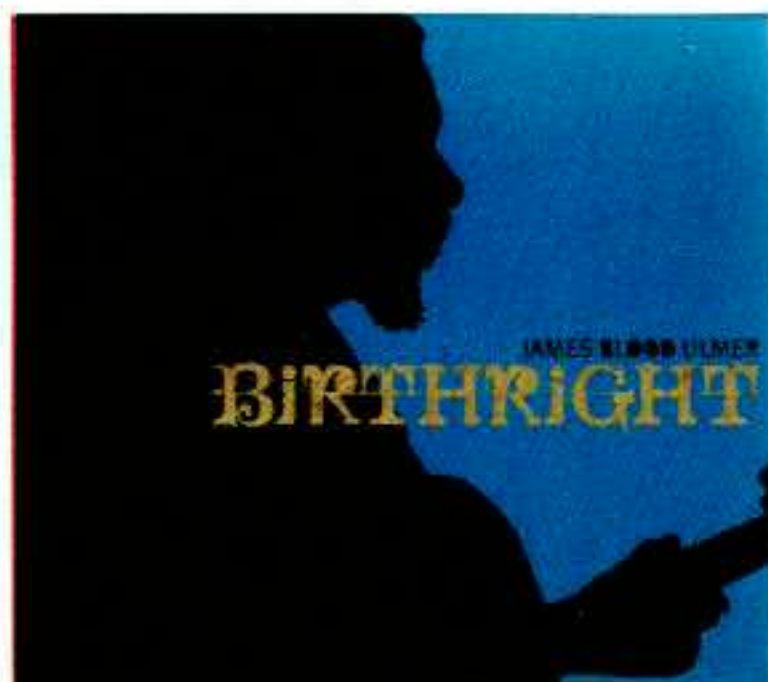


lyrics in the classic indie vocal style, high and tinged with longing.

—Madeleine Wurm



James Blood Ulmer
'Birthright'
Hyena Records

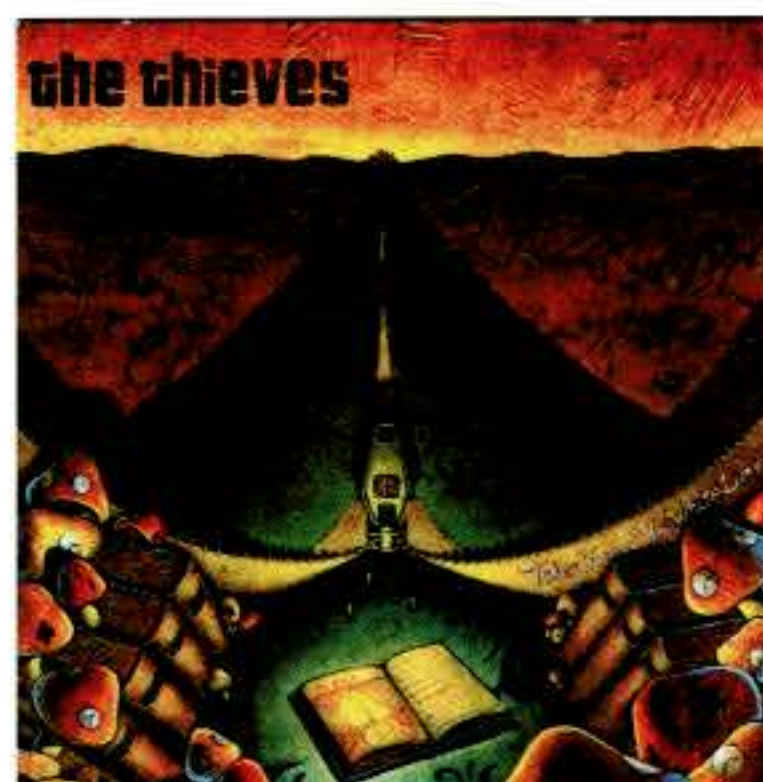
James Blood Ulmer is an American treasure. A true blues/jazz innovator, he's performed on well more than 50 albums with musicians that include legends like Ornette Coleman, Art Blakey and Paul Bley. On *Birthright*, Ulmer revisits the

heart of blues music while placing the fingerprint of his unique guitar approach on each track. At age 63, you can hear an authenticity in his songs about poverty, discrimination, growing old and mortality.

While Ulmer stripped down to nothing more than an acoustic guitar for this recording, his playing is far from restricted to a simple I-IV-V progression. Tracks like "Where Did All the Girls Come From," "High Yellow" and "Love Dance Rag" feature jazzy runs and inventive chords that will mesmerize the greatest players and aficionados.

Produced by Vernon Reid, the majority of songs on *Birthright* sound as if they could have been written in the Robert Johnson-era, but the recording is crisp and never feels dated. This album's going to be in my CD player for many, many years.

