

Courtesy of RCA Records

Pianist Jason D. Williams

Southern pianist to boogie at Zoo Bar performance

By Robert Richardson
Senior Reporter

If musician Jason D. Williams didn't know how to play the piano, he said he would want to work at the Playboy Mansion as a bartender.

But Williams, 31, who will be showcasing his talents tonight at the Zoo Bar, does know how to play the piano. And he hasn't taken a lesson since he started playing at age 7.

Williams has been compared to a cross between Jagger and Liberace, but he says his incentive for playing the piano used to be watermelon.

"I used to play the piano and my brother would give me watermelon," Williams said.

Growing up in Eldorado, Ark., Wil-

liams was adopted by Hank and Marie Williams at six months. He now lives in Memphis, Tenn., and has put out a debut album "Tore Up," that has made the critics nervous.

Although Williams claims, in his best Southern drawl, that he is faster and harder on the piano than Jerry Lee Lewis was, his style — down to the curl in his lip — resembles that of the famed piano man.

But that doesn't bother Williams a bit. "I get real excited when I'm up there playing," Williams said. "It's no imitation of Jerry Lee Lewis, it's just fun."

Williams credits his high energy, aerobic show to the audience. He said Lincoln audiences have been good to him

See PIANIST on 10

Blues break

Album refreshes

By James Finley
Staff Reporter

In this age of pre-programmed, synthesized music, it's nice to hear some 12-bar blues being played by humans, particularly Albert Collins.

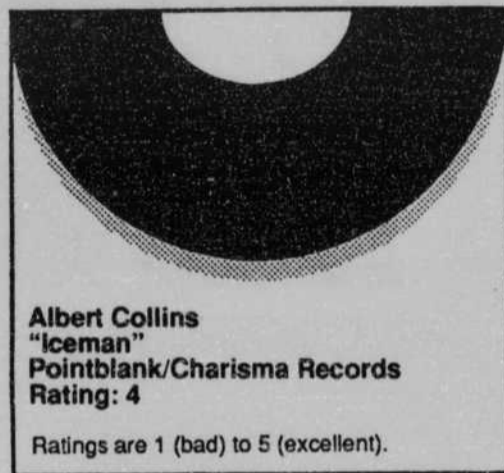
On his new Pointblank/Charisma release, "Iceman," Collins unleashes a funky flurry of soul and blues from his Telecaster that is truly refreshing.

Every song on the album is in the 12-bar blues form. This could get old, but Collins doesn't let it — he uses the horn line, The Uptown Horns, on most tracks to complement his own punctuating riffs. The bass work by Johnny B. Gayden drives the tunes along, and the solid backbeat that Soko Richardson provides makes every track sound tight.

On the opening cut, "Mr. Collins, Mr. Collins," Collins kicks things off with an up-tempo, jump-blues offering that cuts through the changes with searing and funky riffs, accented by the slap-bass. The Uptown Horns get started right away with tight background licks that show a James Brown influence.

The second track, "Iceman," displays an even greater Brown influence, from the horn section through Collins' solos. The listener can almost envision Brown in all his splendor strutting and screaming along with this tune.

Collins slows things down with the blues of "Don't Mistake Kindness for Weakness." His riffs are filled with the pain and emotion that the blues embodies. Collins does more singing on this track than on the first two, and he does well. His voice is smooth but aged, which complements his guitar well.



Albert Collins
"Iceman"
Pointblank/Charisma Records
Rating: 4

Ratings are 1 (bad) to 5 (excellent).

The fourth cut, "Travellin' South," displays the most rockabilly influence of all the tunes, but Collins shows he is adept at this genre as well. At times, the listener is reminded of the late Stevie Ray Vaughan, but considering that Collins is nearly 60 years old, he was probably an influence of Vaughan's.

While this is one of the best tracks on the album, along with "The Hawk," it also displays the weakness of Collins' unique open D-minor tuning with a capo on the seventh fret. At times, in this and "The Hawk," his guitar sounds a little thin in relation to the rest of the band. A little flaw, but nothing too major.

Collins gets funky on the next two tracks, "Put The Shoe On The Other Foot" and "I'm Beginning To Wonder," and his backing band

See COLLINS on 10

Blues effort shadows late '70s in style, adds sterility to sound

By James Finley
Staff Reporter

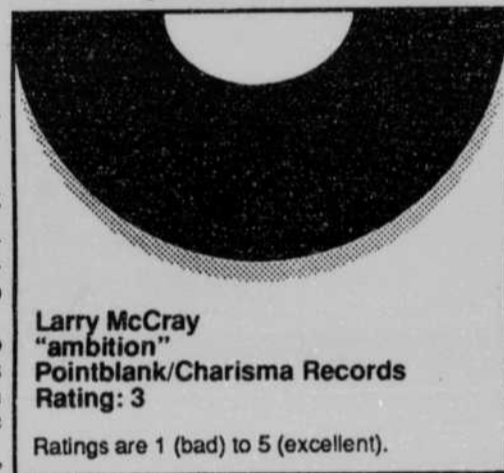
This album is called a blues album, but it sounds more like Lou Rawls meets Bo Diddley, backed by Blood, Sweat and Tears.

From the opening notes of the first cut, "Nobody Never Hurt Nobody With the Blues," McCray launches into his rock-style contemporary blues, using his smooth voice and adequate guitar skills to take the listener back to the blues of the late '70s.

