

## new releases

vocals of Vince Johnson add stone-cold cool to the late-night urgency of *3AM*. Other Beale Street blazers like Blind Mississippi Morris, who adds harmonica throughout, make this a steamy, colorful case study in Memphis-inspired, soulful, at times gospel-inflected, blues.

Billy Lavender is flawless in his execution of soul-charged guitar, and audacious in his musical telepathy with his Memphis musical family. **Memphis Livin'** is a record that is as saucy and satisfying as the city's famous barbecue.

—MARK URICHECK

## TIA CARROLL

Live

Big Cat Records - BCR-0942958

Tia Carroll had specialized in rock and soul until seeing Koko Taylor a dozen years ago caused her to switch to blues. The Richmond, California-based vocalist must have been especially impressed with Taylor's **Force of Nature**, as her third CD—supposedly recorded live, though there's no evidence of



an audience—leads off with three songs from the 1993 Alligator release: the Vasti Johnson composition *Let The Juke Joint Jump*, the Rick Estrin-penned *Don't Put Your Hands On Me*, and Leiber and Stoller's *Hound Dog*.

Carroll does carry Taylor's stylistic torch, but only to a degree. A Koko-like growl turns up often in her booming alto vocals, yet she also uses considerable finesse in her phrasing, achieving, not unlike Etta James, a rare balance between rawness and refinement. Taylor's influence also shows in some of Carroll's

five original songs, especially *2 Drink Minimum*, built on a *Wang Dang Doodle* foundation. "We gonna all meet down at the club. We all gonna cut a rug. You've got about four hours of fun on a two-drink minimum," she wails with appropriate abandon. For *If I Didn't Know*, Carroll borrows the melody and groove of *Down Home Blues*, singing, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't teach an old dog new tricks." *If I Didn't Know* and *No Good 4 Me* are more soul-oriented and utilize what sounds like a drum machine.

Completing the CD, on which Carroll is supported solidly on most tracks by a band comprising guitarist Joel Cohen, pianist-organist Jimmy Smith, bassist Willie Riser, drummer Artie Chavez, and saxophonist Rik Munson, are winning renditions of Ike Turner's *Matchbox* and the Jerry Williams-penned Delbert McClinton hit *Giving It Up For Your Love*.

—LEE HILDEBRAND

## LITTLE JUNIOR CRUDUP

*Baddest Man Alive*

SoSwell Records - SSW00144CD


Like his late uncle, Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup, Earl "Little Junior" Crudup is quite a word-smith. "I pimp-slapped a tiger, and I dared him to cry. I put a chokehold on an elephant, and I choked him till he died. I'm Little Junior Crudup, baby, and I'm the baddest man alive," the Forrest, Mississippi-born, Oakland, California-based bluesman wails in gruff tenor tones on the shuffling *Dust My Broom*-style title track of his second CD.

Crudup may present himself as a superhero, but he's not afraid to admit his fear of gold-digging women, especially on *Sho-Nuff Scared Of You*, a slow blues about one who "drove six men to drinking, put four of 'em on skid row, put eight of 'em in the welfare line 'cause you took 'em for all their dough, put five in the crazy house 'cause they ain't got their minds no mo', buried three of 'em in the cemetery, and got two jealous fools on death row."

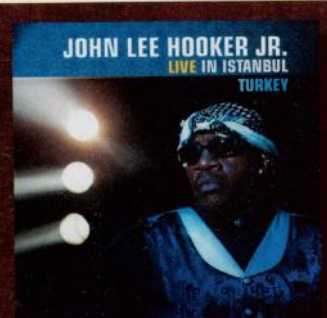
The 11-song disc ends with the highly provocative *Blues Ain't Black No Mo*. "They stole our blues and got filthy rich and left us nothing but poverty," Crudup sings, citing Eric Clapton and other unnamed musicians from "across the sea" and charging Elvis Presley with having ripped off his family. "They feed us crumbs and let us sell a few CDs," he adds.

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