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DVD & Blu-ray Reviews

Al Di Meola – Morocco Fantasia, Blu-ray (2011)

Concert and extras on the guitarist's appearance at the 2009 Moroccan music festival in Rabat.



Published on January 20, 2012



Al Di Meola – Morocco Fantasia, Blu-ray (2011)

Performers: Al Di Meola, guitar & World Sinfonia, plus three Moroccan special guests

Filmmakers: Francesco Cabras & Alberto Molinari

TrackList: Misterio, Siberiana, Double Concerto, Michaelangelo's 7th Child, Gumbiero, Turquoise, Encore, Egyptian Danza

Studio: Inakustik INAL 7004 BD [1/24/12] [Distr. by Naxos]

Video: 16:9 1080i&p HD

Audio: DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1, PCM stereo

Extras: Rehearsals, Soundcheck, Bazar 1 & 2, Roof solo, Mawazine Suite: Parts 1-4, Morocco, Still photo gallery, Teaser

Length: 123 minutes

Rating: *****

Jazz guitarist Di Meola has been one of the leaders in the growing world music movement with his World Sinfonia. This is a filmic record of his third visit to Morocco, to appear at the Mawazine Festival in Rabat with his group plus an oud player, violinist and percussionist from Morocco. There is no spoken material or narrations, even in the extras—the selections are identified with titles at the beginning of each.

Di Meola and the World Sinfonia consists of the guitarist—playing an acoustic guitar that seems to have some sort of wireless connection to an amp and speaker—plus a second guitar, a virtuoso button accordionist, a bassist, drummer and percussionist. The *Double Concerto* as well as other Di Meola works feature extended exchanges between the guitar and accordion, and Fausto Beccalossie tosses off the high-speed note-spinning at a rate I haven't heard from any piano accordionist; plus he sometimes vocalizes. The performers receive a rousing ovation from the audience.

Di Meola says in his notes that this Arabic-speaking nation is the tip of another culture in which there exists a mutual connection. The creative cutting of the concert is peppered with brief Moroccan scenes of a mostly abstract nature, but some with people in pathways or working on small boats. Some of the rapid-fire guitar works are accompanied by quick-cut shots of the nets of the fishermen. In the extras are more of these artistic views of Rabat and the country. The last two selections of the concert bring on the Moroccan guest musicians, with oud player Said Chraibi and violinist Abdellah Meri prominent, and there is more music with local musicians in the extras.

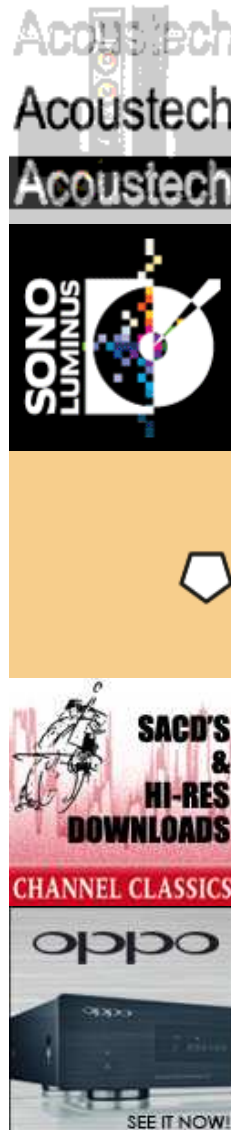
The hi-res surround is excellent, and the Blu-ray transfer looks very good. I did notice that the various creative film shots cut into the concert had some dirt on the frames, whereas the concert was obviously shot on videotape and didn't have that. I was also a bit distracted, as I had been in a previous guitar summit in which Di Meola participated, by his wearing shirts open nearly to the navel to show off his hairy chest. He's such a great guitarist, I'll give him that.

—John Henry

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