The biggest flaw is that the influences are so easily identifiable. McCray should go for his own sound, which incorporates elements from his influences, but doesn't sound exactly like them.

The next tune, "Count on Me for Love," seems to be too cleanly produced to be real blues. It's too sanitary; there's no emotion. The horn section is great, reminiscent of some of the great stuff by B, S & T. McCray fills his solo breaks with too many "higher-faster-louder" type solos to be effective.

McCray's singing seems to take a vacation on the third cut, "One More Lonely Night." His voice still is smooth, but his singing is sloppy, which doesn't fit the precise soft jazz style of the song.



Larry McCray
"ambition"
Pointblank/Charisma Records
Rating: 3

Ratings are 1 (bad) to 5 (excellent).

The best blues example on the album is found on "Country Girl," the fifth song. This is a slow blues tune that could have allowed McCray to really show his talent. Instead, he does more of the same on the guitar. But he does show more emotion in his voice, which almost makes up for it.

Despite these shortcomings, McCray manages to capture the true feeling, and humor, of

See McCRAY on 10

JudyBats upbeat, energetic

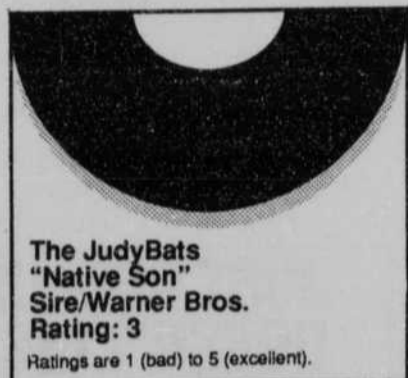
By Julie Naughton
Senior Editor

The newest addition to the "I-wanna-be-R.E.M." band list is the Tennessee-bred group the JudyBats, who take their name from the age-old puppet show of Punch and Judy.

The group's light melodies and bouncy lyrics are addictive. Their debut album for Sire/Warner Bros., "Native Son," for the most part is upbeat, energetic, hip music with a fun twist. However, the album is erratic in places, mixing real flashes of musical brilliance with musical sludge.

On "Native Son," the JudyBats combine elements of folk, jazz, pop and rock to create a sound that — even when it turns to sludge — is never boring.

"Incognito," a rich, mellow tune, combines smoothly blended vocals and vibrant lyrics for a song that drifts



The JudyBats
"Native Son"
Sire/Warner Bros.
Rating: 3

Ratings are 1 (bad) to 5 (excellent).

pleasantly over the listener.

Also pleasant is "Native Son," the album's title cut. "Native son/ where have you gone," the group sings to a rhythmic drum beat. There's nothing brain-straining here; the song is simply light, danceable fluff.

The album takes a veer into reality — and intelligible lyrics — with "In

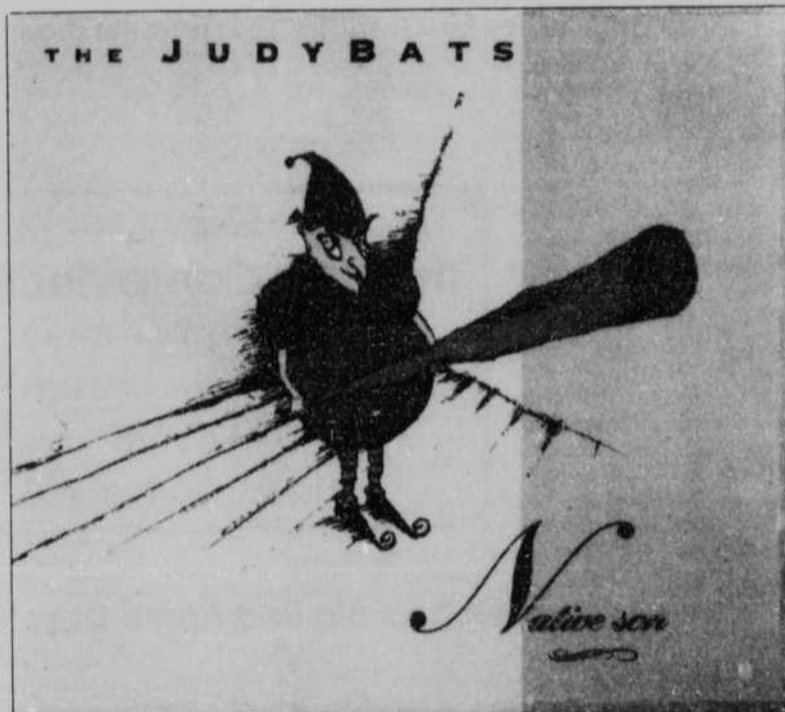
Like With You," a commentary on the state between like and love. "Isn't this who we are?/ Another sleazy bar/ another tinkling in the glass. . ."

Continuing in the reality mode is the album's best song, the thoughtful "Don't Drop the Baby." This interpretation of childhood and adulthood is a fabulous combination of meaningful lyrics and a driving melody. Ripping drums add texture to the effect.

"Aren't we all born at sea?/ Water breaks, the woman screams. . .," lead singer Jeff Heiskell plaintively wails. Heiskell's distinctive vocal style is reminiscent of R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe.

Heiskell is ably backed by Ed Winters on electric guitars, Terry Casper on drums, Peggy Hambright on keyboards, violin and vocals, Timothy Stutz on electric bass and

See JUDYBATS on 10



Courtesy of Warner Bros.