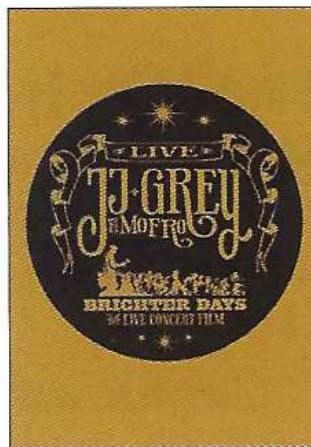


JJ Grey & Mofro: Brighter Days ★★★

(2011) 119 min. DVD: \$16.95.
Music Video Distributors (avail.
from most distributors).



A concert documentary combining songs and interview footage, *JJ Grey & Mofro: Brighter Days* seems designed to introduce its eponymous singer-songwriter, north Florida's JJ Grey, to a broader audience, and deservedly so. Steeped in blue-eyed soul with a vintage Memphis sound as well as riff-based, swampy blues-rock, Grey is an authentic talent who occasionally rises to inspirational highs. The performance captured here is a 2011 show in Atlanta that finds a smoldering Grey backed by his very Stax-sounding band, Mofro, on the brutal blues of "This Place," the chunky gravitas of "War," and the passionate torch song "A Woman," which can't help but put one in mind of R&B titan Percy Sledge. Grey has a captivating growl as a bluesman, but goes into a higher, warmer register during ballads. The non-concert material features Grey discussing his background in a hard-working extended family; the head of a record company comparing Grey to Southern author Carson McCullers; and ace guitarist Derek Trucks (Allman Brothers) admiring Grey for embracing his roots. The 15-song set peaks with a soul-stirring performance of "The Sun Is Shining Down." Presented in stereo, this ear-opening introduction to a fine bluesman is recommended. (T. Keogh)