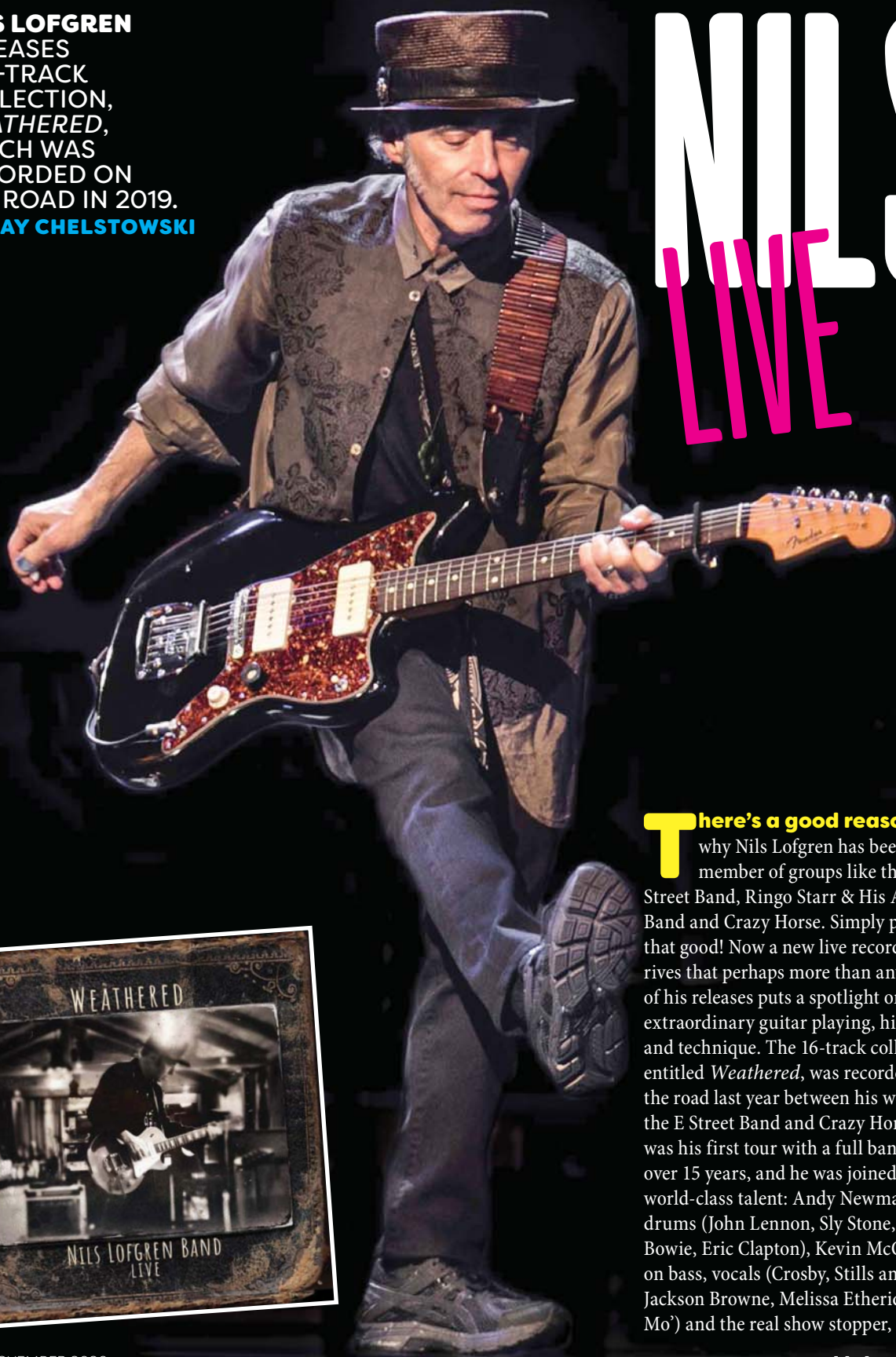




NILS LOFGREN
RELEASES
A 16-TRACK
COLLECTION,
WEATHERED,
WHICH WAS
RECORDED ON
THE ROAD IN 2019.
BY RAY CHELSTOWSKI

NILS LIVE



There's a good reason why Nils Lofgren has been a key member of groups like the E Street Band, Ringo Starr & His All-Starr Band and Crazy Horse. Simply put, he's that good! Now a new live record arrives that perhaps more than any other of his releases puts a spotlight on his extraordinary guitar playing, his tones and technique. The 16-track collection, entitled *Weathered*, was recorded on the road last year between his work with the E Street Band and Crazy Horse. This was his first tour with a full band in over 15 years, and he was joined by some world-class talent: Andy Newmark on drums (John Lennon, Sly Stone, David Bowie, Eric Clapton), Kevin McCormick on bass, vocals (Crosby, Stills and Nash, Jackson Browne, Melissa Etheridge, Keb' Mo') and the real show stopper, Cindy



