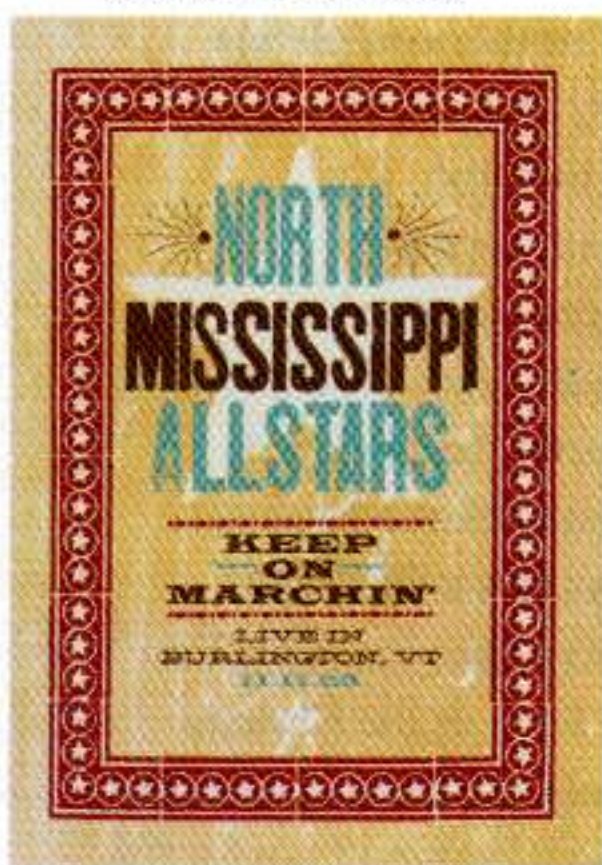


NORTH MISSISSIPPI ALLSTARS

Keep On Marchin' DVD

(Songs of the South)



The North Mississippi Allstars cover the distance from traditional blues to contemporary jam in a single step, and in this DVD we watch them take the full stride. The set opens with guitarist Luther

Dickinson soloing on a modified diddley bow (here, a single-string instrument with a cigar box resonator with a broom handle) and evolves into Chicago blues, funk, Phish-type jams, near-hip-hop, and finally into Derek Trucks-quality jazz improvs. Along the way, the trio periodically circles back to the blues touchstone that underlies it all. There's even a solo washboard performance by Cody Dickinson (Luther's brother). The Dickinson brothers—along with bassist Chris Chew—channel the traditional Delta music in all directions and never lose sight of home. As an improvisational trio, the North Mississippi Allstars really have few equals, all the way back to Cream.

Even though they are larger than the sum of their parts when they're doing Allman-style extended instrumental jams, they thin out during the vocal passages and seem limited by the trio format. Somehow, the vocals separate out from the rhythm like an unstirred roux. While Luther Dickinson's rugged vocals add an air of authenticity and immediacy reminiscent of singer James Dewar on Robin Tower's notable blues work, Dickinson's thinner, reedier voice just can't carry the full load demanded by a band of this power.

But there's no slighting any individual player. Drummer Cody Dickinson displays more flair than the genre usually allows, but he does it well, drawing on resources and chops that were never included in the blues toolbox. Bassist Chew is the ultimate pocket player: each solo remains firmly in the groove, embellished with just enough melody to elevate it above the rhythm lines. Luther Dickinson is a slide player unrivalled anywhere. When this DVD finds the groove, it's quite a ride.

