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SOUND RECORDINGS REVIEWS

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The performance traditions of African-American women blues and jazz artists from the 1920s to the 1950s has long been of interest to scholars. In understanding the style, aesthetics, and performance practices of these artists, scholars have relied heavily on commercial recordings as a primary resource. Although there were numerous early female blues and jazz performers, it has not been easy to acquire original recordings by them. The problem is particularly difficult for researchers who are interested in recordings by female jazz instrumentalists. Because jazz traditionally has been perceived as a male-dominated music, where its focus is mainly instrumental music, the majority of recordings by early female performers feature singers rather than instrumentalists. Prior to the 1970s, there was only a small market for the music of female jazz instrumentalists, so recordings of early women instrumentalists have been few in number, and those that were made saw limited distribution.

Although a few record companies, such as Columbia and MCA, have reissued scattered recordings by early women blues and jazz performers, Rosetta Records (115 W. 16th Street #267, New York, N.Y. 10011) has emerged as the only label that exclusively specializes in women's blues and jazz music. Founded by Rosetta Reitz in 1980, the *Women's Heritage Series* is a 19-volume set of albums, each of which is available separately in LP, CD, or cassette format (the recordings reviewed for this essay were in LP format). The series features original recordings by women performers of the pre-1950s era, ranging from the most popular to the least well known. Reitz's detailed liner notes about the music, life, and influences of each artist, moving beyond description to analysis, chronicle the blues and jazz traditions of early performers from sociocultural, historical, and feminist perspectives.

Most of the women performers represented in this collection were rural southern migrants who left home during their early teens in pursuit of work in the city. While in the city, many young women managed to find jobs for minimal wages as domestics. Out of this pool came many musically talented women who were attracted to the lucrative world of the vaudeville stage.

Between 1915 and 1925, such cities as Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, St. Louis, and Chicago became havens for Black vaudeville performers. A major booking agency for vaudeville was the Theatre Owner's Booking Association (TOBA), organized in 1909 by Anselmo Barrasso in Memphis. Barrasso, who immediately saw the commercial potential of Black vaudeville performers, began booking acts throughout the country. On the vaudeville stage via the TOBA, the women's blues tradition was nurtured.

By the 1920s, women vaudeville singers sought careers as recording artists in the race music industry. They were, however, confronted with white male producers who adamantly felt that Black women singers could not perform the blues in a manner comparable to that of white female

singers. Black composer and producer Perry Bradford convinced Fred Hagar of the General Phonograph Company to record a Black singer, Mamie Smith, on the Okeh record label. Although Smith initially performed two of Bradford's vaudeville songs for Okeh, it was her performance of Bradford's "Crazy Blues" in 1920 that immediately opened the doors for Black female blues recording artists. "Crazy Blues" reportedly sold 75 thousand copies during its first month and, eventually, an estimated two million copies. "Crazy Blues" was the first commercial blues recording in the history of American music.

"Crazy Blues" was, therefore, the impetus for the commercialization of Black female blues singers in the popular genre known as "classic blues." Because of their commercial success and popular appeal, Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith ranked as pivotal figures in this blues tradition. Yet, as Rosetta Records shows, other classic blues singers such as Ida Cox, Lil Green, Georgia White, Gladys Bentley, and Victoria Spivey also left indelible marks on the blues tradition in general.

Early female jazz instrumentalists, such as saxophonist Alice Calloway, trumpeter Leora Meoux Henderson, and pianist Isabelle Spiller, who were members of the Musical Spillers, also launched their careers in vaudeville as band members. Although women played a variety of musical instruments, the most noted of these performers were pianists. This was due, in part, to the fact that the piano was the most commonly found instrument in two central environments, the home and church, which traditionally were the domain of women. Hence, it is not surprising that many women sought professional careers as jazz pianists.

Women who chose to play other instruments contrast with female jazz piano players, in that the trumpet, drums, and saxophone were commonly considered part of the masculine domain. In many instances, women of jazz were not taken very seriously by the music industry, regardless of their instrumental preferences, skills, and musical training. According to Rosetta Reitz, "The media saw them as gimmicks, never treating them with respect" (liner notes, *International Sweethearts of Rhythm,* RR 1312, 1984). Hampered by the paucity of available commercial recordings by female jazz instrumentalists of the pre-1950s, Rosetta Records nevertheless provides a rare inventory of instrumental recordings ranging from female piano boogie-woogie players to solo instrumentalists to all-women's jazz bands.

