

# The Electric Review

## Index

- ◆ Features & Profiles
- ◆ From Rat's Notebook
- ◆ Rat on Photography
- ◆ Rat on Poetry
- ◆ Rat on Reference
- ◆ Rat on Music Books
- ◆ Rat on Fiction & Nonfiction
- ◆ On the CD Watch
- ◆ Quick Picks
- ◆ Industry News
- ◆ Email Us
- ◆ Home Page
- ◆ Archive Review Page

## Links

- ◆ The Columnists
- ◆ Bob Dylan
- ◆ The Daily Bleed
- ◆ Empty Mirror Books
- ◆ Expecting Rain
- ◆ Allen Ginsberg
- ◆ Harper Collins
- ◆ Jack Magazine
- ◆ Michael McClure
- ◆ Shana Morrison
- ◆ Small Press Distribution
- ◆ The 3rd Page
- ◆ Elsevier Health Science
- ◆ Continuum

## On the CD Watch

**November/December 2008**



- ◆ Archive Review Page
- ◆ Martin Scorsese's "No Direction Home"  
--(Including an interview with Producer Susan Lacy)
- ◆ Dylan's "Bootleg Series" -Vol. 8
- ◆ Bob Dylan in the classic "Don't Look Back" - *Deluxe 1965 DVD Edition*
- ◆ The soundtrack "I'm Not There" (with classic covers from the vast Dylan catalog)
- ◆ Bob Dylan at Starbucks
- ◆ Star Wars: The Clone Wars (soundtrack recording)
- ◆ Grammy News
- ◆ The Warner Bros. Studio on *American Masters*
- ◆ Leon Fleisher
- ◆ Pete Seeger
- ◆ Marvin Gaye on *American Masters*
- ◆ Original Jacket Collections: Jascha Heifetz and Itzhak Perlman
- ◆ Celluloid Moments
- ◆ Star Wars turns 30 with a soundtrack for the ages
- ◆ Tina Turner
- ◆ *Chasing Sound*: The legend of Les Paul on *PBS*  
-- Plus an interview with *Chasing Sound* director John Paulson
- ◆ Eagle Rock Entertainment (featuring Van Morrison's first-ever DVD)
- ◆ Other notable Eagle Rock DVDS (including Foreigner; & Bryan Ferry doing Dylan)
- ◆ Ella Fitzgerald featured in *PBS* Tribute
- ◆ Image Entertainment (featuring "Gotta Serve Somebody")
- ◆ Dylan's Halloween Show - 1964
- ◆ On the DVD Corner: Featuring new music DVDS from *MVD* (Including new Bob Dylan)
- ◆ New CDS (Including 2006's Installment of The RCA Red Seal Series).
- ◆ More New CDS & Artist Interviews
- ◆ World Music
- ◆ *Atlantic Records: The House That Ahmet Built*:  
--Susan Lacy interview. Solomon Burke interview. Ben. E. King interview.
- ◆ Eye on The Independents:  
Shana Morrison; Zade; Mike Schermer; Raining Jane; The Krayolas

# TELL TALE SIGNS

## & THE RIDE OF A ROCK-AND-ROLL FATHER

### Dylan's "Bootleg Series" #8



Illustration by Eric Ward. © 2008. All rights reserved.

◆ **TELL TALE SIGNS. INSTALLMENT 8 OF THE BOOTLEG SERIES.**  
**Bob Dylan. Produced by Jeff Rosen. Columbia Records.**

**By John Aiello**

Even though a smattering of the selections contained in this three-disc set have already made the rounds between bootleggers at the four corners of the globe, none of those homemade copies could hope to come close to the stunning production work of **Tell Tale Signs**, the 8<sup>th</sup> installment in Dylan's famed "Bootleg Series."

When fans think of Bob Dylan's music, they most often think of the amazing body of songs the man has produced and the amount of time he has spent on the road: Except for an 8 year hiatus between the 1966 motorcycle accident and the 1974 world tour, Dylan has pretty much been performing live for nearly 35 years straight.

However, the tentacles of Dylan's art extend so much further than that. In addition to altering the way songs were written and the way that radio was formatted, he also gave birth to the phenomenon of the *bootlegger* (people who circulate pirated recordings in plain wrappers through the underground networks of the world).

Basically, there was such an insatiable appetite for Dylan's work fans could not wait for the next official release. Instead, they had to hear it *now* – even if the quality was pale and the practice illicit. For them, it was all about the music and the holy energy of the poetry; for them, it was only about the secret realms of emotion that Dylan's voice somehow carried them to.

And thus the “Bootleg Series” was born. In 1991, Columbia decided to finally give the fans what they wanted and they packaged a handsome set of unreleased and live takes that filled in the blank spaces between Dylan's official life on record and his life on the public stage.

The experience of that first “Bootleg” release was indeed riveting, as we collectively came to be immersed in the creative genius that is Bob Dylan – alternate song takes showing how the impulse of the creative self is formed and honed, how it's plied and molded, until the flower of *poem* grows from the mere shape of *idea*.

Staying true to this tradition, **Tell Tale Signs** presents a magnificent collection of rare and unreleased recordings spanning the years 1989-2006. The pieces contained herein are the gems that Dylan didn't feel quite right about, the pieces that somehow didn't fit into the schematic of an official record.

Still, the circumstances that tell us why these songs were held off official Columbia releases are hardly important. Instead, it's the music that matters, and hearing this record is like venturing into some great archive of untouched memories, the same as being granted permission to rifle through some drawer full of Blake's unread rhymes.

If experienced at just the right moment, a song can actually transcend the human world and elevate you to a plane that parallels heaven. And that is just how much of this record plays – on a plane with an invisible as yet unnamed world riding the wings of angels through the misty rain at dawn.

Compiled by Jeff Rosen (one of Dylan's managers and the driving force behind the “No Direction Home” PBS documentary that outlined Dylan's early years), the songs on **Tell Tale Signs** capture pieces of Dylan at his most intimate and stark and searching – the perfect compilation of ‘greatest hits’ that aren't

known to the mass audience.

At the centerpiece of the record is “Series of Dreams” (unreleased from the *Oh Mercy* sessions). This song, driven by pounding horse-hoof drums, is a clear and crystalline picture of Dylan’s consciousness: Surreal now ice-deep, connected to this hidden murky undefined world of ultimate truths that only reveals itself when we sleep.

In addition, the three versions of “Mississippi” (from the *Time Out of Mind* sessions) are particularly compelling, for they offer us the rare chance to peer into the mind of a songwriter as he grapples and fine-tunes, editing and refining, twisting the lips of syllables here and back to there, plying the melody line to build just the right bridge of rhythm to carry the boots of the words forward.

Also notable is the live version of “Ring Them Bells” (*Supper Club*, 1993). This is one of Dylan’s great latter-day songs, and the piece benefits from the intimate venue, Dylan’s voice soaring and straining and inspired, waltzing through the cradle of its own spectacular vision.

Going still further, “Mary and The Soldier” (unreleased, from the *World Gone Wrong* sessions) tastes poignant and reflective, a song for times of war and moments of penance, this hymn calling all the living and all the dead to genuflect in a collective gesture of love.

And finally, the live version of “High Water” from 2003 is vintage Dylan – the long-bruised venom wail now has receded to an introspective growl as the aging poet goes searching for the souls that influenced his path across these distant stages of the past.

Obviously, there is quite a lot of music on these three discs, and it has the power to keep you occupied for hours. In simple sum, this record is an absolute treasure – a tour de force of lyricism and endless dimension taking us to secret places beyond words, taking us deep into webs of echo and sound now leaping beyond frozen skeletons of human time into mazes of breath and song.

And these, then, are the places where the angels play and the dead men reign. And these, then, are the places where storms blow in fever-stained circles as old Rock-and-Roll fathers sing the faint whispers of the dawn back to sleep.

Order at [BobDylan.com](http://BobDylan.com)



# GRAMMY NEWS

## JOHN PHILLIP SANTOS' LINER NOTES

## UNDER GRAMMY CONSIDERATION

By John Aiello

In my mind's eye, Bob Dylan's early 1960's records made album liner notes an art form. Starting back in 1964, Dylan penned the notes to 5 of his 60's classics, culminating with the magnificent allegory about man's futile search for an earthly paradise that graced the "John Wesley Harding" collection (1967).

However, as time passed, CDS replaced vinyl and record jackets fell by the wayside. And while these changes made records sound better, they also served to homogenize their personality, stirring so many individual voices into a 'one-size-fits-all' package.

Looking back, what made Dylan's liner notes so great was that they bloomed as poems spontaneously written in the moment and extending the vision of Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg (and the other seminal Beat writers). In sum, these pieces speak from the core of the self – passionate statements about the steps men take in these lonely cold solitary hours that rise just before dawn.

And now, in year 2008, music fans have a second chance to venture back into the sweet infancy of rock-and roll. As collective music historians, we are able to take this ride only because of the brilliant imagination of John Philip Santos.

Santos wrote the liner notes to The Krayolas' "La Conquistadora" album (2008), and his perceptions sing with a vibrancy and deep passion that is often missing from the techno-laced persona of modern times. Here, Santos releases a sprawling poem which conjures the spirit of Kerouac while simultaneously capturing the Christly images of a tiny moonlit lake rising from the hidden lands of a lost America.

Indeed, Santos' liner notes are about The Krayolas and the sweet 'Texas experience' the band brings to the stage. Yet going further, Santos' essay also serves as a meditation on our lives and our culture. Simply, this piece is a word-speckled painting about the repentance of a generation as it moves from youth into the middle stage of life.

And going still further, this piece is about the naked splendor and the harsh pain of our collective journey (as so many questions remain): Who am I and *who was I*? And have I reached my place of destiny?

Quite obviously, these are big questions that do not benefit from a formulaic response. Accordingly, Santos is brave enough to ask, ponder and wonder – without demanding ultimate answers. Instead, he sits back beside us as The Krayolas play on, knowing that the real answers come only when the wind turns back the pages and closes the book for a final time.

In the end, just like Dylan's great parable about the "Three Kings" on the back of the "Wesley Harding" jacket, Santos leaves you thinking about your place in

the world and your relationship with these many hidden selves.

*Deservingly, John Phillip Santos' liner notes for the "La Conquistadora" album are under consideration for a Grammy nomination. I purposely have not quoted his work here so that you can locate a copy of the CD and discover the beauty of Santos' writing for yourself in its entirety. Just be sure to open the holy doors to your heart as you read it; my guess is that you'll stand richer for the experience. ~John Aiello*



**STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS – ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK. John Williams and Kevin Kiner. Sony Music.**

**By John Aiello**

**The Clone Wars** soundtrack provides the musical backdrop for the first-ever animated feature from **Lucasfilm Animation**, while serving as the latest installment in the ongoing *Star Wars* Saga (this new film serving as prelude to a weekly, animated prime-time television series set to premiere in the fall of 2008 on **Cartoon Network**, followed by appearances on **TNT**). This hour-long soundtrack (which includes an exclusive fold-out poster) once again spotlights the work of John Williams, who has created the main theme for this film. Here, the main theme ("A Galaxy Divided") drives the record – the rising crescendos of sound move in waves about the walls of the psyche before finally overtaking the room. In ancient times, the poets who roamed the naked flanks of the countryside often said that God was sound, or, more precisely – *music*. And if that idea is true, then the work that Williams has done for the **Star Wars** series is an extension of the holiest of hands: The line of his melodies crisp and clear, like perfect pools of water, they call forth the parched mouth of the conscience and it drinks. In addition, **The Clone Wars** features more than 30 separate music cues composed by Kevin Kiner. Kiner, who came to be known for his work on such television series as *Stargate SG-1*, *Star Trek: Enterprise*, *Superboy* and *CSI: Miami* does something truly unique with his contributions to this record. Instead of providing mere background music, he has built the cues around the inner-sense of the characters so as to help them tell their own stories through the hidden lines of the soundtrack (**Best cuts**: "Meet Ahsoka;" "Obi-Wan To The Rescue;" and "Jabba's Palace").

Please visit [sonybmgmasterworks.com](http://sonybmgmasterworks.com) for more information.



---

**UPCOMING PBS SPECIAL  
EXPLORES THE WARNER BROS. LEGACY**

**YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS: THE WARNER BROS. STORY.**

**A presentation of *AMERICAN MASTERS*. Written, Directed and Produced by Richard Schickel. Narrated by Executive Producer Clint Eastwood. A Lorac Production in partnership with Warner Bros. Entertainment.**

**By John Aiello**

In this upcoming 5 hour epic from **American Masters**, the life of a revolutionary movie studio is recalled. **You Must Remember This** traces the steps **Warner Bros.** took through the nine decades that followed its inception – as award-winning writer-director Richard Schickel artfully tells the story of the country through the films this maverick studio produced. It's quite a challenge for a film-writer to build a five-hour script around the life of a studio. Bluntly, most viewers are apt to care more about the films it produced than about the vision of the studio itself. However, **You Must Remember This** is a grand exception to this rule, as the tale it tells recapitulates the heart-song of the greatest film studio in American history. The *Golden Age* of film? Make no mistake, **Warner Bros.** was the alchemist behind the collective camera, and through its eye we came to bear witness to films such as *All The Presidents Men*, *The Exorcist*, *Cool Hand Luke*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *The Maltese Falcon*, *Dirty Harry* and the insightful music documentary *Woodstock*. As you can see from this partial list of productions, **Warner Bros.** was about taking risks and spotting talent – as original and non-formulaic actors like Eastwood and Pacino were given the opportunity to find an audience because this studio was willing to back scripts that did not fit into the 'box' (the **Warner** execs known for turning directors loose and letting the idea of art rediscover itself). And that's just what Schickel does with this historical over-view of **Warner Bros** – by letting the studio speak for itself the myriad forces behind the creation of these films are illuminated (as the interviews with the likes of Alfred Hitchcock, James Cagney, Ronald Regan, Warren Beatty, Arthur Penn, Clint Eastwood, Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, Sidney Lumet and Jack Nicholson serve to create a living cool seamless narrative of the most influential film studio in the world).

♦ *The film premieres nationally on PBS stations throughout the country on September 23, 24 and 25. Check local listings in your area.*

♦ *The AMERICAN MASTERS series is produced for PBS by Thirteen/WNET in New York.*




---

## NEW SERIES REVISITS

## THE BRILLIANCE OF LEON FLEISHER



- **SCHUBERT: SONATA IN B-FLAT MAJOR, D.960/LÄNDLER – Leon Fleisher, piano (original LP release 1956). Sony Music.**
- **DEBUSSY: SUITE BERGAMASQUE/Ravel: Sonatine /Valses nobles et sentimentales/Alborado del gracioso – Leon Fleisher, piano (original LP release 1959). Sony Music.**
- **MOZART: SONATA IN C MAJOR, K.330 / SONATA IN E-FLAT MAJOR, K.282 /Rondo in D MAJOR, K. 485 – Leon Fleisher, piano (original LP release 1960). Sony Music.**
- **LISZT: SONATA IN B MINOR/Weber: Sonata No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 70 / Invitation to the Dance, Op. 65 – Leon Fleisher, piano (original LP release 1960). Sony Music.**
- **COPLAND: PIANO SONATA/SESSIONS: FROM MY DIARY/Kirchner: Piano Sonata /Rorem: Three Barcarolles – Leon Fleisher, piano (original LP release 1963). Sony Music.**
- **BRAHMS: QUINTET FOR PIANO AND STRINGS IN F MINOR, Op. 34 – Leon Fleisher, piano/Juilliard String Quartet (original LP release 1963). Sony Music**

### By John Aiello

A somewhat rare illness tried to silence the music emanating from the heart of Leon Fleisher when a neurological malady called *focal dystonia* crippled one of his hands in 1965.

However, even though the labyrinth of his nerves were compromised, the drive and impact of this man's life and work would not be mitigated – as these symphonies that Fleisher created with the delicate and nimble fingers of imagination continue to rage on like the perfect cool dawn-struck wind.

Here, in celebration of the great pianist's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, **Sony** has digitally remastered and re-released 6 of Fleisher's most remarkable albums (previously only available as complete works in LP format).

And here, the full brilliance of Leon Fleisher consumes us, the way his hands make love to the keys of his instrument never more striking than in **Schubert: Sonata in B-Flat Major** – this record representative of the nuanced flavor a Fleisher performance brewed (layered and vibrant, capturing the secret moments of the soul's reawakening).

Fleisher, who was born in 1928, was destined to play music. At the tender age of nine, he studied under the majestic mind of Artur Schnabel, refining many of the techniques that would mark his best work. And then, when he was still only 16, Fleisher debuted at the New York Philharmonic – this performance blood-stained with the genius that inspired conductor Pierre Monteux to hail the young virtuoso as the “pianistic find of the century.”



Also notable in this collection is the beautiful **Brahms: Quintet for Piano and Strings in F Minor**: The understated elegance of this recording is the mirrored reflection of Fleisher's approach to the piano – *man* mastering the keys by becoming one with them, infusing the notes with the resonant taste of his blood.

Today, as we plod along through the homogenized swamps of the new millennium and computers manipulate the way we see things, this collection of recordings by Leon Fleisher look to bring us back to ourselves – encouraging us to rediscover pieces of our own pasts that we may have stepped away from on the quest for instant gratification.

Even though **Sony** released these records to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Leon Fleisher's birth, they actually serve as a gift to all classical music fans who will revel in the sweet infinities these concertos are able to conjure.

Please visit [sonybmghmasterworks.com](http://sonybmghmasterworks.com) for more information.



---

## THE ORIGINAL JACKET COLLECTIONS

♦ **JASCHA HEIFETZ AND ITZHAK PERLMAN. Original Jacket Collections. 10-Disc Box Sets. Sony BMG.**

**By John Aiello**

The **Sony/BMG Original Jackets Collections** comprise one of classical music's truly splendid series – these box sets that feature original discs coolly repackaged and remastered into CD-sized replicas of their actual long-play jackets. Critically acclaimed and recognized for the sweet resonance of the records, each next installment of the *Original Jacket Collections* is always widely anticipated, with advances in technology taking time-tested classics and rendering them fresh and new and vital again.

Accordingly, these two installments are no exception:

♦ **THE ORIGINAL JACKET COLLECTION ITZHAK PERLMAN.** This record captures the vast history of Perlman in its evolutionary form, capturing highlights from both his **RCA Red Seal** and **Sony Classical** records and synthesizing them into a seamless 'narrative' of violin-driven symphonies. This box is rife with centerpieces and master-performances: Note the 1978 recording of string-trio serenades by Beethoven and Dohnanyi (featuring the work of violinist Pinchas Zuckerman and cellist Lynn Harrell). This record is representative of the visionary brilliance of Perlman, a stunning and insightful

performance that moves the heart rather than the mind, driving the listener back to the essence of the self, driving us with the motion of sound driving the poetry of echo into crystalline layers of vibration. Sit back and focus: As cello melts into violin we have come to lose ourselves in this mystical bright holy storm of strings in the light of sun and moon now become one. Also notable is the spotlight disc that memorializes selections of Perlman's collaborations with Academy-Award winning composer John Williams. It's all on the *Cinema Serenades* record (and specifically in the riveting theme from the "Schindler's List" film): As the music uncoils, both soul and conscience are revived. And the horror of the human condition come alive (the darkness and beauty of man rewoven into a piece of music that goes well beyond the narrow mission of defining a movie). Instead, this is the personal theme of each of our blind and secret histories forever committed to walls of sound.

◆ **THE ORIGINAL JACKET COLLECTION JASCHA HEIFETZ.** To many, the violin is defined by Jascha Heifetz's catalog of work. And probably nothing best defines the brilliance of Heifetz more than the solo interpretations of Bach recorded in the early 1950s. In this collection, Sony re-releases three full CDS of Heifetz doing Bach, these records that feature the six solo sonatas and partitas, as well as the *Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor*. To hear this music is to journey back in time – back across the sweeping ocean tides of memory into this invisible motion of music. And to hear these records is to embark on a long and holy spiritual quest one man among many gone in search of God. Simply, this music is about building a separation from the human earth as we move into the idea of the self, moving into deep concepts of creation. Simply, to listen to Heifetz's magnificent manipulation of the violin is to bear witness to an artist on a pilgrimage to rediscover the idea of heaven in strains of echo now melting into song. As many a critic has observed, Heifetz's playing is technically perfect – tone and pacing as flawless as we have ever heard. But going further, what made him a true *master* is in his ability to take this technical understanding and bring it dollops of blood from within (this ability to use the violin as a vehicle to reconnect with the wayward ghosts of the great Bach and Brahms in invisible worlds one thousand universes away). Also notable is Disc 4, featuring a chilling version of Bruch's "Violin Concerto No. 1."

In sum, these box-sets mark two stunning assemblies of music, and the rest of the classical world will be hard-pressed to match (let alone surpass) what **Sony** has done in resuscitating some of the most inspired music to ever be recorded.

Please visit [sonybmgmasterworks.com](http://sonybmgmasterworks.com) for more information.



## Star Wars Turns 30!

**STAR WARS 30 Years Later –  
Still a Feast for the Senses**

★ **STAR WARS. THE COLLECTORS EDITION. John Williams.**  
**Sony/BMG.**

**By John Aiello**

For many, **Star Wars** was *the film* – this grand amalgamation of action and fantasy and science fiction that fed the senses from an array of perspectives. And this wonderful artistic ‘stew’ is now back front-and-center thanks to this 8 CD soundtrack collection that marks the film’s 30-year birthday.

Truly, this soundtrack is a piece of memorabilia worthy of the brilliant films from which it was sired: A stunning and elegant feast of sound that lives in its own individually numbered box (sporting brand spanking new cover art culled from the main **Star Wars** characters).



Image courtesy of Sony.

Astute **Star Wars**’ junkies will quickly note that the heart-center of the collection is buried in the three recordings by legendary composer/conductor John Williams – for as much as **Star Wars** is a visual record of George Lucas’ journey as a film-maker, it is also an auditory record synthesizing the heartbeat echoes that pursue Williams in the dead of night, inspiring these symphonies and concertos for consumption by the diamond-blind human soul.

Fans will note that the 8-CD set is comprised of music from Episode IV (“A New Hope” – 2 CDS); Episode V (“The Empire Strikes Back” – 2 CDS); and Episode VI (“Return of the Jedi” – 2 CDS). The 7<sup>th</sup> installment in the collection is “**Star Wars: The Corellian Edition**” which stitches together the most popular themes from the first six **Star Wars** episodes and then releases them into soaring bridles of music that serve to honor the most readily identifiable movie ever screened.

Finally, the 8<sup>th</sup> CD is an 'extra' for all those kids-at-heart: This CD-ROM collects each of the inserts and gatefolds and posters that were included with the original vinyl releases from **Star Wars** Episodes IV, V and VI – these digitized pieces of artwork bring the whole film back to life in crisp and piercing detail: The pictures melding with the music in seamless fashion to recreate the phantoms and faces and misty silhouettes Lucas was dancing among when he built this film.

Simply, **Star Wars** is one of those movies that will be called *a classic* not only today and tomorrow, but for centuries to come (just as this collection of CDs now writes its auditory record: Committing our collective journey through those hidden galaxies of tomorrow to beautiful cool permanent music).

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)



---

## THE TWO VOICES OF THE SINGER

---

### Marvin Gaye on American Masters

♦ **AMERICAN MASTERS MARVIN GAYE: WHAT'S GOING ON.**  
**Written, produced and directed by Sam Pollard. Produced for PBS by THIRTEEN/WNET in New York City in collaboration with Isis Productions.**

**By John Aiello**

Marvin Gaye was a rare force in the annals of American music – a singer and performer of great passion whose art was able to transcend the cultural divide while carrying Black music to its rightful place in the pantheon.

In this new documentary from **American Masters**, Gaye's music is examined with deft precision by award-winning Director Sam Pollard, as Pollard comes to humanize the myth of Marvin Gaye (while proving this man was so more than a soul-singer).

As Pollard's film shows, Gaye was an artist whose voice resonated with depth and faith and wonder – this testament to the fact that there is really no *Black experience* or *White experience*. Instead, it's just people united in turmoil, connected by hunger and the need for love; instead, it's all just people united by soft invisible threads of music.

As you can see, Gaye was a larger-than-life figure. And his story ends up being the most complicated of assignments for any film-maker. Simply, how do you synthesize a life this big into a mere one hour show? Moreover, how do you bring the intangibles of the creative process to the screen in a form that will

hold meaning for a mass audience?

The answers to these questions are provided by Pollard in stunning and graceful terms, as he brings the specter of Marvin Gaye to life in a spirited and enlightened way - placing us in touch with the man who changed how the world heard music.

In **What's Going On**, Pollard uses great clarity of focus to paint a living and realistic picture of one of the great voices of our times. But in as much as Gaye was an original voice and a tireless innovator, he was also a troubled man who battled demons down every step of his career. Accordingly, Pollard is able to teach us that great art is often the by-product of agony and rage – the culmination of a spiritual journey through darkness and rain.

**What's Going On** sets an archival interview with Gaye against live performance footage in order build the foundation for the film – the two voices of the singer telling this deep and profound story. Additionally, interviews from his sister Jeanne Gay and ex-wife Jan Gaye (along with Smokey Robinson, Mary Wilson and Martha Reeves) fill-in the blank spaces between the pages, giving the film both *body* and a lasting relevance to multiple generations.

At once, **What's Going On** strikes the thirsty heart of the viewer – this dark and piercing film that sheds light on a possessed soul whose every breath deepened the healing essence of song.

Yet, most unfortunately, Gaye could not save himself, and his journey ended stillborn in tragedy. However, as this movie evinces, his legacy and its great body work serve to enjoin music fans of all races, creating a vibrant community that still thrives today. And in that regard, Marvin Gaye's life proves a resounding beacon of triumph, will, beauty and courage.