—David Bradford

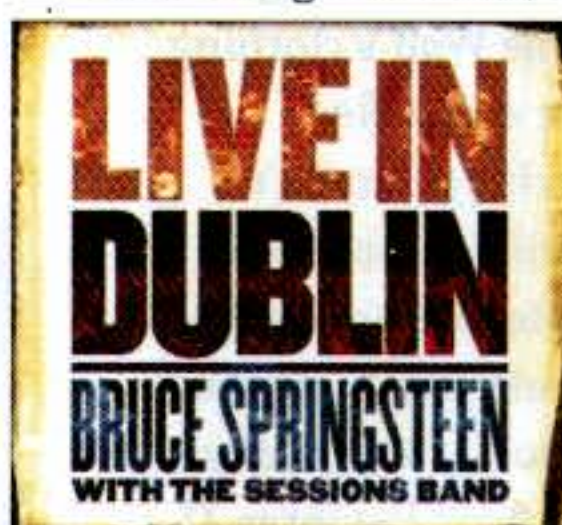
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN WITH THE SESSIONS BAND

Live in Dublin CD/DVD

(Columbia Records)

The Seeger Sessions was an acoustic masterpiece and history lesson of primarily traditional folk music. *Live in Dublin*, recorded with the same band, takes the concept several steps further. The CD and DVD contain the same performances so you can watch it at home in 5.1 surround sound or listen to the CDs (there are two) in your car, or wherever.

You can feel the joy and fun the 17 band members are having, and Bruce gives them all a chance to shine. His reworking of "Atlantic City" opens up the set with a fervor that only Bruce can muster. While the band's main concentration is on *The Seeger Sessions*, many of his own



compositions and a few covers are given a new life, infusing each song with unbridled energy.

"Keep Your Eyes on the Prize"

becomes a classic work. "O Mary Don't You Weep" builds to a crescendo unparalleled in recent music. Starting simply, Charlie Giordano's easy piano gives way to the angelic violin playing of Sam Bardfeld. Layer by layer the horns, banjo and voices create a mixture that would make Madeline Murray O'Hare stand up and testify. Covering "This Little Light of Mine," the band creates a revival meeting feel evangelists strive to duplicate.

Funk and soul came to life in the reading of the Winstons' 1969 hit, "Love of the Common People," and the beauty of a cappella gave a whole new meaning to "When the Saints Go Marching In."

The highlight of the show, however, was "Open All Night," which Bruce and company turned into a big band celebration complete with the Sessionettes (his name for the women in the band) doing their best Andrews Sisters jive. For over eight minutes the song rocks, swings and makes for the best jitterbug music since "In the Mood," but with the power no '40s band could produce.

The majestic power of the music, even the mournful ballads, is exuberant enough to make the human heart explode with joy.

—Gene Knapp

THE DRIFTERS

The Drifters Greatest Hits CD/DVD

(Classic Studio)



This interesting set comes to us from the United Kingdom. There were four major lead singers during the very involved recording history of the Drifters: Clyde McPhatter, Ben E. King, Rudy

Lewis and Johnny Moore. Moore began with the Drifters in 1955, left for the service in early 1958 and returned to lead the group in 1964, and was the lead on more Drifters' records than any other with over 50%.

Johnny's Drifters became legendary in Great Britain, and continued having hit after hit there after leaving Atlantic Records for Bell Records in the 1970s. This hitmaking process was aided by the tunes of Roger Greenaway; songs such as "You're More Than a Number in My Little Red Book," "There Goes My First Love" and "Kissin' in the Back Row of the Movies" are included on the CD and DVD. Many of these British hits have since become staples in America's "beach music" scene.

The CD contains 20 songs and the DVD has 31 (104 minutes), as well as another 50 minutes of interesting interviews. Three of the four current members joined Johnny Moore in 1990 or 1991 and continued the group after his death in 1998. With the recent passing of the last original Drifter, Bill Pinkney, the claim to the name "Drifters" is in question. With over a hundred different members, it is a question that will probably never be answered.

This CD pays tribute to each of the Drifters' lead singers. The DVD is also fun, although the guys don't always have their facts straight as to when a song was originally released (a problem only for the most ardent Drifters' fans).

—Dan Guilfoyle

ADAM GUSSOW

Journeyman's Road

(University of Tennessee Press)

A wonderful read! If you were to plunk