



Stefan Grossman

Acoustic Guitaristry

An acoustic guitar of an extremely high standard is on exhibit in new releases by three formidable players of very different stylistic bents.

When it comes to bluegrass flatpicking, Tony Rice may be the best ever. To even be mentioned in the same breath with Clarence White, Norman Blake, and Doc Watson is staggering enough, but Rice arguably stretched the flat-top farther than any of them, with David Grisman's groundbreaking quintet and his own Tony Rice Unit. Both of those groups were strictly instrumental – remarkable, considering that Rice was already considered perhaps bluegrass' best vocalist.

Bill Monroe's centennial was in 2011, and there were numerous tributes. But much like the way he lets other soloists have their say before stepping forward (check out "Jerusalem Ridge," where fiddler Rickie Simpkins and mandolinist Jimmy Gaudreau take fine turns before Rice patiently builds an amazing solo), this 14-song set is about as good as it gets.

Culled from his two dozen Rounder albums, Rice – surrounded by Dobro king Jerry Douglas, banjo

great J.D. Crowe, bassist Todd Phillips, mandolinist Doyle Lawson, brothers Wyatt and Larry on rhythm guitars, and others – is utterly at home.

Gut-string fingerstylist

Lawson Rollins' impressive solo outings, *Infinita* and *Espirito*, couldn't have prepared anyone for his latest cross-cultural, globe-trekking exploration. With contributions from players as far flung as pedal steeler Jim Hoke, guitarist/vocalist/co-producer Shahin Shahida, and edgy-but-tasteful-and-melodic electric courtesy of Buckethead, even "world music" seems an inadequate blanket to wrap around what Rollins has created here. But whatever it is, he's a master of it.

There aren't many genres Stefan Grossman hasn't delved into since he cut his first album 45 years ago – having recorded with Paul Simon, Tokio Uchida, Rory Block, Danny Kalb, Mickey Baker, and others. But the 66-year-old Brooklyn native is mainly known as a blues fingerpicker extraordinaire, having learned directly from Rev. Gary Davis, beginning when he was 15.

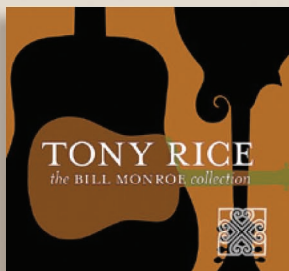
Because of the hats he has worn as label head, producer, and educator,

his performing career has sometimes been overlooked. But with the excellent "Guitar Artistry" DVD series (spotlighting David Bromberg, Geoff Muldaur, John Fahey, and others), in which he serves as producer and unseen/unheard interviewer, we finally have a generous (155-minute) DVD spotlighting *him*.

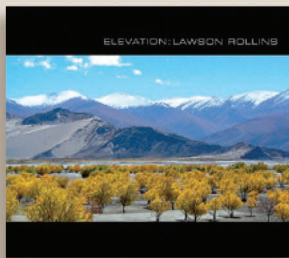
The repertoire encompasses impeccably played blues, ragtime, gospel, and jazz (he and John Renbourn offer a beautiful rendition of Charlie Mingus' "Goodbye Porkpie Hat"), interspersed with fascinating stories about Rev. Davis and the Folk Boom days. There's even an early-'60s television clip of Grossman's band of future all-stars, the Even Dozen Jug Band.

Included on the DVD is a pdf containing tablature for most songs, as well as an extensive bio and descriptions of the tunes. And, as if intended exclusively for *VG* readers, there's a list of all the guitars played, including various Martins (the oldest being a 1930 OM-45), a '39 Gibson Advanced Jumbo, a '30s Euphonon, a '20s Stella 12-string, and more.

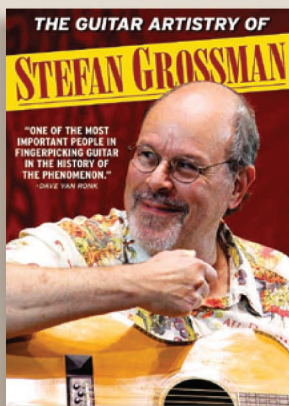
If any of this sets off an "academic" alarm, rest assured; it's anything but. Grossman's passion for the instrument comes through whether he's playing it or talking about it. – **Dan Forte**



Tony Rice
The Bill Monroe Collection
Rounder



Lawson Rollins
Elevation
Infinita



Stefan Grossman
The Guitar Artistry Of
Vestapol



Contino
Back Porch Dogma
Blind Pig

Pete Contino is the son of Dick Contino, who was once billed as "the world's greatest accordion player." Mindful of such a legacy, the younger Contino is a seriously skilled player who blends his instrument seamlessly into his band's sound rather than taking a lesser, novelty-type approach.

Though he operates ostensibly under a blues banner, much of what Contino does on his debut disc will likely remind you very much of *Children Of The Future*-era Steve Miller. That's especially so on originals like "Rotgut Run," "One Thing," or "Big Tent." The latter is a jumping number that has guest vocalist Maria Muldaur singing with a funky abandon that might surprise those who forget her jug-band beginnings and think of her only as a folk-pop balladeer. The tune also boasts a search-and-destroy sortie of a solo from former Spanic Boys guitarist Al Ek, who is not just a great player but who also boasts one of the coolest names in showbiz.

Truth be told, the whole darn band here is just *on*, and everyone seems to know just what to do and when to do it. On Willie Love's "V-8 Ford," Ek proves just as fine a harp man as he is a guitar player. On Tom Waits' "Temptation," Contino lays an eerie, serpentine accordion over Billy Truitt's organ/piano background that fits the cabaret style rumba to a T. The mix of tasty originals like the aforementioned "Big Tent," and "Zydeco Train" and tasteful, judiciously selected covers like the Waits tune and Lieber and Stoller's "Three Cool Cats" combine for a toe-tapping blast of a disc. Just say "yes." – **Rick Allen**



Gerry Beaudoin
The Return
Francesca Records

Gerry Beaudoin is indeed back. And with a vengeance. This new album is a masterful showpiece, displaying all aspects of his seemingly effortless fretwork.

Beaudoin boasts impressive credentials. He was mentored by swingman Bucky Pizzarelli and has played and recorded alongside Duke Robillard, Ronnie Earl, Howard Alden, David