The musical contributions of women have explicitly added a broader perspective to scholars' understanding of the development of both blues and jazz traditions, but the interpretation of women's music from a feminist standpoint was lacking in early research. Accordingly, women jazz and blues performers have been commonly stereotyped as "sexual mammys, insatiable whores, buffoons, or love-stricken women" (liner notes, *Big Mamas,* RR 1306, 1982). But, in recent studies, feminist scholars such as Sally Placksin, Linda Dahl, and Daphne Harrison have found that early blues and jazz female performers used their music as a women's response to the sexual and racial oppression in America. Their music and life-styles marked their desire for respect, self-determination, and independence.

Rosetta's series is a recent compilation that draws upon a feminist approach to the musical study of female African-American blues and jazz performers. The liner notes, which offer historical perspectives, also include song texts and excellent black-and-white photographs of performers. This collection is systematically organized under three broad categories based on genre, song lyrics, and the musical contribution of each artist to blues and jazz music: "Foremothers," "Independent Women's Blues," and a third untitled category, which I will call "Miscellaneous."

Foremothers is comprised of nine multi-artist records representing the most influential blues and jazz women performers from the 1920s to 1950s. The albums are *Wild Women Don't Have the Blues: Ida Cox* Volume 1 (RR 1304, 1981); *Hot Snow: Valaida Snow* Volume 2 (RR 1305, 1982); *Georgia White Sings & Plays* Volume 3 (RR 1307, 1982); *Dinah Washington: Wise Woman Blues* Volume 4 (RR 1313, 1984); *Lil Green: Wails the Blues/Chicago 1941–1947* Volume 5 (RR 1310,

1985); *Ethel Waters: 1938–1939* Volume 6 (RR 1314, 1986); *Mae West: Queen of Sex* Volume 7 (RR 1315, 1987); *Sister Rosetta Tharpe: Gospel, Blues, Jazz* Volume 8 (RR 1317, 1988); and *Dorothy Romps: A Piano Retrospective, 1953–1979* Volume 9 (RR 1318, 1991).

Wild Women Don't Have the Blues features the music and performances of legendary blues singer Ida Cox. In her liner notes, Reitz explains her decision to include Cox: "I chose Cox to be the first in this Foremothers series because she was exceptional and little is known about her. . . . After Bessie Smith and May Rainey, she is in the top echelon of the next league." The literature about classic blues singers says little about their compositional efforts. This album contains, nonetheless, four blues songs written by Cox: "Cherry Pickin' Blues," "Hard, Oh Lord," "Lawdy, Lawdy, Blues," and her famous signature song, "Wild Women Don't Have the Blues." Cox also performs W. C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues." Although most of the albums in the Foremothers series are reproduced from pre-1950s recordings, *Wild Women Don't Have the Blues* was originally issued as *Blues for Rampart Street* by Riverside Records (RLP-9374) in 1961. On the album, Ida Cox is accompanied by the Coleman Hawkins Quintet with Hawkins on tenor saxophone, Roy Eldridge on trumpet, Sammy Price on piano, Milt Hilton on bass, and Jo Jones on drums. The combination of Cox and the Hawkins Quintet is very reminiscent of the combo blues sound popularized by Louis Jordan in the mid-1940s.

Hot Snow presents the musical performances of Valaida Snow, known to the world of jazz as the "Queen of Trumpet." The excellent liner notes fully document the life history of this woman, including her grim days in a German internment camp (1941–42), which nearly caused her death. The notes also contain information about Snow's diverse talents as a composer, instrumentalist, singer, and dancer, and her proclivity for languages—she was fluent in seven. The recordings on this album are mainly of Snow's performances in Copenhagen (1940), Stockholm (1939), London (1936, 1937), New York (1945, 1950), and Los Angeles (1945). Valaida Snow recorded approximately 50 songs in Europe; unfortunately, according to the notes, "the records she made in the U.S. were on small independent labels that have vanished." Despite this great loss, Rosetta Records was able to find a few of Snow's U.S. records, which are indeed a treasure. The album contains 15 selections featuring Snow on vocals and trumpet accompanied by several jazz orchestras. The album selections include one of her compositions, "High Hat, Trumpet & Rhythm," as well as her musical interpretations of numerous jazz and pop standards: "Minnie The Moocher," "Solitude," "My Heart Belongs to You Daddy," and "Some of These Days."

