

solos on the record. "It's About You" is a stomper with a nasty solo that showcases two things about his style that make him a bit different than normal rock players. He's not afraid to play fast and furious, but the sound is always clean – taking nastiness to a different level.

The primitive production is also noteworthy – clean and dry. Oddly enough, that makes this record rock even more. You'd be hard pressed to find an artist outside of Horowitz who can pull that off this well. – JH

DVDs



Deep Purple with Orchestra Live at Montreux 2011

Eagle Rock

Worldwide, Deep Purple is still a huge touring venture. This recent Swiss concert has the group backed by a symphony, harkening to its first classical venture, 1969's *Concerto For Group And Orchestra*. Today's Purple features vintage members in front man Ian Gillan, Ian Paice on drums, and bassist Roger Glover, along with keyboard veteran Don Airey and Dregs guitar hero Steve Morse, who's been with the band for 15 years already. In any event, it's a formidable lineup. Unlike most '70s-era bands, Deep Purple still sounds like a young group that's hungry and eager to earn its place in the hard-rock pantheon – well-illustrated by how it just kicks ass at this gig.

The show opens with "Highway Star," where the band tears through a faithful rendition of the FM stomper, replete with Morse covering Ritchie Blackmore's famous guitar solo, throwing a few of his own hot licks in for good measure. While some fans will never accept Morse's role in place of the "other" Man In Black, Morse more than earns his keep with blistering solos and riffs galore, though he can get slow and soulful too, as on the bluesy ballad "When A Blind Man Cries." He also gets center stage on "The Well Dressed Guitar," where his legendary classical chops (on a signature Music Man guitar) are pitted against the orchestra for some dazzling exchanges. Without question, this level of licksmanship is by far beyond the technical capability of Blackmore and, judging by the big grins on the faces of Gillan, Paice, and Glover, they are well aware of Morse's "secret weapon" abilities. The thousands of clapping fans out front are equally in rapture. Add to that classics from "Smoke On The Water" to "Space Truckin'" to "Knocking At Your Back Door" (plus a brief but cool encore of "Green Onions"), and you have a killer Deep Purple live DVD. – PP



Anthony Wilson

Seasons: Live at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Goat Hill Recordings

Anthony Wilson knows a good guitar when he hears it. Listening to a recording of Martin Taylor playing an archtop created by luthier John Monteleone, Wilson says he literally could not believe the tone – full, rich, powerful. Tracking down the guitar maker to his workshop in Islip, New York, Wilson and Monteleone became fast friends with mutual respect for each other's craft.

Growing from this shared esteem, Monteleone commissioned Wilson to compose a new work. The result is a four-part suite, *Seasons: A Song Cycle for Guitar Quartet*, presented here on Wilson's own label in a deluxe CD/DVD package in two forms.

Wilson is joined by guitarists Julian Lage, Steve Cardenas, and Chico Pinheiro. The 50-minute live DVD concert is filmed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, capturing an intimate setting and providing close-ups of the quartet's fretwork – and their obvious joy in their collaboration.

Throughout, the foursome trade off among themselves a magnificent quartet of Monteleone guitars. The sound from these instruments is lavish and alive in both the concert DVD and audio CD. The concert DVD also includes a documentary film and photographic slideshow tracing the story behind the Wilson/Monteleone collaboration.

For fans of jazz guitar, it doesn't get much better. – MD



Steve Howe's Remedy

Live

MVD

Even amongst Yes fans, there's always been a cult following for Steve Howe's solo music, which kicked off with the 1975 LP, *Beginnings*. Here, we have a concert from 2004 featuring Howe's solo band Remedy, which also features sons Dylan on drums and Virgil on keys. The music is a grab bag of instrumental and vocal material that pushes Steve's guitar melodies and improves to the front.

Presumably in homage to his hero, the Shadows' Hank Marvin, Howe plays the first few songs on a gleaming red Strat, including "Sensitive Chaos" and "Diary Of A Man Who Vanished." He also detours into his patented steel guitar solos, all drenched in heavy echo and overdrive, such as on "Pennants" (from 1979's fine *The Steve Howe Album*).

