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## THE MIX

## THEY SAID IT

WAYLON JENNINGS: "I've always felt that blues, rock 'n' roll and country are just about a beat apart."



PHOTO COURTESY OF KRT CAMPUS

Before B.B. King wowed crowds as a standout blues musician, he recorded advertising jingles and worked as a radio station DJ. King is one of the many artists whose contribution to American music is being celebrated in 2003.

BY MEG MOORE  
THE GAMECOCK

The music genre has attracted the attention of "Gangs of New York" producer Martin Scorsese — blues music was the topic of his documentary that aired this week on PBS.

The style's most celebrated performers have become recognizable names in American pop culture, from B.B. King to Muddy Waters. Why has there been so much hullabaloo lately concerning the blues?

In a supreme expression of music appreciation, the U.S. Congress dedicated 2003 as "The Year of the Blues." Rock might have made its comeback, and bluegrass might be all the rage, but blues music has officially taken precedence this year.

A Senate resolution described the genre as "the most influential form of American roots music," noting blues music's impact on the formation of popular styles such as rock and country.

Yet to many Americans, the blues remains an obscure style of song rarely mentioned in conversation and actually listened to even less. It is simply categorized as the genre perpetuated by B.B. King and buried in the back of musical memory.

Blues was first "discovered" by W.C. Handy, who heard the emotive style of music in a Mississippi train station. Ever since, it has impacted and evidenced its influence in the work of countless artists over the past century.

Handy was nicknamed "Father of the Blues" for his work in composing the first blues-music

manuscript, which allowed the innovative style to be played and adapted by artists around the country.

Since Handy's chance discovery 100 years ago, American music has been defined by and has built upon the blues formula, from rock 'n' roll to R&B.

Celebrating this milestone year in music, area artists and blues listeners will gather for the ninth-annual Columbia Blues Festival this weekend at M.L.K. Park in Five Points.

Organized by Word of Mouth Productions, a local nonprofit corporation dedicated to diversifying the live music scene, the event brings an impressive lineup of acts, many locally grown, to the outdoor stage.

Scheduled acts include Drink Small, a South Carolina native

and 1999 inductee into the South Carolina Music & Entertainment Hall of Fame. Nicknamed "the blues doctor," Small will make his fifth appearance at the festival, having headlined in the event's inaugural year.

Small's musical talent has taken him from his rural hometown of Bishopville, S.C., to the stage at such storied events as the World's Fair.

Cool John Ferguson, another South Carolina-born bluesman, has been performing professionally since age 5, accompanying his gospel-singing sisters on guitar early in his career and recently playing on a pop recording with his niece Esperanza.

Ferguson's lifelong immersion in music has allowed him to play with a variety of artists and perform an assortment of musical

styles.

Juxtaposing the old with the new, the Columbia Blues Festival will include performances from seasoned artists such as Small and Ferguson as well as sets from up-and-coming musicians.

One such newcomer is Richard Johnson, a Houston-born performer who has helped invigorate in newer artists an interest in the fusion of country, rock and blues. Johnson released his debut solo album in 2002. On several of the album's tracks, as well as during his live show, he plays the drums with his feet while simultaneously working another instrument with his hands.

Also taking the stage this weekend is Big Bill Morganfield, the son of music royalty. His father, McKinley Morganfield, was the

famed Muddy Waters. His festival appearance comes on the heels of his latest album, aptly titled "Blues in the Blood," which was released Sept. 22.

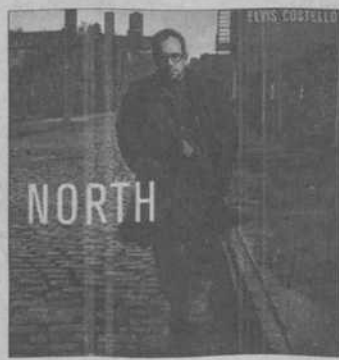
The Rev. Marv Ward will open Saturday's festivities at noon with his R&B-infused tunes. Small, Ferguson, Johnston and Morganfield will follow. The festival will close with a set from Lonnie Brooks, who has headlined the Chicago Blues Festival and played with Eric Clapton.

With such an impressive list of performers, the Columbia Blues Festival will expose area residents to the heart, soul and sound of blues music. After all, 2003 is indeed "The Year of the Blues."

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## CD REVIEW

## Costello sleepily heads 'North'



"NORTH"  
Elvis Costello  
★★ out of ☆☆☆☆

BY BEN ANGSTADT  
THE GAMECOCK

Elvis Costello is certainly a man who has made an exciting name for himself. For decades, he's been creating rock music that has made him a staple for the fans of his distinctive, original sound.