*Consult your local listings for broadcast times.*



---

## CELLULOID MOMENTS

---

### WAYNE EWING FILMS

Wayne Ewing is one of the ballsiest film-makers working today, an artist who is dedicated to the idea of telling some bigger truths no matter who might be rubbed wrong. In my mind, this mission should mark the true driving force behind the concept of cinema (while simultaneously inspiring those who practice its craft). Ewing, who works out of Colorado, is recognized for his documentary films which seek to provide a *document* or *record* of their subject

in the real-time of a celluloid moment. Yet, going further, Ewing has the intangible knack of capturing the *bigger picture* of his subjects as they are placed in their proper historical context. In the end, what these movies do is give us an intimate peek into the hidden lives of mavericks like the brilliant yet tormented Hunter S. Thompson – dissolving the myth of Thompson as we come to connect with the soul of the man behind the mask. And that, simply, is the beauty of a Wayne Ewing film: Subtly blends with nuance as a face is created on screen. And while the face on screen tells us its personal story, it also somehow reflects the audience as an infinite new whole (telling our collective story in the process). ~John Aiello

## Exploring Wayne Ewing on DVD

♦ **BREAKFAST WITH HUNTER. A Film by Wayne Ewing starring Hunter S. Thompson.** This feature-length documentary is representative of Ewing's vast talents, as he reduces the giant that was Hunter Thomson to a life-size figure (humanizing the myth via expertly crafted scenes that catch the journalist at his most raw and accessible). **Breakfast** was shot over a span of several years as Ewing shadowed Thomson in his quest to test all limits with his vibrant balls-to-the-walls brand of *Gonzo Journalism*.

♦ **WHEN I DIE. Wayne Ewing.** This film serves as a beautiful counterpart to **Breakfast With Hunter** as it chronicles the raising of the *Gonzo Memorial* – a beautifully crafted documentary that reveals the many layers of the artist and his impact on the culture. Viewers will be captivated by Ewing's ability to pace the film and move it along to its graceful conclusion.

♦ **BENCHED. The Corporate Takeover of the Judiciary. Produced and Directed by Wayne Ewing, (with Barry Bortnick as Associate Producer).** As good as Ewing's chronicles of Hunter Thomson are, I will forever correlate his importance as an artist with **Benchd**, a movie that examines the American court system and helps to publicize the corporate takeover of our judiciary. Make no mistake, this movie took guts to make (especially during the *Reign of Bush II* during a time when Americans have to fear being spied on by their own government). In sum, **Benchd** peels away the hypocrisy of media and partisan politics to show the *Grand-Daddy of Democracies* sold off to the highest bidder. Anyone interested in why the country is floundering at a historical low-point should go out and find this movie – you will be both shocked and enlightened by what you see.

~John Aiello

See [hunterthompsonfilms](#); or [benchd](#)



## OF MUSIC AND CONSCIENCE



## On PBS stations nation-wide

📺 **AMERICAN MASTERS - PETE SEEGER: THE POWER OF SONG.**  
**Directed by Jim Brown. Produced by Jim Brown, Michael Cohl, William Eigen, Norman Lear and Toshi Seeger. Produced for PBS by THIRTEEN/WNET in New York City.**

**By John Aiello**

Time has proven Pete Seeger, once pigeon-holed as a mere folk-act, to have been the true pulse-beat of the country's conscience, a seminal influence on the growth of the American songwriter.

Seeger, now 88 years-old, has led a vast parade of writers into deeper awareness. Accordingly, this film, directed by the Emmy-winning Jim Brown ("We Shall Overcome" and "The Weavers: Wasn't That a Time!") gives many of the voices that Seeger inspired a chance to rise up in honor of him.

In **The Power of Song**, Brown allows the vision of the dynamic Pete Seeger to take center-stage and help tell a story as vibrant as the idea of music itself. Via clips and rare personal footage from Seeger's 1960 world tour, we are given a glimpse into the majestic soul of Seeger (who came to influence songsmiths as varied as Bob Dylan, Jim Croce and Tommy Smothers).

In addition, Seeger's unique style as an instrumentalist motivated many aspiring players on both coasts (just listen to the cricket-like chirp of the late John Stewart's banjo-picking and you'll hear strains of the old master – this universal heart of the musician taking form at invisible altars before us).

Going further, **The Power of Song** offers insight from performers such as Joan Baez, Bonnie Raitt, Bruce Springsteen and Mary Travers – and although their voices are different, they are all saying the same basic thing: That Seeger's life is about stimulating social change through an awareness of community and self.

In Seeger, we have the likes of a man who will never again be seen – this man who, instead of his promoting his own work, offered up the sweet blood of his spirit as a means to insure the preservation of the world and its people. As **The Power of Song** documents, Seeger's existence has only been about planting the seeds of change, his songs a way to illuminate the four-corners of the world and spark a connection between all the souls who share a common path on this earth.

In turn, Brown's film sets out to finally give Seeger his due. Simply, this is our chance to intimately connect with a brilliant artist who focused his days on two clearly-honed ideals – the depthless love for his wife, Toshi, and the belief that music could alter the course of the universe and thus cure us of these terminal cancers called 'selfishness' and 'greed.'





# THE LEGEND OF LES PAUL

## On PBS stations nation-wide

♦ **AMERICAN MASTERS LES PAUL: CHASING SOUND. A John Paulson Production. Directed by John Paulson. Executive Producers: Susan Lacy. Glenn Aveni. Produced for PBS by THIRTEEN/WNET in New York City in conjunction with Icon Television Music.**

**By John Aiello**

At 92, the great Les Paul serves as one of the hidden faces of American music, a man whose hands and heart are alive in myriad aspects of our *sound*, as much a part of the musical landscape as visionaries like Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Aretha Franklin and Robert Johnson.

Some 60 years after he hit the scene, Paul's contributions to music are used and reused, are heard and reheard, on every stereo and on every radio throughout the world. In point of fact, this is the innovator who gave the world the most influential instrument of the modern musical era - the solid body electric guitar.

However, Paul's ingenious curiosity didn't stop there, as his cutting-edge ideas on making records found their way into the studio in the guise of the now universal over-dubbing technique that so many sound engineers employ.

In **Chasing Sound**, which is part of the acclaimed **American Masters** series that has entertained and educated us for decades, we finally have been granted a true examination of the dynamic Les Paul and his many revolutionary accomplishments.

"It would be difficult to overstate Les Paul's influence on popular music in the twentieth century," muses American Master's creator Susan Lacy. "He pioneered the electric guitar and revolutionized our concept of what recorded music could be. Ironically, his inventions ushered in rock 'n' roll and pushed him out of the spotlight..."

In the minds of many, Les Paul *is* the rock and roll melody line, his solid-body electric axe the heart that drives the blood through the vein of the song. Consequently, every player owes a debt to his genius: Without his diligence and curiosity and hard-edged drive, our music would sound quite differently (and most certainly would lack much of its wanton bring-down-the-walls passion).

In this film, Paul's story is told in pure documentary form, but with a twist: Instead of using a narrator, Paulson allows his subject to propel the flow of the piece, Paul painting the picture of his life through sweet remembrances and anecdotes (taking us from the bitter basics of his Wisconsin hometown, to the Depression-sick streets of Chicago playing along side Art Tatum and Louie Armstrong, and then onto Hollywood, days of World War II, where he backed the legendary Bing Crosby on guitar).

Interspersed throughout the production are classic bite-sized capsules of the music Paul helped to make famous, in addition to interviews with the likes of Jeff Beck, the late Ahmet Ertegun, B.B. King and Tony Bennett – these voices who remain indebted to Paul now looking back on him with fond respect, these intimate pebbles of memory serving to give this film-record ‘body’ and ‘shape’ and present-day relevance. Moreover, these interviews offer much new information on multiple levels, helping to humanize Paul in a way that those staid biographies and formulized magazine snapshots never could.

Obviously, there are many reasons why this is an important film, not least of which is the fact that it weaves the bits and pieces of a *huge* life into a single shard of fabric that is as broad as it is introspective – a true reference point that will enlighten a series of generations. Simply, any kid who boots up his *I-Pod* and retreats into a rock ‘n’ roll moment should know who Les Paul is and why his work is considered utterly indispensable to the face of our popular culture.



## TEN MINUTES WITH JOHN PAULSON

**John, let's begin with a bit about how you started directing films.**

I was actually a film-maker at the Smithsonian Institute for 14 years, and that's how I cut my teeth on the documentary form. That was also where I learned to make films about culture and music and the arts. While I was at the Smithsonian I was able to work with a variety of themes, in a variety of styles. But I always seemed to gravitate towards films which possessed a strong cultural expression. That part of my career came to an end in 2002, when the Smithsonian terminated its film department. And that's when I became a true independent film-maker.

**Some would say that it's pretty bold doing a film on Les Paul, holding to the theory that it's a narrow subject-line, since most young viewers probably are not aware of Paul's place in music history. Given this, how did you come to make *Chasing Sound*?**

You know, that's probably true – most people don't have a real sense of who Les Paul is, other than being some dusty name from the past. And that was exactly my mission with this movie – to increase awareness of this very important component of music history. In fact, Les was the first guy playing electric guitar coast-to-coast, the first to ‘electrify’ and bring this music to the radio. Personally, I met Paul while I was at the Smithsonian. Of course, I'd known about him for a long time, with his name embroidered on the necks of so many guitars. And as I got to

know him, I found Paul to be an amazing character full of exuberance. And as I got to know him better, I came to understand his special place in history, I came to see that he was indeed a candidate worthy of an *American Master's* production.

**It must have been a daunting assignment – trying to bring this multi-dimensional man to the screen...**

Yeah, it was. There was so much to the story. Plus, I was absolutely stunned by his ability as a guitar player. The layers to his recordings are astonishing. But the story was big and broad; there was so much to say in 84 minutes. As a film-maker, I had to give it everything I had. I didn't hold anything back, because when you're working with a legend like Paul, you owe him as much. Really, there's a lot to Paul that most listeners don't know about, things like his wonderful sense of humor. I wanted to bring that element out. I wanted to make a film to match up with Les Paul's rascal-sense of humor.

**Why is it important for young fans of the rock idiom to see this movie?**

I think the over-all message is important – that you can't take what came before you for granted. Listen to your soul and your vision and where it wants to take you. Paul heard these guitar sounds in his head that no one else heard and he worked like hell to make them real. He willed them into being, creating technical advances to make them a reality.

**After creating this movie, tell me who you think the real Les Paul is...**

Paul is a guy who always knew what he wanted to do, and he worked like hell to make these things happen, dedicating many years of his life to his art. And because of his dedication, his contributions to music are permanent.

**In terms of making the movie, how long did it take – start to finish?**

It took about 2 years start-to-finish, though it wasn't done continuously. I started it during his 90th birthday celebration and the filming continued for another 6-9 months. After the filming was done, it took another 6 months to edit and shape the movie. I guess it might be hard for some to understand, but with Les, you don't just rip out the camera and start filming. There's some camaraderie to the process.

**Given Paul's advanced age, this production could have presented some challenges. What was it like working him? Did you run into any unforeseen problems?**

Well, Les' age wasn't a problem at all. In fact, Les didn't even want to make this film in the beginning, he didn't want to stop his own work that

he was doing. It took me 9 months to convince him to do the project. Actually, Les is really a night owl. He gets up in the afternoon and lives his life at night. Thus we'd start filming around 6 PM and stop around 2 AM. We'd finish and leave, and he'd be off to work on something else. "Chasing Sound" is actually a phrase Paul uses to describe his own quest. And it was a perfect title for the movie. But, really, Paul's age wasn't a consideration. He's still incredibly sharp-witted with extraordinary recall, with such extraordinary memories stored in his mind.

### Where do you go from here John? What's your next project?

As far as I am concerned, music is the fabric of our beings. It's as important as drinking water. It's what moves us. It's what soothes us. And in my eyes the music-makers are standard-bearers for each of us. I've done a lot of music stories in documentary form and I want to continue this work. Art is what moves my soul. And I want to continue on this path...

~John Aiello

---

The commercial DVD version of *Chasing Sound* is now also available from **Koch Vision**, and it allows viewers to commit this very important and very influential music documentary to their own libraries. The DVD brings the legend of Les Paul right to your home projectors and captures some rare footage of Paul at *work*, playing with his Trio at the Iridium Jazz Club. These are the special moments that the film's director John Paulson alludes to in the preceding interview: Paul's considerable skill as a musician placed center-stage as he drowns his spirit in sacred ideas of sound and rhythm. Going further, viewers are treated to extended discussions with this 'architect of rock 'n' roll' as we come to create a very real and very intimate relationship with the man responsible for so much of what we hear on FM stations across our scattered countryside. Aside from its subject matter, the film's production work stands out – sparkling clarity marks the shape of each and every frame. In addition to being appropriate for fans of the electric guitar, *Chasing Sound* should be strongly considered for use in the classroom as an instructional aid: Too many younger students of the idiom fail to realize Paul's place in the history of our music, and this film serves to right that course, reacquainting us with this innovator of many faces and many passions who took the bare-white thirsty bones of an idea and shaped them into a world-wide revolution.

~John Aiello

---



# GREAT PERFORMANCES PRESENTS –

## "WE LOVE ELLA!"

### A TRIBUTE TO THE FIRST LADY OF SONG"



Stevie Wonder and Quincy Jones appear in **We Love Ella!** which premieres Wednesday, June 6 at 9 p.m. (ET) on **PBS Stations** (*check your local listings*).

🔥 **WE LOVE ELLA! A Tribute to the First Lady of Song. A GREAT PERFORMANCES presentation. From Thirteen/WNET, New York.**

**By John Aiello**

Ella Fitzgerald was one of the great ones: A voice and presence so infinitely beautiful she caused everyone who heard her sing to shiver - struck by the tender holiness of the experience. **We Love Ella! A Tribute to the First Lady of Song** (a *GREAT PERFORMANCES* presentation from **Thirteen/WNET New York** premiering **June 6** on PBS stations throughout the country) brings a group of Ella's disciples together to celebrate the anniversary of her 90th birthday. **We Love Ella** features the work of Patti Austin, Natalie Cole, Stevie Wonder, Quincy Jones, Nancy Wilson and Ruben Studdard - sterling performances by some of the musicians who were so deeply influenced by Ella's magnet spirit, by her inimitable ability to bring the core of song to multi-dimensional life. This film, directed by David Horn, captures a concert that took place April 29th at the University of Southern California (and co-produced by Phil Ramone, Gregg Field and Mitch Owing), interspersing streams of music with interviews and recollections of the 'first lady' (in addition to show-casing several riveting and never-before-released vocal performances by Fitzgerald herself). The images here rise and swell with movement, motion and energy --the bluesy wail of each particle of memory swinging the sweet jazz of time without past or future: Suddenly, Ella is back with us again, alive in the moment, perfect in the *present*, guiding her many disciples through the concert of a lifetime. Simply, this is a powerful and engrossing musical tribute to one of the most influential voices of the modern era. Consequently, it will appeal to both hardcore fans and new students of the genre. Mark your calendars - *this one can't be missed*.



## "Atlantic Records: The House that Ahmet Built"

*American*<sup>®</sup>  
MASTERS

&



Ben E. King



Ahmet Ertegun



Solomon Burke

Images courtesy of PBS. All rights reserved. No duplication permitted.

---

## ANOTHER CLASSIC FROM AMERICAN MASTERS

*"Atlantic Records: The House that Ahmet Built"* provides a film-record of the life of music-pioneer Ahmet Ertegun, whose visionary spirit changed the recording industry. *"The House that Ahmet Built,"* part of PBS's acclaimed American Masters series, is rich and bold and evocative, an extended moment in time featuring interviews with the enigmatic Ertegun and many of the musicians (Ben E. King; Solomon Burke; Eric Clapton; Phil Collins) who gave

**Atlantic Records its unique face and inimitable sound. In addition to our review of the film (below), we are also featuring interviews with the film's Executive Producer, Susan Lacy (as well as legends Burke and King). ~John Aiello**

---

**🔥 AMERICAN MASTERS ATLANTIC RECORDS: THE HOUSE THAT AHMET BUILT.** Written and directed by Susan Steinberg. Producer: Phil Carson. Susan Lacy Executive Producer and original creator of the AMERICAN MASTERS series. Produced for PBS by THIRTEEN/WNET in New York City.

**By John Aiello**

He started the most innovative and daring record company in the world with a mere 10 grand that he borrowed from his dentist, unleashing on the world a perfect sanctuary come in the guise of a recording studio, this holy place where music-makers would gather and ply their trade, honing the chocolate-dark echoes of heart-sound into poetry.

Of course, this place was Atlantic Records. And the man behind the construction of the palace was none other than Ahmet Ertegun, a Turkish immigrant whose ear and vision chiseled their way into our collective consciousness and changed the way we would hear music.

Ertegun's story, the subject of the PBS feature *AMERICAN MASTERS Atlantic Records: The House That Ahmet Built*, is truly mythical in proportions. In turn, via the classic documentary style, the film sets out to examine Ertegun's life from the silken skeleton of its edges:

Fresh from Turkey, the young Ertegun hits New York City in 1947 and parlays a small loan into an empire. As soon as the doors of his studios swung open, the core of our *American sound* would become Ertegun's *Atlantic Sound* --this amalgamation of so many different styles and so many genres, this vision that melded the thick echo of R&B with the shaking hips and savage tongues of Rock-n-Roll, this creation of a new palette on which the 'painters' would come to drip their living beads of blood.

*AMERICAN MASTERS Atlantic Records: The House That Ahmet Built* took nearly half a decade to flow together, and the reasons for this are obvious: This is a sprawling story with many faces and many side-doors to explore, a story that serves not-so much as a eulogy to the great Ertegun (who died in 2006 after falling backstage at a Rolling Stones' concert) as it is a hymn to the power of music, a testament to our *American sound* that is comprised of billions of people in places hidden to everything except the eyes of the ghosts who hover at these separate corners of the world.

A big story, indeed.

And how does one go about trying to capture the steady genius that was Ertegun? And how does one go about trying to paint the poem of a life into the permanent structure of film?



It only can be done in the pure documentary form by the hand of master film-makers, the tale told through the voices and the eyes and the bloodied, soul-piercing observations of those people who were there.

Accordingly, ***AMERICAN MASTERS Atlantic Records: The House That Ahmet Built*** features interviews with James Blunt, Solomon Burke, Chris Blackwell, Ray Charles, Eric Clapton, Phil Collins, Aretha Franklin, David Geffen, Taylor Hackford, Mick Jagger, Mick Jones, Leiber And Stoller, Kid Rock, Ben E. King, Henry Kissinger, Wynton Marsalis, Sergio Mendes, Bette Midler, Paulo Nutini, Jimmy Page, Robert Plant, Percy Sledge, Jann Wenner and Jerry Wexler -- the ones who were singing for Ertegun are allowed to carry the current of this very personal story, weaving the echo of song into distance and perspective in order to create this document of one man's life which represents the music of a century and the cultural evolution of a nation.

In addition, the producers juxtapose these interview segments with Ertegun home-movies and various stunning and rare performance clips (along with 4 years of interviews with Ertegun himself), taking us on a breathless journey which begins at the genesis of Atlantic Records (moving through 50 years of changing faces and pattern-less roads). And this, then, is the place where we come to find ourselves in the center-cut mirror of a movie that serves as a testament to the voices who sang and the hearts who heard -- a testament to the *idea of art* itself.

***AMERICAN MASTERS Atlantic Records: The House That Ahmet Built*** (like its many *American Masters* predecessors) is flawless -- the pacing and editing are at once bold yet restrained, capturing a man in tireless motion, capturing his *Atlantic Sound* that was meant to be in the midst of perpetual change like the countryside of its birth.

Yet, more than anything, this film is about creating a universal intimacy: As we listen to fellows like Solomon Burke talk about Ertegun and the inner-core of this man's soul, we are really listening to one friend talk of another friend in very personal and revelatory terms. In the end, ***The House That Ahmet Built*** records the motion of random voices as they flow together into one naked pool - this description of how the seeds of art came to be fertilized and fed, this photograph of the eternal garden of song now rising into golden cool definitive bloom.

Inarguably, the ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** series is an artistic triumph that has lasted decades because of its ability to supersede the sometimes narrow constraints of the *documentary* as it devours the whole drama of life amid all our contradictions and failures and painful missteps (in turn, giving rise to the essence of art and the bittersweet beauty of human existence).

For lovers of music and historians of the *American sound*, this snapshot of Ahmet Ertegun will not only prove illuminating, but completely indispensable.



**FEATURING**  
**AMERICAN MASTERS**  
**CREATOR**  
**SUSAN LACY**



**Photo courtesy PBS. All rights reserved.**

**"Atlantic Records: The House That Ahmet Built"**

**Susan Lacy**, the creator and executive producer of PBS' acclaimed *American Masters* series from Channel Thirteen/WNET New York, has produced many films over a career that has spanned nearly 30 years.

In the course of creating *American Masters* (famous for documentaries that propel their subjects into new dimensions of reality), Lacy has presented many music-based features (including the acclaimed Martin Scorsese-directed "**No Direction Home**" which chronicled Bob Dylan's meteoric ascent to the top of the rock-and-roll world, as well as the sharply nuanced "**Lou Reed: Rock and Roll Heart**").

And now, on May 2, *AMERICAN MASTERS Atlantic Records: The House That Ahmet Built* is slated to premiere on PBS stations throughout the country: This stunning film-record of **Ahmet Ertegun**, whose *Atlantic Records* changed the course of popular music by providing a platoon of R&B artists a firm stage from which they could refine their craft and embrace their audience.

In keeping with Lacy's other work, *The House That Ahmet Built* is notable for its pacing and for the thread of its narrative – this film that churns forward like some great wheel of wind, throbbing sweet new melodies, sweeping us up in its story until we find a actual pieces of

ourselves hidden there. ~**John Aiello**

### **Tell me about the genesis of this film.**

Well, the idea for the film came about while I was working on a project with Phil Carson at *Suns Records*. At the time, Carson was producing an album with Ahmet – an album of contemporary musicians doing famous *Sun Records* hits. For example, Paul McCartney did a great version of “That’s Alright Mama” for that album. And **American Masters** filmed the recording process and created a documentary based on it. In the process of doing this film on *Sun*, I got to know Ahmet very well and that’s where the idea for a film on his life and work was born.

### **Why a film about Ahmet Ertegun? What was the most impressive thing about Ertegun?**

As you can imagine, it’s quite a daunting task trying to tell the story of 60 years of music through the story of one man. However, Ertegun has had such an enormous influence on culture and on many different forms of music that we were able to do it. I think what was most impressive about Ahmet was that he both loved and recognized the African American contribution to music, and his work helped these contributions to flourish. People sometimes forget that when Ahmet entered the business there was a lot of racism and prejudice, and what he accomplished at *Atlantic* helped to combat this. Plus, Ahmet was a hands-on producer, by this I mean that he got into the studio and rolled up his sleeves and made these records with the musicians. And that was unusual for the times. Also, Ahmet had an unerring belief in what he was doing. He had an amazing ear and had the talent to recognize talent in others - which is a rare ability in itself. But more than anything, Ahmet was a true gentlemen in a rough and tumble business. Record people are not known for being gentlemen. But Ahmet had impeccable manners. He treated people with respect. Here was a guy who could have dinner with the Queen one night and go clubbing with Mick Jagger the next. A rare man indeed...

### **How long did it take to create *The House That Ahmet Built*?**

The movie was shot over a period of 4 years, but it actually took about 9 months to produce once all the interviews were done. It took so long to finish the interviews because it was so hard to schedule time with the many working musicians who are featured. Actually, when we launched into the idea, we didn’t have the full budget in hand, yet we were very aware of the fact that we needed to keep going with the interviews. We knew Ahmet’s age was a factor, and we didn’t want to lose the chance to make this movie. Really, this was quite a difficult film to make. It’s not easy to cover this much time and history in two just hours....

### **I understand Ertegun participated in several hours of interviews for the film, and it seems that he was intent on his story being told. What was the underlying reason for this?**

I think he was ecstatic about the opportunity to reconnect with his friends

and with people he worked with in the past. And I think he was also flattered that **American Masters** wanted to memorialize his legacy, to create a record of his legacy that future generations could look back on. It's the ultimate recognition to the value of his work.

**In terms of his impact on the whole of the culture, what do you think future generations of musicians will most remember about the man who built the *Atlantic Records* empire?**

I think, again, it comes down to Ahmet's effort to bring recognition and respect to African American musicians. This should not be understated, as what Ahmet did at *Atlantic* in this regard helped the work of these R&B players to flourish, and in turn, it forever changed music. I don't think this will ever be forgotten. Ahmet's life is a wonderful story: The story of an immigrant who took his love for jazz and the Blues and turned that love into the most important record label in America. His story is about progression, starting with the Blues and ending with Rock and Roll -- changing the face of music in the process...

**Looking at Ertegun's career, he had an amazing knack of connecting with many different kinds of musicians (the Rolling Stones; Solomon Burke; Ben E. King; Eric Clapton; Phil Collins). What was it that drew so many different kinds of players from so many different backgrounds to want to work at *Atlantic*?**

Well, all of these artists grew up on the music of *Atlantic Records*, on the music that Ertegun helped make. As I said, there were two very distinct lives at *Atlantic*: One devoted to Blues and one devoted to Rock and Roll. The label changed with the times because it had to change in order to survive. And I think all of these musicians who you mentioned really wanted to be a part of *Atlantic* and the history of its music. Plus, *Atlantic* treated artists well. Ertegun had a reputation of treating musicians with respect and not as some commodity to exploit. There was a love of music at *Atlantic*. And artists who recorded there knew Ahmet would not second-guess them or interfere with their creative vision. Ertegun recognized talent and uniqueness and allowed it to flourish. That's what brought musicians to *Atlantic*....

