

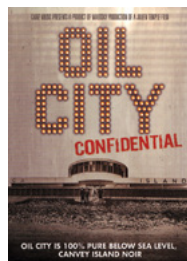
child prodigy to admired young sideman to '80s mainstream country star, balanced by the ups and occasional downs of his personal life, makes for interesting reading.

Among memories of various Nashville stars, his recollections of the pillars of bluegrass particularly stand out. A friend of Bill Monroe, Flatt and Scruggs, his former boss Ralph Stanley and one-time Stanley bandmate Keith Whitley, he captures their human and their lighter sides.

His memories of fine instruments like his first Gibson mandolin and a 1924 F-5 Loar he took out a bank loan to purchase are especially enjoyable.

Reflecting on the excitement of discovering Django Reinhardt, Skaggs recalls marveling at his music's similarities to bluegrass. Any musician can relate to his '80s dilemma of lacking a lead guitarist for one tour and having to get his own guitar chops up to speed. Too often, such memoirs give the music short shrift. Not this time. — **Rich Kienzie**

## DVD

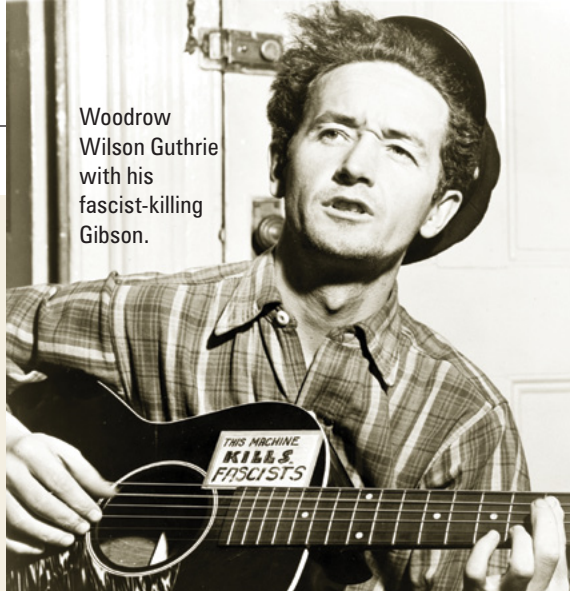


### Dr. Feelgood Oil City Confidential

Finally available in America, Julien Temple's superb documentary follows the brief career of England's late, great Dr. Feelgood, Temple employing his trademark technique of mashing up new interviews with archival and fictive footage, in this case clips from mid-century British film noir.

Interviews with surviving members are highly entertaining, and Temple's method stunning. But it's the charismatic guitarman Wilko Johnson who steals the show, hamming it up on Feelgood's home of Canvey Island while discussing his famous "redguard" Tele ("Red scratch-guard so the men won't see the blood"), busking in front of a hometown arcade, and revealing that his signature rhythm/lead technique was inspired by Alan Caddy of Johnny Kidd and the Pirates.

The Feelgoods burned out as they were hitting in the United States, but not before they saved England from glam and prog, with their short hair and sweaty suits. In celebrating the band's contributions, Temple "does it right." — **Dennis Pernu**



Woodrow Wilson Guthrie with his fascist-killing Gibson.

## REQUIRED LISTENING

There's a scene in *Man in the Sand*, the documentary about the acclaimed *Mermaid Avenue* collaboration between Billy Bragg and Wilco on a set of Woody Guthrie songs, in which Wilco frontman Jeff Tweedy sarcastically tells Bragg, "The fascists are really going to get what's coming to them." Presumably, the *Mermaid*-era Tweedy, who approached Guthrie's archive from a more apolitical angle than Bragg, would have groaned at the title *American Radical Patriot*. To be fair, the title of this epic eight-disc, limited-edition set may appear a bit misleading, and might even turn off some potential buyers. That's their loss. This is the ultimate Guthrie collection.

In fact, *American Radical Patriot* makes sweetly subversive sense as a title when it's considered that all seven hours of music, spoken word, and radio drama featured was commissioned by the U.S. government. This collection largely comprises Guthrie's first studio recordings,

captured at the Library of Congress in 1940 by Alan Lomax. And while it does indeed feature anti-fascist tracks recorded for the war effort (as any definitive Guthrie collection would), there are also songs about outlaws, bankers, hobos, Okies, cowboys, women, whiskey, and horses — the stuff of great folk music.

Three hours of the Lomax sessions have been previously released, most recently in 1998, but two hours are added here, complete with Guthrie's anecdotes and conversations with the legendary folklorist. And, it must be noted, the audio on the four LOC discs is superb, with nary a hint of the scratchy-needle-at-the-bottom-of-a-well quality that marks previous Guthrie recordings.

Guthrie's songs on disc five publicizing damming in the Pacific Northwest for the Bonneville Power Administration are well known among fans (the included DVD also features *Roll On Columbia*, a 1999 University of Oregon documentary about Guthrie's efforts on this front).

Less renowned, however, are the so-called VD recordings on disc six made for the U.S. Public Health Service (in which Guthrie repeatedly refers earnestly to "the VD"). It's difficult to imagine the federal government today hiring, say, Rufus Wainwright to record frank musings on any subject, let alone one with such moral baggage. This is not to say these songs were previously unavailable — in fact, this set even includes a 78-rpm record featuring Bob Dylan's 1961 recording of "VD City" from his 1961 "Minneapolis Hotel Tape."

All seven discs and the vinyl record are presented inside a handsomely bound 60-page book illustrated with rare photos and Guthrie drawings. An expanded 258-page version is included as a PDF on disc one.

Far from being a cherry-picked collection of Guthrie's leftist polemics, *American Radical Patriot* is the be-all, end-all Guthrie set (all that seem missing are his children's songs). At the risk of sounding like, well, a fascist, this should be required listening for all American school-children.

— **Dennis Pernu** VG

### Woody Guthrie American Radical Patriot

