

ENTERTAINMENT

POP

MONTY ALEXANDER "Stir It Up: The Music of Bob Marley" (Telarc) ***

Here, finally, comes a tribute record I can relate to. The great Jamaican-born jazz pianist Monty Alexander plays the music of Bob Marley by turns with an American and Jamaican rhythm section.

Alexander, 54, dates from Marley's generation, but Alexander left the island before Marley's apotheosis into a Rastafarian and political revolutionary. Alexander offers up jazz with a Caribbean lilt. His effort is full of a music called mento, which dominated Jamaican pop music until the 1950s. It's Alexander's roots music, and he does it justice, serving up Marley's magnificent melodies with a genuine jazz sensibility influenced by curried goat.

Alexander often simplifies matters musically, following one of his popularizing mentors, Nat King Cole. But he doesn't look down on reggae. (He acknowledges the primacy of the trombone in Jamaican music by showcasing trombonist Steve Turre as a guest.) The music stirs him. He is reliving his youth, and you can almost hear the cackles.

COUNTRY

MARTY STUART "The Pilgrim" (MCA) ****

Marty Stuart has produced a lot of very good music over the years, but for all his talent, passion and likability, he has never delivered that one killer disc. That changes with "The Pilgrim," a concept album whose execution matches its lofty ambition.

An unabashed lover of country tradition, Stuart tells a story that is perfect for exploring such age-old country themes as infidelity, drinking, religious faith, dislocation, and the tug of home. In unfolding his tale, Stuart digs deeper than he ever has, making this his most profound work.

His music still ranges widely — from bluegrass to hard-core



Monty Alexander pays tribute to Marley.

country, to his self-styled "hillbilly rock," and ringing, Tom Petty-style rock — but the setting lends his eclecticism a greater coherence than it has ever had. And though Stuart doesn't have a voice for the ages, he gives an extra dimension to his ultimately uplifting saga by enlisting the help of several guests who do, including Emmylou Harris, George Jones and Johnny Cash.

JAZZ

JOE LOVANO & GREG OSBY "Friendly Fire" (Blue Note) ** 1/2**

The telepathy flows by at the speed of sound on this much-awaited meeting between alto saxophonist Greg Osby and tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano. Both men are noted risk-takers and cutting-edge improvisers whose penchant for the maniacal makes

them ideal partners.

Happily, this powerful recording fits in nicely between far-afeld and in-the-pocket. Lovano and Osby remind us of the keen glory inherent in their respective reeds. (Lovano also plays some wild flute.)

The tunes by Eric Dolphy, Ornette Coleman and Thelonious Monk keep matters grounded with a lusty, hard-boiled feel, but the leaders' compositions are less winning and overly clever.

Their tremendous technical abilities sometimes make Osby and Lovano sound as if they're on automatic pilot and not really connecting. For the most part, the two sax men communicate with operatic bravado even when they indulge in calamitous cacophony.

CLASSICAL

DANIEL HOPE "Works by Alfred Schnittke, Kurt Weill and Toru Takemitsu" English Symphony Orchestra led by William Boughton (Nimbus Records) ****

When planning his recording debut, violinist Daniel Hope might have taken a cue from colleagues by making yet another recording of the Tchaikovsky or

Mendelssohn, showing some skin or a tattoo for the cover art, and waiting for a response.

But the 25-year-old Brit with a lusty tone instead makes a serious and seriously impressive recording debut with four works with four distinct veins of dissonance. Hope chose worthy and underperformed pieces that, taken as a group, make a friendly and powerful statement about the 20th-century musical avant-garde.

Don't listen for jazz or rhythmic looseness in Weill's Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra, Opus 12. Strident and austere, its melodies tend to be knit from angular intervals, its rhythms, marchlike.

Hope takes on a gauzy tone in Takemitsu's "Nostalgia," a 1987 work commissioned by the Scottish Post Office for Yehudi Menuhin. Takemitsu blankets the listener with a kind of moody gray mist — at once gorgeous and depressing.

Schnittke's Sonata for Violin and Chamber Orchestra (composed in 1963 for piano and violin and arranged for violin and cham-

ber orchestra in 1967) uses some serial techniques. But dissonance abates through the four movements. The harpsichord woven into the orchestral texture sounds nostalgic today — not looking back to the baroque, but to that brief fade in dissonant concert and movie music of the 1960s in which the antique instrument took on the musical persona of a fusty and slightly scary old aunt knocking around the attic of Western orchestration.

Schnittke, who died last year, does look back to the baroque in his Concerto Grosso No. 6 for Piano, Violin and String Orchestra.

RATINGS: 4 stars: Excellent; 3 stars: Good; 2 stars: Fair; 1 star: Poor

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