
Subject: Re: Blind Willie and Bukka White
Posted by [elektratic](#) on Fri, 22 Apr 2005 07:01:03 GMT
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MB, In the classical world, two of the major review magazines are Gramophone and Fanfare. In Gramophone, the reviewers, being British, tend to paper over their differences, or at least state them politely, but the American Fanfare reviewers make no effort to do so. Sometimes you will see two reviews of a significant release, and more often than not they will be diametrically opposed, one reviewer extolling its virtues, the other excoriating it as a piece of trash. Then the readers pile on, and it goes downhill from there. The fights can be downright vicious -- and highly amusing ("Jane, You ignorant slut") if you don't have an ax to grind. They taught me early on that all opinions about music are intensely personal, and I don't mean to pretend differently. Anyway, at least it means that I'm no LESS qualified to review a piece than anyone else! As for M. Liszt, you've unfortunately hit one of my blind spots. I think I've said that, in exploring classical music, focus on what you like, don't worry about what you don't like. That's really what I did. I sampled a composer; if I liked him, I tried more, if I didn't, I moved on. The result was a series of blind spots -- composers who didn't grab me when I first sampled them. In many cases, with more experience I've gone back and resampled and found my assessment dramatically changed. (Brahms is an example. At first, he left me cold; now I love him.) Unfortunately, I've just never gotten around to resampling Liszt. Do I infer correctly you like piano, or is there something about Liszt in particular? To the extent I feel competent, I'm happy to focus on particular periods, composers, instruments, etc. One other thought on getting one's bearings in the imposing world of classical music. Particularly if you're interested in a particular piece (Liszt's Piano Concerto, for example), you can do a lot worse than slip into the local record shop and take a look at the recommendations in the Penguin Guide to Classical Music. Yes, the authors have their prejudices (they're Brits, and they've never met a Simon Rattle recording they don't love, for example), but they're pretty darned reliable. Each of the three authors must be about 80 years old by now and probably has been writing classical reviews for 40 or 50 years. In addition, Gramophone has a website with a feature (called Gramofile) that allows you to search their reviews. (You have to sign up, but it's free.) It's six months out of date (I think), but that really doesn't matter. Rarely is the latest release the best. There is also a "recommended recordings" section.

[Gramophone Magazine Website](#)