~John Aiello

---

## REMEMBERING AHMET ERTEGUN

**Solomon Burke & Ben E. King**

**recall the genius of Ahmet  
Ertegun**

**Ben E. King** of the *Drifters* and **Solomon Burke** are legends in their own right - -singers of amazing depth who possess a command of language and voice and the ability to reach an audience through stage-driven performance. And even though they are often categorized as *R&B performers*, they cannot be pigeon-holed. Instead, **King** and **Burke** (like **Ertegun** himself) are students of song and sound, men compelled by nuances of melody, men driven to give identity and cadence to the secret music that plays on behind the severed walls of the mind. Looking back, it seems that **Ertegun** gravitated toward these kinds of players: Men who had a firm idea of who they were and what they wanted to say, men who had stage-presence and brimmed with emotion and empathy, who overflowed a sweet mix of sorrow and unquenchable joy. **Ben E. King** and **Solomon Burke** are two of the great voices of modern music and they found a home in the studios of **Atlantic Records**: This holy garden without boundaries where so many music-makers plied their craft. The memories of King and Burke provide great insight into both the rebirth of the blues and the international take-over of rock-and-roll. In addition, their memories grant insight into the immortal legend of **Ahmet Ertegun**: Music-mogul and maverick iconoclast whose mission was to bring this world the everlasting gift of song. ~**John Aiello**

## Solomon Burke

**Tell me of your first meeting with Ertegun.**

I still remember that day vividly: I met Ahmet in the lobby of **Atlantic Records**. He was standing with Jerry Wexler [the famed **Atlantic** producer], and Jerry introduced us. Without even taking a breath, Ahmet said: “You’re Solomon Burke? You’re signed to **Atlantic**.” And that was that. It was literally that fast. Imagine what I was thinking: There I was in the lobby surrounded by photographs of the likes of Big Joe Turner and Ray Charles, in the midst of *all this history*. I just stood in amazement, lost in the thought that I had just become a part of a label where all this ingenious music was being made....

**So, Solomon, that’s all Ahmet said – ‘you’re signed?’**

(*Laughing*) Well, as soon as he did, he asked me – “So what kinda sandwich do you want? Pastrami or corned beef?” Now here I was, a dude from Philadelphia – I knew about cheese-steaks and sausage, but not about corned beef (*with big brimming laughter*)....So I ordered myself a pastrami sandwich with hot chocolate. Just like that, I was a star on **Atlantic Records**....You see, things literally happened instantly with Ahmet...

**Wow – amazing...**

I’m telling you, I left **Atlantic** that day with a contract and some mayonnaise from my pastrami sandwich on my sleeve (*laughing*).

**Looking back, tell me about Ahmet, I mean how was this very refined**

**gentleman able to literally gut the recording industry and reconfigure it the way he did?**

Well, Ahmet was very diplomatic and he had the talent to relate to all different kinds of people on their level. He was high class. Really, Wexler looked like a school boy, and Ahmet – he looked like *the teacher*. But Ahmet, man, he really knew music. Jazz. Blues. Gospel. He recognized sounds almost instantly. Wexler could feel the music in his bones, but Ahmet – he knew it on an intellectual level, and he was a true master in the studio. Ahmet and Jerry [Wexler] were a special team and they were able to blend their genius into a special kind of magic. And it comes through those records and through the years: In the final days, that music is still going to be standing....

**I imagine Ahmet's passing has had a great impact on you...**

Oh yes, oh yes...Ahmet didn't decide to leave us, the angels decided he was going to go to a **Rolling Stones** concert and then roll on out with them. The angels decided it was time for him to sign some bigger acts and book some far bigger shows. I don't believe Ahmet's gone. I think he's on one of those big-time tours and we have no idea who he's booking, we just know, like everything he did, that it's a *big deal*. I feel that in my heart. If anyone is ever going to find Noah's Ark, it's got to be Ahmet – he was that kind of master.

**Can you speak a bit about your last interaction with him?**

Every moment I ever spent with the guy was fascinating, it was intensely educational. One of our last meetings was in Switzerland, and it was filled with conversation about the music we'd made together, and it was filled with a lot of laughter. Ahmet had an impeccable personality and an impeccable memory and an impeccable sense of humor, he had a knack for making you laugh. And he was a natural storyteller – told me stories about myself that I didn't even know (*roaring with laughter*). He was a one-of-a-kind man, and no one is ever going to imitate him, or duplicate him, or replace him. This was a man whose presence said: 'I am who I am and I believe in what I believe.' I mean, you have to respect that...

**Given the racial tensions of the times, why did black musicians want to record with Ertegun? Why did they trust his take on things?**

With Ahmet – there was no color barrier and no language barrier. He believed only in the music and the artist. He didn't care what color you were as long as you had the talent to make meaningful music. If you had the talent – *and away we go!* Ahmet was a rare man who could look you dead in the eye and tell you what was going to work and what was not going to work. And you believed him. Simple as that.

**Looking back, what stands out in your memory about this guy – beyond the music?**

He was happy! He was happy at home and that reflected in the rest of his

life. Also, as I said – he was a guy who told it like it was, he was happy to make that final decision and then stick to it. That’s something that demands respect. I always thought that if Ahmet had had a son born in his exact image, there would have still been something different about the kid. *Ahmet was that unique.*

**So, what made you want to participate in this film-record of Ahmet Ertegun’s life?**

I was part of the story and of the time – I was there when the label and the music were both developing, and I wanted to be able to help tell the story. **Atlantic** had a unique vision, mixing different markets, bringing the music to the people and the people to the music. So much great music; for a time, we thought it was never going to stop. Turn on the radio in those days, and it was all about **Atlantic Records**. Think about it now, and it brings your memory into clear focus...

**What was Ertegun’s greatest impact on the music?**

*Him....You see, Ahmet was the impact. Everything that came about came about because of him. His history. His background. His heritage. His joy. His love. His life. Just him. Let’s take the show to heaven now, and keep those shows cool – please.... (Poignant laughter)*

**How did Ertegun’s vision meld into your own personal vision as an artist?**

His vision will always live on within me. It comes down to something he said to me once after I gave him a record of mine to preview. He said – “Keep on keeping on...” And how those few words inspired me! He was telling me – you can make it if you really try. He was saying, don’t give up on yourself – ever! He was saying, you can make it if you want it...

**That’s pretty special to find that kind of soul in a business not noted for its *soul*...**

What can you say about the man that would not be incredible? He had such an incredible way of looking at life. He never blinked. He never said I’m different. Instead, he said – ‘I’m me. Accept me for me.’ He never blinked and he never stopped thinking. Instead, he made action and movement a part of his thinking. He’s an act you just can’t follow. All you can do -- trace the years with tears and joy...

~John Aiello

## BEN E. KING

**So, Ben E., I recently interviewed Solomon Burke about Ahmet and the PBS film chronicling his life and times. And I am going to ask you some of the same things I asked Solomon, as a way to paint a portrait of Ertegun’s distinctness from multiple perspectives...**



Sounds good! We'll see if our old men are thinking alike (*laughter*)

**Tell me of your first meeting with Ertegun.**

My first meeting with Ahmet was back in 1958, at the **Atlantic Studios**. I was part of the second formation of the *Drifters*. Immediately, Ahmet made sure we all felt comfortable. He was obviously aware that we were five guys from Harlem who really didn't know anything about the big leagues of the recording industry. Ahmet seemed to realize that as a band we had a huge responsibility in taking over for the original *Drifters*, and he had empathy for us -- he understood that what we were about to do was going to be difficult. Really, looking back, it was as if he was adopting all of us, he made us feel that secure.

**I imagine that his death has affected you deeply...**

Really John, it has. I knew Ahmet for almost 50 years, and we developed a deep friendship. He cared for me not only as an artist, but also as a person. He helped me on both creative and personal levels, and losing him is really a hard thing to talk about, a hard thing to explain. The best I can do is to compare it to losing a close family member. (*long pause*): In the past on many occasions I told my wife and kids that, if anything ever happened to me, the first person they should call was Ahmet. I trusted him not only in business, but with my family as well.

**When did you last speak to or see him?**

I last saw him at the *Montreux Jazz Festival* in 2006. Actually, Ahmet had invited me there to perform. I remember we were sitting together one day, talking, and Kid Rock appeared and approached Ahmet. First off, Ahmet introduced Kid Rock to me and it was hilarious to hear him try to describe my music to Rock. But that was Ahmet in a nutshell: The guy would never leave you to be a stranger to anyone.

**In the wake of Ertegun's death, what's been lost that will never be recaptured? What element died with him?**

I think we lost someone who really cared about the music -- the music that was created in the past and the music that is being created in the present. He was a true creative genius who had an understanding of blues and jazz and R&B -- really, there are not too many men around like that. Now days, producers are in it only for the money and not for the music. It's a totally different world now...

**Looking at it objectively, Ahmet must have seemed like an oddity to five dudes from Harlem: Here was this very diplomatic Turkish gentleman who was producing pop records in America. Given the racial tensions of the time, what made so many black players trust this guy, what made them believe in what he was saying?**

Really, when you meet somebody you know in your heart if they're legitimate and sincere. As for me, I decided to watch and observe him

and I believed in what I saw and decided to tread water with him. More than anything, Ahmet lived up to his promises – and beyond. He was very open and very real; plus, he was not shy about telling you what was right with your sound and what was wrong with it. He was the kind of guy you could do business with -- and right after, sit down and have a ham sandwich with him. He was real and honest, and that's why I loved him...

### **Looking back on your 50-year history with him, what stands out?**

The way he cared for me as a person. As I grew up and grew older and learned more about the business, I learned that he really did care for me a lot. For example, one day I was at **Atlantic** and I was approached by two guys who said they were going to manage me. I was stunned, because I didn't know who these men were. After a time, these two fellows went into Ahmet's office. They stayed awhile, and then left without saying another word to me. When they left I went to speak with Ahmet and I told him what these guys had said. He shook his head no: 'Those guys are not right for you Ben E.' You see, he was always looking out for me and my best interests. I knew I was in good hands after that, and that little exchange cemented our friendship forever.

### **What was Ertegun's greatest impact on the music?**

He had the ability to see things through. Whatever he came to be involved with, he would see it through – from start to finish. And he had a total love and respect for American music, whatever color it was: You could be purple, or black, or red, or blue -- and that didn't matter to him. He was only interested in your talent and seeing what you could do together. He taught me to respect music and he taught me the business, but really what stands out about him is his honesty: His handshake was money in the bank.

### **That's similar to things Solomon said....**

See, the old men do think alike!

### **So, finally, what made you want to participate in this film-record of Ahmet Ertegun's life?**

Well, it wasn't about saying good-bye to a friend, because he will never leave me. Personally, I wanted to let the world know what he did for me. There would have been no Ben E. King without Ahmet Ertegun. He gave me this life [in music]. And I wanted to participate in this film to let the world know what he did for me and what he meant to me (and to a lot of other musicians just like me)...

~John Aiello



# AN AMERICAN MASTER REVEALED



Jacket-art used by permission of Sony-Legacy. All Rights Reserved. ©Sony Music; 2005.

♦ **BOB DYLAN: NO DIRECTION HOME. A Film by Martin Scorsese.**  
**Paramount Home Video. Soundtrack released by Columbia Legacy.**

**"It's not dark yet. But it's getting there..."**

**-Bob Dylan. 1997-**

**By John Aiello**

Quite simply, this is the best music documentary that has ever been made -- a tour de force of image and sound that leaves the fewer paralyzed and spellbound, a graceful and poetic journey into the personal history of a man who embodies the spiritual history of American music during the last century.

**No Direction Home** premiered on the award-winning **AMERICAN MASTERS** series on PBS last month. The film was co-produced by Susan Lacy (**AMERICAN MASTERS'** creator and executive producer), in collaboration with Director Martin Scorsese, Jeff Rosen of Grey Water Park, Nigel Sinclair of Spitfire, and Anthony Wall of the BBC's Arena series.

As documentaries go, what Scorsese has accomplished here is remarkable: by juxtaposing threads of music borne from Bob Dylan's historical 1966 world tour (when he went "electric" and performed songs packaged with rock-and-roll beat) with interviews, we are led through a half-open door and allowed an intimate glimpse into Bob Dylan's heart and mind.

In short, this production is what Dylan fans have been anticipating for decades. And it surpasses all expectations by leaps and bounds.

In addition to seeing Dylan discuss himself and his work against the context of world history, we witness first-hand the power of his performances in Europe in 1966. And the journey is absolutely incredible. Much of this old footage (shot as Dylan battled with audiences who wanted to hear "Blowin' In The Wind" and not Jagger-inflected blues) has never been seen before (only rumored to have existed). And it makes for a fresh and truly breathless ride.

Viewers will be kicked in the face as Dylan leads the Hawks through bone-cutting versions of his classic catalog: Catch Dylan's phraseology as he performs "Like a Rolling Stone" and "Tom's Thumb's Blues" -- the howl of vowel intersecting consonant, biting through syllables, devouring the rancid essence of the silence.

More than music, this is a picture of poetry being borne, words coming to life, ideas finding their way back to the sacred and holy light (evidenced by Dylan using a road-side sign to build several different poems on the spot and before the camera). More than concerts, these shows were revelatory experiences meant to enlighten and drive the audience to personal introspection -- snapshots of an artist in the midst of his process growing by the second through the energy of his listeners.

And in **No Direction Home**, Scorsese delicately captures it all in the fingertip-whisper of an instant.

What is remarkable about the Scorsese's work here is that the director is careful to remove himself from the equation; instead of adding layers through the film-maker's perceptions, he is wise enough to just sit back and let it all unspool across the web-laced eye of the viewer. Obviously, the material is so strong it needs no other "voice" but Bob Dylan's to carry it. And instead of piling more on, Scorsese only helps to shape the picture through masterful edits and cuts -- interspersing song with narrative until the picture finds its full, whole and supple glory.

The high-lights abound: among the many memorable interviews that are conducted for this picture, none stand out more than the comments of Dylan's long-time producer, Bob Johnston, who says that Dylan's "got the holy spirit about him" -- drawing a quick metaphor to the man's immense talent as both writer and musician.

Also notable are the segments with Al Kooper (the organ player on "Rolling Stone" who recounts how he came to play for Bob Dylan) and the interviews done with Suze Rotolo (Dylan's "Ramona") and Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, who speaks to Dylan's work in the broad context of post-20th century poetics. Finally, the sometimes-pissy-moments in the interviews that were conducted with Joan Baez demonstrate that Dylan was both a lovable and irritating companion who, once he burrowed his way under your skin, became truly impossible to rinse away.

At 3.5 hours running time, there is literally a mountain of music and history to swallow, and viewers will need to look at this material 3 or 4 times to begin to digest it all -- rest assured, there's something new around the twist of every corner.

However, the one constant here is Dylan himself: shy and unassuming, piercing and comical -- a reserved and sure-footed poet looking at the world through the lips of a candle. What he sees in the crystal eye of that flame we will hear breathe through every single song he plays.

***Viewers who missed the September premiere (and who have yet to purchase the DVD) should continue to check their local PBS listings for encore broadcast dates and times.***



The Soundtrack for **No Direction Home**, meanwhile, is a must-have companion to this DVD, and it includes a lot of the music that's in the movie, albeit in *different forms*. There are some wonderful treats to savor, indeed: a bare-bones version of "Stuck Inside of Memphis" allows us to see how Dylan was writing at the time, building the words of his songs around the riff, true to the great and spontaneous spirit of Kerouac. Another gem takes the form of a blues-drenched alternate take of "Visions of Johanna" that shows just how many gowns that song has worn in the chambers of Dylan's mind: a song almost like a human face changing with the changing light of the landscape. In addition, note the kick-ass live performances of "Hard Rain's Gonna Fall" and "When The Ship Comes In" (as well as the take of "Tambourine Man" with Jack Elliot): these cuts (along with the poignant rendition of Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land") capture the voice of an American legend in its infancy. Like all great music (like the concertos that grew from the breathless skin of Bach's hand, like the blues-cut belly howl of the great John Lee Hooker), each of these moments lives on in the subconscious mind of our history: bridging the vacant divide, shattering musty shackles, living on forever. ~**John Aiello**

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), or go to the [Bob Dylan](http://www.bobdylan.com) web site.



---

## THE FACE BEHIND THESE 'AMERICAN MASTERS'

---

### An Interview with Susan Lacy

By John Aiello

**Susan Lacy**, the creator of PBS' acclaimed *American Masters* series on Channel Thirteen/WNET New York (which produced the Scorsese-directed Dylan documentary), spoke to us recently about the role she played in bringing **No Direction Home** to fruition. Without her guiding hand, it seems unlikely that this lasting portrait of the *then-and-now Dylan* would have enjoyed such a classy and engrossing frame. Lacy, whose productions are known throughout the world for their depth and resonance, is a living example of how meaningful the television medium can be: After 20 years, her work remains a multi-layered inspiration to hearts and eyes and minds from around the globe.

**I understand you are the founder of the brilliant "American Masters" series. Can you tell me briefly about its genesis and what you initially hoped to accomplish through it?**

Well, *American Masters* goes back almost two decades. We're entering our 20th season and our 160th film. I first had the idea to do it back in 1984. Actually it was all quite simple. I wanted to create a series that would be based on the giants of 20th-century culture. I wanted to bring their lives and work together under one umbrella. It was a hard sell really. The same question kept cropping up: "Who wants to watch stories about *artists*?" It's like it was so hard for some to see that stories about artists *can be* full of drama - -artists have demons and they always seem to be in processes of overcoming something. You see, *American Masters* was never about being some "*Sunday morning biography show*," but instead, a vital series on many different levels. We started out in 1986, and the critics loved it. And in these last 20 years, we've had a great deal of success; for example, we've won Emmys in 5 out of the last 6 years. [pauses] *American Masters* is not about filling television time. Instead, it's meant to be as textured and layered and nuanced -- as interesting -- as the people we're making movies about.

**These productions must be quite intricate and complicated to orchestrate....**

Yes, they are; and I wear quite a lot of hats in the production process. One of my major roles is to make sure we have secured the rights to material and to insure we have access to the things we need. My central motivation is to make first-rate films and be original and inventive in the process. And this can be quite complicated and quite expensive. Many places are competing to do these projects, but they are not always as concerned with attaining the same quality and originality that we are. A lot of my work is centered around giving us access to all the material that we need to be able to create these movies.

**Can you tell me briefly about your background and how you came to PBS?**

I actually have a Masters Degree in American Studies, and I came to PBS shortly after graduate school. I had been living in Rome at the time with my first husband, having just written an article for *American Studies Magazine* on how television could impact the arts. A short time after it was published, my then-husband and I eventually moved to New York, and I was able to get an interview at *Channel Thirteen*[*WNET New York*]. To make a long story short, I got the job and began exploring some arts and performance programming ideas. Soon after, we launched *The American Playhouse* series [among some other productions]. That was all 26 years ago! As I said, we started the *American Masters* series in '86, and I've been working on it ever since...

**What was the impetus behind the Dylan project and making "No Direction Home?"**

Well, Jeff Rosen [one of Dylan's long-time managers and one of the producers for this film] was sitting on a wonderful archive of material, footage from Dylan's 1960s' world tours, some really magnificent stuff. In addition, he was doing all of these interviews on his own, trying to capture information about

that time from all the people who were there, trying to get it all down while these people were still alive. Yet, even though Jeff had this great archive of material, I don't think he really thought he had the makings of a film until Bob Dylan agreed to do an interview with him [Rosen]. That tied the threads of the narrative together.

### **So this project goes back many years?**

Yes, definitely -- I had wanted to make this movie forever, and I think I called Jeff about it once a week for 10 years! I definitely wasn't the only one who wanted to make the film, and when I actually got the call about doing it, I felt incredibly lucky and privileged -- there's just was so much to say with it. I also really feel fortunate that Scorsese agreed to direct it. He's just amazing in so many ways, and the film truly took on a life of its own when Marty came aboard.

### **Did you interact much with Dylan and Scorsese during production?**

Certainly not with Dylan - nobody did. But with Marty, yes. Especially during the last six months of production, as the story was coming together. Most viewers don't realize that directing is a very private experience. The whole process [in the beginning] is about finding your feet and finding the story and making it *your own*. It's a very private thing. And directors, including myself [Lacy has written and directed several of the *American Masters* installments], don't let anyone *in* until they're absolutely ready.

### **How did the footage and interviews come together? Who had the creative control?**

Marty, of course! And the material, it came together in a very natural way. First, there was the immense archive that Jeff had been collecting and compiling which he made available for the film. In the process of editing and shaping it, Marty had specific things he wanted to see. For example, he might say, 'get me all the music you can find from Hibbing [Minnesota] from the 50s' -- and we would try to get him as much of those kinds of things as we could find. The editing itself took 2 full years to complete. You must realize that the directing process is a *decision-making process*: every frame is a new decision. And when you have such a wealth of material like we had for "No Direction Home," it becomes very difficult. You see, the director's process is the creative process itself.

### **Did the Dylan camp censor any ideas or attempt to impose restrictions in any way?**

No, absolutely not. I've been told Dylan won't ever look at this film. He's more about looking forward, not looking back. But getting back to your question -- there were no limits. We wouldn't allow that. We just don't work that way. To the contrary, it was very free. There were no limitations or boundaries, and Marty was able to focus completely on the material. [*short pause*] I guess the only real 'limit' we had [to adhere to] was to keep the film to these five specific years [61-66], ending it in 1966 at the point of Dylan's motorcycle accident. I think that's probably where Dylan felt comfortable ending it. But in actuality,



that was *the absolute right decision*. Centering the story at this point allowed us to show the tremendous impact Dylan had on the culture [as it was happening].

**In your mind, what carries "No Direction Home" to its amazing plateau?**

Marty reached a great arc with the story, certainly. But I don't think there has ever been as interesting a portrait of an artist in the process of 'becoming' as what we were able to accomplish here. Dylan was in a period of white heat creatively, and even though he was making some amazing music, the world seemed to want him to be something *more*. And he never bargains with that. Not once. In the end, the story becomes a cautionary tale about the artist struggling against his own fame.

**What has the public response to the film been?**

The reaction has been fabulous. I don't think we've had one negative review, which is quite amazing. The film really was an 'event' -- a happening. And we'd never quite experienced anything to that degree before. Remember, there were four different companies promoting pieces of the show [Sony; PBS; Simon and Schuster; and Paramount], so there was a buzz and an awareness to the whole thing. So naturally, you'd think that that kind of attention would spark some cranky negative reaction, but it didn't happen here.

**So what's next for you Susan, where do you take the series from here?**

We have a lot of projects we're moving forward on. Right now we're in production on several films -- [pieces] on Woody Guthrie, Nat King Cole, the John Wayne/John Ford story, Marilyn Monroe, and a three-hour epic on Andy Warhol. We also have a big film on the Grateful Dead upcoming. And that's *just* for next season.

**Looking back, which of your films stand the tallest in your mind?**

People ask me that question all the time -- and I can't do it! I can't pick. I've done so many wonderful pictures, and I can't pick from my 'babies' that way...



---

**DOCURAMA PRESENTS**

**BOB DYLAN**

**in**

**"DON'T LOOK BACK"**

---

🔥 **DON'T LOOK BACK - 65 Tour Deluxe Editon. BOB DYLAN. A Film by D.A. PENNEBAKER. Pennebaker/Hagedus Films & Ashes and Sand. Distributed By Docurama.**

**By John Aiello**

This is the *65 Tour Deluxe Edition* of the seminal rock and roll documentary that gave the public its first celluloid glimpse into the music and mystery of Bob Dylan. Without a doubt, **Don't Look Back** is one of top two music films ever made (paling only in comparison to Martin Scorsese's **No Direction Home**, which continues the Dylan story where **Don't Look Back** leaves off).

For the second time in the last 40 years, **Don't Look Back** is the music release of the year, a film capturing the young Dylan at his finest hour, on the road in Europe circa 1965, performing impeccable acoustic versions of "Tambourine Man," "Don't Think Twice" and "To Ramona" (among others).

**Don't Look Back**, which intersperses concert footage with "scenes from the road," is an absolutely riveting display of the young master's depth, humor and poetic presence, while Pennebaker's direction remains a thing of utter and striking beauty: Confident in his material, the director just sits back and lets the story unfold before our collective Eye.

As many know, this *in-concert-documentary* has countless hallmark moments, including one special scene where Dylan is flanked by the shadowy image of a bearded and dark-eyed Allen Ginsberg – a picture symbolic of the way he was able to blend the vision of the Beats with music to create a sparkling new wheel of poetry.

And even though most music fans know the story of how Dylan's evolution into rock and roll changed the cultural landscape, this cinematic masterpiece now known as *65 Tour Deluxe* is very much a vital new work of art.

Here, Pennebaker (in collaboration with **Docurama**) has taken the spectacular advances in digital transfer and applied them to Dylan's whirlwind tour of 1960s Europe. The result is a picture that resonates with depth and clarity, as many of those once hazy hand-held shots have been sharpened and honed to bring out every edge of Dylan's magnificent stage presence.

Yes, many of us have seen this footage tens of times, but that does not detract from the way the digitization makes it all seem so fresh and original again – crystalline and cool, colored with infinite contour, allowing us to peer into the essence of the mirror and find this series of heretofore undiscovered layers.

In addition, viewers are allowed into the Pennebaker vaults and given a whole new film to savor: **Bob Dylan 65 Revisited** (the companion disc) offers another look at the young Dylan, as we embark on this fascinating journey into the director's out-takes, many never-before-seen snippets of footage painting a picture of the *film behind the film*. Suddenly, we come to see that the idea for **Don't Look Back** was borne in a Dylan gig: Born here in the spur of the moment in the blood-dirty rawness of song, born here in the sweetness of

breath flowing like poetry off the torn tips of the tongue.