The third volume of the Foremothers category, *Georgia White,* highlights the music and life of a singer-pianist who, like many of the classic blues singer and boogie-woogie pianists, has, unjustly, been disregarded. Based mainly in Chicago, White recorded between 1935 and 1941, but soon afterward vanished from the scene. Legend has it that she may still be alive. The album features Georgia White accompanying herself on piano, except for a few selections where she is backed by a trio featuring guitarist Lonnie Johnson, trumpeter Jonah Jones, and pianist Sammy Price. "When You're Away," "Alley Boogie," "No Second Hand Woman," and "Crazy Blues" are among the 16 selections on the album. White's subdued piano work contrasts with her singing style, which is, in Reitz's words, that of "a shouter."

The fourth volume, *Wise Woman Blues,* features the unprecedented jazz-blues vocalist Dinah Washington. Unlike the aforementioned singers, including her mentor Georgia White, Washington was neither overlooked nor forgotten in the annals of American popular song. Like many of her foresisters, Washington began her career as a gospel singer. Because of her love for blues and jazz, she left the gospel-music arena. Thanks to her ingenious ability at combining jazz and blues styles, Dinah Washington was recognized by music critics as the most versatile singer of her time. Lauded as the "Queen of the Blues," she established a rhythm-and-blues vocal style that influenced later singers, including Ruth Brown, Esther Phillips, and Nancy Wilson.

Rosetta's Dinah Washington album presents 15 selections from the years between 1943 and 1945. Washington performs alternately with three jazz orchestras—Lucky Thompson's All Stars, Lionel Hampton and His Orchestra, and Duke Ellington and His Orchestra. The songs here capture the full essence of Washington's vocal versatility, from a Tin Pan Alley or pop-jazz to a blues style. For example, "My Lovin' Papa," "Do Nothing Til You Hear From Me," and "My Voot is Really Vout" clearly illustrate Washington's blues vocal style, whereas "Arkansas," "No Love, No Nothin'," and "All or Nothin' " demonstrate her pop-jazz singing ability.

As a competitor of Dinah Washington, Lil Green bridged the gap between classic blues and soul. Green recorded from 1940 to 1951, but because of her fatal bout with cancer at the age of 31, Lil Green's musical career was short-lived. As a result, her musical contributions have been nearly obliterated. Fortunately, Rosetta Records has revived the rich and vibrant music of Green on *Lil Green,* which features recordings from her peak years in Chicago, 1941 to 1947. She is backed by a trio featuring guitarist Big Bill Broonzy. Among the 16 selections on this album, "Why Don't You Do Right" and "Romance in the Dark" are considered major pieces that had an impact on the early years of rhythm and blues.

Also in the Foremothers category is singer Ethel Waters. In contrast to the aforementioned singers, Waters was not exposed directly to the blues rural roots. Originally from an integrated neighborhood in the northeast, Ethel Waters developed a style that was unique yet bore a strong resemblance to a Tin Pan Alley style. Rosetta Reitz views Waters as a foremother because of her influence on later prominent jazz women singers such as Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, and Sarah Vaughan: "Waters' sweet bell-like clarity of tone and subtle use of nuance showed her innate taste and tireless invention. Her timing, inflections and phrasing are jazz" (liner notes, RR 1314). *Ethel Waters* contains performances from 1938 to 1939. Accompanied by Eddie Mallory and His Orchestra, Waters sings a wide repertory of songs from "Frankie and Johnnie" and "Georgia on My Mind" to "Jeepers Creepers," "I Just Got A Letter," and "Stop Myself from Worrying Over You."

