

**EXCERPTS FROM "WANDA'S PICKS" – by Wanda Sabir
San Francisco Bay View National Newspaper**

LARRY VANN

Larry's to be congratulated on his new CD, "The Rhythm and Roots of Larry Vann," that rocks the blues, jazz, funk traditions of Rufus Thomas, Lightnin' Hopkins and Roger, as in Zap Band. "Here's a Little Groove for You (Part 1)" sets the pace, which doesn't let up, each track swinging from opening song until the vinyl runs out. And because there are only 12 cuts, I just put "Rhythm and Roots" on continuous play as I cruised down Embarcadero along Pier 39, 41 ... past Palomino and Delancey Street headed toward Pac Bell.

I wasn't bothered by the awful taxi drivers... color blind adults who thought red meant go, and pedestrians who pushed the "right away rule." Traffic? What traffic?

"Sexy soul ... pour it all over me."

Okay, so I'm looking for Harrison as "Party 'til the Morning Light" shakes my little Legend – timbales providing the rhythm for my feet. Drivin' along the San Francisco Bay headed back East after an Indonesian Independence day celebration at the Consulate Aug. 17 – my sister-in-law is Indonesian - I turn up the stereo and try to bump it. Unfortunately, I didn't possess a cool suspension system, which would have made a much better impression as I cruised along the Marina. Props are almost as important as the score, I think, as I adjust my camera. Almost. A long convertible — or at least a fast, slick sport vehicle was in order, not a practical Legend. Who's heard of a Mitsubishi Legend?

Oh well, "The weather's hot ... and the (boys) are oh so ... pretty. Summertime in the big city."

Nice bass, trumpet ... keyboards, guitar, and of course Vann's drumming. I don't know how he sings and drums at the same time. I'm always amazed when I hear a voice coming from behind the horn section at the Friday Night Fish Fries. Talk about multi-talented, Vann has played with everyone from the late Charles Brown, The Whispers, Martha Reeves, The Marvalettes and Buffy Saint-Marie to Randy Crawford.

"A professional performer since age 15, Vann draws from a deep well of musical influence, including gospel, blues, funk, jazz and soul," all present on this latest CD.

My favorite song is "Here's a Little Groove" and the closing reprise. It's just so funky ... Rufus again, this time in pink shorts, warming up the burners. The temperature on low, isolated drum beats on the tom understated impressions like random thoughts on a canvas ... each voice laced between cow bell, horns, guitar cries, the musical chorus and alto sax solo ... "Larry's got a groove for you."

On Jimmy Cliff's "Sitting in Limbo," Vann testifies like a southern preacher. While "Hero's Blues" is not about waiting patiently, it's about cutting your losses and moving on, a lot easier said than done, according to guests Chicago blues guitarist Elvin Bishop and keyboardist Merl Saunders.

While the slower numbers are the perfect time to catch one's breath, if Vann's great musicianship doesn't grab you, the writing does. "Rhythm and Roots" is superb for its artistic integrity... talent married with craft.

"Happiness Is Just Around the Bend," featuring Brian Auger on piano, gets the buns shaking again. "Tonite," a love ballad, slows things down, while "Look Over Yonder" keeps it there as Vann sings about a sister who cut a man 20 times for disrespecting her. Yeah this one is a show stopper, especially with guitarist Carl Lockett's solo. He and Vann salute the woman drying out in Santa Rita. Visit Vann's website, larryvann.com, for the 411 on his new CD and performance plans.

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www.rustykeyrecords.com ■ 415.905.4567
www.larryvann.com