



Exciting, Yet Subdued

TALK ABOUT PIQUING one's curiosity. The promos for the truncated pledge-drive version of the Crossroads Festival that aired on PBS in December began, "Sixty-five guitarists... 87

Clapton, J.J. Cale, Carlos Santana, and others, over Jimmie Vaughan's rendition of "Texas Flood" from the event. The concert footage then begins, very much out of chronology with Clapton



There are highlights, to be sure, like the acoustic bluegrass duo of Dan Tyminski and Ron Block; Vince Gill's diesel-fueled country; Robert Cray's soulful "Time Makes Two"; Joe Walsh and Los Lobos' David Hidalgo taking turns fronting Booker T. & The MG's; and an especially blistering "I Shot The Sheriff" by the event's host. And the historical pairing of Clapton backing J.J. Cale is appropriately laid-back but quite memorable.

But greater-than-the-sum-of-its-parts wholes can't be choreographed; they either happen or they don't. Not surprisingly, the one time that those kinds of sparks fly is when Clapton joins Santana for an extended "Jingo."

heartfelt vocals.

Co-produced by banjo whiz Bela Fleck along with engineer Gary Paczosa, The Duhks couple outstanding dynamic agility with natural timbral accuracy. On the first tune, a penny whistle punctuates the end of the first musical line. Even when I'm expecting it, that whistle never fails to whip my head around. It sounds so real that my ears perk up like Pavlov's dog at feeding time.

If you long to hear music that combines what Bill Monroe used to call "the ancient tones" with a modern musical sensibility, look no further than The Duhks. Their music will roll over you like liquid off a



Al Di Meola *One of These Nights* Inakustik

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ever, the contemporary Di Meola largely plays steel- and nylon-string acoustics, as seen in this excellent concert DVD taped in Germany.

Di Meola's latest journey blends echoes of jazz-rock fusion with South American rhythms, exotic World-beat textures and the merest hint of New Age. It's far subtler than his *Elegant Gypsy*-era work, but way more complex. To boot, his live band features Al working with a keyboardist, drummer, and percussionist, and even a classical string quartet.

Gear-wise, Di Meola plays Ovation steel and Godin nylon-string acoustics in this concert, each fitted with Roland GK pickups fed to of the company's V-Guitar systems. As such, you'll hear Al doubling his lead lines with various wind and string instruments, à la guitar synthesizer, but more startlingly, you will occasionally hear a ripping, distorted, electric solo... from an acoustic guitar! Here, he is using one of the V-Guitar's emulation programs. Again, Di Meola continues to break ground.



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of Krauss' voice creates a feeling of timelessness. The concept of trendiness or contemporary musical fashion seems moot within the context of Krauss' style. If someone could drop one of the songs here into a jukebox in the hinterlands of America in 1955, it would be perfectly in step with their musical tastes.

Krauss' music also has a polished, minimalist perfection to the instrumental parts. No one ever overplays, yet the ar-