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## REVIEW

### DVD Review: *Talmage Farlow*

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Neal Gardner

In 1958 jazz guitarist Tal Farlow retired from active playing at the top of his game. He had played in the Red Norvo Trio featuring Charles Mingus, and in the bands of Buddy DeFranco and Artie Shaw. *Down Beat* chose him "New Star" of 1954. He was a *Down Beat* poll winner in 1956 and 1957. Tal went back to life on the river and the craft/occupation of sign painting in Sea Bright, New Jersey. He taught guitar while occasionally playing out in the New Jersey and New York areas. His absence from the jazz scene proper was noted and eventually everyone was asking, "What happened to Tal Farlow?"

Filmmaker Lorenzo DeStefano helped answer that question with the release of *Talmage Farlow* in 1981. A 1980 visit with Tal was the basis of the film. In addition, rehearsals of the Tal Farlow Trio are filmed featuring pianist Tommy Flanagan, and bassist Red Mitchell. Interspersed throughout are stills of club marquees, album covers, photos of Farlow, etc., documenting his popularity in the '50s. Later in the film legendary guitarist Lenny Breau pays a visit to Tal and they are also shown sitting in the sunlight on Tal's porch playing a duet.

The trio of Flanagan, Mitchell, Farlow is shown rehearsing atop a penthouse apartment in Manhattan. The film winds up with coverage of a few songs from a performance at The Public Theatre in New York.

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Extras on the DVD include an hour of outtakes with Lenny Breau and Farlow, a photo gallery, and the trio.

This film manages to convey an overall impression of Tal Farlow as a musician and a person. Greensboro, North Carolina born Farlow projects a country boy simplicity and kindness coupled with a virtuosic talent for jazz improvisation on the guitar. I've played guitar for more than 40 years and my knowledge of guitar compared to Farlow's amounts to the proverbial drop in the bucket. Any guitar players comparing themselves to Tal have to be tempted to just put his instrument back in the case and slide it under the bed. Farlow, who died July 25, 1998, is now in the pantheon of jazz greats, and a true inspiration to plank spankers everywhere.

Songs on the DVD include:

- "Autumn in New York"
- "Fascinating Rhythm"
- "I Love You"
- "Flamingo"
- "Jordu"
- "I Hear a Rhapsody"

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### Author: Neal Gardner

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