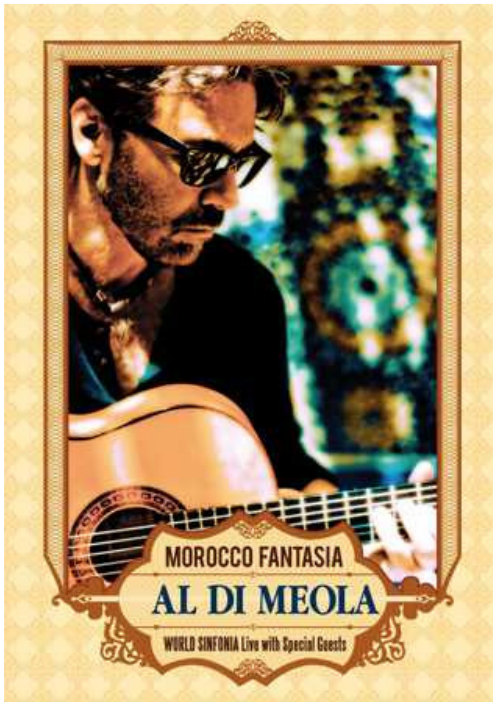


FAME Review: Al Di Meola - Morocco Fantasia (DVD)

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Morocco Fantasia

[Al Di Meola](#)

Inakustik - INAK7003DVD (DVD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Mark S. Tucker**
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There exists a universe of really good guitar players on planet Earth but only a small catalogue among them transcends human norms, causing jaws to drop whenever they strap an axe on. Al Di Meola's one of the latter, a fretbender so accomplished that adjectives pale. He debuted rather auspiciously in the famed Return to Forever combo, replacing Bill Connors as the group ramped up into a fusion mode so heady that it, for a time, redefined what acumen and the genre itself were. I caught him in Tampa in the 70s, opening for Weather Report (with Jaco), and was astounded by what the gent could pull off as easily live as on LP (this was the pre-CD era. y'all).

Morocco Fantasia presents the wunderkind amid an assemblage named the World Sinfonia (it's a five-piece, but, hey, I'm not about to argue semantics here) in a world music fest that's quite fusiony. I find it arresting that Ancient Future is re-releasing its older world music issuances, while touring a fantastically adept reunion just as this DVD emerges and shows, along with Matthew Montfort and his crew, what the upper limits of such musics can be. The mode started with Oregon, Beyond, Osamu Kitajima, and others (not to mention Third Ear Band, Dzyan, and the proggier ensembles), later slumping into Steve Halpern and Georgia Kelly until catching its second wind and fusing into the Narada label, Michael Hedges, still later the CandyRatters, and then ongoing efforts such as this DVD showcases.

Probably the best comparative would be John McLaughlin's later works, from Shakti forward and into his work with Trilok Gurtu and others. This isn't accidental. McLaughlin, Di Meola, and Paco de Lucia stunned the music world a couple decades ago with their acoustic trio releases before once again treading their own paths. John and Al could probably make a lot more money were they to re-form their old ways in the blistering, roaring, pounding Mahavishnu Orchestra and RTF, but they're true artists and never sit still for very long, evolving and reaching for new skies and climes.

Di Meola's been pursuing the world music use for a good while now, and Inakustik has recorded just what that means: beautifully complex exotic sounds and tempos, dazzling prowess, containing moods and tones uncommon to the Western world while introducing subtleties and nuances continuing to influence the more intelligent axemen. Catch Steve Vai's monstrosously progressive *Where the Wild Things Are* ([here](#)) to see and hear just what I'm talking about or sit down and consider what made Pat Metheny so unique. Watching the interplay of performers is one of the brass tacks of filmed concerts, enhancing and dimensionalizing the sounds themselves, because one catches the warmth and visual splendor of witnessing creativity firsthand; that's certainly the case here. Di Meola allows plenty of room for the back-up players to stretch out their colorations, especially accordion player Fausto Beccalossi, and the whole thing wraps up in a tear-the-roof-off version of *Egyptian Danza* as the guitarist picks up his electric and travels back to the *Casino* days.

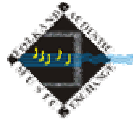
In short, if you aren't still following this guy, if you were one of the acolytes back in his electric speed demon days who dropped out as the maestro refined, you're missing one hell of a lot, and the re-do of *Danza* silently illustrates just how much that old magic depended on what he's pursuing ever more faithfully now.

Track List:

- Misterioso
- Sineiana
- Double Concerto
- Michalangelo's 7th Child
- Gumbiero
- Turquoise
- Encore
- Egyptian Danza

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