Mizelle on vocals (Luther Vandross, Whitney Houston, Steely Dan, Bruce Springsteen). His brother Tom (who's been playing with Nils since his early band Grin) rounds things off.

Among the many singles fans will welcome from his solo records, the album also contains tracks from his recent Lou Reed tribute *Blue With Lou* and great covers like the Hank Williams' classic "Mind Your Own Business" — not to mention an all-out funky guitar jam take of The Temptations staple "Papa Was a Rollin' Stone." Lofgren and the band put on a real clinic pushing and pulling the song forward, playing with its construct in ways that allows each instrument to shine again and again.

Goldmine caught up with Lofgren to discuss the inspiration for this breakthrough record that's been 50-plus years in the making, what he has learned from his famous employers about being "the boss," and how it feels to have made music that has set the most supreme standard among audiophiles.

GOLDMINE: *You've recorded six live albums now. What did you specifically want to accomplish with this one?*

NILS LOFGREN: I tour a lot acoustically, but I haven't played with a band in over 15 years. Of course I play with E Street, and I've been playing with Crazy Horse and I'm thrilled to back in that fold with Neil, Billy (Talbot, bass) and Ralphie (Molina, drums). But I just wanted to play with a band, especially after putting a band album out (*Blue With Lou*). It all just seemed right. Part of the freedom of being in front of a band is that it allows you to tune out for a moment, stop being a performer for a minute and enjoy having this great band around you. Initially, I didn't want to be bothered with recording, because there's a lot of detail that goes into it and it's a head space. You have to get all prepared for recording and *pretend* you're not and just be free. But I didn't want to go there.

Then at the last minute my wife, Amy, said that "no matter what goes on you should just record the tour," because it was a very rare combination of musicians. In the end I got some rough mixes



Lofgren with Bruce Springsteen, live at Wembley Stadium on June 4, 2016, in London, England.

BRIAN RASIC/WIREIMAGE



Lofgren and Neil Young perform during the 30th Bridge School Benefit at Shoreline Amphitheatre on October 23, 2016.

TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES

to listen through, and as always I said, "I'm a little sloppy." But there's a vibe to this band that I haven't felt before. To make a long (story) short it got to a point where I thought that I should share the best of the tour.

GM: *There's so much fire on this record musically. It's a real guitar record.*

NL: Thanks man! It's something that I enjoy doing so much, having an electric guitar and having the freedom to not play but just sing. And then when I *do* play we always keep it free and leave the arrangements wide open. I like working with musicians where I can be very hands off and let them play what they feel and hear. It surprises and inspires

me. I don't know if I went overboard, but I did relish the freedom to just wail whenever I wanted.

GM: *The real standout in my opinion is Cindy Mizelle on background vocals and percussion. She adds so much dimension to the music like Merry Clayton did for The Rolling Stones.*

NL: Amy and I got close to Cindy on the Bruce tours, and it was Amy who really pushed me to get Cindy on this tour. Most of the time she's out with Steely Dan or someone really huge, so there's rarely a chance to make something like this happen. But it just worked out that she was free and wanted to do it. I

warned her that we'd be on a bus and be staying at Holiday Inn Expresses. She had no problem with that. Everyone was game and it shows. I warned her early on, past the harmonies I need you to stretch out. If you hear something in your head, do it. It was a very free, unregimented experience and, man, she took it and ran with it, adding little scats here and there. It was like having another instrument. She gave a lot of these older songs a new take and freshness.

Look, Kevin, Andy, Tommy and I have done a lot of touring together. The *Wonderland* tour back in the early 1980s was a madhouse of jamming. We went crazy taking things right to the edge. We really got reckless. Early on, Cindy learned that the more you do the better we're all gonna get. Don't force it, but never edit it. If you feel it then sing it. It really paid off, and it made the band beam.

