

cd reviews

Pop

WHEN WE WERE THE NEW BOYS

Rod Stewart

Warner Bros.

★★★

As is commonly held, as Rod Stewart became one of the older boys, he turned into a parody of a rock star. Worse, his output suggested he didn't even care to try anymore. So it's a heartening surprise to report that with "When We Were the New Boys," Stewart has crafted his finest album in 20 years. On its 10 rockers and ballads, Stewart navigates familiar lyrical territory, wistfully reflecting on old pub days on the title track (the set's sole Stewart composition) and The Faces' 1973 Celtic-tinged tune "Ooh La La." And, yes, there's intended raunch, thanks to Graham Parker's "Hotel Chambermaid," a stomper Stewart says he had earmarked to cut as far back as 1979. Stewart's raspy Scot-soul singing also sounds rejuvenated, especially on a striking cover of Skunk Anansie's modern rock ballad "Weak," in which he must start from his lowest register and abruptly leap to his highest without sounding winded.

Before the CD's release, Stewart had said he'd use his classic 1971 album "Every Picture Tells a Story" as a blueprint, and that album's hallmarks are evident on "The New Boys" — the chiming guitars, the sweet mandolin, the driving rhythm section. But this is no mere exercise in nostalgia. Stewart also turns to young U.K. songwriters from Oasis ("Cigarettes and Alcohol") and Primal Scream ("Rocks") for material. At 53, Stewart cares again. You will, too.

— Howard Cohen
The Miami Herald

Country

TELEWACKER

Redd Volkaert

HMG

★★★

Redd Volkaert is a member of one of the elite ensembles of country music — Merle Haggard's Strangers. One listen to this debut, and it's easy to see why Hag recruited the Canadian guitarist last year.

Volkaert's style echoes the blend of honky-tonk simplicity and jazzy sophistication that is a hallmark of Merle's music. His singing voice is a serviceable baritone, but it's when he's wielding his Telecaster on such original instrumentals as the tempo-shifting "Telewacker," the Bakersfield nod "The Buck Stops Here" and the moody, sax-kissed "Redd, White and Blue" that he really cuts his own figure.

— Nick Cristiano
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Pianist Wied, star pupil a dynamic duo

By LYNN DARROCH

 Special writer,
The Oregonian

Pianist and composer Eddie Wied also is known as "the Professor," partly because he's the dean of Portland's jazz pianists and partly because that's what he is — one of the area's top piano teachers.

In the 1980s, he taught an Italian high school exchange student named Giovanni Ceccarelli. The two stayed in touch when Ceccarelli returned to Italy, where he has become a leading jazz pianist. Wied began traveling to Italy to teach master classes and perform. Last year, Ceccarelli returned to Portland to record this two-piano CD.

The session also features drummer Ron Steen, bassist Frank de la Rosa, saxophonist Lorenzo Fontana and Portland guitarist (and the CD's producer) Michael Brewin.

It's a beautiful record and a peak achievement for both student and teacher. The two will perform together at 9 p.m. Friday at Suki's (2401 S.W. Fourth Ave.).

Two-piano performances are rare. It's difficult to stay out of each other's way, and to the casual listener, it may be difficult to distinguish one instrument from the other. But in the case of a mentor and his protégé, the format enhances the music, adding a joyous energy based on Wied's pride in his former student and Ceccarelli's pride in playing shoulder-to-shoulder with his former instructor.

Wied has seldom recorded during a long career in which he worked in Las Vegas bands, studied at Juilliard, received a master's degree in art, led the house trio at one of Portland's most popular clubs and played extensively with greats such as Herb Ellis. This CD demonstrates the ease, intelligence and fluidity that make his playing a model of modern jazz.

Most important, Wied is willing to set the scene for his younger partner and then step aside.

But Ceccarelli is also responsible for the pleasures of this collection of standards ("Liza," "Ghost of a Chance" and "Come Rain or Come Shine") and two originals that feature each pianist alone. The duets are the best, though. On "Yesterdays," for instance, the Italian shows himself as fluid as the master, but with more assertively bluesy right hand lines. Ceccarelli's choice of notes is always clear and singing, and he swings effortlessly in step with Wied.

This is a great demonstration of the rewards of teaching as well as a satisfying collection of modern jazz. And if you care about jazz in Portland, you've got to own a CD by Eddie Wied.



nw cd

THE STREET DANCER

 Eddie Wied
and Giovanni Ceccarelli
Philology

★★★½

To hear Eddie Wied and Giovanni Ceccarelli perform "Yesterdays," call Inside Line, 225-5555, category 2375