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Al Di Meola: Speak a Volcano



This entry was posted on 10/28/2007 11:55 PM and is filed under [DVD Reviews](#).

Al Di Meola looks like a middle school science teacher, but has talent to burn. After 30 years of a splendid career and exploring a variety of styles, Di Meola still ranks among the most popular guitar-masters of jazz and jazz-rock. Here, on his first “electric” DVD, Di Meola takes his *Speak A Volcano* tour to Leverkusen, North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany.

Shot in November of 2006, the set runs about an hour and a half, and finds Di Meola rediscovering his love of the electric guitar without denying newer influences, surrounded by a band that includes his old companion and superb percussionist Gumbo Ortiz. The result presents Di Meola totally at the top of his game; it’s a balancing act between volcanic electronic ecstasy and emotionally moving sound excursions, between fervent improvisations and intimate conversations.

Well directed, seamlessly blending in fretboard close-ups and aerial drum kit shots, the show is anchored by five Piazzolla tunes, as well as a handful of compositions from Di Meola himself. While subtly working his instrument in shamanistic fashion for much of the show (he doesn’t exactly give Buckethead a run for his money in the showmanship department) a clad-in-black Di Meola sits down for the affecting “Azzura,” which might be the highlight of the DVD.

Released concurrently with the syncopated rhythm-heavy CD *Diabolic Inventions and Seduction for Solo Guitar, Volume 1*, Di Meola’s first solo acoustic guitar album, *Speak a Volcano* comes housed in a regular Amray case, and presented in widescreen enhanced for 16x9 televisions. The disc’s transfer is super-crisp and free from grain, even if the contrast of its picture is just a bit off, with the black borders showing up more as grey on occasion. Viewers can select from three different audio options, meanwhile — stereo PCM, Dolby digital 5.1 and DTS 5.1 tracks.

By way of supplemental extras, **in addition to offering up 11 minutes of guitar tips and showcasing different picking styles, Di Meola also sits for an 18-minute, seven-part chat**, covering his early years (including time with Return to Forever), development and thoughts on music theory, scales and harmony. Props go out from Di Meola to both his first teacher, for instructing him in jazz as well as pop standards, and legendary pianist Chick Corea, whom he cites as a big influence, particularly on his first solo work, *Land of the Midnight Sun*. Di Meola’s thoughts on the differences in phrasing and expression between acoustic and electric guitars are also quite fascinating, making this a solid pick-up for music fans and aspirant guitarists as well. [To purchase the movie via Amazon, click here.](#) **B (Concert) B+ (Disc)**

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