

REVIEWS



DVD REVIEW

Incredible String Band

Live At The Lowry

MVD Visual (SECDVD123)

Grade: ★★★

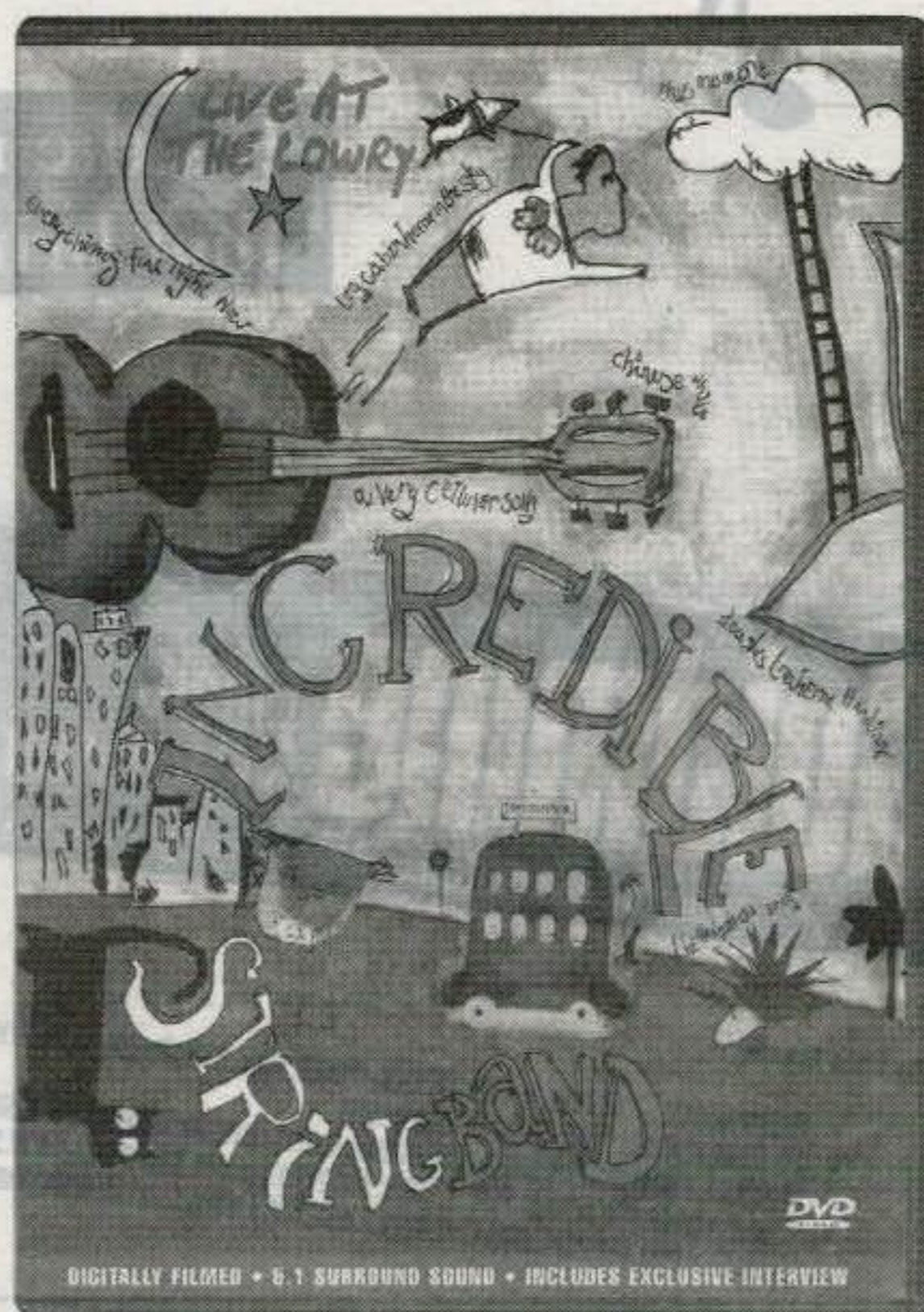
With a spring in their step and hearts as light as gossamer, experimental folkies the Incredible String Band, with banjo player Clive Palmer back in the fold on this occasion, deal with "the ancient" portion — as the group puts it — of their catalog mostly in this intimate, thoroughly engaging show from September 2003.

If only the group's performance was a little tighter. There is a whole lot of charm in the Incredible String Band's loose playing, but in this richly filmed live DVD, occasionally it results in an awkwardness that's not quite as lovable.

In the close quarters of The Lowry in Salford Quay in the U.K., Palmer, founding member Mike Heron, multi-instrumentalist Lawson Dando and Fluff (on vocals, whistles, mandolin, violin and cello) captivate with their eccentric, exceedingly British spin on Appalachian folk. In addition to a freewheeling medley ("Cuckold Army," "Because He Was A Bonnie Lad," "Worlds They Rise And Falls," "A Very Cellular Song" and "Black Jack Davey") of fiddle and pipes, wistful renditions of "Ducks On A Pond" and the aching "Maker of Islands" are beautifully sketched in sad strings, lithe acoustic guitar and artfully drawn-out piano.

A playful banjo interlude runs headlong into the simple, heartfelt imagery of "Painting Box" — its delicate structure supported by Heron's guitar and Fluff's contemplative violin — before Palmer digs his hands into the earthy "Empty Pocket Blues," leaving no doubt that the Incredible String Band is more than just a group of bus-station buskers. The lively "You Know What You Could Be" is more evidence of that. Even without one of the band's pillars, namely Robin Williamson, this foursome should have had a king's ransom in loose change in their instrument cases to show for this lovely evening.

— Peter Lindblad



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erdale, plus Jon Lord's
drums, combine
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. Its place in the Deep
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for re-evaluation, as

v life to Deep Purple
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"Lady Luck" and
e same time, deftly
olin loops and dives
in "I Need Love"
rd workout. It's Lord
runaway semi that is

on "Burn," "Lady Double Dealer" and "Mistreated" is mind-blowing, and Lord sizzles on keys, especially in the intro to "You Fool No One." An interesting round of reissues — with no bonus tracks to be found — these releases, and the historical assessments included in producer Joe Reagoso's liner notes, could spark strong debate among fans about an underappreciated period in the band's existence.

— Peter Lindblad

They Might Be Giants

Here Come the 123s

Walt Disney Records CD/DVD

Grade: ★★★★★

Musically, this CD sounds like the usual They Might Be Giants sound (that's a compliment), even though this is a

Brooklyn band. To fans, this should come as no surprise. The two Johns (Flansburgh and Linnell) & Co. have made a career out of intriguing and ear-catching light-pop tunes.

More thrill with this one comes from the addition of a DVD with videos for 23 of the 24 tracks. Despite the less-than-impressive title-track opener and the "Mickey Mouse Clubhouse Theme" closer, the album as a whole impresses musically while proving educational and entertaining for kids. In particular, "Zeroes" and the brief "Eight Hundred and Thirteen Mile Car Trip" stand out, with the best of them being "High Five!"

The DVD presents a different type of animation for each song; there's no repetition, and the effect is that it certainly feels like thought and care went into each production.

If you have kids or know someone with kids, give serious thought to the educational benefits and enjoyment of giving the gift of They Might Be Giants.