But first-time listeners to Costello's latest album, "North," could easily come away never knowing he's ever sung anything close to rock music. In a surprising move, the entire work is a collection of somber, mellow jazz tracks.

Of course, Costello has made similar music in the past. His compilations with Burt Bacarrach and his 2001 release "For the Stars," with Sophie Vonotter, have all embraced a jazzy approach.

But considering that his most recent solo release, "When I Was Cruel," went in a strictly rock direction, releasing such a

different album now seems like a non sequitur.

Costello has described his latest album in an interesting way. According to the album's theory, when things go bad in life, they go south. As he puts it, the title, "North," is meant to represent the opposite of that phrase.

Surely he has much to be happy about, including—and most relevantly—his engagement to jazz musician Diana Krall.

Unfortunately, this has left his listeners with a sappy, 11-track love letter to Krall, making all of the songs sound similar at best. After a few minutes of "North," song changes become almost indistinguishable, save a few bright spots of innovation scattered throughout the album.

More importantly, the straight-up jazzy sound ultimately doesn't work for Costello. Despite his years in the music industry, Costello does not necessarily possess the type of singing voice that should be the sole, featured element on an album — but his vocals are exactly what "North" emphasizes.

In a way, it seems like he just lifted Krall's smooth jazz style and transplanted it onto an impetuously released record.

The album does not begin with a bang, but instead it opens with a symphonic whimper. By the time the orchestrated violins that open the first track, "You Left Me in the Dark," have finished playing, "North" is already making the listener's eyelids feel heavy. The dreary remainder of

the opening song does little more to cure this bout of Costello-induced narcolepsy.

Ironically, when the third track — "When Did I Stop Dreaming?" — rears its head, the vast majority of "North" listeners are probably immersed in a dream even as the song plays. "Fallen" and "When It Sings" follow and do little to change or even excite the painfully dreary tone.

Thankfully, the album is stirred awake with "Still," whose melody actually resembles something that Costello would have written in the past. It is jazzy as well, but the glimmer of Costello's previously distinctive style keeps it from emitting the same tired sound as its musical company.

Sadly, at a pitiful two minutes and 24 seconds, this brief flirtation of consciousness is fleeting to say the least. It ultimately does little to shake the listener from the rest of the album's malaise.

Four more tracks come and go, and "North" ends, leaving little satisfaction and a lot of questions — questions that mainly concern exactly which direction Costello's next album will take.

It seems that "North" is nothing more than a listener-subsidized love note that accomplishes nothing more than one good song. Well, not unless it enters the market as a cheap alternative to prescription sleep aids.

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## 'Urban Realism' visits Columbia art museum

BY HILARY SCHRAMM  
THE GAMECOCK

The Columbia Museum of Art on Saturday will open its new exhibition, "Edward Hopper and Urban Realism." Traveling from the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the show displays influential works from an important transitional period in American art.

The exhibition focuses on many of the major works of Edward Hopper's early career. As one of the most important American artists of the 20th century, Hopper used soft brushstrokes and solid, bold fields of color to portray scenes of modern city life. Importantly, Hopper focused on individuals, often leaving the viewer with the feeling of isolation that he used to describe life in his society.

Hopper was joined in the early 20th century by American realists known collectively as the Ashcan School. These artists abandoned the natural Western landscapes that had formerly captivated audiences and instead took inspiration from the gritty urban scenes found in their everyday lives. Known for their socially conscious themes and aesthetic renderings of the constant change within the city, they combined the soft edges and hard themes of impressionism with the realist tradition of American art.

Works by Ashcan artists such as Robert Henri, John Sloan, William Glackens, Stuart Davis



PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK

"Queensborough Bridge" by Edward Hopper is one of the works that will be featured at the Columbia Museum of Art.

and George Bellows round out this exhibit as complements to Hopper's works, exemplifying the many approaches used to describe and glorify the American city.

The exhibition represents some of the strongest works of Ashcan artists, and is also unique because of the rarity of Hopper's early paintings.

It also portrays an important turning point in American art. While these artists kept the classical realist style of previous generations, they created a new genre that mirrored and even celebrated American ideals and modernity.

Throughout the course of the show, the museum will offer many related programs and events. These include a "Gallery Talk" tomorrow at 2 p.m. with Evelyn C. Hankins, assistant curator of pre-

war art and special projects at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

The exhibition also features lectures by USC professors Brad Collins and Dan Streible. Collins, an art-history professor, will speak October 24 at 7 p.m. about the Ashcan School. Streible, a professor of film studies, will speak on "The Ashcan School at the Movies" in January.

Admission to the museum, which is located downtown at Main and Hampton streets, is \$2 for students Wednesday through Friday and on Sunday. Admission is free on Fridays from 5 to 9 p.m. and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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