

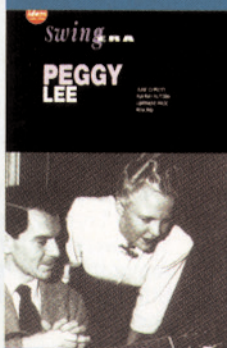


**American Songwriter
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DVDs

SWING ERA SERIES

With Peggy Lee, June Christy, Ina Ray Hutton, Lorraine Page, and Rita Rio
(MUSIC VIDEO DISTRIBUTORS)



This fascinating collection of soundies, a 1940s precursor to music videos that were shown on machines called Panorams in nightclubs and bars, highlights some long-overlooked contributions of female singers and bandleaders in jazz. Peggy Lee and June Christy were lovely blondes whose work on songs like Lee's "Why Don't You Do Right?" and Christy's "Imagination" shows an ability to adopt a bluesy style to jazz standards. Hutton, Page, and Rio led all-female

orchestras. Audio quality is somewhat inconsistent in the collection. These black-and-white soundies naturally have a film noir feel to them, and lots of movies from those days featured a song or two delivered in a similar vein. A real curiosity is actor Alan Ladd's appearance, tunelessly singing "I Look at You" with Rita Rio and her Mistresses of Rhythm in 1941. That was the same year Ladd played a bit part as a reporter in *Citizen Kane*, and just one year before he became a major star in *This Gun for Hire*. Ms. Lee died in 2002, 44 years after her classic "Fever" (not included here) was a Top 10 Pop hit. —PHIL SWEETLAND

JOSH ROUSE

The Smooth Sounds of Josh Rouse (RYKODISC)



Josh Rouse makes good music. He hails from Nashville, a music town generally characterized by its dependence on wardrobe changes, auto-tuners, and sleeveless triceps, but Rouse and his music do not fit comfortably into any box. It is just good music. If you have seen Josh Rouse do his thing live, then chances are, you already know this. If you haven't, you now can with the issue of the DVD, *The Smooth Sounds of Josh Rouse*,

which presents Rouse's 2003 New Year's Eve show at Nashville's legendary Exit/In. The strength of the DVD lies in the performance that it captures. Rouse is playing his hometown, he's pulling songs from his whole catalog, it's the last night of the year, and he's just come off the road. All this amounts to an amazing show that viewers can feel connected to, even if it's coming out of a screen. Stylistically, the film bounces back-and-forth between B/W and color footage, some of which was shot using a crane. This effect, at times, gives the film a music video quality. You never get distracted though because it is edited in a way that leaves the viewer focused on the performance at hand. Also included in the DVD package is the documentary, *The Many Moods of Josh Rouse*, which was also part of his latest release, 1972, and a CD of 'rarities.' The documentary, which consists of touring and studio footage intermingled with interviews of Rouse's musical peers, is a typical behind the scenes look at the artist. The CD is good, and probably great if you are a Rouse fan. I am, and after taking in this DVD I am ready to go see the guy play his music. —COURTNEY LITTLE