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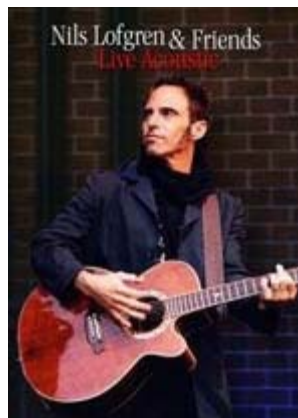
Monday February 12 2007

## NILS LOFGREN & FRIENDS Live Acoustic

MVD Visual DR-4552 (2006)

### Mature Lofgren unplugged...

'There are three kinds of guitar people. There are guitar owners, and there's about a million of those. There are guitar players, and there's a few of those. Then there are guitarists,' and you can work out the rest yourself by watching the DVD.



Former Doobie Brothers and Steely Dan guitarist Skunk Baxter nicely sums things up in his introduction to 'Deadline' one of the highlights of a beautifully played and superbly filmed concert. In the interview section, brother Tom Lofgren also makes the point to Nils on camera that 'the acoustic format brings out the finer points of your playing'. And once Nils overcomes an almost shambolic intro the back slapping is fully justified.

Over the next hour and a half, Nils quickly brushes aside any possible apprehensions regarding the acoustic setup, with a finely balanced set that aside from one or two ballads too many, is a fine appraisal of a great guitarist, a fine song writer and flamboyant performer.

For a performer at one time best known for his back flips on a trampoline, the sedate, sit down environment comes as something of a shock. However, once the early nerves are settled -'I couldn't take a show this long' - Nils and friends build up a real head of steam.

It's not the usual case of the gradual build up to a big rock climax as for half the CD the emphasis is solely on the songs and vocals. On 'I Found You' the only song from the 'Breakaway Angel' album he revels in the dark lyrical irony of 'I almost liked me since I found you', and he slips into a Lou Reed vocal style lament on the stripped down 'Black Books'.

Again the lyrics impress on a tale of good love gone bad as Nils recalls she needed 'a new shoulder to cry on and a new back seat to lie on'. Such is the intensity of the live performance that even a long term favourite such like

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'Valentine' is eclipsed by the following 'Tender Love' , a duet with Mary Ann Redmond. Both vocalists dig deep, and even a stumble over the introduction of a verse can't take away from the quality of the song and two superb vocalists.

And so to 'Deadline' from the 'Wonderland' album which opens into a triple acoustic guitar attack before slipping into a bluesy shuffle mid-section on which Skunk Baxter improvises with some lap steel style slide. The mesmerising guitar interplay is juxtaposed with a brace of Grin songs - fronted by fellow former Grin band member Bob Berberich with Nils on piano - which acts as the perfect foil to preceding climactic workout.

Nils delights on electric guitar on his enduring 'Moon Tears' but goes back to acoustic on his early solo career favourites 'I Came To Dance' and 'No Mercy' – a song requested early on in what was apparently a three hour plus show..

With six bonus tracks including Nils's ode to Keith Richard, 'Keith Don't Go', and some revealing rehearsal footage and interviews, this is Nils Lofgren at his mature best.

\*\*\*\*

Review by Pete Feenstra

\*\*\*\*\* Out of this world | \*\*\*\* Pretty damn fine |

\*\*\* OK, approach with caution unless you are a fan |

\*\* Instant bargain bin fodder | \* Ugly. Just ugly

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