*65 Tour Deluxe* is a real treat for long-time Dylan fans who will be able to re-connect with a piece of music history that forever changed the way the world perceived the role of the songwriter in relation to popular culture. This particular release features insightful and incisive commentary from Pennebaker himself, as well as comment from Dylan's former road manager, Bob Neuwirth (in addition to several more pristine and uncut live performances from the tour).

Although **Don't Look Back** has deep meaning for Dylan freaks and sixties flower children, this movie will also have broad appeal to rock and roll fans of all ages: Along with Elvis and the Beatles' invasion of America, this was a defining musical moment. And as Dylan's vocal comes to be juxtaposed with the director's 'blow-by-blow' review of the film-record he so artfully created, we come to taste each and every reason why **Don't Look Back** still remains atop so many top-five lists.

*Packaged with the **Don't Look Back** companion book and a flipbook of the "Subterranean Homesick Blues" cue-card sequence.*

[Go to Docurama for information.](#)




---

## "I'm Not There" Paints a New Face on Dylan

---

◆ **I'M NOT THERE. SOUNDTRACK.** *From a film by Todd Haynes.*  
Columbia Records.

**By John Aiello**

**I'm Not There** comprises the soundtrack to a film by the same name, this 're-imaging' of the life of song-poet Bob Dylan born from the faces of six different actors portraying the enigmatic Dylan at six strategic points in his life.

To say that this project is 'bold' is the understatement of the year – here, writer-director Todd Haynes seeks to unlock the insatiable poetry of Dylan's persona by juxtaposing it with different layers of itself (from folkie-Dylan to Gospel Dylan and all lost points in-between).

Yet, through it all, the single thread that ties the random buttes and long valleys into one perfect landscape...is the music. And really, what better way to understand a song-master than through the tongue-taste of his songs?

Rest assured, the core of **I'm Not There** is Dylan's amazing catalog of work, and this soundtrack serves as the most powerful "Greatest Hits" collections ever released.

Here, a wonderful assembly of artists come together to pay homage to the genius of Dylan's pen. And by doing so, they are able to re-interpret some of his classic pieces, recreating brand spanking new versions of timeless songs.

From the opening cut of Disc 1 (Eddie Vedder and MDB churning through a raucous cover of "All Along the Watchtower") we are on a journey – a journey through the mind of a poet as he burns across the distant fields searching the muse for sweet enlightenment.

And in the process of his own journey back to the infinite, Dylan is inviting his audience to accompany him. Like a revival taking place in a million church houses throughout the world at the very same hour, this record brings Dylan's fans together for the single purpose of sharing in a celebration of his finest moments in music.

Though there are a fair amount of the tried-and-true 'hits' here, there are also brilliant interpretations of lesser known tunes that serve to demonstrate just how vast Dylan's contribution to the medium has been. For example, John Doe's "Pressing On," from Dylan's Gospel period, is absolutely chilling – this piano/organ-driven piece an anthem of faith and endurance driven by the melody of the echo driven by the singer's bloody-hot voice rising into the stony boot-swords of God.

In addition, Jeff Tweedy's version of "Simple Twist of Fate" (from the 1975 album "Blood on the Tracks") shines – a solitary statement of love and loss that spans not merely decades, but *centuries*.

Also notable are Willie Nelson and Calexico doing "Senor" and Bob Forrest crooning "Moonshiner" – the understated elegance of each will leave you speechless as you lose yourself in the bare bones of Dylan's unique poetry.

Finally, after over 2 and one-half hours of soul-gouging and epiphanies, the record ends aptly – with Dylan's own humble and heart-sick voice singing beside *The Band* sometime during those famed *Basement Tape* sessions – his annunciation eerily reminiscent of the very voice he assumed 40-years later on 1997's "Time Out of Mind" (Eyes stepping out of the mirror, observing the memory of shadows, eyes stepping out of the mirror, detached from these now-hollow memories of time – "But I'm Not There/I'm Gone").

But in true point of fact, Dylan is not gone at all, nor will he ever be gone. Instead, he remains with us, *permanently*, a man revealed and glorified and preserved in the perfect mask in the deep essence of these songs.

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), or go to the [Bob Dylan](http://www.bobdylan.com) web site.



# IN DEFENSE OF BOB DYLAN

---

## On the Starbucks Controversy

By John Aiello

A lot of people are pissed off at the news that Bob Dylan's new album (the widely bootlegged *Gaslight Tape* which reportedly features an early version of the classic "Hard Rain's Gonna Fall") is being sold through Starbucks coffee stores instead of in the general market place.

Opponents to this decision decry Dylan as a sellout because he's chosen what they think is an overtly Capitalist venue in which to sell his record. Personally, I don't buy the argument. In the poet's own words, "the times they are a-changing." And so is the way an artist has to market himself.

In times past, folks would wait with bated breath for a band's new record to hit the bins. We were addicted to the romance of it all: the jacket art; the liner notes; the complimentary concert posters that came with so many albums. But no more now.

Today, kids aren't going into record stores the same way previous generations did. Instead, they huddle together in coffee shops like Starbucks and use these cafes as sanctuaries in which to hear music, buy music, share stories, and talk among themselves. Like it or not, Starbucks are the cornerstones of the new urban community - and they are here to stay.

I mean, take a firm look around: Go to the movies or the baseball game, and Starbucks is there. As are Coke and Pepsi and Nike. And so many other corporate giants. These entities are simply *a part* of our culture now and there is no escaping it.

Actually, Dylan's smart enough to see this. He's actually opened his eyes to the fact that you have to bring the music pools to the places where the people gather. And in 2005, that place is Starbucks. Truthfully, how many other artists -- if they had the commercial juice to pull it off -- wouldn't try to cut a similar deal?

Finally, it's time to let the false nostalgia go. It's not 1965 anymore, and too many of this man's old fans have become necromancers feeding off the idea of what they think his songs mean in much the same way that parasites feed off living walls of flesh. It's one thing to admire a poet's work and find personal meaning in his vision. It's quite another thing to believe that your standards and beliefs co-mingle with his.

The fact of the matter is that Dylan owns his songs. He owns the mind that made them. And he's free to circulate them where he wants to in any form he chooses. So, if hearing Bob Dylan's bare-boned growl inside a Starbucks offends you so deeply, well - you're perfectly free not to buy coffee there.

---



---

## Guest Review

---

# Seeing the Real Bob Dylan at Last

*By Paolo Carmassi*

♦ **BOB DYLAN LIVE 1964: THE CONCERT AT THE PHILHARMONIC HALL. Bob Dylan. Columbia/Legacy.** In early 1961 in New York City, Harry Jackson, a cowboy singer and a painter, told Nat Hentoff after listening to Bob Dylan in a small club that "He's so goddamned real, it's unbelievable!" Nat, a prominent music critic at the time, went to see Dylan shortly thereafter. Bob had the same effect on him and Nat quickly became friends with the young singer. Hentoff's marvelous line in the liner notes of "The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan" bears repeating: "The irrepressible reality of Bob Dylan is a compound of spontaneity, candor, slicing wit and an uncommonly perceptive eye and ear for the way many of us constrict our capacity for living while a few of us don't." After listening to the recent Columbia Bob Dylan release, "The Philharmonic Hall Concert," Nat's words reentered my mind. They sum up the heart of this precious live 2-CD package. Nothing seems to have changed: this musical document is as pure, as honest, as fresh, as real, and as timely as it was when Bob created it.

I have followed Dylan's career since his debut album, "Bob Dylan", in 1962. What we have here in "The Philharmonic Concert" is Bob at his early best and in many of his moods. During the concert, he tells the audience "I'm wearing my Bob Dylan mask tonight." On the contrary, Bob has taken his mask off. The authentic Dylan has always been revealed while performing on stage. It is easy to hear on these CDs that Bob wants his audience to have a good time and to learn and discern. I have always felt that Bob's sense of humor is one of his greatest assets. He's a funny man and it is prevalent throughout this show. Was he really putting us on when he said he was a song and dance man in "Don't Look Back?"

This performance represents an artist who is the personification of originality and purity of expression. This is the young Shaman ready to explode and expand the horizons of all who listen to him, a major, creative revolutionary who, with the Beatles, would change the face of music throughout the world.

There have been many Bob Dylans. He is the chief chameleon. Very capricious. We all know this. "The Philharmonic Concert" presents my favorite Bob Dylan: the poet, the seer, the humorist, the social critic, the political observer, the wordsmith who assimilated and synthesized all the great existential themes found in history, philosophy, and literature, and crafted them into magnificent songs.

Yes, the music: many of the classic young Bob Dylan songs are here. Among them we find: "A Hard Rain's A-gonna Fall", his first epic, his first novel in lyrical form, and it is a complete novel in song. Each line is written and sung as if it would be his last. "The Times They Are A-changing" is an anthem for a generation. "To Ramona" is a transcendent love song never before realized by any other author. "Gates of Eden" and "Mr. Tambourine Man" are poems that inspired millions of admirers and writers. "With God on our Side" is an incredibly powerful, ironic insight into our brief history and into the abuse of power. "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Corroll" is an incisive perception of racial and class structure that still abounds in our country today. "It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)" is a genuine American poem that Allen Ginsberg loved and that opened my young eyes to the illusions and lies that condition us from being truly free. Dylan saw the bondage we inherited from birth and was able to delineate it through his art.

The changing styles in Bob's singing over the years have been recognized by all his fans. These pieces are all sung with the ache of beauty and of loss; they are all sung with the triumph of spirit and of soul; and they are all sung with the force, faith, and commitment to that which is ever eternal: truth.

"The Philharmonic Concert" ultimately displays the immense humanity, dignity, poetic vision, and reality of America's greatest 20th century songwriter.

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), or go to the [Bob Dylan](http://www.bobdylan.com) web site.

---

© Paolo Carmassi. June 2004. All rights reserved.

Paolo Carmassi is an expert on Bob Dylan's music. He lives in California.

---



---

## EAGLE ROCK ENTERTAINMENT

---

**VAN MORRISON: LIVE AT MONTREUX. 1974 & 1980. DVD. Eagle Rock Entertainment.**

**By John Aiello**

Recently, Mickey Jones, who played drums for Bob Dylan during Dylan's famous 1966 world-tour, said something in his own "home-movie" of that tour that profoundly defines the reason why people buy records and go to concerts.

In sum, Jones said that people don't listen to music – they *experience* it. And



that *experience of sound* is just what Van Morrison's first-ever DVD, **Live at Montreux**, is all about.

According to the DVD's distributor, *Eagle Rock*, Morrison hand-picked these performances from his vast catalog of work, ostensibly because they transcend the confines of human time and allow for a brand-new generation of listeners to *experience* the power of his early and middle-period work (in the same way so many small congregations of eyes and ears experienced these songs as he sang them from the holy altars of the stage in the half-lit darkness of some still-born hour).

**Live at Montreux** provides an absolute record of how energetic and vital those early Van Morrison shows were. As the DVD shows, here was a guy driven by the same passions that drove Elvis and James Brown and Little Richard – these men driven by the invisible rhythms of the music, these men driven by the need to talk to their audiences through the ghostly spirit-voice of an indefinable Muse.

From the first strains of “Wavelength” (track one of disk one recorded July 10, 1980) we become part of a magnificent ride. In “Wavelength,” Morrison is able to unite himself with his audience in a spiritual pursuit: The simple idea of the song is to inspire us to communicate via the ‘wavelength’ of dream-mind and memory, inspiring us to communicate through the breathless echo of song and melody, inspiring us to communicate with the living and the dead through the transparent magic of music.

Basically, this is the same kind of journey we go on when we sit and read one of Shakespeare's plays or one of Blake's “Songs of Innocence.” Simply, even though Blake's been dead for hundreds of years, his poems endure, bringing the power to place us outside the sacred window of time: Suddenly, we are riding with the poet now riding with him breath-for-breath though the dark skeleton kingdoms of his heartbeat, tasting the very same images he tasted as he sent each chain of words burning down the blank-brows of the page.

In essence, this process is about the cycle of light coming full circle, enveloping sky and wind, devouring river and storm in a single spasm of reflex. Now, as we watch Morrison play (almost playing to himself in front of the mirrors of an invisible crowd), we have been invited into his secret world where clear-crystal strands of words catch fire and burn into great new ash-piles of song.

Via this perspective, pieces like “Kingdom Hall,” “Moondance,” and “Wild Night” are much more than tokens of nostalgia twisted by the tear-stained passage of too many years. To the contrary, these songs serve as testaments to the life of a man whose only mission was to enlighten a generation with his gift – the gift of being able to perfectly marry the essence of a poem to some swelling Blues-arrangement that could us fill us with rapture (as we prayed for the song to just swirl on forever and swallow us up).

Yet, as great as the literary content of these pieces are, the fact that we are watching one of the great living Rhythm and Blues singers in the relative infancy of his career should not be lost. Disk two (recorded June 30, 1974)

truly spotlights Morrison's voice, his ability to take a song and kill it and then strangle the melody right back to life before our eyes has never been more stunning than in this rendition of "Naked in the Jungle" (a little-known classic that marks the unbelievable range of both the singer and poet who is Van Morrison).

These mentions, however, serve only as random highlights – the brilliant surprises coming in rapid succession. For example, the recitation of "Tupelo Honey" features magnificent keyboard work from veteran Jeff Labes and some spine-chilling saxophone bleats from Pee Wee Ellis, while "Troubadours" blooms into the whole heart of a poem: This holy moment now captured on film as musician cues band with a single nuanced glance, this holy moment capturing Morrison in half-trance, bending at the waist, shooting arrows at the moon with the broken altars of his eyes.

In the end, **Live at Montreux** will thrill long-time fans who finally get that pristine Van video for which they have been searching. In addition, younger fans get a chance to see first-hand why so many continue to hold Morrison in such reverence. Going back to "Wavelength," we see him now: Bare-naked on stage, heart the shape of a new-born flower, heart the shape of a perfect open wound, crying out to God, beckoning the stars for a cup of food.

[Go to Eagle Rock for more information.](#)



## Other Notable Eagle Rock releases

◆ **ALIVE AND ROCKIN'.** In-concert DVD. **Foreigner.** Eagle Vision.

By John Aiello

**Foreigner** was one of the quintessential muscle bands of the 1980s – together with **Journey**, **Foreigner** set the standard for the era's power-rock movement. In retrospect, the band's layered *crash* of guitar against drum helped to return top-forty from disco back to its Haley-Holly roots (updating Spector's famed 'wall of sound' in the process). **Alive and Rockin'** finally gives us a film-record of both the depth and energy that continues to make **Foreigner** such a draw across the world. Simply, anybody who was high school in the early 80s likely danced to a Mick Jones/Kelly Hansen piece, devoured by the unbridled power of the band's melody line that always took a song to its furthest point – driving the audience to delirium, refusing to let go until everyone had fallen limp and breathless. Indeed, **Alive and Rockin'** shows the world just how accomplished a band **Foreigner** is; this particular concert, recorded in Germany in 2006, hits the ground running and doesn't stop until the final strains of the final piece. Featured cuts include a tremendous version of "Head Games" (dueling guitars and impassioned vocals challenge all comers and shows that 30 years into the game Foreigner is still a force to be reckoned with) and a murky diesel-stained "Hot Blooded" (with Hansen's voice rising through the memories of our collective youth). In addition, interview segments with Jones, Hansen and

drummer Jason Bonham serve to fill in the historical gaps between songs, painting a lasting picture of a band whose music has stood the test of time to take its final place in the pantheon of rock and roll.

[Go to Eagle Rock for more information.](#)



### **Bryan Ferry 'Does Dylan'**

♦ **DYLANESQUE LIVE: THE LONDON SESSIONS. Bryan Ferry. Eagle Vision.**

**By John Aiello**

This DVD just released by **Eagle Vision** showcases the huge talent of *Roxy Music*'s Bryan Ferry, while simultaneously furthering the legend of Bob Dylan. Here, Ferry is as bold as he has ever been – using a collection of Dylan covers as the subject matter for a full-length DVD.

Simply, this is a stunning and surprising work that will hold the attention of the most ardent Dylan fans. In **Dylan-esque Live**, Ferry does the unthinkable – he actually makes some of Dylan's most classic and penetrating pieces sound new, infusing them with a hot vibrant energy that captivates both heart and ear.

Sadly, the idiom of the *music-video* is typically premised on giving the audience what it wants (usually limited versions of classic top-forty pieces) rather than in cutting across unplowed territory.

And that's just where this DVD separates itself from the rest of pack: Ferry has taken some of Dylan's most enigmatic and personal works and made them his own by attacking these pieces at their cores – wringing the words in between the fists of his lips until the poetry reappears in long shiny spools. Moreover, because this is a *film-record*, we are have the chance to actually witness the process unfold before our collective eye.

**Dylan-esque Live** includes some riveting performances of some truly great songs. Listeners will immediately gravitate to the thump and grind of "Tom Thumb's Blues" as Ferry decapitates the lines at the vowels, drawing blood from their musty blackened hearts. In addition, his version of "The Times They Are A-Changin'" is nuanced in its waltz-like melody, the back-up singers filling in the empty spaces between the bridges, building a cool and breathless 'wall of sound' (similar to *The Byrds* cover of "Times" which didn't come close to the stark razor-sharp power of this recording).

However, the centerpiece of the film blossoms in Ferry's performance of "Simple Twist of Fate" (from Dylan's 1975 album *Blood on the Tracks*). Ferry's "Twist of Fate" is faster than Dylan's and serves to capture the chaos in the heart of the narrator who struggles to find a love gone away. Here, Ferry's

vision as a singer is completely revealed - each breathless mouthful of words creating the face of another ghost in the mirrored mind of the listener.

Finally, the band that's been assembled for these sessions is flawless – with Colin Good's piano and Oliver Thomson's guitar stealing the show. Also note the incredible 'Dyalnesque' harmonica lines by Ferry and the backing vocals by Anna McDonald, Me'sha Bryan, Sarah Brown and Tara McDonald (Doo-Wop cut with back-alley growl fusing together into a single elegant swatch of cloth).

Interspersed throughout the film are interesting interview segments with Ferry, who explains what forces drove him to attempt the near-impossible - painting a clear new perspective of one of the most mysterious and varied artists of the last century.

Basically, I think the greatest praise one could give this DVD is to say that Bob Dylan, himself, would likely find many of these performances interesting and worthy of a long and dedicated look. What more, then, is there left to add?

[Go to Eagle Rock for more information.](#)



#### ◆ **DIXIE DREGS. LIVE AT MONTREUX (1978). Eagle Rock Entertainment.**

For music fans, going to the *Montreux Jazz Festival* is like a pilgrimage to see the Pope – this stage where seminal acts have gathered for over 40 years in a grand ritual of entertainment and art. In 1978, a kick-ass jazz-fusion band from Georgia called the *Dixie Dregs* descended on the legendary *Montreux* stage and presented the audience with a blended sound that they hadn't heard before. The *Dregs* (formed by Steve Morse and Andy West) are known as a band that, simply, cannot be classified. Instead, their particular sound is branded in original tones that build through a delicate amalgamation of jazz and rock and classical (framed around mid-South bluegrass). Unique and pure, the *Dixie's* style paints a living definition to the idea of *fusion*. This DVD, just released by **Eagle Rock**, offers a brilliant film-record of a band that is often forgotten when fans think of 'classic' players. However, the pieces collected here serve as a permanent reminder that the *Dixie Dregs*, fueled by those unrelenting guitar lines that rise off the gnarled branches of Morse's fingers, were cutting through virgin territory: More than anything, the *Dixies* are about braiding textures and tones into supple new melodies as we come to see how one distinct thread of style can segue into another (jazz-cool into rock-and-roll thump) in a seamless transition. In **Live at Montreux**, we are able to taste and touch and feel the best of the band's 'stage face,' as songs like "Patchwork," "The Bash" and "Kathreen" capture some truly gorgeous moments in a lasting testament to the cutting-edge genius of this band. In addition, Allan Sloan's violin work stuns us: At once, Sloan's sound is ethereal, depthless and haunting, the tear-swept tear-whispered echo of his instrument as enormous as the beauty of the *Montreux* experience itself. ~**John Aiello**

Go to [Eagle Rock](#) for more information.



---

# TINA TURNER

---

◆ **TINA! Tina Turner's Greatest Hits. Tina Turner. EMI.**

**By John Aiello**

Tina Turner is the true *Queen of Soul*, and in the 1980s, she had such a string of hits that she literally owned the airwaves. In this long awaited compilation featuring 18 cuts, Turner's strongest work is revisited – the music bristling with passion as the steamy rhythms recollect the best of the MTV era. In addition, two new tracks are included among the time-tested hits (“It Would Be A Crime” and “I’m Ready”). These songs reflect a depth and a true maturity of voice that will captivate the listener, testifying to the fact that even though *Queen Tina* has aged, she has not lost the vitality that drove her great stage shows. To remind us just how scintillating Tina can be on stage, four in-concert recordings serve as the centerpiece of the package – with the gentle hushed pensive “I Can’t Stand The Rain” (from Amsterdam in 1996) and the nasty shuffle of “Addicted to Love (from London in 1986) compelling repeated spins. Also notable here are the studio cuts that made Tina Turner an international hero (“Proud Mary,” “Better Be Good To Me,” “Private Dancer” and “What’s Love Got To Do With It”) are as good a body of work as any female vocalist created during the era. Basically, for any *Greatest Hits* collection to matter it must truly capture the flavor and sound of a singer, collecting seminal pieces and then weaving them together in a way that tells us why the artist is worth a ‘second look.’ And that’s just what **Tina!** manages to accomplish – this snapshot of the inimitable Tina Turner at her most vibrant and glorious.

*Tina Turner is currently on tour; for details SEE: [www.tinaturnerlive.com](http://www.tinaturnerlive.com)*



◆ **TINA TURNER: RIO 88. Tina Turner Live in Concert in Rio de Janeiro. EV Classics/Eagle Rock Entertainment.**

**By John Aiello**

Tina Turner fans will delight in this video-chronicle which documents the diva's rise to international stardom. Here, we witness in real time each of Turner's inimitable vocal styles (the raging wolverine, the solitary blues wailer, the sensual midnight crooner) in a concert for the ages. At the height of her ascent

(in the 80s) Turner could amaze even the most calloused of critics – it was all in the way she jumped from raunchy blues to restrained whisper in the course of the same 4 minute song. Yes, set against the blankness of 1980s copy-cat rock, a Tina Turner performance brimmed with soul, captivating audiences both young and old alike. This particular concert was taped in Rio de Janeiro in 1988 at the apex of Turner mania – and viewers will immediately come to see that the uproar that accompanied those shows was truly warranted. **Rio 88** captures most of the hits from her 80s' catalog – these riveting snapshots of a band and singer standing naked in their prime. Versions of "Help" and "We Don't Need Another Hero" spotlight a band that defines the essence of R&B. Note Jack Bruno's drum work and James Ralston on guitar (astride the impeccable Deric Dyer on Saxophone) – the ensemble driving Turner's heels across the many mirrors of the stage. Many will naturally salivate at the raucous version of "Proud Mary," but in many ways it's Turner's elegant delivery on "I Can't Stand the Rain" that steals the show, evincing the fact that for several decades Tina Turner was truly one of the most versatile and evocative singers to ever dance down the lost lands of the American frontier.

[Go to Eagle Rock for more information.](#)



---

## FROM THE DVD CORNER

---

### NEW DYLAN ON A NEW DVD

---

◆ **INSIDE BOB DYLAN'S JESUS YEARS. Busy Being Born Again.**  
**Written and Directed by Joel Gilbert. Highway 61 Entertainment.**  
**Distributed by MVD Entertainment Group.**

**By John Aiello**

Bob Dylan's *Jesus Years* comprises the singer's most underappreciated phase, as well as his most inspired – with the three records that grew out of this period (*Slow Train Coming*, *Saved* and *Shot of Love*) layered with a half dozen classics that resonate with passion and clarity.

However, back in 1979, when Dylan first unveiled his 'Christian' songs and Gospel band, he endured the wrath of both long-time fans and international music critics. Simply, everybody was put-off by the fact their 'spokesman' had

abandoned writing social pieces in order to pay homage to the ‘King called Christ.’

It is only now, some 3 decades later, that fans are able to look back on this period with some sense of softness and objectivity. And objectively, Dylan put out some damn fine Gospel music during this time (the Jerry Wexler-produced *Slow Train Coming* rife with smoldering R&B arrangements that seethe like no other Dylan record).

Here, filmmaker Joel Gilbert has written a documentary that sets out to explain Dylan’s motivations, illuminating just how deeply the man was moved by his connection to Christ.

And to accomplish his mission, Gilbert speaks to the very people who were a part of the process; interviews with Wexler, back-up singer Regina McCrary and keyboardist Spooner Oldham serve to paint a vibrant picture of what it was like to work around Dylan in the midst of this vast controversy. The segments with McCrary prove particularly enlightening, as she seems to have connected with Dylan on a deep spiritual level, her comments helping to humanize the poet on myriad levels.

Additionally, Gilbert’s interview with Joel Selvin (veteran Pop Music critic from the *San Francisco Chronicle*) is a treasure. Back in 1979, when Dylan’s tour hit San Francisco, Selvin savaged him in a column – and the singer was less than pleased. In fact, Dylan was so riled that he actually called Selvin’s house to tell the rock-and-roll reporter that he’d “lost his license to review” his music.

Entertaining and well-paced, Joel Gilbert’s **Jesus Years** is a worthwhile film that sheds valuable light on a key period in the spiritual growth of one America’s greatest voices. In the end, it educates serious fans and curious by-standers alike.

*Augmented by several bonus features, including a photo gallery (spanning the years 1978 through 1981), in addition to a spot on Dylan’s 1978 world tour.*

✦ **For further consideration: "Bob Dylan: 1978-1989" reviewed below.**

**SEE: [mvd2b.com](http://mvd2b.com) for information.**



✦ **BOB DYLAN: 1978-1989. Both Ends of the Rainbow. Chrome Dreams/MVD Video.**

**By John Aiello**

Bob Dylan never ceases to amaze or captivate us, as decades-old segments of his career come to be memorialized on film in sleek and shiny packages. To this end, **Dylan 1978-1989** marks a brand new video-glimpse into the poet’s



Christian period (and post-Christian period).

