



[Artists](#) | [Issues](#) | [CD Reviews](#) | [Interviews](#) | [Concert Reviews](#) | [DVD/Video Reviews](#) | [Book Reviews](#) | [Who We Are](#) | [Staff](#) | [Home](#)

John Illsley

Streets of Heaven

Review by Gary Hill

This solo album from John Illsley isn't a huge surprise. He's best known as the bass player for Dire Straits, and this disc feels a lot like something Dire Straits might do. As such, it's quite a strong release.



[Return](#)



Track by Track Review

Toe The Line

There's a killer hard rock sound that brings this in. As the vocals enter it's kind of a singer songwriter style mixed with Dire Straits. This is accessible and quite tasty. Of course, considering Illsley's musical pedigree, that Dire Straits reference is an obvious one.

Tell Me

A Latin element, with horns, brings this cut in and it works out from there in a sound that's again quite reminiscent of Dire Straits. This is quite tasty and the vocals often call to mind Bob Dylan.

Streets Of Heaven

Quite mellow, this is a ballad that's pretty. The Dire Straits elements are still present, but there are other sounds here, too. Of course, it doesn't hurt that Mark Knopfler provides the guitar solos here.

Young Girl

This is a very folk oriented number with a lot of power and emotion built into it. It's along the lines of something from John Flynn. It powers up later with the addition of more instruments and layers of sound.

Only Time Will Tell

Polly Wood's vocals play counterpoint to Illsley's here and Knopfler is back with his lead guitar. This is a mellow and quite pretty ballad and one of the best pieces on show here.

Banks Of The River

While Dire Straits is still on the musical map here, the horn section and soulful groove bring it into an almost Phil Collins-like sound at times.

No Way To Say Goodbye

Dylan meets Dire Straits comes front and center on this track which reminds me a lot of "Lay Lady Lay." It's a tasty ballad and Wood is again prominent here. It works out to a rocking version of itself later.

I Thought I Saw It Coming

There's a bit of a European café sound on the intro here, but the folk music sound that makes up the bulk of the track has some Celtic textures. It rocks out harder later and this is quite an effective tune.

Is It Real

We're back into a serious hard rocking motif here with Dylan and Dire Straits merged nicely and a little jazz thrown in for good measure.

Big Top

This one really feels very much like Dire Straits. It's a melodic and mellow tune, but also energetic.

Foreign Land

Here's another that sounds a lot like something Dire Straits would have done. It's a good way to end things nicely.

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