Alongside the African-American women represented in this series is Mae West, a white performer, who was heavily influenced by classic blues singers. Because of her sultry performances, which during the 1930s were considered radical for a woman of the mainstream, Mae West, like the classic blues singers, was exploited by the entertainment industry. Much of her success, then, was predicated on her quasi-blues singing style, which she openly admitted was influenced by Black women singers. However, unlike her Black female counterparts, West received unprecedented press coverage, thus becoming an important figure in American popular culture. Rosetta Records presents Mae West performing blues songs such as "Memphis Blues," "St. Louis Woman," and "Frankie and Johnny" among many others. *Mae West* also contains a previously unissued recording of "I'm an Occidental Woman in an Oriental Mood for Love," from the 1936 film *Klondike Annie*. West is backed by distinguished jazz bands including Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, Sy Oliver and His Orchestra, the Dorsey Brothers, and numerous others.

The eighth volume of the Foremothers series covers the music of gospel soloist-guitarist Sister Rosette Tharpe. Often criticized by the Black clergy for publicly performing gospel music in secular contexts such as Harlem's Apollo Theatre, Sister Rosetta Tharpe continued to state, "The Lord was ready to listen whenever and wherever He was . . ." (liner notes, RR 1317). At one point in her career, Tharpe performed as an up-front vocalist for several jazz orchestras, including the Cab Calloway Revue and Orchestra and Lucky Millinder's big band. Although she sang a few secular songs, she continued to perform gospel tunes in her appearances with these bands as well. Sister Tharpe's important musical contribution was her ability to incorporate blues and jazz stylings in gospel music, eventually bridging the gap between gospel and popular musical traditions. She is also regarded as the first gospel singer to introduce gospel music to nightclubs.

On this album, Sister Tharpe is featured with Lucky Millinder's Jazz Band and the Sammy Price Trio. A few of the songs' vocal backgrounds are provided by singer Marion Knight and The Dependable Boys. The album fully illustrates Tharpe's incorporation of secular idioms in gospel. For example, her performances of "Down by the Riverside" and "Rock Me" with jazz band accompaniment clearly demonstrate the interrelationship and cross-influences between jazz, blues, and gospel. Furthermore, her renditions of "Up Above My Head" and "Jonah" are rooted in a boogie-woogie style, and "Rock Daniel," "Jericho," and "Fly Away" are arranged with an up-tempo swing beat. There are more traditional pieces on this album, such as the spiritual, "Motherless Child," in which Tharpe accompanies herself on guitar. Centering around the I and V (with suspension) chords, this arrangement of "Motherless Child" is harmonically unique. Another interesting song interpretation is "Two Little Fishes," which somewhat resembles the harmonic structure of "St James Infirmary." The only secular piece on *Sister Rosetta Tharpe* is "Trouble in Mind" recorded in 1942 with Lucky Millinder's orchestra, one of her major hit records with him. Other tunes on the album include "Savior, Don't Pass Me By," "How Far From God," "What Have I Done?" "Shout Sister, Shout," "Daniel in the Lion's Den," and "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot."

The last of the nine volumes, *Dorothy Romps,* presents the music of jazz pianist extraordinaire, Dorothy Donegan. Born in 1924, Donegan, a native of Chicago, studied the piano formally from the age of eight. Like other foresisters, she began her musical career in the church, but by the age of 14 she had ventured out into the secular music scene, playing blues piano mainly for rent parties. Donegan attended the Chicago Conservatory and the Chicago Music College, where she studied the piano works of European composers under Rudolph Ganz. Although in the liner notes Donegan is quoted as saying that she still practices the European classics and never practices jazz, she cultivated jazz, boogie-woogie, stride, and classical music styles in her playing, thus earning the title "The Sophisticated Tinkler of the Ivories who Swings into Classics and Boogies the Blues." In 1943, Donegan became the first African-American to perform at Chicago's prestigious Orchestra Hall. Her concert consisted of both jazz and European classics. Among the audience members at the Orchestra Hall concert was virtuoso jazz pianist Art Tatum. Donegan tells us in the liner notes, "After he heard me, he took me under his wing and showed me most of the things he did. . . . He was the Horowitz of the jazz field. He was the strongest influence on my playing."

