



Earthquake at the Avalon

[Larry Coryell](#)

INAK9092 CD

Available from [Amazon.com](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Exchange
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To the music world at large, Larry Coryell isn't as well known as his equally talented contemporaries (John McLaughlin, John Abercrombie, etc.) but should be. The guy has put out some of the best guitar music of the 20th century and was a key exponent of fusion after Miles broke into the vocabulary. Rumors and whispered tales abound regarding a rather sharp temper and ego, but what that might have to do with his legacy and chops is anyone's guess (answer: nothing). Daniel Meza, in the liner notes attributes Coryell's perennial failure to garner the wider latitude of acclaim he deserves to Fela Kuti. Nonetheless, the guitarist has tackled it all and very often shone like the sun. One sequence burns vividly into my memory is an old Tal Farlow tribute concert VHS with Larry, Abercrombie, Scofield, Carlton, and Farlow himself. Everyone got a burning solo slot, but when Coryell's time came, he just took over, on fire. You could see Farlow's jaw drop.

This live set was recorded not far from me, up in Hollywood at the Avalon, athwart the world-famous Capitol Records building. In fact, at the time (Oct. 15, 2005), I'd noted the gig and was planning on attending but lost out to bad luck. Now, with this, that's somewhat rectified. What I hadn't known was that Coryell had taken along his son Julian (guitar, keyboards), then snagged Bernard Purdie on drums and John Hart on bass. Later, David Hidalgo (Los Lobos) showed up on guitar and Wynton Byrd on trumpet. Yow! In many ways, the night proved to be a return to Coryell's most basic mode: rock and a rock-inflected jazz, rather than the high-flown fusion of 11th House or the complex acoustics of his duets period. He even sings on some cuts, and we haven't heard that in a long long time (although...um...er... there was fairly sound reason for the absence).

Half a Heart is one of several highlights of the CD, wherein Larry trades solos with Hidalgo (as he also does in *Slow Blues*), a cooking 6:26 cut. He then resurrects a song from his very first (Vanguard) LP, the solo *The Dream Thing*, and hooks it up with a duet he'd done with Elvin Jones, *Stiff Neck*. Like everything else, the atmosphere swings and incandescens, giving Coryell plenty of improv room between theme sequences. For nearly 70 minutes, Larry wails and gets down, flying over the frets, cranking classic prime era distorto-funkrock, psych, and jazz. Frankly, I'd expected another of his exquisite all-jazz outings and was very pleasantly surprised to hear him ripping it up on cuts like "Morning Sickness". The audience was lovin' it, wild with applause and cheers all the way up to the end and its 16:17 *The Drag Gate*, where everyone gets to jump up and sizzle. As in the Farlow tribute, the storied guitarist lays down with authority here, as does Julian, both leaping nimbly into the skies, so that, by the time the disc clicks out, you, like me, might experience a twinge of regret that you hadn't been there either.