, Dire Straits led by Mark Knopfler's Dylanish vocals and tasteful restrained guitar breaks, cruise through "In the Gallery" reggae-style and pay homage to John Martyn with the smoky vocal delivery of the great "Wild West End". Mark Knopfler deserves to make it for this track alone.

With Knopfler's potential song writing ability and talent for wry lyrics the next Dire Straits album should be the realisation of the promise present on this debut.

George Kay

Dion
Return of the Wanderer
Lifesong

Dion DiMucci is one of rock's survivors. He has been at the top (with and without the Belmonts), and at the bottom, has beaten heavy drug problems, and has been versatile enough to challenge changes in musical fashions.

After forays into blues, folk-balladeering and a one-off collaboration with Phil Spector, Dion's wheel has turned full circle. The greatest Wop Doo-Wopper returns to street pop, the sound of the city in heat.

So many early rockers still treading the boards are almost pathetic figures living in the fading glow of long ago success. Here Dion shows that like his artistic godson, Bruce Springsteen, he was born to run. The album includes the superb "looking back" fantasy, "Midtown American Main Street Gang," as evocative of street corner singing and subway echo as anything you'll hear.

He also does Tom Waits' "Heart of Saturday Night," Dylan's "Spanish Harlem Incident" and



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