GM: *This is about as solid a band as anyone could ask for. They are all as seasoned and as world class as you musically. What have you learned from Neil and Bruce about being the band boss on the road?*

NL: Everyone's different. I've probably done about a thousand shows with Bruce and tons of shows with Neil. One of the things about those two is that they tend to aim you in a direction, then be hands off. With every band I encourage players to do the same and stretch out. That was the case even with Ringo's All-Starr Band. At the rehearsals for the first tour in 1989, I asked him what he needed and what the rules were. He looked at me, put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Nils, play what you want, wear what you want, go where you want, sing what you want. I want *you* all the time." The great musicians know that if you let these people free, you are going to get inspired, and that will enhance your own playing.

GM: *I love that the album Silver Lining (1991) is so well represented here, because it's my favorite record of yours. Did you ever trot "Valentine" out on this tour?*

NL: Yeah, once and a while we do that. It's been quite a while. It just kinda fell out of the set. It's startling to see that



Nils Lofgren on his prolific songwriting: "It's startling to see that there are hundreds of songs within my own catalog."

there are hundreds of songs within my own catalog. My great hope was that I could take this band out late in the year. I was supposed to go out with Neil Young and Crazy Horse at the end of April for a couple of months. The great thing about Neil is that if he's having fun he might decide to stay out. And I was hoping tentatively that next year might be E Street. I was getting greedy! I'd have a year-and-a-half of touring with these three wonderful bands, then poof, it all went away.

GM: *The studio cut of "Walkin' Nerve" stands out to me for two reasons. The layers of wiry guitars you provide and Ringo's rock-solid backbeat. How do you decide on an approach live where you can't always loop all of that guitar sound together?*

NL: That was a wonderful track. Ringo Starr, Kevin (McCormick) and I played that live in studio as a trio. We were in the big room with no barriers looking right at each other. I got a live vocal and it came out great. Kevin was producing and said we should just add a couple of lead lines and keep things really raw and simple. That was an interesting jam on the first Ringo tour in '89. I had that riff and hadn't written the song. As I played it, Ringo started laying this incredible shuffle that ended up on the record. Jim Keltner used to say that when most drummers do the shuffle it's very military with both arms working. Ringo did it all with one hand. Only did the backbeat. He would do that groove, and I'd start playing this riff. Then Billy Preston would start singing "She's a woman." (laughs)

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— Nils Lofgren

GM: *You have done a Lou Reed cover record and one covering Neil. Would you ever take a stab at making an album of all Bruce tunes?*

NL: That's come up a lot. I did that album *The Loner, Nils Sings Neil* (2008). But the truth is I've done what I think was a really heartfelt take of "Wreck on the Highway" for a charity record. "One Step Up" I've done for another charity record. I used to do a bottleneck version of "Seeds," and I've regularly sung "If I Should Fall Behind." So I've kind of done half of my Bruce record already and it's out there is some form or not.

GM: *Were you aware that serious audiophiles consider your tune "Keith Don't Go" to be a high-end sound system demo standard?*

NL: You know that I became aware of that a while ago, and God bless Ron Freeland. He was a dear friend and engineer who worked with me a lot in Maryland and passed away a few

years ago. Ron would have been so proud. We've been approached to do these high-resolution masterings and put them out on vinyl. Now they have an ever higher resolution 45 vinyl and they have done a package of it. I guess it's one of the premier songs to test systems out. I've seen some of the articles and I'm so glad for that. I sent a big note to Ron's family and wife with samples of the vinyl. We were blessed to have a great engineer who really knew what he was doing. But I had no idea that I was going to get that kind of attention from the audiophile community, and I'm truly grateful for it.

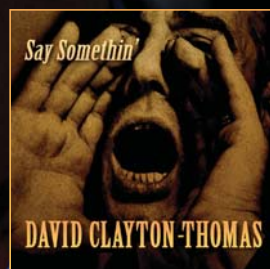
GM: *Well we sure hope that your touring wishes come true and that you're back out there with all three bands in the near future.*

NL: That's the plan. Everyone just hunker down and stay safe. Hopefully we'll all be out doing what we do sometime soon. ●

DAVID CLAYTON THOMAS

Say Somethin'

Former Blood Sweat & Tears frontman, Grammy-Winning, 40-million album-selling, Hall of Fame icon David Clayton-Thomas announces the release of his politically-potent album, **SAY SOMETHIN'**



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