

classics such as the ragtime-tinged title track, a feisty "Samson And Delilah" and the testifying "A Little More Faith."

The centerpiece of this project, however, is a tenacious, six-minute version of Davis' "Death Don't Have No Mercy" with Knight's shouting vocal driven moodily along by Campbell's slightly distorted guitar work and Kim Wilson's atmospheric harmonica commentary. Wilson also adds a sheen to a majestic redo of the traditional "Twelve Gates To The City," while vocalist Catherine Russell, along with an acoustic bass and drums, joins Knight on a spirited "You Got To Move" and the sweeping "I Am The Light Of This World." The word is that the octogenarian is briefly touring in support of this plainly moving project – if she comes to your town, don't miss her. — Gvont

### CHRIS WHITELEY & JEFF LANG

*Dislocation Blues*  
Rounder 2191

This superb CD is, sadly, Canadian blues artist Chris Whiteley's valedictory. He passed away at age 45 from lung cancer about six months after the recording was completed, a team effort with blues slide guitarist Jeff Lang and support from Grant Cummerford on upright bass and Ashley Davies on percussion.

Whiteley's talent and drive were prodigious. His multi-instrumental work on guitar, reeds and brass appears on more than 150 albums, including work by Leon Redbone, John Hammond, Amos Garret, Cindy Church, Penny Lang and the blues band Fathead. More recently, he played New Orleans-style trumpet on Fruteland Jackson's 2007 release, *Tell Me What You Say*, and shared billing on *Morning Sun* with Diana Braithwaite on vocals; Whiteley handled vocals, guitar, harp, spoons, slide guitar and cornet. He has also contributed work to Sesame Street, television documentaries and children's albums by Raffi and others.

Whiteley began recording with brother Ken, a fine blues performer in his own right, as the Whiteley Brothers in 1990. From there, Chris developed and refined a dark and rarefied blues sensibility that channeled into whatever instrument he might be called on to play. His own recordings have won numerous awards including Jazz Report Blues Album of the Year, six Juno Award nominations, and Maple Blues Awards' Horn Player of the Year.

*Dislocation Blues* is a delicate yet dark evocation of a blues sensibility that may or may not have been colored by Whiteley's illness. Certainly, his voice is softer and less robust than it might have been earlier in his

recording career; nevertheless, it conveys a soulfulness more than capably backed by Jeff Lang's often mournful slide guitar work and upbeat vocal counterpoint. Together, they balance one another perfectly, making this a very cohesive production that has been superbly recorded. The airiness – "head room" – of the recording accents the contemplative, sometimes ambiguous nature of many of the pieces, including the opening track, a quirky but highly effective riff on the Stackolee-Shot-Billy legend. "Twelve Thousand Miles" opens with a falsetto by Lang that's reminiscent of Jack Bruce's vocal work with Eric Clapton and Cream. The guitar work is contrapuntal between Whiteley and Lang – almost call and response – while Davies' insistent, almost relentless, drum work keeps the piece rocking no matter how many changes in tempo the leads decide to make.

While most of the tunes are Whiteley compositions, a standout track is the duo's cover of Dylan's "When I Paint My Masterpiece." The angst that Dylan built into the song is amply conveyed in this dark version of that oft-covered tune (most notably by The Band).

Two hidden bonus tracks – Robert Johnson's "Hellhound on My Trail" and "Kick the Stones" – were recorded live in concert and demonstrate how an experienced and talented artist can take a staple of the blues canon and mold it into a personal statement. — MC

### MICHAEL DE JONG

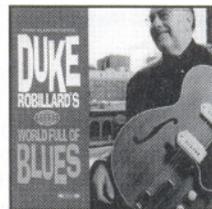
*The Great Illusion*  
Music & Words 1017

Born in France at the close of World War II, guitarist Michael de Jong came of age playing country music and the blues from Nashville and Detroit to New Orleans and San Francisco. His time in the Bay Area proved especially productive as he either worked with locals like Jerry Garcia, Maria Muldaur and Charlie Musselwhite or supported legends such as Albert King or Albert Collins when they came through town. In the mid-1970s, he joined Jimmy Reed's band and, with the blues great's encouragement, began writing his own songs.

This project, recorded at four different studios in the Netherlands (where de Jong currently resides) contains 12 recent, compelling compositions with no distractions as de Jong showcases his resplendently nuanced, at times Fahey-like, guitar playing answering and commenting on his soulful, straight-from-the-heart vocals. A few of his most interesting originals have a Dylan-ish, folk-rock feel to them, lyrically as well as

in the venturesome manner he sings them. Not that that's a bad thing – numbers like the proclamatory "Magnificent Obsession," a ringing chronicle of restlessness titled "Blow Wind Blow (Pt. 2)" and the bleak "Unmarked Grave," with its desolate, topical lyrics and harrowing phrasing, all contain eye-opening fret-work and carefully etched vocals.

Other, more extended compositions such as a bluesy, shout-riddled "The River And The Stone" and the set closing epic "As The Circle Turns," with its mandala-like lyrics and precipitously dynamic guitar/vocal blend are in an identical vein. Also noted is the complete change-of-pace love song "The U Before The I" that has a marvelous Joni Mitchell sounding, acid-dipped airiness to it. The prolific de Jong has recorded quite a few albums lately for a variety of European labels – this bare-bones effort is one of the best. — Gvont



DUKE ROBILLARD  
*World Full Of Blues*  
Stony Plain 1323

Celebrated blues and roots music guitarist Duke Robillard's extensive discography includes recording with contemporaries like Bob Dylan, Roomful of Blues (which he founded in 1967 at the age of 17), the Fabulous Thunderbirds, Tom Waits and Herb Ellis as well as icons such as Ruth Brown, Jay McShann, Billy Boy Arnold, Jimmy Witherspoon and the Blind Boys of Alabama.

Here he follows last year's Grammy-nominated *Guitar Groove-A-Rama* release with a two-hour, twin-CD set of blues, jump, swing, funk and original material that traverses the wide cross-section of blues styles he's become familiar with over the years. Most of the titles also allow plenty of room for long time band-mates like Mark Teixeira on drums, John Parker on electric or acoustic bass, saxophonist Doug James and keyboard marvel Bruce Bears to shine as well.

Guest shots by harmonica aces "Sugar" Ray Norcia (on a rocking cover of James Cotton's instrumental "Slam Hammer") and Tim Taylor, Gordon Beadle (great gritty baritone sax on the T-Bone Walker tribute "Treat Me So Low Down"), Al Basile,