To the casual fan, the years 78-89 were a barren farm, since Dylan failed to re-write "Like A Rolling Stone" or discover another "Band." However, these people have truly missed the point – drunk on nostalgia, unable to accept that artists grow and evolve (evolving beyond their former selves into brand new beings).

And that's really the point behind this film: It's about telling a piece of Dylan's story as he evolved beyond the mask of his early years into the meadows of these "middle" years. And in the midst of this process, he was able to create some truly stunning work – passionate and bloody and raw with emotion, this writer on a quest to remarry the muse of the soul and reconnect with the naked impulse of salvation.

Here, the viewer is offered a deep and introspective look into the period that produced records like "Infidels" and "Shot of Love." Accordingly, the people who were working beside him at the time (producer Chuck Plotkin; engineer Toby Scott; musician Ira Ingber; masters of rhythm Sly and Robbie; guitarist Mark Howard) discuss the essence of Dylan in relation to the way his studio-work seeks to capture the spontaneity of the moment on record.

Plotkin (who has also worked with Bruce Springsteen) is thoroughly engaging in his interview; listen close and you will learn bits and pieces about the demons that drive Dylan and keep him moving forward...asking questions and pursuing some higher plane of spiritual enlightenment.

Still, the most compelling segment of **1978-1989** comes by-way of Dylan's own words, as a snippet of an interview that was done with the poet in 1979 sheds light on his deep belief in Christ.

Make no mistake, Bob Dylan's Christian period wasn't some passing fancy or whimsical foray into gospel music. To the contrary, these years are as much a part of his artistic self as the trance-like poems "Chimes of Freedom" or "Tambourine Man" – this eloquent shard of his personal history that serious students of music ought not ignore. *Running time: 127 minutes.*



---

## THE EARLY YEARS OF VAN MORRISON

---

🍷 **VAN MORRISON – UNDER REVIEW. 1964-1974. Sexy Intellectual Films. Distributed by MVD Entertainment Group.**

## By John Aiello

*Van the Man* is a musical institution – the Irish poet having risen from the ranks of the unknown into international stardom, this phenomenon based not so much on hype and marketing as on the fact that Van Morrison is the greatest living soul-singer of his era (in addition to being an ingenious writer who’s been able to codify the random-ness of poetry into soft perfect frames of ‘song’). In **Under Review (1964-1974)**, Morrison’s formative years are given a long look in an unauthorized documentary that’s likely to hold both long-time fans and curious listeners spellbound. The film is important because it examines Morrison’s biggest records (*Astral Weeks* and *Moondance*) in relation to his evolution as both a writer and singer. Moreover, rather than waxing nostalgic and disregarding all the work that follows these near-perfect albums, the producers instead use them as a vehicle to peer into singer’s penchant for taking risks in quest of *personal* artistic fulfillment. Accordingly, interviews with the likes of Jim Rothermel (who played in the *Caledonia Soul Orchestra*) and music writer John Wilde allow the viewer a deep glimpse into the complex consciousness of a performer who is often unjustly jabbed by a media that has mostly missed the point behind Morrison’s ultimate mission – which is to attain some level of spiritual enlightenment via poetry and music. In the end, this film shows us that instead of analyzing him to death, perhaps all that he wants (*and all that should happen*) is for us to sit back and listen to the sweet songs unfurl. In this respect, **Under Review (1964-1974)** offers a fine starting point. *Bonus: Live and studio recordings of Morrison classics, including a mesmerizing waltz down the heels of “Madame George.”*



## [Previously Reviewed](#)

♦ **BOB DYLAN: After The Crash – 1966-1978. In Association with ISIS Magazine and Chrome Dreams. MVD Distribution.**

## By John Aiello

The recent release of Dylan’s “Modern Times” has seen a deluge of critical analysis re-proclaiming the reclusive poet as *genius*, unparalleled in his ability to synthesize the history of American popular song and then personalize it with his unique interpretation and biting lines.

Yet, no musician reaches the peaks of a “Modern Times” without hard traveling down countless roads (stops along the moonlit seaboard, tours through the outer edges of storm-black skies, stops along the muddy shoulder, eyes catching tale of the moon in these tear-sick stains of smoke and rain).

In essence, “Modern Times” is a record about where Dylan’s journey has led him, while the wonderful new DVD, **After The Crash**, is about the middle years of that journey and all that he encountered. After Dylan’s motorcycle crash in 1966, time seemingly stood still for his fans as they waited for him to come back to a “Blonde on Blonde” sound that would be no more.

Even though Dylan's aura was not as kinetic in the 70s, his music was still as meaningful – maybe even more meaningful. Accordingly, **After The Crash** covers the years 1966-1978 and ushers us into the kingdom of one of Bob Dylan's most introspective, spiritual and creative periods, bringing us face-to-face with the many writers and players who crossed Dylan's path during this decade.

**Crash** recounts the story of the period by interspersing footage with interviews to create a film-document of this sometimes forgotten period in the context of Dylan lore. Writers Clinton Heylin and Nigel Williamson provide insightful segments, analyzing the bigger picture of the Dylan myth in relation to the direction that his work went subsequent to the crash.

In addition, some of the many players who supported Dylan (Rob Stoner, Bruce Langhorne, Scarlet Rivera) speak to what it was like working with a guy whose typical *method-of-operation* was to blow into the studio, lay down the tracks and then blow out again - no spare time for rehearsal or polish. Further, Rob Stoner's remarks about Phil Ochs bring forth a new perspective on the circumstances surrounding Ochs' tragic suicide.

However, the centerpiece of the production comes in the segment that features playwright Jacques Levy in his last-ever interview. Levy, who co-wrote much of the "Desire" record with Dylan, is sharp and searching in his comments; in retrospect, Levy is probably the one who helped reconnect Dylan with the depth of imagination that led him to the door of the "Rolling Thunder Revue."

*Also noted for concert footage that includes a legendary performance of Dylan and Johnny Cash doing "Girl From The North Country." Running time: 2 hours.*



## Of Related Interest

### ♦ **ROLLING STONES - UNDER REVIEW: 1962–1966. Featuring the Rolling Stones. MVD Distribution.**

Dylan and the Stones are notable not only for the mark they have left on Rock and Roll, but also because they are also two of Rock's most enduring acts: Sustaining the creative flame for nearly 5 decades while touring and making records that continue to move listeners from around the world. In this DVD, the legend of the Rolling Stones is examined byway of their first decade of work (when that classic sharp-sawed R&B slap was being honed into its present state). Through interviews, footage and obscure photographs, viewers come to witness first-hand how the band formed, tasting the undercurrents of madness and motion that have fueled our endless ride. Performance footage includes "Satisfaction," "The Last Time" and a truly kick-ass version of Holly's "Not Fade Away" (which alone is worth the price of the film). Also notable for commentary by Tom Keylock, who traveled with the band as a bodyguard in the 1960s. ~**John Aiello**



### ♦ **JAZZ SHOTS - EAST COAST VOLUMES 2 AND 3. Various artists.**

**MVD Video Distribution.** Too many times, music compilations will try and fill space with interviews and introductions – endless talk meant to do little more than use up time between the three or so fragmented songs interspersed in between. Not so with **East Coast Jazz Shots Volumes 2 & 3**, recently released by MVD. These disks are about the music (sans talk!), and they provide a great look back at the East's influence on Jazz – an astounding glimpse into the players from the Atlantic-side of the country who so heavily influenced the “be-bop” rhythms of Jack Kerouac’s spontaneous prose circa 1956. In essence, Kerouac and many other literary masters were drawn to Jazz because it sought to strike a delicate balance between the intellectual and the emotional – a music of deep breadth and introspection that is able to communicate without a dependency on words. In this respect, the players whose roots are in the Eastern states were pioneers and innovators, and their compositions have come to truly define the meaning of the genre – their sound worming its way into the many distant layers of our flesh, becoming these hallowed parts of our histories and memories. Listeners will be drawn to the Miles Davis Quintet and to Charlie Parker’s “Hothouse” (from Volume 2), in addition to John Coltrane’s “Alabama” (from Volume 3) -- among so many other highlights. *These DVDs are highly recommended to both Jazz collectors and to novice listeners looking for a thoughtful journey into the best of the idiom. Volume 2 runs 74 minutes; Volume 3 runs 95 minutes.* ~John Aiello



### **Of Related Interest**

#### ♦ **DUKE ELLINGTON - EARLY TRACKS FROM THE MASTER OF SWING. Duke Ellington. MVD Distribution.**

Ellington was a genius whose lilt and juke influenced the musical heart-beat of the world. **Early Tracks From The Master Of Swing** collects 21 of Ellington’s early songs, featuring stirring renditions of “Satin Doll,” “Mood Indigo,” and “Fly Me To The Moon.” For those youngsters who wonder what the era of Swing was all about, this DVD is a college course in-and-of-itself: 80 minutes of music that speaks to a century of history speaking to the life of one of the founding fathers of popular song. ~John Aiello



#### ♦ **BOB DYLAN: 1975-1981. ROLLING THUNDER AND THE GOSPEL YEARS. Directed and Produced By Joel Gilbert. Highway 61 Entertainment Productions; Music Video Distributors.**

**By John Aiello**

At first glance, the slipcase of this forthcoming DVD will disappoint hard-core Dylan freaks who no doubt will quickly note that there are no Bob Dylan songs included in the production.

However, that sentiment quickly dissolves once you get this one in your player: Even though **Bob Dylan** is an unauthorized documentary that's been produced with no input from Dylan or his camp, this film is an exceptional ride that contains heretofore unknown facts about one of the singer-songwriter's most pivotal and creative periods.

When Dylan took his now famous "Rolling Thunder Revue" on the road in '75 he sought to bring the spirit of Jack Kerouac's *spontaneous prose* to his fans, preaching from the altars of the rock and roll stage. It was a magnificent tour that wound its way through the silent tongues and tangled gut of the Americas; going on for a year, its likes would never be duplicated.

**Bob Dylan** begins with a chronicle of this seminal roadshow, taking us on a ride through a half-decade period in the poet's life which would see him write three records and go on another huge world tour (finally culminating in a complete revision of his religious and artistic focus). The years 75-81 were huge for Dylan, and huge for his fans as well. It's an alluring era when we witnessed the chameleon Dylan transform himself time and again in search of a door to the sweet purity of self-expression and self-knowledge.

Gilbert's **Bob Dylan** is a bold undertaking, and viewers will immediately be struck by how much new information they get here. Framed around interviews with so many of the supporting figures from Dylan's late 70s work, the film is jump-started by its ability to give us the 'stories behind the songs.'

Interviews with former boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter are sweeping and intense, as Carter himself paints a vivid picture of the introspective Dylan who came to visit him in prison and then wrote a 10 minute epic about the wrong-way road of Carter's murder trial and subsequent imprisonment. Carter speaks of a Dylan who had gone directly back to his 1960s' roots to write a topical song about the black experience-- a song that he hoped might somehow help to free a man who was obviously wrongly accused. To hear Rubin Carter speak of Dylan in these personal and human terms is truly startling, and even passing fans will sit enthralled.

In addition, Rob Stoner, who played bass for Dylan on a couple of legendary tours, tells of how the "Street Legal" and "Desire" albums were recorded, also sharing behind-the-scenes details of how the 1978 tour of Japan unfolded. Stoner's eloquent monologues fill in major holes in the Dylan story, broadening our understanding of what the singer was going through when he embraced Christianity with such passionate fervor. Although these are highlights of the DVD, they are only the tip of the iceberg. Other nuggets include interviews with Jack Elliott and the genius-producer Jerry Wexler, along with inside looks at both *Rundown Studios* and *Muscle Shoals Studio*.

With a running time of 4 hours, this DVD is a majestic and very telling look at the creative process of a musician who has both fascinated and mystified us

since he took New York by storm in 1962. And in a way, it's almost better that Dylan and his music are missing from the production: As strange as it sounds, I think it makes the narrative stronger to allow the key "side-players" from the period to build this compelling story that records the steps of a man on an artistic and personal journey to find God in the beauty of his multi-dimensional muse.



### ALSO NOTABLE FROM MUSIC VIDEO DISTRIBUTORS

♦ **CLASSIC RHYTHM AND BLUES. Volume 3. Hosted by Ben Sidran. Produced by Kim Lyon and Gary Peet. Music Video Distributors.** This one leaps off the screen with kick-ass R&B from the best of the genre. Pieces like Baby Doo Caston's "Low Down Dog" and John Lee Hooker's razor-honed "Boom Boom" are augmented by Sidran's analysis, these comments create living *time-capsules* of song and artist and serve to illuminate the greatness behind the music. Good sound. And well formatted design, with artist biographies offered as a special feature. Would make a nice addition to any Blues collectors shelf. *Running time: 50 minutes.* ~**John Aiello**



♦ **BOB DYLAN. WORLD TOURS. THROUGH THE CAMERA OF BARRY FEINSTEIN. 1966-1974. Directed and Produced By Joel Gilbert. Music Video Distributors.** Feinstein had rock journalism's most prized house seat during Bob Dylan's world tours in both 1966 and 1974 (when the singer returned to the stage after an 8 year hiatus from performing). Here, Dylan's most talked about stage shows are chronicled through the electric eye of Feinstein's camera, startling images that capture the musician in mid-growl, center of the ascent, ascending from the icy porches of Hibbing, Minnesota into the world's greater consciousness. Sexy and haunting, with discussion from drummer Mickey Jones (1966) that serves to narrate the first-ever rock and roll 'super tour.' *Running time: two hours.* ~**John Aiello**



♦ **JOHNNY GUITAR WATSON: MUSIC HALL IN CONCERT. Gerd F. Schulze, Executive Producer. Music Video Distributors.** This cat's influence on R&B guitar drips down through the work of Van Morrison, Mike Campbell (*Petty's Heartbreakers*) and Eric Clapton -- a player of richness and nuance whose style would often be imitated, yet never copied. Here, we have an hour of his best stage work, with great renditions of "Gangster Of Love" and "Mother For Ya" that will rock the house down in a naked swirl of bloody-hot-passion. Kids who like the blues but don't know of Watson's high-ranking place should be introduced to **Music Hall In Concert**: this natural out-growth of the idiom's layered history. *Running time: One hour.* ~**John Aiello**



---

## IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT

---

♦ **GOTTA SERVE SOMEBODY: The Gospel Songs Of Bob Dylan.**  
Directed By Michael Borofsky. Image Entertainment.

By John Aiello

"...how long/can you/hate yourself/for the weakness/you conceal?"

-Bob Dylan, "When He Returns"-

"...keep me/set apart/from all/the plans/they do pursue..."

-Bob Dylan, "I Believe In You"-

When Bob Dylan "went religious" in 1979, many of his fans were lost, incredulous -- rabid with ire; I imagine in their minds they just couldn't understand how the media-proclaimed *prophet of the 60s* could abandon them. Yet, because of their own naked prejudices, they missed some of the most passionate, bare-boned music Dylan has ever made.

In **Gotta Serve Somebody**, director Michael Borofsky presents us with a documentary about this controversial and enthralling segment of Bob Dylan's storied career. Basically, **Serve Somebody** documents the making of the 2003 Columbia Records album "Gotta Serve Somebody," a record which stitched together some of the greatest Gospel voices of our time (Shirley Caesar; Dottie Peoples; Rance Allen; The Fairfield Four) doing vintage interpretations of Dylan's oft-disregarded Gospel catalog.

However, as this video affirms, there is a reason this record was nominated for a Grammy a couple of seasons ago. And that reason is simple: This is beautiful and timeless music which strikes at the cores of psyche and soul like a triumphant hammer. Simply, this is the music from which legends and poets and seers are brewed.

Borofsky begins his film in stunning form, juxtaposing Arlethia Lindsey's poignant rendering of "Dylan's classic "Every Grain Of Sand" with a live performance of Dylan reciting "When He Returns." This in-concert snapshot was taken in Toronto in 1980 (during one of the "Gospel Tours"); and as the video unfolds, we bear witness to an unforgettable moment. The moving frames capture Dylan at the piano. There, frozen bare at the core, mouthing the words to a hymn to the Christ -- a chilling performance that reigns perfect in every single way.

Hit the rewind button and listen again: Dylan's vocal freezes us, cutting to the bone, chilling and haunting, cutting with the holy vengeance of knives. At once,



the listener feels great pangs of hunger and tastes blood on the edge of a memory. At once, the listener folds into the mouths of the words as they crystallize in time and conjure images of the moon as She descends the mountain to weep:

*"The iron hand*

*It ain't no match*

*For the iron rod,*

*The strongest wall*

*Will crumble and fall*

*To a mighty God.*

*For all those*

*Who have eyes*

*And all those*

*Who have ears*

*It is only He*

*Who can reduce*

*Me to tears..."*

**-Bob Dylan, "When He Returns"-**

**Gotta Serve Somebody** would be worth the price of admission for this live Dylan performance alone. Yet, rest assured, there's much more here to devour your consciousness and your imagination.

As noted, the movie's mission is to show the motives and motivations that brought these varied artists together to pay homage to a pair of Dylan's most ignored records (1979's "Slow Train Coming" and 1980's "Saved"). Borofsky intersperses artist interviews with studio performances in order to show the passion of the moment, chronicling the hours and minutes that gave birth to the music.

By all means, this is a brave project, as many of Dylan's long-time fans still aren't interested in a period they regard as a wayward bump in the great poet's road. However, the people who were there with Dylan (former band members Jim Keltner, Fred Tackett, Spooner Oldham and Regina McCrary, in addition to producer Jerry Wexler and journalists Paul Williams and Alan Light) staunchly defend his sincerity and focus.

And as each of them speak out, their observations pierce with a perfect allure, serving to humanize a mysterious and reclusive artist whose very being has

been driven by the motion of the mind. When I hear McCrary talk of the concerts she did along side Dylan in the early 80s, I taste the archetype of a man who was born only to think and search, this holy exploration into altars and crosses, this journey to define the *eye and tongue of the self*.

**Gotta Serve Somebody** swells and bulges with great music. How does one pick centerpieces? No review could ignore Dottie People's riveting version of "I Believe In You"-- a moment is frozen in camera time as a single eye sits alone in a church, trembling in its dawn-lit pew where an angel at the altar talks to God. And then there's Rance Allen in the studio doing his version of "When He Returns:" this cut is pure organ-driven *gospel* - a melody meant to move the congregation from its collective chair and steal away old apathy, a song attacking each of the five senses simultaneously (the lines overflowing in the righteous vigor of the light). Finally, The Chicago Mass Choir's rendition of "Pressing On" (led by Dylan's former back-up singer Regina McCrary who stops singing momentarily to candidly speak of how the loss of her child forged a deep undying faith) will make you want to cry: McCrary's vocal teems and soars, her bloody and brazen belief in the aura of the Christ pushing these crystal storms of music to invisible pinnacles -suddenly, it becomes impossible to question a piece of art this multi-dimensional and confessional and pure.

Aside from being about great 'Gospel' songs, **Gotta Serve Somebody** comes to collect a sheaf of *great poems* which speak to a journey isolated in time, speaking to a quest for Christ amid the personal challenges of being a rock-n-roll star. In short, this film serves as a beautiful testament to the growth of a seminal American artist, and it will no doubt be remembered as an important component to Dylan's vast body of work.



## NEW CDS

♦ **ART TATUM: THE PIANO STARTS HERE (LIVE AT THE SHRINE).**  
**Art Tatum. Zenph Studios (Sony BMG).**

**By John Aiello**

What we hear in the work of most innovative rock and roll piano players – in finger-whipped passages by pianists Ray Manzarek (*The Doors*) and Roy Bittan (*E Street Band*) – is owed in part to the great legacy of Art Tatum.

Tatum's life is indeed one of those mirrored points of history from which jazz merges with swing and swing with rock: This perfect *osmosis* where-by sound becomes a living part of the atmosphere.

On **Live at The Shrine**, Tatum's genius comes to full boil as we are presented with one of his virtuoso performances, the full range of Tatum's magic collected on this brand new CD from **Zenph Studios** (an imprint of **Sony**

**BMG).**

On **At The Shrine**, 13 classic Tatum pieces are featured in two distinct forms, the lilt and grace of Tatum's vision bursting into being, paralyzing dark paths of time; and suddenly, nothing else exists save the magic of song (graduating into the permanent grandeur of Eternity).

In **At The Shrine**, **Sony** and **Zenph** did the unthinkable and re-recorded Tatum's 1949 concert at this famed Los Angeles, California auditorium. More precisely, engineers placed a piano at the same spot on stage where Tatum sat when he first performed these pieces and re-recorded the songs on modern equipment in front of a live audience – affording the audience the chance to be the musician and hear the very strains of sound that Tatum heard as his fingers danced down the infinite spine of his instrument.

“There are 13 songs on the record, and they actually appear on the disc twice,” notes John Q. Walker, President of North Carolina's **Zenph Studios**. “The first 13 tracks were recorded from an expected perspective in front of the piano – what you're hearing is what the audience would have heard [on the night of Tatum's concert]. And then, the 13 tracks are presented again, this time recorded in *binaural* [a recording technique where 2 microphones are placed in a *dummy head*, at the exact spot where Tatum's own head would have been positioned]. Now, if you listen to these second 13 tracks through headphones, you get a sense of ‘being inside Tatum's head’ as he plays – with the piano laid out in front of you, bass to the left, treble to the right....”

As you listen to this magical record that marries a piece of the past to our modern era, you are indeed hearing a transcendental performance – songs without names without histories are being created in the moment before our eyes (as we sit in witness to an artist at the zenith of his powers).

Listen to the sweet prance of finger over ivory; and listen to the birth of Jazz into as yet unknown idioms: This great amalgamation of styles and genres this great testament to the ever-evolving history of music (as this record affirms, *the piano starts here*).

If you are even mildly interested in the work of Art Tatum and his place in the pantheon of modern song, then you should track down this CD and spend some long hours in its company.

Going beyond nostalgia far beyond the idea of paying homage to a great player, **Live at The Shrine** will open doors to how you listen to music in the future. Quite simply, this is the kind of gift that does not come along every day. **On Sale June 3, 2008.**

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)



◆ **SINATRA AT THE MOVIES. FRANK SINATRA. EMI/CAPITOL.**

**By John Aiello**

New Sinatra is *always* a story. In this compilation from **EMI/Capitol**, the amazing contributions Frank Sinatra made to film are recognized in a single CD meant to memorialize the singer's amazing depth and limitless range.

Amid the stony passage of time, it easy to forget just how many classic movies featured Sinatra's silky-cool voice and all-encompassing presence (but as this record reminds us, in his day, there was no one bigger than *Ol' Mr. Blue Eyes*).

**Sinatra At The Movies** includes title themes from *The Tender Trap*, *From Here To Eternity*, *Young At Heart*, *Three Coins In The Fountain* and *Not As A Stranger*, as well as "Chicago" and "All The Way" from *The Joker Is Wild*, "I Could Write A Book" and "The Lady Is A Tramp" from *Pal Joey*, "How Deep Is The Ocean" and "All Of Me" from *Meet Danny Wilson*, in addition to "To Love And Be Loved" from *Some Came Running*.

Sinatra, who won appeared in 58 films and took home 10 Grammys, was known for the way his voice moved, literally wrapping its tentacles around the throat of song and sucking every drop of breath from it (before he suddenly resuscitated the lines and brought them humming back to life, infusing each syllable with warm pearls of blood until they melted into our skin).

And in songs like "All of Me," the crooner is actually *making himself the song*, giving his audience pieces of himself through the rabid passion of sound through the holy wonder of music.

Accordingly, this record stands as a true testament to the film-history of an American icon – deep and sultry and passionate, every song synonymous with the shimmering soul of the inimitable Sinatra himself.

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)



**RICKY NELSON: GREATEST LOVE SONGS. Ricky Nelson. Capitol/EMI.**

**By John Aiello**

Ricky Nelson was a true 'teen idol' whose presence on the sublime 1950s' "Ozzie and Harriet Show" made him an international heart-throb.

However, Nelson was much more than a young actor playing an adolescent. Instead, he was also a musician and singer of great power whose romantic ballads came to define the melancholy innocence of a generation caught between the specter of war and the volatility of the burgeoning free speech and hippie movements.

Think back: Viewers old enough to remember the "Ozzie and Harriet Show"

will also likely recall the way each episode ended: Ricky Nelson at the microphone performing a song with impeccable cadence and Sinatra-like charm. It's a memory most of us savor with great purpose, since it captures a moment in time when the country had hope and its children still believed that compassion could conquer all enemies.

Accordingly, Nelson's **Greatest Love Songs** brings us back to those very days, this record serving as a compilation of the *Teen Idol*'s most enduring songs (featuring renditions of classics like "Hello Mary Lou," "Dream Lover," "Unchained Melody" and "Poor Little Fool"). All-in-all, there are 22 cuts here, and 14 of them cracked the top-20 (not an easy feat in any era but especially noteworthy given that this was smack-dab during the golden age of Elvis).

Yet, listeners should not be misled into thinking that this is some nostalgia trip or another stroll down memory lane.

To the contrary, **Greatest Love Songs** restates the genius of Ricky Nelson by-way of his own spirit, offering this original perspective on one of the seminal voices of folk-rock – with Ricky's trembling half-whisper memorializing the bittersweet irony of his last trek through "Lonesome Town" (as you will now recall, Nelson died in a plane crash on New Year's Eve, 1985, while en route to play a show in Dallas, Texas).

