

JOHN BATDORF & JAMES LEE STANLEY

All Wood and Stones II

(BEACHWOOD/BATMAC)



At worst, covers butcher a good song; more often, a cover makes the listener homesick

for the original. At best, however, a cover becomes a wholly new and equally wonderful song, and that's what we find here. We've all heard the Rolling Stones unplugged, but these Stones covers sound like they've never even heard of electricity.

Stripping the edge from the Stones seems risky, but Batdorf and Stanley peeled it away to reveal not a dull edge, but a tender core. On a few tunes—most noticeably “Miss You”—Batdorf and Stanley change one or two words (heresy!) to brilliant effect. The whole “Puerto Rican girls just dying to meet you” riff is omitted here, and a gentle “Are you all right?” replaces Jagger’s merciless “What’s the matter with you, boy?” The song takes on a whole new dimension, now fragile and shot with longing.

Batdorf and Stanley have very different vocal styles, and the country-tinged, rough-hewn edge of Stanley’s “Tumbling Dice” sounds like it was taken right out of the outlaw country movement, with harmonies every bit as compelling as the Stones’ or the Highwaymen’s. Batdorf’s lovely tenor, on the other hand, lends the perfect boyish wistfulness to “Wild Horses,” colored with the heartbreaking poignancy of hopeless dreams.

Batdorf and Stanley’s enunciation

and emphasis on songcraft rather than theatricality will allow most Stones fans to literally find new meaning in these ten excellent songs that are excellently performed not between the buttons, but out of the box.

SUZANNE CADGENE