The height of Dorothy Donegan's career was from the 1940s to the 1950s, however, she lost her visibility during the rock and roll era. During the 1960s, most of her performances were in Europe. By the 1970s, Donegan's career not only peaked in Europe but regained its popularity in the United States as well. Although acclaimed as a virtuoso pianist, she occasionally was confronted with sexism. According to Rosetta Reitz, "Oscar Peterson refused to have her play on the same bill with him if she used her trio, and George Shearing wouldn't let her play at all, trio or not" (liner notes). In spite of a few such experiences, she still was credited as the piano's best by many—including Duke Ellington, Jo Jones, and Art Tatum.

Dorothy Romps highlights 14 of Dorothy Donegan's piano performances from 1953 to 1979. "The Sophisticated Tinkler" ingeniously executes jazz, blues, and classical styles with marvelous flair *par excellence*. "Boogie in the Nursery" and "Minuet in G" (not to be confused with the minuet pieces by Bach and Beethoven) make use of Donegan's eclectic ability to subtly combine European stylings of Paderewski and Mozart, respectively, with the art of jazz and boogie-woogie piano styles. Whereas "Grieg's Boogie" is a quasi–classical blues tune, "Lullaby of Birdland" is blues with a tinge of Bach's art of the fugue. Donegan's piano arrangements of American classics such as "Louise," "That Old Black Magic," "Limehouse Blues," and "Put Your Arms Around Me, Honey" demonstrate her extensive use of block chords and rapid florid passages in

a capricious style, whereas "Donegan's Walk," "Dorothy Rocks," and "Kilroy was Here" are strictly a mixture of excellent stride and boogie-woogie piano.

The second category of the *Women's Heritage Series,* Independent Women's Blues, comprises four albums containing numerous classic blues singers ranging from the well known to the less recognized. The titles of three of these albums—*Mean Mothers* (RR 1300, 1980), *Big Mamas* (RR 1306, 1982), and *Super Sisters* (RR 1308, 1982)—might lead one to think that they allude to well-known caricatures of classic blues singers in popular culture, women who are cruel with ox-like strength or who are just simply unfeminine. In the past, the meanings of these terms were never translated from the artists' perspectives, but were, rather, taken from an outsider's point of view. In her liner notes, Rosetta Reitz sets the record straight. In reality, "mean," "super," and "big" were terms commonly used by African-Americans to describe a woman who did not allow anyone to disrespect her. Hence, a mean woman was "celebrated for being forthright and honest—and insisting upon her dignity. She learned how to live with adversity; she never fell apart."

In the Independent Women's Blues category, Rosetta Reitz carefully groups songs according to lyrical theme. The songs, most of them reissued for the first time, shatter the notion that women who sang the blues wallowed in their discontent, bemoaning the men who left them. The first two albums of this category, *Mean Mothers* and *Big Mamas,* contain blues songs that center around women's feelings about sex, their desire for equality, and their desire for independence from male dominance. Although the titles of some songs may be sexually suggestive, the lyrics are full of irony, humor, and double meanings. *Mean Mothers* contains performances such as Ida Cox's "One Hour Mama," Mary Dixon singing "You Can't Sleep in My Bed," and Maggie Jones singing "You Ain't Gonna Feed in My Pasture Now." Lil Armstrong, Blue Lou Barker, and Martha Copeland are featured singing respectively: "Or Leave Me Alone," "I Don't Dig You Jack," and "Good Time Mama." *Big Mamas,* too, highlights songs espousing the independent woman. This album features Edith Johnson, Viola McCoy, Issie Ringgold, Clara Smith, Bea Foote, Ella Johnson, Billie Holiday, singer-actress Hattie McDaniel, and many others. Singers on both albums are accompanied by noted jazz figures, including Sammy Price, Coleman Hawkins, James P. Johnson, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, and Charlie Christian.

Volume 3 of the Independent Women's group is *Super Sisters.* As in the previously mentioned albums in this category, the songs here continue to express women's innermost feelings, needs, and concerns about racial and social inequalities. Among the 16 songs on this album are "I've Got Ford Movements in My Hips," performed by Cleo Gibson; "Take Your Fingers Off It," sung by Lizzie Miles; "Take Your Black Bottom Outside," sung by Sara Martin; "Do What You Did Last Night," sung by Helen Humes; and "You've Got the Right Eye But You're Peeping At the Wrong Keyhole," sung by Bertha Idaho.