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)



♦ **LUCKY YOU -- Music from the Motion Picture. Various Artists.**  
**Columbia Records/Sony Music.**

**By John Aiello**

In the realms of the recording industry, soundtrack releases seldom cause a big splash or are viewed as 'events'. However, **Lucky You**, on **Columbia Records**, is a stunning exception to the rule, as it features no less than two classics by a couple of veteran masters whose voices will echo in your head like the sweet refrain of the wind.

**Lucky You**, directed by Curtis Hanson and starring Drew Barrymore and Robert Duvall, is a film about high dollars gambling and the ghosts that drive card players like Huck Cheever (the film's protagonist).

The music that frames the skin of this film has been carefully picked to accentuate the spirit and consciousness of Cheever, filling in the vacant lines between the dialogue, fleshing out the characters and then building them into actual faces (into the embodiment of spirit and soul).

Many of the songs collected here will be familiar to fans, as "Springsteen's "Lucky Town" and "The Fever" and George Jones' "Choices" provide punch and verve, helping the audience to answer the question that is likely on many

minds – *just what makes a guy want to gamble away his cash like that?*

In addition, the brand new Kris Kristofferson recording, “They Ain’t Got ‘Em All” finds the Nashville crooner in top form, his voice salty and introspective, cutting through deep consciousness – this singer who stands naked before us in passionate command of his craft. The record would certainly be worth its sticker price for this piece alone (even if track 12 didn’t exist).

But make no mistake –it’s “Huck’s Tune,” written by Bob Dylan for this film, that is the album’s centerpiece, standing alone as and one of the finest melodies and most brilliant vocal performances Dylan has featured in the last decade.

Simply, “Huck’s Tune” is a stunning achievement – both musically and for its poetry, a song that captures the ache and the essence of growing old, a song that captures the taste of time as it unravels into landscapes and secret lives re-formed into long sweet new memory pools.

In “Huck’s Tune,” Dylan’s voice encases the music as tight as a glove and refuses to let go, compelling us to live through the characters on screen, driving us to put ourselves in Huck’s skin as we answer our own question -- *just what makes a guy take to this kinda life anyway?*

Dylan’s delivery on this piece is reminiscent of the way Johnny Cash used to sing in the latter days of his career – sometimes breathless, sometimes searching, the poet at the edge of himself and the stage, looking for answers in human words, looking for answers that just might not exist at the invisible throes of this threshold:

*“The game’s gotten old*

*The deck’s gone cold*

*I’m gonna have to*

*Put you down*

*For awhile...”*

***"Huck’s Tune" by Bob Dylan.***

***2006. All rights reserved.***

**Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)**



## **A TIMELESS JOURNEY**

**[SONY IMPROVES ON THE CLASSICS](#)**

**By John Aiello**

♦ **RCA RED SEAL LIVING STEREO SERIES. In hybrid SACD/CD format. Can be played on conventional systems. Various Artists. Installment three in 10 CDs. Sony.**

This package of CDs, just released by Sony/BMG Music Entertainment, serves as the third installment in the widely-acclaimed **Red Seal Living Stereo series** -- and it may just be the best piece of the puzzle yet.

Basically, these albums have nourished decades of classical fans, since they in fact compile the finest classical records that ever were spun into wax and blasted from a stereo. Moreover, this series does the unthinkable, taking sounds and concertos and symphonies we already know and adore and reviving them into fresh and clean new epics -- old pieces suddenly come alive to resonate with original breath, swallowed up in the sweet candlelight of so many unknown discoveries.

Who would have thought this possible 20 years ago?

Make no mistake, this magic ride is the product of superior technology that has allowed the original tapes to be remastered and digitally "restored" into bright and all-encompassing *walls of sound* (this unique technique of restoration encourages the listener to assume the engineer's chair, witnessing the music come out of each separate 'channel' just as it was heard in the booth when the original tracks were laid down).

There's no disputing that Sony's technique of digitalization has set the bar for the industry (look no further than what they did with Bob Dylan's oft-ignored 1978 classic, "Street Legal"). However, this series is truly something special, blending many different centuries together into a seamless *symphony of concerts* that is chilling to behold.

As you might guess, highlights abound, and the records that standout will differ based on a listener's personal tastes and biases. In terms of general critical comment, all are impeccable: statements of art of the highest order, preserved in accordance with the highest musical standards of the era, worthy of endless ovations.

Personal favorites from our end begin with **HI-FI FIEDLER**. This record memorializes some stunning performances by Arthur Fiedler conducting the Boston Pops Orchestra -- the versions of Rimsky Korsakov's *Le Coq d'Or Suite* and Rossini's *William Tell Overture* will nail you to your chair and keep you there, trembling in anticipation of more music. The experience is simply that rich.

Also notable is **BEETHOVEN** (Symphony No. 5; Symphony No. 6, "Pastoral"), with Charles Munch conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra . This record is new to the **Living Stereo series** and the way the tracks have been remastered renders it a haunting effort -- brimming with delicate energy, mournful pure evocative, exploding through the senses like the silver knives of stars.

Finally, **MAHLER: Symphony No. 4** (with Fritz Reiner conducting the



Chicago Symphony Orchestra; featuring soprano Lisa Della Casa) is a tour de force -- a powerful and uplifting storm of sound and poetry and muscular beauty that has the ability to seal closed old wounds and paint away the pain in scenes of velvet. Even if the rest of the records were throw-aways (**believe me, they are NOT!**), this album alone would justify purchasing the package -- a marvel, born dark with wonder, melding the strains of a thousand years of music into a single perfect symphony.

Classical fans will simply be intoxicated by these records, by their sacred freshness, by the way each note resonates with bloody urgency - drunk on the moment, devouring time and space and the vacant mirrors of the distance.

For the true classical music fan, nothing can be better than the experience of hearing a piece of music that pummels you drunk with joy. And multiple listenings of the **RCA Red Seal Series** will only re-enforce this feeling, now, as the last feeble strands of echo rise into the wake of the moment, rising into the gorgeous naked moonlight hooves of the dawn.



♦ **Also featured in this series:** **RACHMANINOFF: Piano Concerto No. 3; PROKOFIEV: Piano Concerto No. 3** – Van Cliburn featured on piano, with Kiril Kondrashin conducting the Symphony of the Air & Walter Hendl conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. **BRAHMS: Violin Concerto; TCHAIKOVSKY: Violin Concerto** – Jascha Heifetz, violin, with Fritz Reiner conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. **FRANCK: Symphony in D Minor; STRAVINSKY: Pétrouchka** – Pierre Monteux conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra & Boston Symphony Orchestra (with Bernard Zighera on piano). **STRAUSS: Scenes from Elektra and Salome** – Inge Borkh, soprano; Paul Schoeffler, baritone; Frances Yeend, soprano, with Fritz Reiner conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra & Chicago Lyric Opera Chorus. **CHOPIN: Piano Concertos Nos. 1 & 2** – Arthur Rubinstein, piano, with Stanislaw Skrowaczewski conducting the New Symphony Orchestra of London & Alfred Wallenstein conducting Symphony of the Air. **STOKOWSKI Rhapsodies** – Leopold Stokowski conducting the RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra & the Symphony of the Air. **ANNA MOFFO: Opera Arias** – Tullio Serafin conducting the Rome Opera Orchestra.

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com); or go to [sonyclassical.com](http://sonyclassical.com)



## RCA'S LIVING STEREO SERIES UPDATED FOR 2006

By John Aiello

February 2006 saw the release of 10 additional titles as part of RCA's unparalleled "Red Seal Living Stereo" series, taking up where last year's stunning effort left off (*see the above featured review for specific references to the mission of this historical series of recordings*).

Basically, what makes Red Seal so resonant and so sweetly haunting is the way the digitized restoration has enriched the sound of these albums and left them to leap -- bouncing from one wall to the other, surrounding the listener in the heart-beat-echoes of holy hands; simply, these are among the finest records of the classical genre ever to be made.

Remastered by lead engineer John Newton, each of these CDs thrives, foaming a true clarity of focus, foaming deep purpose and a certainty of vision. And each of these CDs: Cracking through the layers of human consciousness like some vibrant animal claw - at once commanding the complete attention of God, at once bringing breath back to the ancient strains of imagination.

Multiple listening will only re-enforce the magic: These records comprise music for the ages -- the depth of passion and desire which rise from these pieces will leave you awe struck and on the verge of tears. Simply, when the first poets contemplated the ethereal potions of music, they were only imagining these very records that were still centuries away from conception.

And multiple listenings will only re-enforce the magic: Every man in every lost corner of the world is blessed to have access to the Red Seal masterpieces.

### NOTABLE NEW INSTALLMENTS IN THE SERIES

◆ **BEETHOVEN PIANO SONATAS:** *Moonlight. Pathétique. Appassionata. Les Adieux.* Featuring Arthur Rubinstein.

◆ **MENDELSSOHN Symphony No. 4: Italian. Symphony No. 5: Reformation.** Boston Symphony Orchestra. (Charles Munch).

◆ **BERLIOZ Symphonie Fantastique: Love Scene from Romeo & Juliet.** Boston Symphony Orchestra. (Charles Munch).

◆ **VIRGIL FOX ENCORES:** Featuring Boyce's *Ye Sweet Retreat* and Schumann's *Canon in B Minor*.

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com); or go to [sonyclassical.com](http://sonyclassical.com)



◆ **HAVE WE TOLD YOU ALL YOU'D THOUGHT TO KNOW.** Robert Creeley. Cuneiform Records.

**By Jacob Aiello & John Aiello**

**In Have We Told You All You'd Thought To Know** (a live concert performance by the late poet Robert Creeley, backed by musicians Chris

Massey, Steve Swallow, David Cast and David Torn), the poet is presented to us in sparse and ephemeral tones - at once captured in the transcendent noise of these graceful jazz players.

Here, we find Creeley (who died unexpectedly earlier this year) in the guise of mythical creature, an icon of our time, holy chronicler of the times we only hear about in fairy tales.

Listen to the opening lines of the first track:

*What's heart to say/as days pass,/what's a mind to know/after all?*

Creeley's voice - now a reptilian womb bright yearning wheel of desperation. And it glides leathery and warm, guiding the long ribs of music, high and then again low, guiding the piece to its snake-charmed conclusion.

You see, this is the secret place where every poet lives, here amid the writhing violins, among the wandering lines of bass clarinet, here lost in the spattering rain of the hi-hat - immersed in angel's blood and searching for God.

Separate voice from words now and catch the real rhythm: The music, now torn into storms, hammers driving nails, nail us to a silent cross. You can hear the actual *transformation* take place in the rolling waves of Jazz, this great restrained control, as Creeley lassoes the rhythm of our breath, directing it toward his own private destination.

Now catch the loping rhythms again, the way the poet comes to grasp the reins, tight at first, then suddenly loosening the slack. And they dance like children in the snow until the master suddenly tightens the chain again, eyes carefully guiding the road, bringing it all back home.

*Have we told you all you'd thought to know?*

Creeley asks us.

*Is where you are enough for all to share?*

But he doesn't answer.

Instead, he leaves us alone within this brief moment of transcendence, one last holy glimpse through the soot-covered window of the poet. In the end, it's a nice warm place in which to sleep.

**Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)**

---

**[John Aiello](#) is the founder of The Electric Review, and he has written on both music and the Beat Generation for various national publications since the 1980s. [Jacob Aiello](#) is an advanced student of literature at Portland State University who is presently editing a collection of short stories for publication. Reach them both via the [email link on the home page](#).**

---



♦ **JOHNNY WINTER. Columbia Legacy.** This self-titled debut album by the legendary Johnny Winter has recently been re-mastered and re-released by Columbia, bringing Winter's fiery cool classic brand of the Blues to a whole new generation of fans. First released in 1969 as America wrestled with the issue of the Vietnam war, **Winter** burns ripe with that classic smell of the Blues - the ache of echo captured perfectly between the turning strings of guitar and voice.

This record should open up a lot of young ears to what music was like in the 1960s, the purity and spontaneity of the moment growing like roots through the eyes of each of these songs. Winter's Texas-based approach is polished from the beginning, drawing from the deep history of the Delta, drunk on the ancient spirit of Robert Johnson, there on the trail of the devil glazed with freneticism and chaos, there in the shadows running down the old roads of Mississippi hour of the dawn.

Make no mistake, these are the songs of desperate men and hungry children and grave-diggers, the songs of the soul imprisoned by its own sick heart. Back in the days when Johnny Winter recorded these cuts, music served as a refuge for the youth of a torn and divided country. And this record offers perfect evidence of that fact: the music driven by the tension of the times, strangled by passion, groaning against the Kingdoms of the world.

Nearly every cut here is a classic -- but "Dallas" is simply riveting, displaying Winter's range as a player. "I'll Drown in My Own Tears" is also a stand-out, stained with the grief that brings the Blues. And note the great band that flanks Winter -- with none other than the master and legend himself, Willie Dixon, featured. Added to the original set list are three bonus tracks, including the impeccable "Country Girl."

Old fans will want to grab this record for their collection because the digital remastering done by Columbia has added an extra layer of sound to the original mix - which is now so much more cleaner and resonant. Meanwhile, younger kids keen on the Blues will want to check out **Johnny Winter** for its purity of passion and its starkness of vision: in this era of throw-away CDs and disposable art, this album shows us what real music can do. ~[John Aiello](#)

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), or go to [columbia-legacy](http://columbia-legacy)



---

## PUTUMAYO & THE WORLD

# MUSIC SCENE

---

It seems every label these days has a World Music line - if nothing else, the idea's in vogue, and sure to bring some young listeners to the genre. However, try as they might, record companies never seem to reach the bar that **Putumayo** has set, for it truly is the *class* of the World Music scene - a label full of varied artists who are deeply dedicated to promoting true social awareness.

As I noted in a column last year, **Putumayo World Music** is a shining example of the alternatives that exist beyond the Rock/Jazz sound that America has grown up on. The **Putumayo World Music** label (featured prominently on many radio stations throughout the country), offers adventurous listeners the opportunity to expand their consciousness, exposing both old and young record buyers to the rich musical histories of Africa, Latin American and Europe.

One brief sampling of this material reveals an original vision that has stepped past the "profits first" bottom line, reconnecting us with the *true idea* of art.

🍷 **QUEBEC. Various Artists. Putumayo.**

**By John Aiello**

This new collection from **Putumayo** will certainly captivate its audience from the alter of multiple perspectives, since **Quebec** serves to celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of one of the most romantic and poetic cities in all the world.

Quebec has long-been known as a *world-heritage* city that cherishes its place in the grand history of music; accordingly, this record evinces a bloody-rich lineage that has touched every genre and every kind of *voice*.

Here, **Quebec** brings the vibrant sound of this French-stained city to the general listener, at once taking the uniqueness of this Canadian province to the country-sides of the world. One spin through **Quebec** and historians will readily see that this isn't so much a *brand* of music as it is an art-form – evolving like a poem, strumming the heart-strings of people and places and things (while simultaneously delving to the emotional core of the city-side).

Highlights abound, with these remarkable performances taking center-stage: Chloe Sainte-Marie's "Brulots" bursts upon us like one of Rimbaud's sacred poems, colored with melody, consuming the eye of the mind in storms. In addition, Le Vent Du Nord's "Vive l'amour" sets the soul of love to music, urging the listener to dance along in dreams and reconnect with the fields of the immortal self. Finally, Annie Villeneuve's voice ("Un Homme") proves a sexy and sensual *instrument* that commands careful attention – make no mistake, this girl is a star-in-the-making whose presence and sound are as unique as the vales and bluffs of Quebec itself.

Since the **Putumayo** label was born, its mission has been to enlighten the world to the art of hidden cultures and isolated voices, a mission to make music the universal tongue through which we all might speak.

And this record is no exception; listen close now: In these soft golden strains of sound and echo in this heartbeat of just-born wind you might actually hear God breathe across his Garden.



### ♦ **CELTIC CROSSROADS. Various Artists. Putumayo World Music.**

**By John Aiello**

What a find this record is!

Many listeners tend to identify **Putumayo** with the music of Africa and Asia, since the label has released so many stunning albums steeped in the vibrant music of these cultures.

Celtic music, however, is seldom identified as *world music* - most probably because of the migration of so many English bands to the States. In this day and age, the Irish and English sound is often seen as an extension of the Americas (so many seem to think that when The Beatles came over the Atlantic they bought their whole countryside to us).

An interesting thought, indeed. Hardly accurate though. In truth, the Irish sound is rich and unique, autonomous as the Blues. And **Celtic Crossroads** demonstrates this in vast and glowing terms -- presenting the history, evolution and magnificent breadth of this music.

**Celtic** marks the first record of Irish-inflected music that **Putumayo** has put out in seven years. And it's a real winner. This CD compiles a collection of traditional Irish mood pieces that have been souped-up and polished, merging the fragmented tastes of these cultures into a single *body*, constructing an emotional album that over-flows in energy.

At first glance, you might question how these eclectic and different voices (Sinéad O'Conner, Michael McGoldrick, Peatbog Faeries, Cara Dillon) could come together to build a cohesive collection. But somehow they do -- a perfect and seamless marriage of passion and poignancy and deep vision.

Many cuts stand out here. Capercaillie's "Hoireann O" is a veritable masterpiece: The synchronized rhythm of the band builds around the layered depth of this ancient Gaelic lyric and paints a series of pictures in the mind of listener, every strand of music enveloping the psyche, opening another door, revealing yet another hidden face.

Next up, a modernized version of the classic "Wild Mountain Thyme" by Keltik ElektriK shows how great this piece really is: even with the electric glaze of

sound curdled over the wounds of words, it doesn't lose any of its sweetness -- a song that still has the power to send chills down your spine.

Finally, Sinéad O'Conner's "Her Mantle So Green" displays the versatility of this controversial rocker -- a stunning return to the roots of O'Conner's inspiration, a delicate and sinewy rendition of a ballad meant to paralyze its prey: hearing this song like watching ghosts from some distant past parade through an endless series of mirrors. (Place this beside Emer Kenny's wistful "Parting Glass" and you will simply shiver, fading into the webs of words that tell hidden sides to your own story).

This record is quite a find. Like the majority of **Putumayo's** catalog, it brims with the life of far-way cultures with rich histories: Every run through the CD player offers a contemporary ride through a new and unseen part of the world.



Other standouts previously reviewed include:

- **LATIN PLAYGROUND.** A collection of Latin American songs aimed at exposing children to the history of Latin music. Featuring selections by Omara Portuondo, Flaco Jimenez and Carmen Gonzalez. This wonderfully diverse record is part of Putumayo's **WORLD PLAYGROUND** series that introduces children to music from the four corners of the world. The album boasts impassioned singing in a wide array of styles that will appeal to the young and old alike.
- **CONGO TO CUBA.** A sampling of Cuban music and Cuban-influenced African music. These two areas of the world are linked by similar rhythms, the cultures deeply rooted in personal expression through the ritual of dance; CONGO TO CUBA allows us to experience the connection first-hand. Featuring Chico Alvarez, Monte Adentro, Laba Sosseh among others.
- **VHUNZE MOTO. Oliver Mtukudzi.** This new record by Mtukudzi brings the music of Zimbabwe to America. This legendary South African musician captivates his listeners here, bridging the gulf between the continents with his soft cool supple melodies and piercing vocals. A five star performance.
- **ITALIAN ODYSSEY.** Featuring contemporary folk music from both the Southern and Northern regions of Italy. This music has risen from an underground community and is slowly making its way across Europe to the United States. Vibrant, rich with social awareness, **ITALIAN ODYSSEY** calls to mind a 20-year-old Bob Dylan strolling the snow-cruised streets of New York's Lower East Side at dawn.
- **REGGAE AROUND THE WORLD.** A compilation that presents Reggae music from different parts of the world, including Brazil, Jamaica, South Africa and Nigeria. This wild explosion of rhythm documents the far-reaching influence Reggae has had on countless generations. Artists include Lucky Dube, Zeca Baleiro, Peter Rowan and Rocky Dawuni.
- **CARIBBEAN PLAYGROUND.** Another installment in the **Putumayo**



**Kid's** series, this selection features a wonderful array of Caribbean flavored music with the youngster in mind. True Caribbean music blends Native American, African and European influences to create its own distinct sound -- a true amalgamation of the best music of these regions stirred into one glass. **Playground** is a joy to listen to: Here you'll find some cooking pieces that you can share with your child. Literally every cut is notable, but "Great Big Boat" by Taj Mahal and Hula Blues is amazing, and will cause you to hit the replay button a few times before you explore things further. Also the Trinidad-based "Little Anancy" by Asheba will prove uplifting and inspiring to even the most calloused and cold Metal fan.

- **WOMEN OF LATIN AMERICA.** Due for release on September 21, 2004, **Women** is a fascinating compilation of the most captivating female singers of Latin America (representing the regions of Mexico, Peru, Chile, Brazil and Columbia). The variety of music and musicianship here is simply phenomenal, and will cause the listener to take pause: Here, Putumayo has captured the hottest and most magical *woman voices* in the Latin world - -their sound sexy and smoky, subtle and edgy, barking out from the soul these lost wolves at dawn. Highlights are many, but Tania Libertad's "Anada Mareado" smolders -- delicate voiced and deft, circulating around the lips of the room like an invisible wing. Libertad has great vocal range, and this cut shows that she's on the threshold of breaking out into the mainstream. Also stunning is "Toda Sexta-Feira" by Belo Velloso of Brazil. *A great fun record perfect for late summer parties and dancing under the stars.*

---

For more information on purchasing Putumayo's world music CDs, please visit [Putumayo.com](http://Putumayo.com)

---



♦ **LIVE ON BREEZE HILL. Rick Danko. Woodstock Records (Distributed by MVD Audio).**

**By John Aiello**

Robbie Robertson might have been the leader of *The Band*. And Garth Hudson might have been the ensemble's greatest pure musician, but Rick Danko was the group's living breathing heart -- his delicate tear-stained voice and throbbing bass-line building into the band's signature sound and elevating it to a higher place in the pantheon of rock and roll.

In **Live on Breeze Hill**, we get the rare opportunity to reintroduce ourselves to Danko and his sweet stage presence as he performs in concert with this great collection of players (including Hudson on keyboards and horn player Bones Malone, from the Letterman Band).

Simply put, this record is a jewel -- a hushed and understated classic that recalls

the best moments of *The Band*, recalling the amazing influence that Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash had on this rag-tag mix of musicians that spontaneously created art the way that Jack Kerouac's eyes spontaneously kneaded the doughy mess of everyday life into poetry.

Here, Danko performs many *Band* classics, and in doing so, he succeeds in making them his own. The undeniable standout on the record is "Twilight," and Danko's performance will cause your soul to well-up with tears – his tongue twisting around the bare syllables of the lines as it pushes the song's rhythm into the naked force of wind.

Also notable is "It Makes No Difference;" this version is quite different from the one we heard on **The Last Waltz** – dark and brooding and introspective, gouging away pieces of our hearts and then refilling the open wounds with fresh blood. Additionally, a new arrangement infuses "Sip The Wine" with brilliant relevance, this in-studio recording as beautiful and haunting as anything Danko did during his years playing Robertson's sideman.

When Danko died just before Christmas in December 1999, it was truly a sad day for the music world, for it had lost one of its great practitioners and original voices. However, **Live On Breeze Hill** now presents us a rare second chance to reconnect with Danko's limitless talent, this rare second chance to hear the mournful whisper of a ghost return from his grave and sing us back to sleep.

SEE: [www.mvdb2b.com](http://www.mvdb2b.com) for information.



## THESE INFINITE ROADS CALLED EARTH

💎 **SEEING THINGS. Jakob Dylan. Columbia.**

**By John Aiello**

Of all the acts to follow famous parents, Jakob Dylan has done it right. Shying away from the legacy of his famous father (Bob Dylan), Jakob has instead looked to forge his own road with his own particular brand of pop-rock-soul (distancing himself from the elder Dylan by allowing his own song to bloom in its own private wilderness).

In **Seeing Things** (expertly produced by Rick Rubin, who also heads Columbia Records), the younger Dylan makes a truly bold move and goes solo – abandoning the *Wallflowers* with whom he recorded five albums in favor of creating a sparse sound meant to showcase the meaty depth of his writing and voice.

In essence, this record is comprised of a series of mood pieces which are carried by the dark brooding power of Dylan's vocal (the singer moving away from the layered walls of sound that mark the *Wallflowers* best performances;

the singer now on stage alone dissolving into this thick barren whisper dissolving into these deep mirrors of the self).

“In a band, you usually use the studio as another instrument, whether an ally or an opponent,” Dylan says about **Seeing Things**. “But this time, it was if there was no studio beyond documenting the songs. I wanted the studio to be invisible, and to have that lack of sound become the sound of the record.”

As much as Jakob Dylan and the *Wallflowers* have been about straight-ahead rock-and-roll anthems, **Seeing Things** owes its soul to the legacy of Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger and the other singer-songwriter solo-acts who followed them.

On this record, I hear the wistful echo of the late John Stewart (who once played with the Kingston Trio before going on to record 40 solo albums). And in this collection, I hear statements of the American landscape: The dour howl of the war-torn shore taking hold of Dylan, driving his voice, driving the naked rhythm of his heart, driving the solitary path of his eyes.

And he writes in the haunting and ever-so-lyrical “War is Kind:”

*Like a lost dog  
Between houses  
In the unknown  
Open country  
Like an outlaw  
Now standing  
At the foot  
Of infinity*

There are significant masterpieces on **Seeing Things**, and veteran fans of the *Wallflowers* will quickly notice Dylan’s trademark imagery (**note**: “Up On The Mountain”) – the wild blend of surrealism and melody taking hold of the consciousness, swiftly bending around unborn dimensions, lighting the realms of our collective road.

On the record’s true centerpiece, “Something Good This Way Comes,” the poetry of the piece builds into a lush smoky and transparent rhythm – like the Byrds gone acoustic, the flavor of folk-rock mixing with country-pop mixing the wild passion of William Blake’s *Songs of Experience*.

