

may be the closest most of us get to hearing the magnificence of Earl's playing. Joined by the latest edition of his band, the Broadcasters — David Limina (piano, Hammond organ), Jimmy Mouradian (bass), and Lorne Entress (drums) — Earl fuses the blues of Chicago's West Side, the spontaneity of organ jazz, and the Afro-Latin sensitivity of Santana. Though all instrumental, Earl's 11 originals and one cover speak volumes. As he explains in a bonus interview, Earl's music is for "moving and healing people and having the higher power move through you." Earl's first performance DVD includes alternate takes of all of the tunes released on his 2007 CD and two solo, previously unreleased, acoustic guitar pieces — "Lightnin' Hopkins Thing" and a traditional gospel tune, "I Shall Not Be Moved." Guests include ex-Broadcaster Michael "Mudcat" Ward (on upright and electric bass and piano) and guitarist Nick Adams.

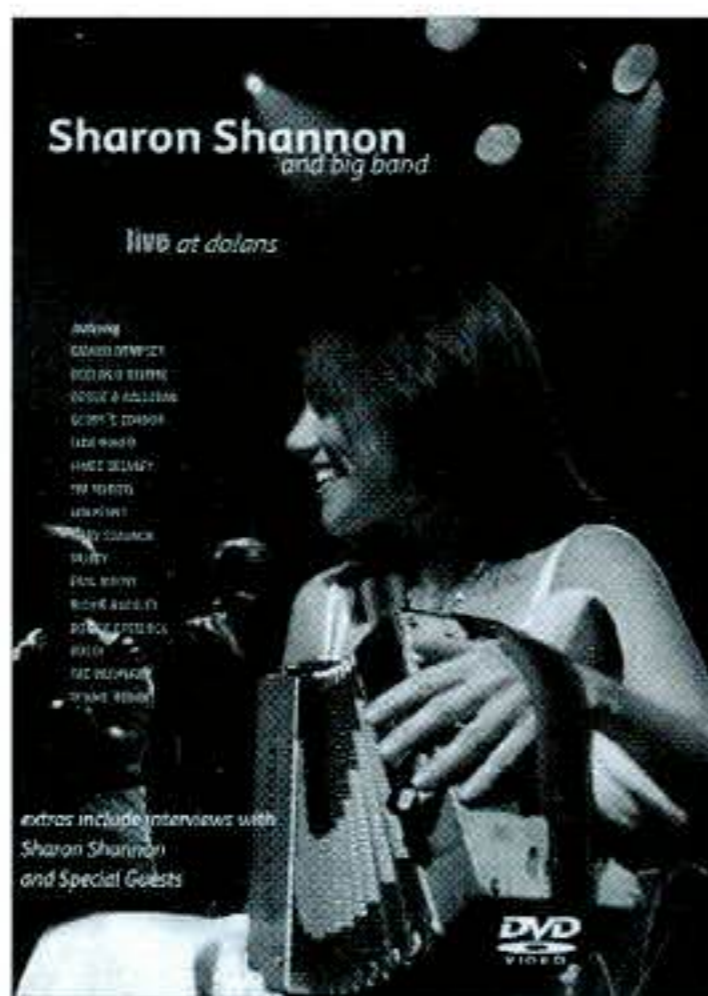
— Craig Harris (Chicopee, MA)

**JOHN MAYALL'S
BLUESBREAKERS
LIVE AT IOWA STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Quantum Leap QLDVD6023/MVD Visual (2004)

Live at Iowa State University presents a concert by a middle-period version of Mayall's Bluesbreakers that featured two outstanding guitarists, Walter Trout and Coco Montoya, along with bassist Bobby Haynes and drummer Paul Hines. A very buff and mullet-haired Mayall led his compact touring unit through a set of Mayall standards, including "Riding on the L&N" and the inevitable "Room to Move," along with some new (at the time) numbers like "One Life to Live." Mayall alternates between keyboards, harp, and guitar while Trout takes the lion's share of the lead guitar duties. Montoya, paradoxically, plays almost inaudible rhythm during most of the set, although he takes off with a jaw-dropping solo on the group's extended jam in "Stepping Out." The show, recorded before a small but enthused audience at Ames, Iowa's Maintenance Shop, is a good representation of what Mayall was up to in the late 1980s.

— Michael Parrish (San Jose, CA)



**SHARON SHANNON AND
BIG BAND LIVE
AT DOLANS**

Daisy Label DLDVD02 (2008)

Onstage, the delightful Irish accordionist and fiddler Sharon Shannon always appears to be one of the most cheerful people on earth, and that good vibe permeates this musical party. Filmed in Limerick in 2006, this expansive two-and-a-half-hour concert video features Shannon and her regular bandmates joined by a dozen guests ranging from Solas fiddler Winifred Horan and tenor banjo master Gerry O'Connor to the charmingly craggy traditional singer Dessie O'Halloran and Irish pop songwriter Mundy. There's a good selection of Shannon's own upbeat tune sets, such as "The Mighty Sparrow" and "The Burst Mattress," but as with her previous ensemble projects, some of the best moments involve the guests, like a rousing version of the American hobo song "Big Rock Candy Mountain" led by comedian Jon Kenney, or the closing full-cast singalong of Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire." The sweet harmonies of the Brennan Sisters are noteworthy, too. Looks like it was a fun night.

