

themselves. Considering his dual talents, John Pizzarelli might need to watch his back. — **DF**

DVD

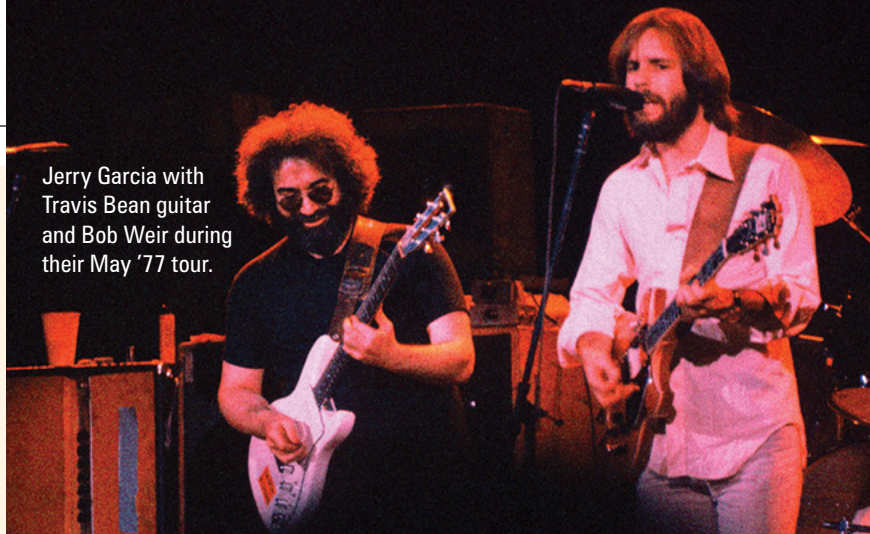


Iggy and the Stooges and Special Guests Tribute to Rob Asheton

The Stooges' influence on '80s and early '90s indie scenesters is unimpeachable. For more than a quarter-century, cognoscenti have clamored to comprehend the quartet's long shadow, more often than not dubbing frontman Iggy Pop with sobriquets like "The Godfather of Punk." Understandable, given Pop's performance chops, but such assessments overlook the cornerstone of the band's sublime scuzz: founding guitarist Ron Asheton, who passed away in January 2009.

Shot in the band's hometown of Ann Arbor, Michigan, in April 2011, *Tribute* attempts to rectify this by presenting a set of Stooges classics with mixed results. Indeed, Pop proves he can still induce mayhem, and classic Stooges riffs as laid down by *Raw Power* guitarist James Williamson and Radio Birdman's Deniz Tek still manage to sound timeless, primitive as they may be. Unfortunately bassist extraordinaire Mike Watt, with the Stooges since they re-formed in 2003, is virtually buried in the mix — doubly shameful considering MC Henry Rollins' preshow spiel on the importance of the band's rhythm section. Also puzzling is the extraneous string and horn sections that manage to sully a trio of primo *Funhouse* cuts.

Depending on how seriously you take your Stooges, *Tribute* could be a real cool time or no fun at all. — **Dennis Pernu**



Jerry Garcia with Travis Bean guitar and Bob Weir during their May '77 tour.

THE DEAD'S OWN MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

Over the decades, the Grateful Dead played more than 2,000 concerts, but none are as fabled, as mythologized as their performances on the magical spring 1977 tour. This 14-disc box set collects five complete shows from that run, displaying the band at a peak of energy and experimentation.

The tour came at an opportune time in the Dead's history. They had survived their psychedelic early years, then reinvented themselves with the rootsy Americana of 1970's *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*. But now, they were in a middle age slump, seeking direction that resulted in three varied albums — 1973's almost-forgotten *Wake of the Flood*,

'74's lackluster *From the Mars Hotel*, and a creative rebirth with '75's *Blues for Allah*. After losing their finances and the dreary live album *Steal Your Face*, they were standing on the threshold of failure.

The Dead headed out on the road in '77 with the songs that formed *Terrapin Station*, to be released that July, in their back pockets. Those songs — especially Jerry Garcia's Mu-Tron III anthem "Estimated Prophet" — and the jams on other recent tunes literally took center stage in the band's shows.

This tour formed the basis of what the Dead would rely on for the rest of its long strange career. As Dead historian Steve Silberman writes in the liner book: "The spring tour of 1977... represented one of those Darwinian leaps, when the Dead took a bold collective step into the future, reinventing itself for a savvy audience eager to live on that edge where something new was always waiting to be born."

The five shows here include stops at the St. Paul Civic Center Arena, Chicago's Auditorium Theatre, St. Louis Arena, and the University Of Alabama Coliseum. Each night, the show included Dead chestnuts from all eras. But it was the new pairings of new songs and the extended jams that linked them that made these shows legendary.

Garcia's guitar work was at a creative zenith in "Estimated Prophet"/"Eyes Of The World" and "Scarlet Begonias"/"Fire On The Mountain." Bob Weir continued to prove himself one of the most innovative rhythm guitarists alongside the stellar bass playing of Phil Lesh. If it wasn't for Donna Jean Godchaux's "singing," these would be the perfect Dead shows.

This gorgeous box set was designed by graphic artist Masaki Koike and includes a book filled with the story behind each show and an essay by Silberman on the tour and the turning point it represented. — **Michael Dregni**

The Grateful Dead
May 1977

