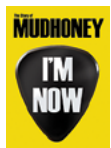


accompanied by the chime of his Breedlove Passport travel-size guitar (scale length 19.25 inches), which he uses as a *terz*. He details, "I tuned it in standard tuning up to A, although for general purposes it's tuned to G." Wilson's main guitars on the CD are a 12-fret Manuel & Patterson 00-12 ESR-3 and a recent Gibson J-45, although he also employs a curvaceous Running Dog Mini Jumbo and his Wilson Style E with P-100s.

Wilson's storytelling can border on prose, in the best sense of the term, as on "Her Mother's Daughter," featuring spare guitar and cello backing. Sitting comfortably alongside Wilson's originals are his renditions of Rabbit Brown's "James Alley Blues," featuring a trumpet/trombone/Sousaphone section, "St. James Infirmary," simultaneously playing a descending bass line underneath extremely intricate fingerpicking on the high strings, and the rousing gospel medley that closes this impressive, enjoyable set. — **DF**

DVD



Mudhoney
I'm Now

King of Hearts

The beauty of criminally underappreciated Mudhoney — aside from a back catalog brimming with ferocious wit and gloriously fuzzed-out guitars (their debut EP was titled *Superfuzz Bigmuff*, after all) — is that they don't believe they're criminally underappreciated. Nevertheless, the Seattle band whose records kept Sub Pop afloat until the indie found major label nirvana gets its due in this stylish documentary from directors Ryan Short and Adam Pease.

I'm Now is visually stunning, featuring fantastic photography and performance footage from throughout the band's history and prehistory. The eye candy complements new interview footage with band members Mark Arm, Steve Turner, and Dan Peters, as well as Matt Lukin and his replacement, Guy Maddison. Other talking heads include David Fricke, Sub Pop co-founders Bruce Pavitt and Jonathan Poneman, producer Jack Endino, members of Pearl Jam and Sonic Youth, and dozens more.

Arm et. al. recount their formation, their angst at leaving Sub Pop, and their eventual return to the label (whose warehouse Arm now runs). *I'm Now* is most revealing for its glimpses into the band's frequently absurd experiences in the music business. They recall executive-level attempts to tamper with their production and also recording entire albums for a few thousand dollars then pocketing the leftover advances (thus managing down payments on homes). Despite the biz and Arm's mid-'90s drug use, which he

discusses here, Mudhoney maintained their sanity and friendship amid the period's heady indie-rock sweepstakes, after which Reprise dropped them in a hilarious-if-it-wasn't-true turn of events.

While others were moping over their bags of cash, Mudhoney was in it for the music (and occasionally the free beer). *I'm Now* serves as a reminder of the value of playing loud rock music with your friends, and documents the legacy of one of the most remarkable bands of the past 25 years. — **Dennis Pernu**



Doc & Merle Watson

Doc & Merle

Rounder

This documentary film is a guitarist's dream come true. Not only does it tell the story of Doc Watson, but it's filled with long, thoughtful sequences of him and Merle playing, both in concerts and casual home ensembles. There's enough in the hour-long film to satisfy a hunger for Doc's music — as well as to learn a few things, besides.

And not only does Doc play his guitar, but the film shows once again what an amazing all-round musician he was, from his speed-blurred flat-picking to equally virtuosic Travis picking, banjo playing, singing, and harmonica blowing.

Along the way, the film also tells Doc's tale. The most touching is his early epiphany that, since he was blind, playing music was the sole way for him to take care of his wife Rosa Lee and their children. He began as a "professional" musician busking on street corners, then playing in groups, before being discovered and lionized by the folk music boom of the early '60s.

The film features Doc's old-time North Carolina music in spades. But it also shows him playing the other music he grew up with — rockabilly. There are several vintage images of Doc playing a goldtop Les Paul through various Fender tweed amps in an early rock and roll group. Reunited with that band's pianist, Jack Williams, they romp through a rollicking "Step It Up And Go." And later on, Doc plays a sizzling, swinging medley leading off with "Blue Suede Shoes."