And on “This End of the Telescope,” the poet’s *eye* is the topic – his individual mission to look beyond the windows of the world past the mystical light of the conscious mind; and his only mission to peer into the actual heart of eternity.

**Seeing Things** is a record that deserves serious attention. Going beyond the fact that it is risky and original (just how many guys enjoying the kind of commercial success that Jakob Dylan had with the *Wallflowers* would chance upsetting the apple cart with a mostly acoustic set?), this album truly has something to say.

Unlike much of the hollow, bubble-gum, copy-cat dance tracks being produced today, **Seeing Things** has the balls to confront the fear-sick reflection of its own face and then sing in concert with the ghosts who walk these infinite roads called earth.

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)



♦ **12 GARDENS. LIVE. Billy Joel. Columbia Records.**

**By John Aiello**

Billy Joel ends the playful and fiery rendition of his classic "Piano Man" by bellowing: "Don't take any shit from anybody!" And this brief moment shows the essence of Joel: An artist who did it his way, compelling his audience by virtue of a catalog of songs built around intricate melodies and emotionally charged lyrics.

In **12 Gardens Live** (*recorded live at New York's Madison Square Garden*) we are presented with a Billy Joel who is older and wiser and much more comfortable with the power of his songs and their place in the pantheon of American art.

Basically, this record serves as a live 'greatest hits' compilation, and it contains a few of everybody's favorites: Joel banging out the structure of each piece with his signature piano lines, wrapping us in the deep dark grace of the melody, driving us with the holy force of the music.

Aside from Joel's ability to write a 'hook' and sing a hit, we have been captivated by him because of his 'take no shit' attitude which captured the discontent of youth and then twisted it into poetry.

**12 Gardens** provides eloquent evidence of this fact, these memorable performances of "She's Always A Woman," "Big Shot," "Innocent Man" and "You May Be Right" brimming with the passion of a lifetime behind the piano. In addition, Joel's "And So It Goes" is poignant and hushed, so sweet and understated, sending shivers careening at full gallop up both sides of the spine.

As far as live CDS go, this one is a keeper, recording the artist in the midst of a lifetime conversation with his audience.

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)



♦ **re: BACH. Lara St. John. Sony Classical.** If there's one word that might describe Lara St. John -- it's "guts." How many other classical violinists would

dare to invite pedal steel guitar player B.J. Cole and Indian tabla master Trilok Gurtu to play on an album of Bach interpretations? The key to understanding this record is in the answer to that question: Lara St. John is *not* like other classical performers. Instead, St. John is a daring and bold musician who has infused new life into Bach's music -- filling the subtle lines of these compositions with gentle inflections of jazz and world music -- a complete demonstration of her wide ranging influences.

*re: Bach* marks St. John's initial release on the Sony label (although she had previously recorded three other albums for other imprints to high critical remarks). St. John, who began playing the violin at the age of two, has toured throughout the world and has played with a number of superb symphonies, including the Tokyo Symphony under the direction of Paavo Jarvi. More than anything else, *re: Bach* shows that St. John has grown into a seasoned and versatile performer who is able to immediately command her listener's attention -- guiding us through time now delivering us from the dead : it's a drive through the invisible riding this perfect vehicle of music. Standout cuts are marked by "Echo" (with wonderful cello fills by Robbie Jacobs) and "Bombay Minor," which features St. John's throbbing and sensual violin set against the heartbeat rhythms of Gurtu's hand drum.

In *re: Bach* St. John has crossed many musical boundaries and bridged the gap between the old world of Bach and America in the 21st century, at once feeding new life into this ancient and timeless music. The result is absolutely riveting.

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) or go to [larastjohn.com](http://larastjohn.com)



---

## AN INTERVIEW WITH LARA ST. JOHN

---

***I understand you began playing music around the age of two. How did you come to start that early? Did your parents promote it? Or was there some other event that caused you to gravitate towards this form of expression?***

Well, first of all, my parents are not musicians. The way I understand it (and it's all hear-say, since I don't actually remember it) is that it [coming to the violin] was caused by my brother and I being annoying. [Laughing] Apparently after my brother went to his first violin lesson and came home with his violin, I got jealous and wanted one, too. So my parents got me one. I began playing on a 16th size instrument -- very small and very squeaky. (laughing)

***So then the rest of the family isn't at all musical?***

As I said, my parents are not musicians. There were some recordings around the house when I was growing up -- *The Great Symphonies of the World* on LP.

And Dad listened to The Beatles. My brother [Scott St. John] is actually a Professor [in the renowned music department] at the University of Toronto. He played and toured regularly for many years, and then decided he needed to be in one place. Shortly after that, he got this job.

***Can you discuss where the inspiration for this record came from - where did you get the idea to infuse Bach's work with such distinct and modern flavors?***

Well, honestly, it was a bit of a team effort. Through Sony, I met Magnus Fiennes [an inventive and masterful composer], and we got along really well. First, we each listened to all of Bach's work thoroughly - which was a monumental under-taking. I spent a month alone listening to all of Bach's stuff. We were each searching for tracks that fit well - tracks that inspired a modern sense. After we agreed on the songs, we began recording. Our idea was to take some of Bach's lesser known works and give them a modern sense and broader audience. We wanted to take these little known pieces and bring them *somewhere*.

***I get the feeling from hearing this record that you are trying to broaden your scope and reach the non-traditional classical listener - reaching a younger audience. Is this a conscious aspect of how the album was constructed?***

That's kind of the concept. In this day and age it's kind of impossible to go and get a dude off the street and have him listen to some of Bach's suites. And that was one of the challenges. To bring it [Bach's music] into the modern era. These great pieces are unchanged, but they have been taken into our times. That was the point: to make the music feel familiar to musicians and non-musicians alike.

***Tell me about how the idea to use tabla and pedal steel guitar was born (such a bold move for a classical artist doing Bach).***

The tabla was Magnus' idea. That wouldn't have been mine. I thought it was amazing though. The instrument is not something I grew up with. It was my first time playing with the tabla. It created a completely different vibe. The pedal steel appears only a couple of times....actually, so many great musicians played on the album. It really was an amazing thing....

***Who are your major influences as a musician?***

Well, I learned a lot from Glenn Gould. And not just because he's my country man. I kind of grew up under that umbrella. I learned a lot from Gould with regard to thinking 'horizontally.' In reality, some of Bach's chords are not *comfortable*. Some are very difficult to capture on the violin. And from Gould I learned to think this through differently, I learned to *hear* every voice at every moment.

***If you had to pick one thing that sets re: Bach apart from other the rest of pack, what is it?***

That's hard to say. A lot of things. I guess it would be my background in Bach. I'm the guy's biggest fan ever. I have so much respect for him as a composer. Bach is the King. And there is no way to make what he wrote better. You could make it worse though. We wanted to make it different. We wanted the listener to hear love and respect come through every track.

***What music do you listen to when you want to relax and unwind?***

I'm pretty eclectic -- pretty moody I guess. I listen to a lot of jazz. Monk. Miles Davis. I have 3 copies of *Kind of Blue* in case one gets scratched. I think I'm somewhat stuck in the 1970s right now -- listening to a lot of Doors and Pink Floyd. Really now, you have to be in a certain mood to listen to a classical symphony.... ~**John Aiello**

*Check [larastjohn.com](http://larastjohn.com) for more information about her music and tour schedule.*



🔴 **MASTERWORKS EXPANDED EDITION SERIES.** Sony Classical. The arm of the Sony empire responsible for classical music is truly an under-appreciated part of the label. However, Sony Classical's approach to digital recording is revolutionary and the sound that this *Direct Stream Digital* methods builds is phenomenal -- crystal clear and see through, as if the music is being performed on stage in front of you in a concert for one: the notes slowly seeping from the walls of the room and into your pores.

This wonderful resonance of sound becomes readily apparent in the **Masterworks Series**, a project which features the cream of the Sony Classical catalog, perfectly remastered with new tracks added to many of its most enduring records: marking a chance for a new generation of record buyers to experience the *classics* of the classical genre.

**Masterworks Expanded** is the second installment in the series (with plans for an additional 100 records to be released by the end of 2006). Most of the **Masterworks** selections include their original liner notes, with prices for these CDS surprisingly modest -- the idea being to encourage young listeners to explore the worlds that exist outside of Rock and Roll and Metal as they broaden their understanding of the myriad forms of this distinguished music.

And that journey *must* begin here, for the **Masterworks Series** comprises the core of the best in classical music from the last 50 years. Each of the records in this series is a veritable masterpiece, but the album "Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring & The Firebird Suite," featuring Leonard Bernstein/London Symphony Orchestra & New York Philharmonic, is astounding -- an inspired and hypnotic performance that is at once appropriate for a wedding or funeral or birthday, the music rising through the halls of the veins like swelling waves, hypnotic and holy and sweet, reducing the bottoms of the eyes to these infinite pools of tears. *This is Bernstein's 1972 London recording of The Rite of Spring; with the New York Philharmonic. Additional tracks featuring Prokofiev's Scythian Suite*



(with Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic).

Also striking is "Mozart: Symphonies & Masonic Funeral Music" (Claudio Abbado/Berlin Philharmonic, including a riveting performance of *Symphony No. 31 in D Major*).

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

SEE: [www.masterworksexpandededition.com](http://www.masterworksexpandededition.com) or [sonyclassical.com](http://sonyclassical.com) for more information.



♦ **HONKIN' ON BOBO. Aerosmith. Columbia Records.** Aerosmith has been, for the last three decades, the classic American hard rock band -- their beat driving black and acidic, capturing the instant of bullet cracking through bone. However, **Honkin'** marks a return for the band, a return back to the roots of their inspiration. In this album, they cover many classic blues pieces - a statement to Rock and Roll fans everywhere that Aerosmith (much like Jagger and The Stones) was both guided and inspired by the soulful howl of the old bluesmen.

"Rather than try and pigeonhole or categorize the album, we'd just like to think of it as a new Aerosmith album," said guitarist Joe Perry. "Our fans have always said, 'We love your new music, but when are you going to make a record that sounds like your old stuff?' In order to do that, we figured the blues was the best place to start, as it has always been a major influence on us."

With the bulk of the record recorded in Perry's *Boneyard Studio* and in lead vocalist Steve Tyler's *Bryer Patch Studio*, **Honkin'** sports an unpretentious feel, somewhat like Dylan and The Band's **The Basement Tapes** coming through bigger, bolder, louder speakers. **Honkin'** is a throw back record, something meant to tell us where these cats came from and why their sound developed as it has. Trust me, after one listen, you'll be hooked - for there isn't a bad cut here. The band's version of "Baby Please Don't Go" is a real gem, the edginess of Van Morrison's version turned up and drawn down until we hear steam pour through the lines in long fists and clots. Also noteworthy is "Jesus On the Main Line," with that classic Aerosmith cadence (clawing guitars, drum heavy chorus), as every second drives the impulse to move, driving the feet to rise up and shimmy, these dancing leaves in the wind, these voices shining like raw blood at dawn.

"We didn't record a blues album," Tyler muses. "We recorded an Aerosmith album. Everything Aerosmith has ever done has been influenced by the blues. This time around, we just brought [that] influence a little closer to the surface."

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

Also SEE: [aerosmith.com](http://aerosmith.com) for more information.



♦ **THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST. Soundtrack. Integrity Music/Sony.** In terms of classical music, it's going to be pretty difficult for anybody to top this record in 2004. Like its namesake, the "The Passion Of The Christ" soundtrack is a remarkable record that has literally taken the nation by storm. As of March 3, the record was *number one* on both the *Billboard* and *Contemporary Christian* charts, while holding the *number two* position on the *Internet* chart. An auspicious beginning to say the least.

**Passion**, composed by John Debney, is a record that was presented with the task of measuring up to Mel Gibson's magnificent film; in short, the music had to take the images on the screen and give them the real meat of *voice*. Many critics have said that "The Passion Of Christ" takes the suffering which Christ endured on the threshold of death and *personalized* it -- making it human ...almost comprehensible. When Jesus is nailed to the cross, Gibson wants us to feel every invisible morsel of pain and swim in his agony, stanching the blood of Christ with the arrows of our eyes, making his holy version of misery our very own.

And the film succeeds on this level, in part, because of Debney's creation: "This score with its mix of ethnic authenticity and symphonic sweetness propels the brutal image[s] to a higher, almost lyrical plane," says Gibson, who also did some vocal chants on the record.

The lines of these compositions (from "Flagellation" to "Crucifixion" to "Jesus is Carried Down") simply soar -- this is music meant to pull your heart out of the cocoon of its chest and pull your ass out of its chair, sharpening the hollow edges of the conscience, reintroducing you to private ideals of beauty and faith and compassion. Rest assured, there's *blood staining this music*: It drips from the half whispered eye of every echo and dances down the mirrored fingertips of the skin, these crimson pearl drops through the torn and transparent wounds of Christ's palms.

In the end, music is a sensory experience that overwhelms the doors of the mind as it opens up the hearts of human animals to deep mysteries of memory and identity. And at its best moments, music will move the soul to tears. **The Passion of The Christ** is just such a score. ~[John Aiello](#)

Order at [amazon.com](#)



♦ **BEAT AVENUE. Eric Andersen. Appleseed Records.** Eric Andersen was part of the emergence of the "singer-songwriter" in the 1960s and, along with Bob Dylan, Van Morrison, John Stewart and Ramblin Jack Elliot, Andersen's work has not only withstood the test of time but has grown more alluring.

Andersen's music --like that of the aforementioned writers-- is deeply poetic, rooted in folk, blues and mid-sixties rock and roll. With **Beat Avenue**, Andersen presents his strongest record in years, expanding on the themes he first began chronicling over 40 years ago. **Beat** features an all-star band, including Eric Bazilian on guitar, Shawn Pelton on drums and Garth Hudson (formerly of The Band) on sax, accordion and keyboards. **Beat** is rich with many wonderful songs (especially the searching "Song For You and Me" which comes on like a storm, its sorrow born in the hollow ache of changing love). Also notable are "Rains Are Gonna Come," "Salt On Your Skin" and "Under The Shadows" (as each of these 14 pieces build into each other like the separate scenes of a movie, building and growing, until we have drawn a full picture of this song-poet on his journey through our times).

Still, the best cut on the record remains the title track -- a 26 minute epic that recounts the events of November 22, 1963: the day President John Kennedy was gunned down. Andersen, only 20 years old at the time, was holed up in Lawrence Ferlinghetti's house in San Francisco, socializing with Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure and David Meltzer following a Ginsberg reading earlier that evening. "Beat Avenue," which took Andersen 15 years to write, is a testament to how deeply Kennedy's death affected a generation: In the hollow orange flicker of a bullet hope dissolved into despair and the path of a nation was permanently changed. And "Beat Avenue" captures it all -- holding the listener spellbound for nearly half an hour as we go back in time to re-examine ourselves and the state of our own lives.

Eric Andersen is a magnificent songwriter whose work defies all labels and categories. Moreover, **Beat Avenue** shows that Andersen is a survivor: a man who has withstood the impact of social and artistic change and emerged even more inspired. In the end, this record should serve as a model for all other singer-songwriters trying to "break in."

Order at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) or through [www.appleseedrec.com](http://www.appleseedrec.com)



---

## AN INTERVIEW WITH ERIC ANDERSEN

---

**Tell me about the beginning of your career: Was it the Beat writers like Kerouac and Ginsberg who inspired your work the most?**

Yeah, to a degree I'd say that. During my younger years I read a lot of Russian literature, and also the French Symbolists like Baudlaire and Rimbaud. You might say I had a Russian soul and a French Symbolist mind. (*laughing*) The friends I was hanging out with in high school were reading the same kinds of books as I was. We loved both music and writing. We were reading Allen Ginsberg's poetry and singing Weavers' songs. But I was actually "discovered" by Tom Paxton, and through him I learned about music and met a lot of people in the music business. That was in late 1963, early '64...

**In my mind, your writing and the way you structure a song resembles some of the early stuff Bob Dylan was doing. How much of an influence was Dylan on you as a young musician?**

Wow ..... that's a great compliment..... (*Pauses*) I think he [Dylan] was the first one on the scene in terms of writing songs in a certain kind of poetic way. But my biggest influence in terms of the craft of writing a song was Tom Paxton. Dylan opened things up in terms of *theme* and *poetics* but Paxton opened things up in terms of *craft*. I heard more of Tom's stuff early on than I did of anybody else's music.

**How often do you see Dylan now?**

I see him whenever he's in Norway. I usually see him whenever he's here -- he loves to talk *shop*. He loves to talk songwriting and music. Actually, we've been talking about working together on a few things, including the record I'm currently in the studio recording [*tentatively titled "The Street Was Always There" -- due for a late summer release*].

**I know you did a lot of work with Rick Danko (formerly of The Band). How did his death impact you?**

Well, I wrote a long open letter to him after his death called "Good-Bye Rick." [SEE: <http://www.ericandersen.com/Letter>]. Actually that letter is worth more than a thousand pictures. It explains how I feel. But when Rick died -- that was a terribly rough and painful time. Losing Rick ...was very sad. Like losing Caruso. The world will never hear a voice like that again, now it's only preserved on the records. It will never be replaced. It's a great loss and I miss him terribly. But that's all part of this life: we come and then we depart. It's all on borrowed time.

**On this same note, many of the writers with whom you had relationships -- I'm talking about people like Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs -- have died recently. Can you describe what that's been like for you: How have those losses affected your writing and the themes you're delving into as an artist?**

What a question.....It may sound strange, but I don't think about things that way. In my consciousness, when you're close to somebody and you lose them, it's like somebody shot you through the crosshairs of your heart. I mean -- you thought you knew their souls, and then they're just gone. It's a terrible thing. Like a chunk of you peels off. Like losing a hand or arm. But some of those people are still standing: John Sebastian. Bob Dylan. Tom Paxton. But in the end, we have the sound of their voices [*referring now to Danko and Ginsberg*]. That was their 'instrument' and they wanted us to know them on that level. It was about getting their music and message out.

**The song "Beat Avenue" from the last record is magnificent. Can you describe the circumstances behind how you wrote that piece?**

Well, it's important to remember that when [those events] happened I wasn't actually writing anything, I was *experiencing* it. Durng the night that would

become the antecedent for "Beat Avenue" I wasn't reading or writing a poem. I was just experiencing the things that were happening. In "Beat Avenue" I am recapturing the night when Kennedy was killed. I started the piece in '85 or '86 as one of the *cinematic narratives* that I like to do. Also I had been reading James Joyce and exploring the idea of how a whole book could take place in one day. Joyce made me want to look at that concept more closely, and "Beat Avenue" grew from that. And after I finished the song I had to look for a place to put it. It's a hard song because of its length [close to 30 minutes]. I see "Beat Avenue" not as a jewel, but rather as a whole necklace, a real jewelry ensemble.

### **How was it received by the poets you were with that night?**

Great! Ferlinghetti really liked it, and I think I was able to capture a lot of what was going on at that moment with us.

### **What's next for you now? Where do you see your music going from here?**

We're currently at work recording a new album. ["The Street Was Always There"]. It's being produced by Robert Aaron and we've already cut 19 songs. The record is comprised of covers and two originals. I'm singing the songs of people I knew on the street -- Phil Ochs, Dylan, Paxton, Fred Neil, Peter La Farge. I really think La Farge was the unrecognized genius of the group, and in many ways, he could have been the best. (*pauses*) This was ground zero. The birth of the singer-songwriter. The record's not about going down memory road or making a museum piece, but about radiating the vitality of the writers. It's very fresh and powerful. And I think it will have a lot of meaning for a lot of people, because it's not a tribute album, but music with a very personal approach.

### **This sounds wonderful - turning the mirror back in time to reflect how music got "here" ...**

Yes, The record is eerie -- like there's an echo in the room (*laughing*). The songs resonate with what's going on -- both "yesterday" and today. Looking back, it's unbelievable to see how rich some of this stuff was. Personally, I never thought I could sing a Phil Och's song or a Dylan song or a David Blue piece. There's some amazing pieces of work on this record, and it's a fascinating situation for a singer to go into -- going into the soul of a song and trying to express it. Dylan was the hardest to do. SO many words! So much language. And so much attitude -- twisting and turning. But then there was Fred Neil: in Fred's work a word is like a thousand pictures. But in the end, it's about the writers and how redolent these songs are. A lot of feeling comes out of this record, and in the course of that, it sounds like something completely new.

**~John Aiello**

---



♦ **STANDING AT THE EDGE. Casey Stratton. Odyssey. Standing At The Edge** marks Casey's Stratton's debut on Odyssey, marking the emergence of a major new singer-songwriter. Stratton, who is only 25 years old, plays piano and writes the songs he performs. Many will immediately notice a connection between this work and the young Elton John, but multiple listenings go a step further, proving that this is an artist with personal motivations and a unique vision: "Writing songs is, for me, like keeping a journal - it charts my progress as a human being," Stratton has remarked. "I tend to talk about my life not by age or by years, but by the songs I've written. I write very quickly, usually in a day, starting with the melody - the music always comes first. But once I get the basic idea down, I become a professional musician, shaping the melody, building the song, figuring out what the lyric should be."

What's most impressive about **Standing At The Edge** is the diversity of the music and songs -- this record isn't about rewriting the same riff over and again (as many young players get caught up doing), but instead about breaking new ground, inspecting the deep scars of the psyche and then trying to make some sense about what is seen there: "It took me a long time to be comfortable in my own skin when I sang my own songs," notes Stratton. "When I first started playing them live, my feet would shake on the pedals of the piano. I felt so transparent, like everyone knew what I was thinking and feeling. The courage to take the plunge came from my influences - Tori Amos, Sarah McLachlan, Joni Mitchell. I thought, 'Well, they're doing it.' And the more I did it -- the more I forced myself to explore my own songs before an audience -- the more empowering it became." **Standing At The Edge**, produced by Patrick Leonard (Madonna, Elton John) has many rich moments on it -- the pieces melodic and driving and piercing, owing as much to Stratton's classical influences as they do to soft rock. Several cuts stand out, but none more so than "Bloom" -- a throbbing and deeply haunting song, so sensual in its sadness, unraveling in spools before us like the new shape of a hymn. Ultimately, "Bloom" affirms that Stratton is a writer with a lot to say and his own way of saying it. Based on what I've heard here, I think we're going to be listening to this guy for years to come.

Order at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)



♦ **WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE? Van Morrison. Blue Note Records.** Van Morrison's prowess as a musician is simply legendary. After more than 40 years at the helm, he needs to make no more statements about himself or his career -- his place in history is absolutely secure. But then again -- Van Morrison hasn't ever made such statements. And that's what I've always admired about him. For Morrison, it's about the sweet poetry of *mind* building into brilliant individuality. In the end, Morrison doesn't make records for

corporations or for his fans: he makes them for himself and to feed his own deep musical vision - and all the rest be damned. In the end, Morrison isn't about money or rock and roll fame. He's about *speaking to the soul* through the holy gift of music (as he so beautifully tells us in "Get On With The Show").

And *get on* he does! What's best about **This Picture** is its *vastness* -- with these 11 originals, Morrison covers the four corners of his songbook, touching on all his signature styles. Veteran fans will smother the dulcet tones of "Blue Moon" and two-step to its sensual rhythms; however, there's so much more here. Absolutely great Blues licks (odes to the spirits of John Lee Hooker, as well as Terry & McGhee). And wonderful interplay between instruments--sweet and graceful saxophone lines interwoven with guitar and drums create the ultimate jazz/blues/rock *fusion*.

**This Picture** marks Morrison at his most varied and profound -- voice into the beaded shape of a knife cuts skin from bone and leaves the heart exposed, rising above these hollow walls of mist. *Taste* the anthem "Little Village," sinking far into the misty mouths of the music ("There's only/Two kinds/Of truth baby/Let's get it/Straight from/The start/It's what/You believe/And what/You hear/From your heart." As the sax fills the borders and bellies of the room, rising and throbbing beyond human breath, we suddenly understand just what Morrison means.

Order at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)



---

## EYE ON THE INDEPENDENTS

---

## NAKED REVELATIONS





On **That's Who I am**, Shana Morrison writes her own road.

© Photo by Deidre Fuller. 2006. All rights reserved.

🍷 **THAT'S WHO I AM. Shana Morrison. Belfast-Violet Records.**

**By John Aiello**

*"What they say/Is always true/What you believe/Is up to you..."*

*-From "Right Or Wrong"*

**Shana Morrison/Mike Schermer-**

In terms of being an artist (singer, poet, painter, writer), one has to have enough security in the self to step out and make a statement. Your words. Your face. No artifice. No elegant mask.

Ultimately, the artist must ignore how all the editors want him to say it. Instead, the mission remains to be brave and certain enough to stand up naked out on stage. Just you and your heart beating in the cool open air on stage.

**That's Who I Am** is Shana Morrison's third solo album and her most starkly personal -- a record of deep and daring introspection that sets in motion this woman on her focused path. Gracefully -- almost defiantly -- Morrison has shed all past faces and misinformed preconceptions, triumphantly announcing to the ears of the world where her musical heart beats.

After nearly 15 years touring and making records (she began her career as part of Van Morrison's *Soul Revue* in 1993 and has never looked back), Shana Morrison has developed into a singer of great purpose and strength and conviction, of amazing subtlety and scope (not so much rock-and-roll diva or darkly haunted Blues-wailer or solitary balladeer as she is an amalgamation of each): This poetess who seeks to move her audience towards the core of the divine through the supple shadow and transparent shade of music.

Morrison's third record reeks of a lifetime of influences, the influences through

which she has stretched the thread of her own personal vision. **That's Who I Am** comes to us a slow-paced and loping extravaganza of blues-inflected melodies cut with the glorious sacred power of *voice* - now eerily reminiscent of the great Bessie Smith (deep proud soul-searching, drowning in the sweet dawn-light of spirit and faith. Deep proud soul-searching, these renegade voices of ageless wonder).

