

partner with Bruce Springsteen. The Boss is very comfortable speaking to his buddy; the talk is insightful and the music frighteningly emotional and strong. The medley of Costello's "Radio, Radio" and Springsteen's "Radio Nowhere" is pure genius.

At its least, *Spectacle* is always interesting. When the host, guest, and music all click, it's one of the real treats in the history of rock and roll on TV. — JH



The Doobie Brothers
Live at the Greek Theatre 1982

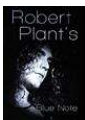
Eagle

This concert DVD captures the last date on the Doobies' early-'80s "Farewell Tour," marking singer Michael McDonald's departure for a successful pop/soul career. Featuring all the obvious hits, this video will satisfy many of the band's fans, as it nicely balances the earlier, rock-oriented songs ("Take Me In Your Arms," "Jesus Is Just Alright," "Black Water"), with the later soul stirrings of the deeply talented McDonald.

On guitar were longtime frontman Patrick Simmons (playing a red ES-335) and then-newcomer John McFee, who did a commendable job filling Jeff "Skunk" Baxter's pair of very large shoes. Here, McFee ably rocked everything from pointy Dean solidbodies to a black Les Paul Custom. The duo even whipped out a pair of Ovation acoustic-electrics for "Slat Key Soquel Rag," a deft fingerstyle exhibition.

For the finale, "China Grove" and "Listen to the Music," the band was joined onstage by founding singer/guitar Tom Johnston and other early members. Watch how Johnston, ever the consummate pro, realizes that his Explorer is dead in the middle of "China Grove" and swaps it out, mid-vocal, without batting an eyelash. He then proceeds to whip out a barn-burning guitar solo, almost stealing the entire show. It's a great moment.

To sweeten the deal, five bonus tracks are added to this funky '70s-rock fan fest, shown in its entirety. Also note that *Live at the Greek*'s audio is being released on CD. — PP



Robert Plant
Robert Plant's Blue Note

Sexy Intellectual

This unauthorized documentary explores Robert Plant's musical journey over the past five decades and, for the most part, grabs our attention. While you may wonder why a singer's career would be of interest to guitarists, the reality is that Plant's music has always been guitar-oriented and, in fact, he's quite a competent guitarist



Anglophile Rockers

When some curmudgeon starts talking about how rock and roll is dead and young bands really don't get it, point him in the direction of the London Souls. Despite their name, the trio hails from New York City and has the kind of energy, direction, and chops that make them as exciting as anyone out there.

Tash Neal is the guitarist, Kiyoshi plays the bass, and Chris St. Hilaire mans the drums. They share vocals and, like most great bands, cover a lot of ground, musically. Neal is a fine guitarist at home on heavy rockers like "She's So Mad," has no problem finding the funk on "She's in Control," with its slinky leads, biting rhythm

guitars, and spacey solo with warbling guitar sounds, or can control the vibe on a pop-rock solo a la Andy Summers on cuts like "Future Life." The blues also shows its influence on "Old Country Road," which starts as a funky country march that features soulful fills and a fine bluesy solo. If riff rock is what you're looking for, "I Think I Like It" will fill your needs. The verses are funky and the call-and-response vocals match perfectly with the concise solo. Neal's play and interplay with the rest of the band on literally every cut here is the kind of mind-meld the best bands have.

While Neal controls the sound of pretty much every song, the rhythm section fits seamlessly with his playing. St. Hilaire's drumming is soulful and at times stunning. "Stand Up,"

with its Hendrix-influenced, ninth-chord base and the amazing work by St. Hilaire and Kiyoshi, points to a band that knows where other members are going to go before they do.

It's encouraging to see musicians in their early 20s show such an impressive array of influences and chops that work together to help them create their own sound and material. Musically, the trio slips seamlessly from Led Zeppelin to Stevie Wonder without sacrificing its own identity. The London Souls should be making waves for some time. — John Heidt



The London Souls
The London Souls
EMI

himself (even knocking out the odd guitar lead now and again during his solo career).

Featuring interviews with pop critics, we follow the trail of Plant's upbringing in England's West Midlands, a drab working-class area that provided stark contrast to the California sounds of Buffalo Springfield, Love, and Moby Grape that fueled the singer's musical imagination in the early days. Later, Plant formed the Band Of Joy, a group that blended West Coast psychedelia and U.K. heavy blues music, such as that of the Yardbirds and the Jeff Beck Group. When he teamed up with Jimmy Page to launch Led Zeppelin, the band was inspired by — and, in fact, freely plundered — the sounds of American blues, often quite shamelessly. But later, Plant and Page explored the sounds of Indian and Northern African music, which resulted in genre-pushing Zep epics like "Friends" and "Kashmir."

In the '80s, Plant became interested in the British post-punk sounds, creating some dreamy modern-rock records, while also rediscovering rockabilly on the hit album *The Honeydrippers*, from '84. The journey con-

tinues through his return to hard rock on *Now & Zen*, the Page/Plant reunion of the '90s, and musical wanderings of the millennium, which resulted in a smash album and Grammy award with country singer Allison Kraus. This compelling journey both asserts Robert Plant as a serious artist in his own right and not just the singer for Led Zeppelin; it may also make you

wonder how bland Zep might have been without his colorful influence.

Ultimately, *Robert Plant's Blue Note* is an intriguing journey through pop and world music and one that might help rewire some perceptions about how an unknown British pop singer in the '60s became a groundbreaking roots-music artist 45 years later. Fascinating stuff. — PP VG