The prime moment, though, may be Williams' insight into playing with Watson: "You'd never hear that boy make a mistake on that guitar. But I could always tell when he'd made one, because he'd throw in about a dozen and a half notes covering it up — and I mean they'd come in there just as slick as a button. People who weren't listening and didn't know what he was doing, didn't know what he was doing. But I did."

This DVD reissues the original 1986 film, plus a bonus of a 1970 "Homewood" TV concert of Doc and Merle. — **MD VG**



Wanda Jackson & the Party Timers, circa 1966, with Tex Wilburn on Tele and Mike Lane on Jazzmaster.

"Let's Have A Party"

Zowie! Wanda Jackson always could rock, then and now. But a collection like this is welcome to remind us exactly how.

Yes, many people had their eyes and ears opened to Jackson's music thanks to her recent album with Jack White, 2011's *The Party Ain't Over*. White's loud guitar and complex arrangements were often in danger of overpowering Wanda's vocals, but her impossible beehive and irrepressible personality managed to shine through.

Fans of stellar rockabilly and country were happy to see Wanda's return, yet yearned for the real, unadulterated deal — these phenomenal Capitol singles from 1956-62.

The social get-together being referred to in the 2011 release began in '58 with Jackson's hit "Let's Have A Party." The song was a stinger, a cover of Elvis' tune from the flick *Loving You* but with even more panache and with Buck Owens and Vernon Sandusky threading trebly Bakersfield-style guitar through Wanda's nasally vocals. Her singing was every bit as raucous and shocking as her boyfriend Elvis' — and perhaps more so, as she was of the delicate sex, as they said in the '50s.

Jackson was still drinking soda pop in high school in 1954 when country star Hank Thompson heard her on

Oklahoma City's KLPR and arranged for her to sing with his band. In 1956, she scored her first hit, "I Gotta Know," that was a genre-bending blend of country waltz and rock and roll with Joe Maphis on gloriously twangy guitar. Check out the



Wanda Jackson
The Best of the Classic Capitol Singles

Omnivore Recordings

YouTube video of the band playing the song back in the day on TV's "Ranch Party" and watch Maphis' grin as he spins out those licks on his signature double-neck Mosrite.

Genre bending and blending proved Jackson's forte. She could sing classic country, twist and turn a rocker, then look skyward as she sang gospel. Her career would ricochet between these styles.

Her brief fling with Elvis certainly helped her employment opportunities, but Wanda's voice was her greatest asset. She could scream, drawl, purr, and snarl, creating a range every bit as unique and dramatic as Elvis.

Jackson was also lucky in that her earliest sides

were *not* cut in Nashville — where she might have been forced to be type-cast as a country singer — but at Capitol Studios in Hollywood. And she was fortunate in the session guitarists available to her.

On those first, 1956 Capitol sessions, Maphis was joined by Buck Owens, pedal-steel maestro Ralph Mooney, and Lewis Talley, who would later play with and produce Merle Haggard. What a lineup, what a sound. "Fujiyama Mama" from 1957 may be the best cut here, a song that created the concept of "big in Japan" and took Jackson on perhaps the first rock tour there ever.

Owens remained key to Wanda's guitar vibe through 1958, along with Billy Strange and J.W. Marshall. It was a proto Bakersfield sound, heavy on the rock and roll accent.

By 1960, Jackson was cutting tracks in Nashville with Roy Clark and later, Harold Bradley. The later was kid brother of producer Owen Bradley, who led the A Team in recording everyone from the Johnny Burnette Trio on the rockabilly front to too many great country singles to list.

This CD is jam packed with 29 tracks of the best of Wanda Jackson — including country and rockabilly, searing vocals and scorching guitars — that it'd be a shame to leave without. — **Michael Dregni**