### Songs sampling many tastes

**That's Who I Am** foams and froths with some very fine songs, an album marked with the sharp confidence that only long experience behind the microphone brings.

The record draws its title from a line in the 4<sup>th</sup> cut, "Right or Wrong," which is also its true centerpiece: Morrison looking back at a face in her life that is part ghost and part palpable skin, looking back at scattered pieces of herself in mirrors past. Through it all, the singer refuses to apologize for the twists in the road that carried to this very place in time - a beautiful poetic testament to the artist and stubborn rebel alive in so many of us.

However, this is *hardly* the only stop-you-in-your tracks cut; listeners will also gravitate towards the thunderous ass-kicking guitar lines of "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" -- Morrison and her band (fueled by brilliant interchanges between the Mighty-Mike Schermer and Chris Collins) soup up this traditional hymn with an intense growl with the unbridled and raucous passion of a new generation's eyes.

Yet, the journeys of self-discovery don't stop there. Going still further, that soft and sexy waltz of "Wo Wo Wo" showcases both Morrison's songwriting and her special sensibilities - the striking honesty of the lines dissect the need each human heart has for community and companionship and sweet connection.

Switching gears a bit, "You Don't Own Me" features the naked-murky swell of the Blues that her band delivers time and again with such energy, force and precision, while "Jupiter Jones" (a well-known piece for anyone who has seen her perform in concert) cooks and cries with a devilish certainty. Blowing in like a storm, "Jones" is a song about modern woman on the prowl for a husband, and we are invited to follow along as she fades across the musty stage, watching now as her gown blows up into raised hems amid this bluesy swirl of guitar and drumstick.

### A message left behind

Many will want to look for the specter of Van Morrison here, and they should refrain from the impulse. The simple truth is – this music is solely about the strides Shana Morrison makes, paying homage to her father's work in the passing nod she gives to other heavy-weights like Brownie McGhee, John Lee Hooker, Janis Joplin and Lou Reed (artfully mixing the shiny-golden vocal of the young Dolly Parton with strains of Joplin and Smith and some unknown church-house choir at their altar).

In turn, we are struck at the coiled sinew of spine and heart by so much of this record (the Kerouac-minded “More Than I Need” driven by a deep Buddhist perspective that assures all sorrow culminates in the *enlightenment of pathway*, while Morrison’s raw musky delivery on “Simple” builds into a true *ache* rhymed in the Blues).

Beyond the singing and songwriting, also noteworthy is Morrison’s band *Caledonia*: Chris Collins (guitar and keys); Mike Schermer (guitars); Paul Olguin (bass); Joel Griffin (drums) form a tight-cast group whose edgy and cool rhythms punctuate and drive these subtly nuanced grooves of voice to distant peaks and precipitous depths, driving the smoky-hot boot-heel of the melody line, driving the subconscious power of the music to become a living bloodied part of both *memory* and *future*.

Incidentally, **That’s Who I Am** was co-produced by Morrison and Chris Collins, and the duo has managed to capture elements of *Caledonia*’s in-concert presence in many of the cuts here. Collins (who along with his brothers founded the band *Wake*) has worked with Morrison for over a decade and consequently knows the shape of her voice very well – always careful to accentuate the electric hum of the melody instead of burying it away in coffins of inaudible *noise*. A prime example of this comes in the closing number (“Punchline”) which etches the pair’s signature sound: Definite top-forty groove, as supple and layered-hearty as the first breath of the day.

If **That’s Who I Am** is attuned to say one thing, I think it implores us to disregard old preconceptions, calling us to disregard all those stories of famous mothers and famous fathers and instead find the artist in the songs now forming as perfect and sheer as icicles at the sea-bottoms of our breath.

In the end, this record is about independence in full flower written and produced by a woman at the holy height of her creative impulse. Go on a vast exploration; give it a long chance and savor the tumult of the ride. At the right moment, in the thirsty shapeless electric autumns of night, it might even lead you a step closer to your own naked revelations.

For more information, or to purchase, see [shanamorrison.com](http://shanamorrison.com)



## TEX-MEX KRAYOLAS' STYLE



**The Krayolas'** new album is dedicated to Alessandro Carbonaro (pictured above), who was killed in Iraq in 2006. Photo courtesy of Hector Saldana.

---

## • **LA CONQUISTADORA. The Krayolas. Box Records.**

**By John Aiello**

After 21 long years, **The Krayolas** are back with a new record and a bright new sound, the kids from Texas who thrilled the country back in the 1970s while wielding their unique brand of *Tex-Mex* muscle- rock have now grown

up, growing into a deep and vibrant group with much to say about this sometimes-suffocating world of technology and detachment.

**La Conquistadora** is the name of **The Krayolas** new album, and it serves as an amalgamation of their strongest styles, blending myriad genres into a beautifully cohesive stew that provides a provocative summary of what happens when rock-n- roll kids grow older.

And that, then, is the ultimate mission behind this record: A mission to document changing waves of time (putting word to melody as means to chart the feelings many of us carry but few can articulate).

As I wrote in **The Electric Review** before, the band (fronted by Hector Saldana on vocals and guitar; brother David Saldana on drums; Joe Sarli on bass; and Van Baines on guitar – with a guest appearance by the legendary

Augie Myers on Vox Organ, piano and accordion) is a throwback to a time when cats strolled into the studio and cut records off the cuff, honoring the spontaneity of the moment.

And that's just the feel **The Krayolas** capture here: A sharply introspective sound guides us to the core of this record, the hum of guitar blending with voice the stream of voice mixing into the sweet blood of the piano building this homage to Spector's holy 'wall of sound.'

There are many memorable moments here, yet they all yield to the title track, "La Conquistadora." This song recalls some of the original brilliance of the MTV age (before it became so mod and tech-driven). The melody of "Conquistadora" brims with energy and raw passion, its *line* pushed by the wayward bounce of Meyers' hand, with Saldana's vocal driving that *line* higher – the performance eerily reminiscent of

what Dylan was doing in both his *Blonde-Blonde* and *Desire* phases (the long literate layers of imagery painting pictures across the time-ravaged mind).

And while “La Conquistadora” is the undeniable masterpiece of the album, there are easily another half-dozen other cuts that shiver and shimmer – real gems that compel repeated spins, captivating both heart and ear.

For example, the “Yakety Song” is a brilliant ride, the rhythm of the piece an infectious romp that would even leave fickle old Van Morrison envious – this riff over-flowing into bowls of *soul* (paced by the clear-honed sexiness of Saldana’s vocal).

In the haunting “Your Doorway Darling,” Augie Meyers once again takes center-stage: The mesmerizing lilt of Meyers’ piano set against the diamond-etched panes of Saldana’s voice conjures strains of Dylan’s



“Sooner or Later” – a sweet ode to the need for love and connection this pain-struck memoir of doors left half-closed.

However, the most poignant cut on the album (and certainly the most socially relevant) comes in the form of “Alex,” a song that Hector Saldana wrote in memory of his cousin Alessandro Carbonaro (to whom the album is also dedicated). Saldana penned “Alex” in the early hours of a 2006 Spring morning immediately after hearing the news that this young man had died from injuries he sustained during a second tour of duty in Iraq.

Just like that, the perfumed innocence of those days in 1970 when the *Tex-Mex Beatles* once ruled the stage has evaporated – the band now in middle age grappling with the wanton tragedy of a war that continues to extinguish young lives with alarming regularity (the rest of us left without a rational

explanation as to why any of this is happening).

And Saldana writes:

“...I’m already missing you Alex

Don’t ask me to accept this just  
because...

I’m already missing you Alex

Don’t ask me to forgive what I can’t  
forgive...”

As you can see, **La Conquistadora** is a deep and muscular record embodying many different styles and traversing the waters of many distant emotions – the sprawling story of our lives.

And in the first pages of this story young men search for love and express themselves in words and music. And in the middle pages of this story these young men slowly grow older. And in the latter chapters tears begin to form like thirsty electric icicles, salting away

the earthly idea of death.

It's all there in the words of that title cut:

“The venerable Father Francisco  
Geronimo

You can read his story written in red  
Painted on the side of his casket  
Among the sacred bones...”

---

**Tidbits and addendums:** *The album features liner notes by John Phillip Santos that call to mind the brilliant lyricism of Kerouac's stark web of roads; & stunning visionary cover art by David Zamora Casas.*

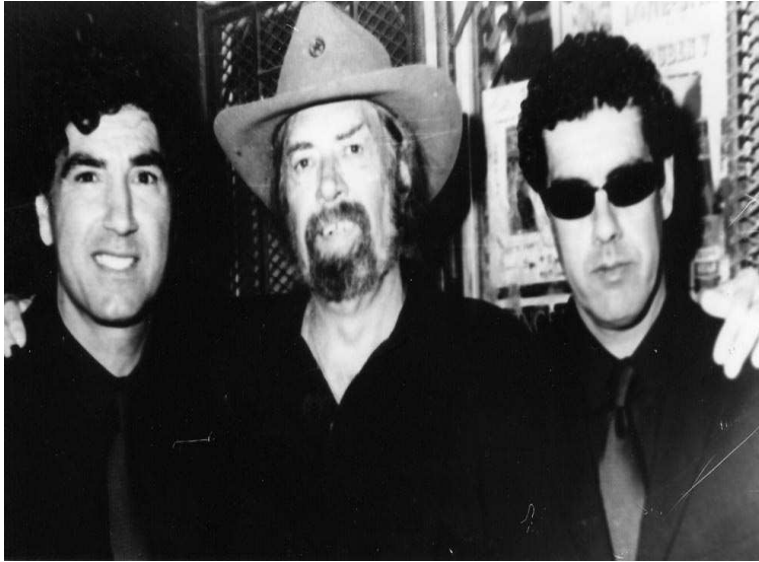
---

**SEE: The Krayolas website for further information.**



**"Best Riffs Only"**

## More From The Krayolas



Left to right: Hector Saldana, Augie Meyers and David Saldana.

Photo by Sam Kindrick. © 2007; all rights reserved.

### ♦ BEST RIFFS ONLY. The Krayolas. Box Records.

By John Aiello

**The Krayolas** were once a hot commodity: Known as the *Tex-Mex Beatles*, the band became famous in the 1970s for its lithe and razor-sharp energy, the songs steaming and chugging into this wanton Texas *grind*.

**The Krayolas** were arguably the most popular Texas band for the better part of the 1970s, working with a host of big-names (Nick Lowe; Chuck Berry; Dave Edmunds; Joan Jett; the Sir Douglas Quintet) – evincing the fact that these cats could play a lot of styles very well.

The band (fronted by Hector Saldana on vocals and guitar; brother David Saldana on drums; Joe Sarli on bass; and Van Baines on guitar) really is a throwback to a more authentic time, calling to mind an era when musicians played off the cuff in hopes of capturing some of the spontaneity of the moment. Looking back at players like Doug Sahm, what stands out is the way that they *embodied the idea of music* – transferring the passion and pain of life to the sweet melody-line of a 4-minute song.

In turn, **The Krayolas** are this kind of band: Their music is the *power-pop* of the 1970's Texas landscape, the San Antonio sun on the shoulders of 4 young men gone in search of Elvis' grail (their mission not to copy its contents, but rather, to inspire a reflection of their own story and their own town).

**The Krayolas** music, above all else, is about growing up – losing us in the miss-steps and inexplicable joys of *Kerouac's Road*, kids in search of the ultimate kick, boys growing into men amid a world half-torn by war, amid a

country torn between corporate passivity and the sacred causes of liberation.

**Best Riffs Only** collects 16 of **The Krayolas** hallmark songs recorded between 1977 and 1988. More than just some throwaway ‘greatest hits’ compilation, this record seeks to turn back the clock and bring us back to a time when songs were meant to move you from your chair (and not to your I pod).

“All I Do Is Try” could have been written in any decade, and it is truly a representative cut – Saldana’s vocal biting and brisk brings a kid’s journey to manhood into real time, while “Roadrunner” calls to mind some of the **Doors** bar-band riffs (even though this cut is mostly uneven, it shows that **The Krayolas** were all about *movement*: These guys didn’t play the same chords every night out, but instead, looked for new ways to express themselves).

Also notable are “Gator Gator” and “Sometime” – songs that straddle many lines and many genres as they show the timeline of American song: Connecting one place to another, connecting one idiom to the next in this never-ending evolution of life and art.

As you listen to this record, you will feel like you are in a room with four cats shuffling through the tracks of their next concert. As they play, some of the songs soar. And some sputter a bit, fall short, and fail. However, the real point of the show is *the process* – a lesson about music and how songs and styles are born.

In addition, **Best Riffs** is about life-stages and memory, a story about the places we’ve been becoming the places where we are going. In the end, it’s all only about the roads men take to alone while searching for a permanent connection to their world.

*Presently, The Krayolas are preparing to go into the studio with the famed Augie Meyers: Their plans include a cut of Sir Douglas Quintet's previously unreleased “Little Fox.”*

Order at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)



♦ **BEAUTIFUL WORLD. Zade Dirani. Sawa Productions.**

**By John Aiello**

Zade Dirani is a 26-year-old pianist and composer who hails from Jordan. In the past, he has released two commercially successful albums which ascended the Billboard charts and reconnected many fans to the beauty of piano music.

Here, in **Beautiful World**, we have Zade at his most emboldened: Not only is he setting out to discover new musical paths, he is also simultaneously tearing down dark walls of prejudice, these songs like great statements of peace in which the artist is asking each of his listeners to forsake preconceptions about people and places and look to the inner tranquillity of the self.

**Beautiful World** is a very important record on both an artistic and social plane, a record based in part on a haunting poem by the late Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani. In the delicate lines of this CD, Zade is on a sacred journey to make music that touches the souls of people, each piece striving for the same 'alchemy of the senses' that the great French poet Arthur Rimbaud captured long ago in his quest to find complete and total spiritual liberation.

However, Zade's mission is even more vital. Being from the Middle East, he is from a divided world which is linked to terrorism -- linked to violent acts of terrorism against Americans. Moreover, in **Beautiful World**, Zade is not merely seeking artistic liberation, but instead, looking to heal the buried scars of ten thousand empty years of hatred:

"This is to be more than just a can't we all just get along, touch-feely "Kumbaya' event," Zade said in an interview with the *Boston Herald* (January 2006). "We want to create something truly sincere...cultural ambassadors of [our]own countr[ies] and regions." And he continued, inspired to motivate us to take an interest in our communities and ourselves: "You need to be prepared to talk about your culture, lead discussions and have knowledge of what's going on in the world..."

The record is rich with high-points: "Comes To An End" presents poignant and mournful as it swirls with an almost holy mercy, evolving like a prayer. "A World In Silence" is performed as if it's been recorded for all those poor families that lost soldiers in Iraq -- a private and soulful meditation of the highest order. "Musician Of The Night" is truly auto-biographical: Zade in stark bare form, revealing his most inner-most core. And "Your Beauty...My Madness" is daring and dark-eyed -- Zade inflecting his piano with the flavor of some Spanish guitar-slinger, improvising breath-by-breath as he goes.

Stepping beyond cold political rhetoric, **Beautiful World** is truly a record about bringing Democracy to the world at large. Burt rather than hang a flag on his car or honk his horn pointlessly, this young man instead laces his fingers between his piano keys and plays: healing the fetid wounds of generations with beautiful new infinite pearls of music.

Order at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)



---

## THE MIGHTY-MIKE SCHERMER BAND

---

🔴 NEXT SET. The Mighty-Mike Schermer Band. Fine Dog Records.

Until I heard Mike Schermer as part of the *Shana Morrison Band*, I was personally down on the guitar sound of this new generation. Even though much of what you hear is technically brilliant, it ends up drowning in stale pools of

itself - wholly uninspired, typically boring. Consequently, I felt myself going back to acoustic music and that folk sound of yester-year. Less complicated times. Less artificial means. Less artifice. Less bullshit.

But as I said, that was until I heard Mike Schermer playing opposite Chris Collins (*founding member of the band Wake*) as they backed Shana Morrison at a gig in San Francisco in late 2003. Anybody who doubts that the 'youth movement' of the new millennium has something to say needs to catch this group, because they can play it all: raunchy blues, slow ballads inflected with gentle Celtic nuance, steamy sensual rockers and techno-pop with the pure under-taste of funk. A sound commanded by Morrison's masterful ownership of the stage (her lusty vocal, flanked by the simple rhythms of dual guitars, bass and drums, is something beautiful to behold).

This is no frills music drenched in the history of the American road. It's punchy Hooker blues filtered through the eyes of old-time rock-n-roll -- spontaneous & cold-brewed off-the cuff, feeding on the high holy energy of the audience. Which is exactly the same effect Schermer creates with **Next Set**, his follow-up album to his very fine debut, **First Set** ([see review here](#)).

**Next Set** will be stereotyped by many as a *blues record* - -which won't do it justice at all, because it's much more than that. Instead, this CD is a great amalgamation of rock and murky soul strains sifted through the neck of Schermer's guitar - a unique interpretation of that tried and true R&B sound. But in the end, what's best about the album is it's freshness-- existing in the newness of the moment, uncontrived, conjuring images of the studio circa 1960. This record brings us back to an era when guys just walked into the hall, plugged in, sat down, and played.

**Next Set** is steeped in high water marks: "Mama Say" is smoky and sexy as it lopes along, a song born in some midnight candle-lit club, just a few pairs of eyes in the audience, just the singer on stage singing to no one in the night. "Big Fine Girl" (with a playful guest vocal by Shana Morrison) displays the subtle tapestry of Schermer's guitar style -- lilting true melodic, framing the lyrics in this invisible light of dawn. "Rediscovered" is one of the centerpieces of the record -- a choice riff built around Austin Delone's piano groove; it just cooks and burns. "Rain Down Tears" (a natural for the FM playlist), features layered guest vocals by Maria Muldaur and Angela Strehli - coarse and biting, a dark deep growling rendition of a classic. Earl King's "It All Went Down The Drain" benefits from the Roy Head treatment Schermer gives it here -- the way the melody comes to echo Head's 1965 hit "Treat Her Right" is both subtle and pristine, displaying the full range of Mighty-Mike's original style. Finally, there's "One Good Reason": another smoky-anti-standard blues number, very subtle, very understated, this cut bathed in shadow and shade would have been right at home on Dylan's "Time Out Of Mind" record that took the 1990s by storm.

When all is said and done, and the next chapter of "*The Great American Guitar Players*" is written, Mike Schermer should be there - front and center. And **Next Set** proves why. Until he passes your way with the *Shana Morrison Band* or with the *Maria Muldaur tour*, you'd be well-served to pick up this CD.



Curious music fans will want to give this record a serious listen -- so rich and vital, so pure and unrelenting. ~**John Aiello**

Order at [cdbaby.com](http://cdbaby.com) or go to [www.mighty-mike.com](http://www.mighty-mike.com)



## BEAUTIFUL IN MOTION

### A FANTASTIC DISCOVERY

By **John Aiello**

♦ **JUDEA EDEN. Judea Eden.** Judea Eden is well-known on the San Francisco club circuit for her smoky cool vocals and immense range as a singer -- she can belt out R&B and rock and roll numbers in one set, and then happily dissolve into country-jazz crooner in the next. A tremendous talent who, to date, has pretty much gone undiscovered (except for those throngs of *clubbers* who have caught her show over the last decade-plus).

Still, this self-produced record (actually released in 2003) should bring some serious attention to Eden, finally grabbing the ears of radio jockeys looking for some fresh clear alternatives. Like we found in Norah Jones a few years ago, Eden has all the tools - and the creative drive to keep the wheels turning beautiful in motion.

**Judea** marks a wonderful debut. In truth, the album caught me off guard, because even though it's self produced, it's surprisingly polished - in depth and pure-of-spirit, with many different styles coming together to showcase the vocal dimensions of *Judea Eden* -- *singer*.

The record boasts three veritable hits among its 10 cuts (seven of which are very strong and captivating). Eden is a rhythmic writer (writing the rhythms of the breath into words weaving words into invisible lines of song in-between breaths as she's breathing). Accordingly, these songs come to be about the self and the search for the soul. Honest. Pure -- forsaking maudlin overtones in favor of self-assurance and passion.

As noted, there are three straight-away hits here. The first comes with "All Sexed Up." This is a testament to woman coming out of her shell and acknowledging hidden tongues of lust and desire. Nasty and dark-stained as it curls around the tongues of the skull and slithers (Eden using at least 3 different vocal maneuvers to tease and caress - and finally capture - her audience).

"Bone Betty" (with sterling rhythm work by Joan Martin on bass and Dawn Richardson on drums) builds a steady rain-driven thunderstorm of a beat -- this is garage-influenced funk-rock in the vein of early Pretenders. "Bone Betty" blooms subterranean and sexy -- a piece that at once seems as if it was written for the soundtrack of David Chase's "Sopranos" - a moaning sleek & slick & sticky back-alley blues.

However, the masterpiece of the record is "Something So Familiar." This original written by Eden in 2002 is stunning. Simply stunning. The chilling vocal climbs down your spine and devours the senses, eating at the deepness of your soul through the eyes. The melodic line is crafted country-rock (so deftly guided by Martin's bass and Karen Hellyer's Dobro), some distant kin of Dylan's "John Wesley Harding," some far-away cousin to Van Morrison's "Piper at The Gates of Dawn." And we bury our bloody skin in the sweet milk of the music: this soothing and loping graceful waltz that features the best Judea Eden's voice has to offer.

But more than some song on a CD, "Something So Familiar" proves a beautiful demonstration of how just the right assemblage of words striking just the right melody at just the right moment in time can come to take hold of your heart and *own you* - body and soul:

*"Somebody turned the light on*

*And opened up my eyes*

*Somebody felt the wind blow*

*And kiss my soul alive...*

*I must have dreamed it*

*A thousand times*

*Before tonight...."*

**Order at [cdbaby.com](http://cdbaby.com)**



**◆ DIAMOND LANE. Raining Jane. Raining Jane Records.**

**By John Aiello**

**Raining Jane** is an Los Angeles-based group comprised of four women with eclectic backgrounds. The band (Mai Bloomfield, vocals/cello/guitar; Becky Gebhardt, bass/guitar/sitar; Chaska Potter, guitar and lead vocals; and Mona Tavakoli, drums/vocal/ percussion) is noted all along the LA club circuit for its silky smooth harmonies that blossom into petals and layers and captivate the subconscious mind, the melodies of these songs wrapping themselves around the silent scarves of the skin like some invisible sequin glove.

On this record, **Raining Jane** breaks out at full throttle, coming to us via a variety of styles that highlight the ebb and flow of these distinct and balanced voices. What I like most about **Jane** is that this is a 'chick band' with brains -- the lyrics of the pieces are incisive and nuanced with intellect, going beyond the surface, delving toward the eye of the core.

During their best moments, these four young women are uplifting while still being able to write in stark and practical terms -- love and life are not always bright, but instead, remain as part of some greater journey that gives depth of shape to the mysterious road we are each traveling on:

*"Cross the double yellow*

*Exposed I cannot hide*

*This road is littered with deceit*

*Let the truth unwind*

*I found an emptiness within me...*

*The burden of the lie inside..."*

**(From "Diamond Lane")**

What is immediately apparent to the listener is that **Jane** seeks to envelop you with the burning rhythm of four independent voices as they're restitched and woven together *into one* seamless veil -- the songs swelling and rising within the breath of the audience, perfect in cadence, asking us to sing silently along.

**Jane** touches on many styles here (Blues, Rock, smooth & mirthful Pop), with something on **Diamond Lane** to meet the expectations of a broad range of listeners. Like the Indigo Girls or mid-period Judy Collins, the strength of the presentation is in the vocals. "Diamond Jane" is an undeniable high point, a moving ballad which features Potter's song writing -- delicate with universal meaning, ethereal in flight. "Birthday Malaise" is absolute in its honesty as it strikes out at a culture that teaches us young pretty women aren't ever supposed to feel down. However, **Jane's** gutsy and assertive enough to write and sing through their self-doubt, looking for answers among the endless questions of mortality and motion and need. Also notable is the naked Blues-Funk-wail of "Come On." This piece is a sexy and sultry romp, somehow distantly reminiscent of the melody line of Bob Dylan's "New Pony," a song driven by the musty depth of Gebhardt's bass and Tavakoli's drums. Accordingly, the unabashed hunger of this ride can't help but bust you from the graves of old doldrums.

However, the centerpiece of the record is the piano-laced "Wyoming Sky" (with its immediate top forty radio potential). God, this is a hell-of-a-beautiful song written and performed by Mai Bloomfield. Bloomfield (who also plays guitar and cello) has an wonderful vocal delivery, breathless and poetic, dissolving bone into bright and sheer diamonds of ice, dissolving skin into the sweetness of unborn blood. Moreover, as deftly as Chaska Potter handles the lead vocals on so many of these cuts, "Wyoming" makes me want to hear more of Mai Bloomfield, it makes me want to hear pieces where the two split the lead vocals on the same song: imagine Potter's smoky hot sound melding perfectly into the supple curves of Bloomfield's intricate phrasing, this complete rebirth of the *Peter, Paul and Mary* magic of the 1960s.

Spin "Wyoming Sky" repeatedly and you'll come to see the truth plainly: this song is a living testament to the levels this band can bring an audience - so subtle, and then suddenly foaming blind with passion, rising and sinking, cutting soul to the memory of nerve, rising and sinking, ravaging the delicate marbled mountains of the heart in this complex mirror of beauty:

*"You can hold your breath...*

*Tell your stories,*

*Lies and glories*

*Under the ashes,*

*History passes*

*Us by*

*Like Wyoming Sky..."*

---

**Order at [RainingJane.com](http://RainingJane.com)**



**[▲ top of page](#)**

---

Website copyright 2002-2008 The Electric Review. All rights reserved.  
Reproduction of material from any Electric Review pages without written permission is strictly prohibited.