—Mike Matray

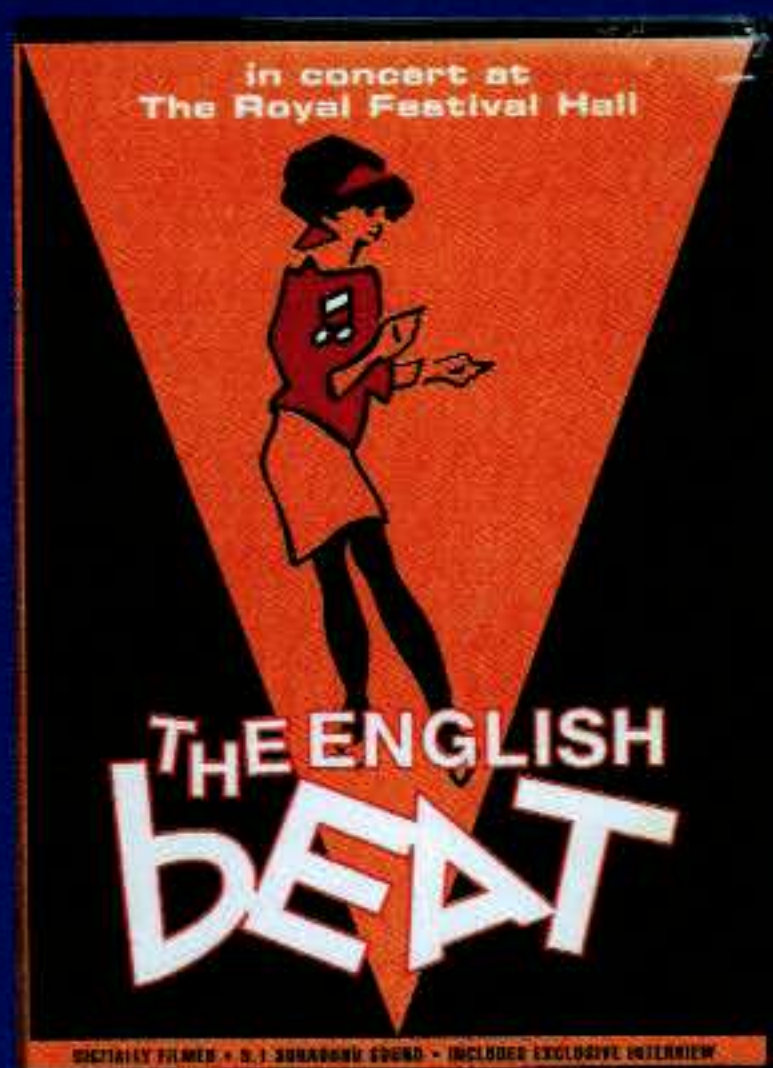


The Thieves
'Tales From The
White Line'
Liquor & Poker

Their Brazen, guitar-heavy swagger-rock may sound like *Zeppelin II*, but the latest effort from The Thieves rocks with a fresh, new appeal.

The majority of songs on *Tales from the White Line* are straight acid rockers, infused with energy and

DVD
The English Beat
In Concert at Royal
Fesitival Hall



The Beat formed during 1978 in Birmingham, England. Known stateside as the English Beat, the band released three phenomenal albums in the early '80s—*I Just Can't Stop It*, *Wha'appen?* and *Special Beat Service*—before sadly splitting in 1983. The members may have left the band, but they didn't leave music. Frontmen Dave Wakeling and Ranking Roger went on to found General Public and guitarist Andy Cox along with bassist David Steele formed The Fine Young Cannibals. Both were fine pop groups, but they never matched the level of cult status that The Beat knew.

Recorded in February 2003, *The English Beat Live at Royal Festival Hall* shares the culmination of a mini-reunion tour that features much of the band's original members, including Wakeling, Roger, Everett Morton and Saxa. Cox and Steel were no shows, but are admirably replaced by Neil Deathridge on guitar, Andy Pearson on bass and Dave Blockhead on keyboards. The concert features a minimal light show, giving the stage the feeling of an energetic orchestra. Completely non-orchestral in delivery and true to The Beat's revival ska roots, Roger invites the crowd to "Dance if you want to." Given the nature of the grooves, the crowd was all too happy to oblige.

The set list is solid, showcasing hits such as "Mirror In The Bathroom," "Tears of a Clown," "Best Friend" and "Can't Get Used To Losing You." Noticeably absent from the show is "I Confess," and The Beat fan in me would have loved to have watch them play "Rotating Head." That said, the 20 song set list is certainly comprehensive.

This is a fine DVD, chronicling a band that hasn't toured North America in this incarnation for decades. The audio quality and video production values are absolutely top notch. Indeed, *The English Beat Live at Royal Albert Hall* is a great addition to the collection of all Beat fans as well as every ska fanatic.

—David Barcus