Sweet Petunias (RR 1311, 1986) is the fourth volume of the Independent Women's Blues series. Unlike the gender-oriented titles of the other albums in this set, *petunia,* meaning "never despair of me," is described in the album notes as a fitting definition for strong women who turn potential despair into affirmation by shouting the blues. This album is representative of the transitional years of the classic blues tradition in the 1940s, when blues and gospel singing styles merged, thus providing the vocal foundation for rhythm and blues. Among those showcased on this album are Big Mama Thornton singing "Stop Hoppin' On Me," Etta Jones singing "The Richest Guy In the Graveyard," Ella Johnson singing "Well Do It," Monette Moore performing "You Don't Live Here No More," and a female group, Bandanna Girls, singing "Part Time Papa." Because of their openness, frankness, and lack of inhibition, the blues songs performed by the women of this era can be considered revolutionary for their time. Ironically, most of the blues songs on this series of albums were written by men, but they are interpreted from a female perspective. The series will be useful to scholars particularly interested in feminist reinterpretations of male texts.

The last six albums of the *Women's Heritage Series,* which I have chosen to call Miscellaneous, feature topical blues songs, women boogie-woogie pianists, an all-women's jazz orchestra, and women's prison songs. *Sorry But I Can't Take You: Women's Railroad Blues* (RR 1301, 1980) contains what some blues scholars refer to as train blues songs. In the country blues tradition, the train always symbolized mobility; bluesmen often sang about leaving the old Jim Crow South to go up North to the land of milk and honey. Yet, "to blueswomen, the train meant something else: It was the unslayable monster that swallowed up their men, men who didn't come back and seldom sent for them" (liner notes, RR 1301). For example, Trixie Smith laments in "Freight Train Blues" that

When the woman gets the blues, she goes to her room and hides
When the woman gets the blues, she goes to her room and hides
When a man get the blues, he catch the freight train and rides

Similar songs included on this album are Sippie Wallace's "Mail Train Blues," Trixie Smith's "Railroad Blues," and Lucille Bogan's "I Hate That Train Called the M & O." Some of the classic blues singers are backed by prominent jazz figures such as Louise Armstrong, Fletcher Henderson, Sammy Price, Danny Barker, and Dizzy Gillespie.

Red, White & Blues: Women Sing of America (RR 1302, 1980) presents songs constructed around a particular city, region, or place: "Do You Know What it Is to Miss New Orleans," "Arkansas Blues," "Chicago," "Charleston Blues," "West End Blues," "New Orleans Blues," and "St. Louis Blues." Although many blues performers originally left rural areas for the city, they created and performed songs that mirrored social realities in their new context, ranging from loneliness, failed relationships, and homesickness to poverty. "Arkansas Blues," for example, captures a very common theme of a southerner's desire to return downhome, "way down in Old Arkansas in old Dixie . . . the southern folks are so good and kind." Influential singers featured on this album are Bessie Smith, Blue Lou Barker, Ella Fitzgerald, Lil Armstrong and Blossom Seeley, Betty Roche, Bertha Chippie Hill, Helen Humes, Rosetta Howard, Mildred Bailey, Victoria Spivey, Lillian Glinn, Julia Lee, Ethel Waters, and Billie Holiday.

Piano Singer's Blues: Women Accompany Themselves Boogie Blues: (RR 1303, 1982) and *Women Sing & Play Boogie Woogie* (RR 1309, 1983) are excellent albums highlighting the virtuoso ability of women playing boogie-woogie. The names of legendary male boogie-woogie pianists such as Clarence "Pinetop" Smith, Pete Johnson, Meade Lux Lewis, Albert Ammons, and Jimmy Yancey are familiar to most. However, women, too, contributed significantly to the boogie-woogie piano tradition, but for many years their accomplishments went unrecognized. As previously mentioned, it was not unusual to find women piano players, because the piano was an instrument traditionally found in the home. And there were women who developed professional careers as consummate pianists of the blues and jazz idioms. Among the most celebrated of women pianists were Lil Armstrong, Hazel Scott, Dorothy Donegan, Hadda Brooks, and Mary Lou Williams, known as "The First Lady of Jazz." In many respects, Armstrong and Williams served as mentors to male performers such as Louis Armstrong and Thelonious Monk.