— Tom Nelligan (Waltham, MA)

**GYPSY CARAVAN:
WHEN THE ROAD
BENDS...**

Docurama Films NNVG9912 (2007)

For centuries the Roma (Gypsy) peoples have been misunderstood, stigmatized, and persecuted. Music has always been a unifying force in all cultures, and Gypsy music has recently become more widely available on CD, with many DJs and bands using the music as the basis for club-style remixes. The time seemed right to give the world

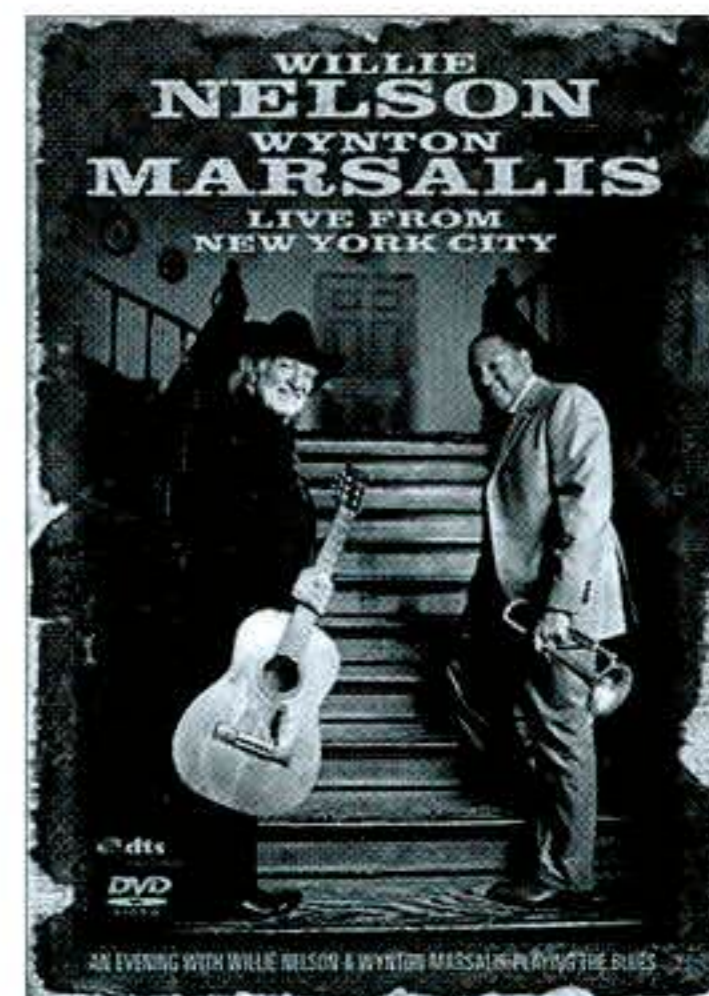
a taste of the real thing in the same way that Wim Wenders and Ry Cooder helped bring the music of Cuba to a wider audience through the *Buena Vista Social Club* film and tour.

In 2006 cinematographer Albert Maysles and the World Music Institute gathered five Gypsy bands from four countries for the six-week "Gypsy Caravan" tour across North America. The film brings the diversity of the Romani people into focus through their own words and music. *The Gypsy Caravan* tour featured performances by the exuberant Macedonian diva and "Queen of the Gypsies" Esma Redzepova; the hypnotic traditional Indian folk troupe Maharaja; the brass-based lunacy of the Romanian group Fanfare Ciocarlia; the majestic Antonio El Pipa Flamenco Ensemble; and the violin wizardry of the Romanian Taraf de Haïdouks, whose leader Nicolae Neacsu passed away at the conclusion of the tour. The film showcases not only the astonishing performances of these groups but gives a behind-the-scenes look into the lives of these musicians, including astounding footage from the villages, cities, and homes of the various musicians in Macedonia, Romania, India, and Spain.

Many of the groups had never played with Roma musicians from countries other than their own, and the film shows how they all came to understand and celebrate their shared Romani culture, and indeed became one big family by the end of the tour. While individual performances are given the spotlight, some of the most exciting moments come at the end of the tour/film, when many of the bands start performing together.

The film is both exhilarating and, at times, heartbreaking in its exploration of the lives of these musicians. Gorgeously filmed and edited and with superior sound, the DVD also adds to the original film a bonus section of complete, uninterrupted performance footage, both onstage and in the musicians' home countries. It also includes biographies and an extended interview with actor Johnny Depp, who is briefly featured in the main film talking about his association with Taraf de Haïdouks during the making of the movie *The Man Who Cried*.

— Lahri Bond (Leverett, MA)



**WILLIE NELSON &
WYNTON MARSALIS
LIVE FROM JAZZ AT
LINCOLN CENTER,
NEW YORK CITY**

Eagle Eye Media EE 39173-9 (2008)

Willie Nelson and Wynton Marsalis' recently released CD, *Two Men With the Blues* [Blue Note (2008); reviewed in issue #139] was one of the most fascinating collaborations ever: a country renegade icon teaming up with a titan of jazz. The sparse CD liner notes didn't adequately explain the genesis of this recording: a two-night concert at New York's Lincoln Center. Now the companion DVD reveals the rest of the story with its behind-the-scenes coverage of rehearsals and the onstage interaction before a packed, appreciative house. There are interviews in which Marsalis praises Nelson's musical acumen and reciprocal interviews in which Nelson endorses the trumpeter's genius. There are rehearsal scenes where Marsalis scats the tricky, syncopated rhythm he's after, and at another point he explains how Nelson makes his guys laugh by suddenly playing something unpredictable that works amazingly well.

Onstage, the crystal-clear videography leaves out nothing. You see Nelson's intricate fingerwork as he climbs the frets, Dan Nimmer's caress of the ivories, Carlos Henriquez's slap of the acoustic string bass, and Marsalis' press, sometimes flutter, of his instrument's valves. You see how Marsalis can bellow out a wide range of sounds, including terrific screeches, by altering the mute's placement inside and around the bell. On the "Night Life" intro, there are mood-setting nocturnal city scenes of infinite yellow cabs, neon lights, and subways. Perhaps the most touching