



## America's Music Legacy

Various Artists  
MVD Visual

hearing, even if the titles are sometimes misleading and the flow isn't always smooth.

The disc titled "Rock n' Roll" is really pop oldies and some are better forgotten; who needs to see Fabian ever doing anything again? But the disc is almost redeemed by a typically bone-shaking performance from Bo Diddley.

The "Blues" disc is a 1982 performance documentary hosted by actor Brock Peters, and is mostly big-band blues (Joe Williams, Eddie "Clean-head" Vincent), though there are still inspired sets from B.B. King, Buddy Guy, Brownie McGhee and others. A big plus is the late Connie Curtis "Pee Wee" Crayton, who is said to have been the first popular blues guitarist to use a Stratocaster (given to him by Leo Fender). Crayton's onscreen time is criminally short but he is brilliant nevertheless.

The "Country & Western" disc is a straightforward series of concerts from about the same era. Don't let an unforgivably schlocky set from Patti Page stop you from sticking around for a masterful set from The Killer, Jerry Lee Lewis or a rocking country swing performance from a pre-bluegrass Ricky Skaggs.

No guitarists headline the "Soul" disc but it is packed densely with talent, particularly James Brown, Carla Thomas and Tyrone Davis. The same goes for the show-stopping "Gospel," "Dixieland" and "Rhythm & Blues" DVDs.

The "Folk" disc is the most guitar heavy with Doc Watson spectacular and a joy to watch as always. Odetta is there to remind us of what a unique and forceful player she was and Josh White, Jr. also shows off his sophisticated and under-acclaimed skill as a player. Each disc is sold separately and all are worth a look or two. Try before you buy and decide for yourself. — **Rick Allen**

## The Big picture

Though its title might indicate a Ken-Burns-style annotated overview of American

music, these are actually independently created presentations that feature a range of artists

from eight semi-related genres grouped under the "Legacy" banner. Each disc has a lot worth

## Books



### December 8, 1980: The Day John Lennon Died

By Keith Elliot Greenberg

Backbeat Books

Certain events are recalled by people who can describe exactly where they were and what they were doing when they got the news. For Beatles fans, December 8 is one of those dates.

This new book is a minute-by-minute account of that day, tracking events leading up to the horrible moment when John Lennon was shot, and shortly after, died. Author Keith Elliot Greenberg is a television producer and bestselling author who brings all his skills as an investigator and storyteller to this remarkable work.

Greenberg takes readers back to New York City and the world John Lennon woke up to on December 8, 1980. In a fascinating narrative, he examines this cultural watershed moment and human tragedy in the spirit of great long-form journalism.

For Lennon and his wife, Yoko Ono, the day included a photo session with Annie Leibovitz, a long radio interview to promote his album, *Double Fantasy*, lunch with their son, Sean, and work in the studio on a remix of Yoko's new single. At the same time, Paul McCartney was in England recording tracks with producer George Martin, New York mayor Ed Koch was in his office with a deputy mayor who had once helped Lennon during his immigration battles. As we follow fans,

reporters, cops, radio DJs, and more, Greenberg explores the lives of these characters, from Lennon's efforts to heal his relationship with his older son to the lingering effects of a recent police labor dispute, to the atmosphere at the Lion's Head, a tavern frequented by reporters from the *New York Post*.

Re-told with surprising detail in a work of this sort, the book will find an audience well beyond Beatle fans. — **Eric C. Shoaf**



### Starting Over: The Making of John Lennon and Yoko Ono's Double Fantasy

By Ken Sharp

VH1Books/Gallery Books

The Beatles are almost certainly the most-written-about group of musicians of any kind in the last hundred years. But the scores of books have little to say about their actual musicianship. Ken Sharp's slim-but-substantive volume about the making of John Lennon and Yoko Ono's *Double Fantasy* goes a long way toward filling in some of the blanks.

Sharp does a fine job of staying out of the way, writing the introduction and short explanatory notes at the beginning of some chapters. But he's smart enough to let the people who were there tell the story. The Lennon quotes are from previously released material, but the rest of the interviews are recent, conducted by Sharp himself. Yoko, producer Jack Douglas, record company executive David Geffen, and the project's technical staff are among the contributors but the most insightful and interesting reminiscences come from

the musicians who played on the album. Though speaking decades after the fact, they are universal in describing the album as the experience of a lifetime and feeling that way not just in retrospect, but at the time. To a person they have nothing but praise for all aspects of Lennon's music making process, in particular his guitar playing. Except for his well known boast about being able to make his guitar "sing," Lennon was otherwise self-effacing about his playing. But his graceful rhythmic technique, his knack for finding the right chord and for knowing when to forge ahead with his own ideas and when to adopt (and credit) suggestions made a strong impression on a collection of the highly talented assemblage of professionals. *Starting Over* is a quick read but it will prove to be a unique and important entry into the Beatle cannon. — **Rick Allen**

road, breakdowns on guitars and amps, early influences, musical philosophies, plus their secrets and tricks.

From early days in London studios to the incredible highs each achieved in the 1970s and '80s, and onto their present role as rock's elder statesmen, these interviews illustrate how these heroes developed their styles and sounds. Many of these articles have not been printed since their initial publication, and with the benefit of several decades' hindsight, they prove just as essential today.

Most of the pieces highlight tour gear, new songs, riffs, and chord progressions. While the photography is sparse, the lengthy Q&A sections make up for that. Reading these brings a bit of déjà vu, along with a keener sense of how these three continue to maintain integrity and relevance.

As these vaunted musicians approach half a century in the business, the book is a fine reminder of their continuing importance and influence. — **ECS**



### Guitar Player Presents: Clapton, Beck, Page

By Michael Molenda

Backbeat Books

Perhaps the three most recognized names in rock guitar, Clapton, Beck, and Page are cemented as founder and influencer of many, if not most, players who have followed.

Here, *Guitar Player* and Backbeat Books raid the magazine's archives to present a collection of several dozen interviews, features, and lessons that trace the careers of these guitarists. The author is also the present editor of the mag, and here selects articles that detail legendary collaborations, stories from the studio and the



### The Beatles vs. The Rolling Stones

by Jim DeRogatis and Greg Kot

Voyageur Press

This is an interesting concept for a book where the central theme is that age-old question, "Would you rather be a Beatle or a Rolling Stone?"

The authors immediately cop that they're both Stones fans, but after that, the book unfolds like a giant piece of comparative literature, with the writers discussing many facets of the bands, members, their