

DVDs



Various contributors

Composing the Beatles

Songbook:

Lennon and McCartney 1966

- 1970

Pride Records

Watching this interesting (if inconsistent) video, you may find your thoughts mirroring John Lennon's from "Strawberry Fields Forever"; "I think I know I mean... Ah, yes but it's all wrong. That is, I think I disagree."

A collection of observations and assertions from "experts" like music journalists/critics Robert Christgau, Anthony DeCurtis, Paul Gambicini, and more, to a musician or two like Allan Moore Steve Turner, these are folks with varying degrees of intimacy and acquaintance. And their recollections of the Beatles range from wrongheaded and laughable – like one's claim that after he introduced Paul McCartney to beat literature and culture, their work had a major influence on Macca's writing and thought – to downright dull.

Lennon and McCartney were never secretive about their creations or their creative process. Because of that, conflicting (or even elaborately expanded) theories are suspect; are these jokers really contributing any deeper, fresher insight or recollections or are they just bloviating, deluded by an inflated sense of their importance and their understanding of the Beatles' work and world.

The most trustworthy musings are probably those of Maureen Cleve and Klaus Voorman, verified insiders from the Beatles' Liverpool and Hamburg

days. In the final analysis (and don't you sometimes wish it was?) discussing the hows and whys of Beatles music is a fun way to pass an afternoon with friends. But deconstructing and codifying, intellectually boiling the joy out of experiencing some of history's best pop music is just a way to extract unearned benefits and intellectually engage those too "thick" or cynical to get it intuitively. – **RA**



David Bromberg

Devil In Disguise

Vestapol/Rounder

vels at Blind Blake's prowess before "Chump Man Blues," and recalls meeting Lonnie Johnson before playing a sparse, almost spooky rendition of "Levee Camp Moan."

The 63-year-old, who in 2007 released his first album in 17 years, can be forgiven if his chops aren't quite as adept as they once were. If you want to hear ragtime played flawlessly, there are folks like Guy Van Duser (or, for that matter, Grossman). But a little rough around the edges though it may be, Bromberg's playing is full of personality – not unlike his mentor, Rev. Gary Davis, whom he references more than once. And the highlight of the one hour, 40 minute set is perhaps the simplest from a technical standpoint, Paul Siebel's poignant "Spanish Johnny."

Bromberg's comeback CD earned him a much-deserved Grammy nomination. This DVD is an additional celebration of a master musician's return to active duty. – **DF VG**