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Music DVD Review: Roy Buchanan - *Rockpalast* (1985)

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Author: [Wesley Britton](#) — Published: Mar 16, 2012 at 9:10 pm

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On August 14, 1988, guitarist [Roy Buchanan](#) was found hanged by his shirt in a Fairfax, Virginia jail cell. He was 48. While his death was ruled a suicide, the circumstances remain controversial. But, unquestionably, he left behind a legacy that included *Rolling Stone* placing him as Number 57 of the "100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time."

Three years before his death, Buchanan was recorded live at the Markthalle in Hamburg Germany on February 24, 1985 for the *Rockpalast* television program. While there are numerous concert releases of the Arkansas-born virtuoso's live work, there is little on video. On that account alone, the *Rockpalast* DVD is most welcome. True, his band of the time was only serviceable. It included John Steele (Guitar, keyboards & vocals), Anthony Dunn (Bass), and the workmanlike Martin Yule (Drums). But anytime we can hear Buchanan's influential "pinch" harmonic tones on his 1953 Fender Telecaster he dubbed "Nancy," well, it's hard to go wrong.

After a somewhat sloppy surf-guitar warm-up, "Thing in G" (Short Fuse), Buchanan reaches back to his 1977 album, *Loading Zone* on which he first introduced us to his engaging cover of "Green Onions." In both the studio version and for this concert, Buchanan shows off just how many sounds can be stretched out of a guitar. Buchanan doesn't so much sing as recite the first verses for the Spanish flamenco flavored "Roy's Blues (Roy's Bluz)" where he even makes his axe sound like dolphin cries. That's before he shifts gears and growls out his own straight-up blues in the second section of the jam.

We hit the waves again with fairly faithful renditions of The Ventures version of “Walk Don't Run,” “Peter Gunn,” and the slower but just as surfy “Sweet Dreams,” one of the highest-regarded entrees in the Buchanan canon. (In 2004, *Guitar Player* listed this song, which debuted on Buchanan's first 1972 album for Polydor, as having one of the 50 Greatest Tones of All Time.) Buchanan gets both imaginative and gritty with “Blues in D (Blues Shuffle Instrumental),” where the band seems most at home, most in the pocket together. Buchanan, never praised as any kind of singer, can't compete with Hendrix for vocal delivery for songs like “Hey Joe “ and “Foxy Lady,” but he can use the melodies to show off his speed and use of delay.

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Dr. Wesley Britton is the author of four books on espionage on TV, Films, and in literature. He's co-host of online radio's "Dave White Presents" where he interviews musicians, authors, actors, and entertainment insiders. ...

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