



MUSIC ●●●●○ SONICS ●●●●●

Muddy Waters: *The Best of Muddy Waters*. Chess/Acoustic Sounds (LP).

At The Beatles' first press conference in New York, a reporter asked what the Fabs most wanted to see in America. "Muddy Waters and Bo Diddley," came the immediate response. "Where's that?" the reporter queried. The Beatles snickered, "You Americans don't seem to know your most famous citizens." Acoustic Sounds hopes modern vinyl fans won't make the same mistake. This mono audiophile edition of 1958's *The Best of Muddy Waters*—pressed at QRP and packaged in a high-grade tip-on gatefold—kicks off a multi-title 75th anniversary tribute to the Chicago-based Chess label. The quality is far beyond any MCA-era reissue I've heard. These 12 raw, arresting tracks by Mississippi Delta transplant McKinley Morganfield include his first single, 1948's "I Can't Be Satisfied"; the blissful "Mad Love (I Want You to Love Me)"; the biting "She Moves Me"; the ominous Delta-inflected "Rollin' Stone," and the red-hot "I'm Ready," which floats on labelmate Little Walter's ethereal harmonica. The cream of the Chess roster—Walter, Willie Dixon, Jimmy Rogers, and Otis Spann, among others—provides backing. Matthew Lutthans has remastered this all-analog album from the original master tapes, bringing a sense of immediacy to these tracks. The blues has seldom sounded as cool. **GC**

Further Listening: Muddy Waters: *Folk Singer*; Willie Dixon: *The Chess Box*

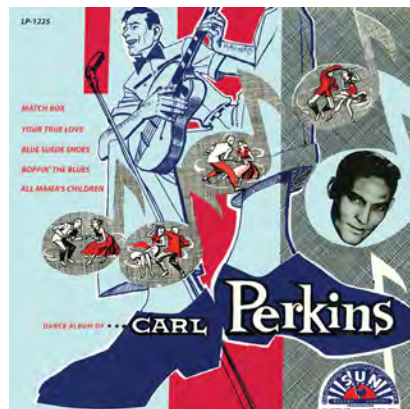


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David Johansen and the Harry Smiths. Chesky/Evolution (One-Step LP).

In theory, Chesky Records and David Johansen would be an unlikely pairing for a recording project. Chesky is known as a forward-thinking audiophile jazz and classical label while Johansen made his mark as the lead singer of the New York Dolls, whose sound was rough around the edges and proud of it. The link that connected the two was Harry Smith, a musicologist whose *Anthology of American Folk Music* (1952) inspired countless musicians, including Johansen, who in 1999 led a five-piece band that formed a semicircle around a Soundfield microphone and played songs from the anthology while Chesky's team recorded the proceedings. The first-ever vinyl pressing of the album, Evolution's One-Step LP brings out all the subtleties of a spacious recording that realistically captures the timbre of acoustic and electric guitar, mandolin, banjo, double bass, percussion, and Johansen's raspy voice. The album features songs by such blues titans as Muddy Waters, Sonny Boy Williamson, and Lightning' Hopkins along with compositions by musicians who will remain anonymous but whose lyrics tell deeply human stories that often reflect the dark side of human existence. If a visitor touts the virtues of AI music, play him the closing track from this LP, "Oh Death," before escorting him from the premises. **Jeff Wilson**

Further Listening: Tom Waits: *Mule Variations*



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Carl Perkins: *Dance Album of Carl Perkins*. Intervention (LP).

Intervention is kicking off their Sun Records reissue series with this 1957 blockbuster, which was a collection of singles and B-sides. The bounce of "Blue Suede Shoes" sets the tone for the party, and "Movie Magg" takes the teen-romance-at-the-movies song to rural Tennessee, with the threat of a dad's double-barreled shotgun, and a horse as the means of travel instead of a borrowed Chevy. In "Sure to Fall," tremolos and slides take the distinctive twang of Perkins's axe into Hawaiian steel guitar territory. Vocalizations and an unusual flat-VI chord make "Honkey Don't" better than just a throwaway shuffle. Unobtrusive guitar chords during the verses of "Only You" keep the focus on Carl's exceptional vocals, and it's a bit of a letdown that his solo sticks to that idea. "Tennessee" is a rather weird nod to the state's contributions to both hillbilly music and the atomic bomb. Rockers like "Matchbox" make up for any weaknesses, though. Intervention's Shane Buettner worked with Sun to find the best quality tapes; Kevin Gray at Cohearent Audio cut the results, and Gotta Groove pressed the final product, a 45rpm mono 180-gram LP that is dead quiet and absolutely pops with rockabilly vitality. **Stephen Estep**

Further Listening: Johnny Cash: *Johnny Cash with his Hot and Blue Guitar* (Intervention); Carl Perkins: *Some Things Never Change*