

Pride's no shrinking violet; he announces himself as the "Real Deal" and backs up his boast before segueing into the slow-grind "Sunrise," where guitarist Jon Moeller takes time for a slicing two-chorus solo. The singer wrote or co-wrote everything on the disc save a revival of Bob Marley's tender "Waiting in Vain," and his muse remains on target on the uptempo "Midnight Call," "I Wanna Be the Man You Want," and the droll "Layin' Eggs," as well as a mellower "Love Will Make It Alright." Revisiting "I'm Com'un Home in the Morn'un," a highlight of his El Paso days (the original 45 on the Suemi label has long been worth big bucks on the British Northern Soul circuit), the song's surging bass line slices deep.

The plea for peace and brotherhood at the heart of "Love Will Make It Alright" would have fit into the '70s, too, when the Staple Singers routinely engaged in uplifting fare for the secular market. Such inspiring messages — the closing "Hold On to Your Dream" plows similar sanctified ground — are as welcome now as they were then. So is Lou Pride's timeless brand of soul.

**BILL DAHL**

**DION**  
*Bronx in Blue*  
Dimensional  
Music 061



The guy who gave us '60s pop hits such as "The Wanderer," "Run-around Sue," "Lovers Who Wander," "Ruby Baby," and "Donna the Prima Donna" is a bluesman at heart. Who knew?

Dion has been a protest singer, too, and has sung religious tunes. But with 1991's *Bronx Blues*, a compilation of rare mid-'60s work for Columbia, those who pegged him simply as a clean-cut pop star had to reevaluate him. Legendary producer Richard Gottferrer coaxed Dion back into blues after hearing him interviewed on public radio in 2003. The singer-songwriter dove into this new *Bronx in Blue* project with as much gusto as a teenager in love. Accompanied only by his acoustic guitar and a wisp of percussion, Dion dusts off a handful of classics — and songs that should have been classics — and adds one original. A few usual suspects turn up here, and returning to the much-covered Robert Johnson four times might be excessive, but Dion's clear, emotionally driven vocals and surprisingly accomplished guitar playing yield a terrific, very personal album.

The sound is warm and full as the rich-voiced singer tackles Lightnin' Hopkins' "You Better Watch Yourself" and Jimmy Rogers' "You're the One." Howlin' Wolf's "Built for Comfort" and "How Many More Years" receive impressive readings. The arrangements aren't particularly unique, but Dion's vocals are powerful and convincing. His attempt at Bo Diddley's "Who Do You Love" is less successful; Dion isn't edgy enough to convince anyone he uses a cobra snake for a necktie. Still, he breathes

fresh life into Johnson's hoary "Crossroads" and Jimmy Reed's "Baby What You Want Me To Do," no small feat considering how often these chestnuts have been covered.

Stripped-down yet smooth enough to attract Keb' Mo' fans, *Bronx in Blue* finds Dion performing remarkably well as a bluesman. Based on this triumphant foray, it's a genre he should continue to explore on future recordings.

**HAL HOROWITZ**

**BUDDY GUY**  
*Bring 'em In*  
Jive/Silvertone 72426



This album might just as well have been called *Bring It On*. Nobody else has the same energy, vitality, or genuine passion as Buddy Guy (who was recently inducted to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame), and each note of *Bring 'em In* suggests he knows it. Any doubt is removed by Guy's pyrotechnic rendition of "I Put a Spell On You," a hair-raising, goosebump-inducing version featuring Carlos Santana. Though the result is unmistakably Santana, Guy has more than enough personality to hold his own in the partnership.

Guy's output through the 1990s and into the new millennium has been both experimental and erratic, but no one can accuse him of repeating the same old thing. *Bring 'em In* has more soul and R&B inflection than is typical for Guy, and this experiment succeeds at times. It works well on "Cut You Loose," where Guy stops worrying and just lets it all hang out. Some of his partnerships are well-advised, particularly "Ain't No Sunshine" with Tracy Chapman and "The Price You Gotta Pay" with Keith Richards. The latter strikes a fine balance between the laid-back feel of the music and the serious nature of the lyrics.

Even when the choice of material or arrangement doesn't quite fit, Guy's energy and invention carry the day. Erratic or not, *Bring 'em In* proves that this elder statesman isn't resting on his laurels. Longtime fans might justifiably crave the less mannered, more free-form approach of recordings such as *Damn Right, I've Got the Blues* or *Sweet Tea*, but the solid *Bring 'em In* contains some gems.

**GENEVIEVE WILLIAMS**

**TOM PRINCIPATO**  
*Guitar Gumbo*  
Powerhouse 123

Recorded before Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, guitarist Tom Principato's newest album now seems even more like a tribute. Many of the songs recall New Orleans in spirit and sound, with tasty Telecaster leads weaving between the choruses on covers of Roy Byrd's "Hey Now Baby," Hank Williams' "Jambalaya (On the Bayou)," and the classic "Drinkin' Wine