

## R.E.M.

*When The Light Is Mine... The Best Of The I.R.S. Years 1982-1987* DVD

(EMI/Capitol)

Boasting more than two hours of content—half of which has never before been released—this DVD includes TV performances, interviews, outtakes, and all 11 of R.E.M.'s I.R.S.-era (their record label before Warner Bros.) music videos. And for more than two hours, I couldn't get over Michael Stipe's full head of curly hair. They all look so young!

It is rather astounding that not only did R.E.M. revolutionize alternative, college rock in the '80s, they were among the first to treat music videos as an art form, manipulating the footage in some way. Several were directed by filmmaker James Herbert, usually in collaboration with Stipe. "Talk About The Passion" depicts NYC's homelessness and poverty in 1983. R.E.M. would later become more actively involved in social, political and environmental issues, but the seed was already implanted. Unfortunately, "Left of Reckoning," a 20-minute music video by Herbert, quickly bores despite the soundtrack, though their energetic TV appearances make up for it. I don't understand how the UK teens in *The Tube's* audience are so still and obedient during R.E.M.'s debut single, "Radio Free Europe."

What a character Stipe is, with his bleached hair with bright red eyebrows, a fashion statement in "Can't Get There From Here," his twitchy, clumsy dancing, and his unorthodox harmonica playing during "Pretty Persuasion." The last five videos pack a wallop, but the DVD extras consisting of interviews with fans and the band from I.R.S. are the real reason to buy this (except maybe for hardcore fans who'll enjoy having all their early videos). Highlights include their acoustic performances, particularly the surprisingly country "(Don't Go Back To) Rockville," and Stipe mumbling, "We don't strive to be a critic's band; we don't strive to be a band, hardly. We just kind of are here."

—Katie Boone



## THE STAX/VOLT REVUE

*Live In Norway, 1967* DVD

(Stax)

This historic 75-minute DVD, restored from the original black & white master tapes and including 20 minutes of lost footage pulled from the Stax vaults, makes a fine companion piece to this year's *Respect Yourself*, a DVD history

of the Memphis-based label. Ecstatic Oslo fans caught the Stax/Volt Revue at the end of a three-week European tour in April, 1967; they thrill to Booker T & The MGs, the Mar-Keys, Eddie Floyd, Arthur Conley, the immortal Otis Redding, and, in particular, the incomparable Sam Moore and Dave Prater. Never was a duo so sweat-drenched, so incendiary, and yet so smooth at the same time. The night truly belongs to them.

Plentiful bonus features include full-length track commentary by guitarist Steve Cropper, music historian Rob Bowman, and Wayne Jackson of the Memphis Horns; Bowman's scholarly essay within the 24-page booklet; and "A Look Back At The Tour" with Cropper, Jackson, Sam Moore, and Stax's founder, Jim Stewart. Interview subtitles in French, German, Spanish, and Portuguese assure accessibility to a worldwide audience, which is as it should be. The grit, the heat, the artistry, the love and joy that made southern soul a driving, unifying musical force that transcended barriers of language and geography are on stellar display here.

—Christine Ohlman



## ROLLING STONES

*Under Review 1967 - 1969* DVD

(MDV)

Tracking the early days of the Rolling Stones, this well-crafted documentary begins in 1963 with the

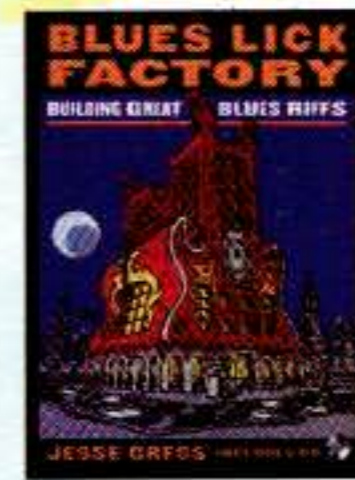
underground blues movement in Great Britain, and the inception of the band by, essentially, Brian Jones, and describes the ascendance of Mick Jagger and his friend, the then-quiet, shy and retiring Keith Richards.

The narrators, mostly music critics from the US and England, divide the Stones' career into three phases: covers and R&B; pop band (with "Between the Buttons") and the final "greatest rock 'n' roll band ever" third phase. They make a compelling case for the transformations of the band during these critical years. Jagger and Richards' usurpation of Brian Jones' entire life—his wife, livelihood, songs and creative control of his band (in the end, without his knowledge, his mic was turned off during recording of "Sympathy for the Devil")—certainly enabled the Stones to become the rock icons they remain today, rather than the blues-oriented band Jones envisioned.

The examination of the psychedelic rock era was of particular interest to me. The film argues that the Stones tried to join the "peace and love" style music of the day, but they really aren't about love and community, they represent a darker side, and "we love you" just didn't ring true with fans. When

they returned with "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and "Sympathy for the Devil," the band rose again to the top as their true selves: bad boys, having a ball with rock 'n' roll.

—Suzanne Cadgene



## JESSE GRESS

*Blues Lick Factory: Building Great Blues Riffs*

(Backbeat Books)

Guitarist Jesse Gress, a former music editor of *Guitar Player Magazine*,

guitarist and music educator, has worked with Todd Rundgren, bassist Tony Levin and many others. His latest instruction book looks at the world of blues guitar playing and covers many of the standard regional Texas, Chicago, Delta, and British blues licks guitarists should know in order to navigate the fret board and play authoritatively with other musicians. Gress uses standard notation as well as tablature in illustrating the lessons, and there is an accompanying CD.

So, enough of the nuts and bolts; is the book successful in teaching blues guitar? Yes, it is, but it's no better or worse than the myriad of other books on the market that deal with the same subject. Where this book does succeed is in its exhaustive nature. There's a lot packed into 140 pages, and it's certainly worth the price of \$19.95.

—Bob Cianci

## VARIOUS AUTHORS

*How To Play Blues Guitar: The Basics & Beyond Second Edition*

(Backbeat Books)

This book delves a little deeper into blues styles and specifics than the Gress book reviewed above, and although it does not contain the almost requisite instructional CD, there is a lot of good information for aspiring guitarists. Broken into three sections, "Roots," "Heroes," and "Tools," each with their own chapters, the topics include essential blues licks, turnarounds, flashy starts and finishes, bottleneck technique, slide guitar in standard tuning, and spotlights on B.B. King, Eric Clapton, John Lee Hooker, Albert Collins, Buddy Guy, Hubert Sumlin, Peter Green and others. There's even a chapter on setting up your guitar for blues playing. Pricy, but it is a worthwhile book for guitarists just getting into playing the blues. There is no better way for guitarists to learn their blues, however, than directly from the masters via recordings, and seeing and hearing great guitarists live is a revelatory experience no book can recreate.

—Bob Cianci