Mid-set, Steve grabs a Les Paul loaded with guitar-synth guts and noodles

a bit aimlessly through "Across The Cobblestone" before grabbing a Telecaster for the Yes version of "America" (though on vocals, Howe is clearly no Jon Anderson – it's long been a drawback to his solo material). Other tracks of note are "Lost Symphony" (highlighting a few tart solos by tour guitarist Ray Fenwick); a "Close To The Edge" excerpt performed on a Martin cutaway; and his '60s pop hit with Tomorrow, "My White Bicycle." He even grabs his trademark Gibson ES-175 for few numbers, such as the "Wurm" solo section of "Starship Trooper."

Taken as a whole, this set is clearly for the Howe/Yes crowd, while if you're not a fan, you may be puzzled by the stiff grooves, Steve's eccentric guitar work, and his weird, sometimes off-pitch vocals. But for the dedicated, this is a cool DVD that captures the Yes veteran later in his career, still mixing genres, sounds, and techniques like few others in rock. As this set proves, there's only one Steve Howe – no substitutions allowed. – PP

Books



Dead Letters: The Very Best Grateful Dead Fan Mail

By Paul Grushkin

Voyageur Press

Needless to say, in any Grateful Dead book, Jerry Garcia will figure prominently. The guitarist, multi-instrumentalist, and songwriter actually was the star of the band and veritable messiah of their devoted fan base: Dead Heads. Addicted, in the best possible definition of the word, to the music and the experience, Dead Heads went to extraordinary, often inspiring, lengths to get their hands on concert tickets by mailing the band and its staff. After all, the only way to get tickets for the Dead was to go directly to the source. The Dead were already receiving fan mail, but it was the liner notes to the 1971 live album that invited reciprocal communication.

Most often, this took the form of letters (and envelopes) with personalized Dead artwork the likes of which the U.S. Postal Service had never seen. If there was magic in the guitar notes, then that magic was transformed onto the artwork produced over the years.

Though Garcia passed many years ago, in 2008 the remaining Grateful Dead band members donated their archive to the library at U.C. Santa Cruz. This book is the first of many expected as the material in the archive, dating back to the 1960s, is fully cataloged and described.

Since the band's earliest days, Grateful Dead staff saved tens of thousands of decorated ticket-request envelopes

sent to them by Dead Heads hoping to capture the ticketing staff's attention with their mind-bending designs. These envelopes are inspirational and hugely insightful, not to mention brilliantly illustrated and unique within the world of rock. The book collects more than 300 of these masterpieces, all presented in 14 thematic chapters. Fully authorized by the Dead, the book also includes, for further context, rare historical photos and memorabilia, in which Garcia is a key element among the Dead Heads and their own experience of the band. Each of the unique pieces of art is displayed fully formed and is intriguing not only for its relationship to the band but also for the level of devotion that so many fans have held for so long to their favorite cause. An envelope on page 146 captures this best as it shows Garcia in a top hat and cape with a magic wand in one hand and the magic tickets in the other, all decorated with colorful glitter. – ECS



The Dream Factory - Fender Custom Shop

By Tom Wheeler

Hal Leonard

Wheeler is a real Fender enthusiast (see interview in the First Fret section), as illustrated in this new history of Fender's vaunted Custom Shop. Though it is a little hard to believe, it all started in 1987 at a small R&D facility in Brea, California, before settling in Pomona in a corner area without any temperature controls. It was an inauspicious start that the book documents with the recollections of movers and shakers, Michael Stevens and John Page chiefly, as well as numerous photos of the early custom work area and some of the first guitars produced.

The book works methodically up to the present day, covering growth and changes that have made the present Fender Custom Shop a large operation. Depth of coverage is startling in the nearly five-pound, 600-page tome, and the guitars illustrated do represent the stuff of dreams. Though many of these were produced for N.A.M.M. and other trade shows, the true mission of the Custom Shop is custom-ordered, one-off instruments for players, collectors, and art lovers. One particular member of all three groups, Billy F. Gibbons of ZZ Top, was inspired to write a Foreword of nearly 2,000 words for the book!

Equally history and photo book, it more than succeeds in honoring the artisans who craft the instruments and the players who use them. Made for the Fender fan, with a deluxe slipcase and hard binding on glossy paper, it will also be enjoyed by anyone who appreciates fine guitars as playable pieces of art. – ECS