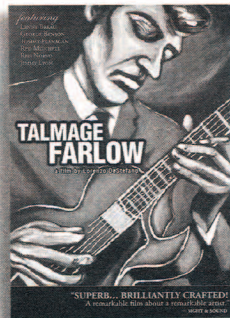


Tal Farlow



Tal Farlow
Talmerge Farlow
Music Video Distributor

which allowed him to stretch for voicings other players had

never even considered. In the closing montage, after the Public Theater performance, a fan puts his splayed hand up against Farlow's, and the difference is astounding – Tal's fingers dwarfing the fan's by almost two inches. No wonder Farlow's signature model Gibson archtop had a Fender-scale neck.

Ultimately, this is more than a music video; it's a rare look at a humble, dignified man who had immense talent but chose peace of mind over stardom. The film deserves the highest possible recommendation. Unfortunately, "bonus footage" is now an expected component of DVD packages, so also included is 60 minutes of raw "footage," if you can call it that, of Farlow and Breau's encounter. Besides revealing too much staging (removing any inkling of spontaneity), the audio fails to capture much of the pair's conversation, and the video completely drops out so many times during the jam segments (with the audio continuing), it's enough to make you scream. My recommendation is to buy the DVD, watch the documentary, do not bother viewing any "special features," and buy the CD of the pair's one and only club date, *Chance Meeting*, on the Guitarchives label. — **DF**

JAZZ ENIGMA, UP CLOSE

At last, this superb 1981 documentary on one of jazz's greatest guitarists and most enigmatic figures is available on DVD! Lorenzo DeStefano (who produced, directed, and edited the film) offers the most up-close and personal glimpse anyone was able to get of the late guitar giant, who walked away from showbiz at the height of his popularity, in 1958, for a quiet life, fishing and working as a sign painter in Sea Bright, New Jersey.

In the early '50s, Farlow's wild approach and advanced harmonic sense were enough to earn him star billing in Red Norvo's trio — "Featuring Tal Farlow" — whose unnamed third member was no less than bassist Charles Mingus. After a brief stint with Artie Shaw, he cut a string of solo albums that left a lasting impression on players like George Benson, who is shown singing Tal's praises in the

film's opening scene.

But the music scene didn't suit the temperament of the lanky, soft-spoken native of Greensboro, North Carolina, and he went back to his earlier trade of painting signs — which he was still doing when this documentary was shot, along with teaching guitar and playing such low-profile, local gigs that most fans thought he'd hung up his axe. In a very touching segment, Farlow talks about learning his sign-painting craft, and compares it to playing jazz — injecting that necessary ingredient, or "snap," to make each special. And he is shown doing just that — meticulously painting the name "Fat Chance" on the back of a client's boat.

Although he had come out of hiding and recorded a couple of albums for Concord by this time, Farlow had yet to play New York City, visible from his porch on clear

days. The film leads up to his triumphant, sold-out return to the Apple, at the Public Theater, backed by fellow jazz legends Tommy Flanagan on piano and Red Mitchell on bass. In between we see them rehearsing in a Manhattan penthouse and are treated to a first-meeting jam with Lenny Breau at Tal's home. It is in these informal settings that Farlow actually displays his best playing. The footage with Breau, who also joins Tal at a local club, is especially valuable since he, too, is now gone, having died mysteriously in 1984 at the age of 43.

Breau was the perfect candidate for such a summit meeting since many of the things he was known for — simultaneously comping and playing bass lines, his non-pareil facility with harmonics — were things that Farlow had innovated. One advantage Tal had over the diminutive Breau was the size of his hands,