Piano Singer's Blues presents a variety of women singers accompanying themselves on piano. Since most female boogie-woogie piano players also sing, more attention has been paid to their singing abilities than to their instrumental skills. On this record, that oversight is redressed by the inclusion of paino solo works by Julia Lee, Lil Armstrong, Hazel Scott, and Cleo Brown. In addition, Brown gives a stunning performance of Clarence "Pinetop" Smith's work, "Pinetop Boogie Woogie." In this performance, Brown includes Smith's dance rap. An important strength of this album is its inclusion of such obscure performers as Cleo Brown, Hociel Thomas, Una Mae Carlisle, Fannie May Goosby, and Edith Johnson.

Although "boogie" is a word with a twofold meaning, describing styles of music and dance, it is used on *Boogie Blues* as a catchall word in the title of several songs. On this album, 11 vocalists accompany themselves on piano, with the exception of Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Memphis Minnie who play guitar. Six solo piano works by Hazel Scott, Gladys Bentley, Dorothy Donegan, Hadda Brooks, Bernice Edwards, and Lil Armstrong are also showcased. Both Scott and Donegan give performances of their boogie-woogie compositions—"Brown Bee Boogie" and "Piano Boogie," respectively.

The *International Sweethearts of Rhythm* features the 1940s integrated all-women's jazz band founded in 1937 by Laurence Clifton Jones. Organized as a fund-raising effort for the Piney Woods Country Life School in Mississippi, the band performed statewide in dance halls and gymnasiums during its early years. Within two years, the reputation of the group spread, and by the 1940s, the International Sweethearts of Rhythm had become well known throughout the United States and Europe. Rosetta's album is from a live radio broadcast made during their 1945 European tour and a 1946 New York session. The album features the musical skills of two of the band's up-front soloists, trumpeter Ernestine "Tiny" Davis and tenor saxophonist Vi Burnside, on such numbers as "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Gin Mill Special." The compilation is completed by detailed liner notes and more than 20 black-and-white photographs of the Sweethearts.

The last recording of this series is a major contribution. Named after a blues song performed by Ida Cox and Bessie Smith, *Jailhouse Blues* (RR 1312, 1987) is a collection devoted to prison songs performed by women. This is the first time women's prison songs have been presented on record in a collection. Material for this album is a result of fieldwork conducted by John A. Lomax and Herbert Halpert for the Library of Congress. Between 1936 and 1939, Lomax, followed by Halpert, recorded women's prison songs at the Parchman Penitentiary in Mississippi. Because of the limitations of recording machines used in the 1930s, Rosetta used painstaking measures to reproduce these recordings from old acetate discs. Liner notes were meticulously prepared by Bernice Reagon, Cheri L. Wolfe, and Rosetta Reitz. There are 24 songs on the album, consisting mainly of blues, game songs, and work songs—all performed a cappella—thus making *Jailhouse Blues* a major work in the study of American traditional song.

As a whole, the *Women's Heritage Series* is of extraordinary value to scholars. The albums extensively document, in a 19-volume set, more than 40 years of musical development of women blues and jazz artists. The concept for a series of this magnitude derives in part from Rosetta Reitz's mission to educate people about African-American music and its previously discredited innovators, many of whom were women. The significance of this series lies in the reissuing of original recordings along with the inclusion of obscure artists whose contributions to American music have gone unheralded. Many of the recordings, like those by Lil Green, Ida Cox, Valaida Snow, Georgia White, and the women's prison songs collection (a first-time release) are absolute treasures. Reitz did the research, wrote the liner notes, conceived of the record design, and produced each album. This was definitely a tremendous challenge for any independent record producer. In my opinion, the *Women's Heritage Series* merits high distinction for its excellence, and it is certainly an important landmark in American traditional music scholarship.