

THE VANCOUVER SUN

MUSIC DVD

Mike Stern

New Morning: The Paris Concert

Inakustik/ Music Video Distributors ***1/2

Guitarist Mike Stern can usually be seen in large concert halls, but this 2004 show finds him and his quartet in an intimate nightclub setting at The New Morning in Paris.

Stern headlines a powerhouse group consisting of bassist-vocalist Richard Bona, drummer Dennis Chambers and saxophonist Bob Franceschini. Their virtuosity is such that you don't know who to watch. Stern is obviously the headliner, but it's hard to take your eyes off Bona as his fingers dance over the five-string electric bass, interspersing chords with lightning-fast runs, or take them off Chambers, a human dynamo on the drum kit (I'll always remember a Vancouver International Jazz Festival show involving Chambers where the balcony was full of people air-drumming along with him).

The aptly named opening number Play goes on for 25 minutes, and there isn't a weak moment in the bunch. For Tipatena's, Stern's guitar and Bona's bass keep time with a constant riff while Chambers plays with the time: falling behind, cutting the tempo in half, dropping out entirely.

The camera operators don't always keep up with the musicians. On the ballad Still There, it takes several bars before they realize that the high, sweet instrument on the melody is actually Bona's singing voice. Bonus features include one song from a 1990 show, another from a 1996 concert, and an interview with Stern.

This DVD is one of two recorded at the Paris club. The other consists of a 2002 concert by the Jazz Crusaders.

- Marke Andrews