



DICKEY BETTS & GREAT SOUTHERN
Live At Rockpalast 1978 and 2008
(MIG/MVD)

Dickey Betts, though not spoken of in the same breath as some of his heralded contemporaries and often overshadowed by bandmate Duane Allman, is without a doubt one of the most accomplished, soulful guitar players of his generation. This wonderful 2DVD/3CD boxed set presentation of Dickey together with his band Great Southern recorded and filmed at Germany's iconic Rockpalast television show from 1978 and 2008, two very different performances, is a joy to possess for any fan of great rock'n'roll music, especially those who prefer theirs with a distinctively Southern American rock, country, blues and roots flavor.

The show from 1978 features fellow future members of The Allman Brothers Band, brothers Dan and David "Frankie" Toler on second guitar and drums, respectively, who played with the Allmans during one of the many reunions of that classic band co-founded by Dickey. The group shown performing at the 2008 show includes Dickey's guitar-playing son Duane Betts, an accomplished musician in his own right, playing some beautifully fiery leads. The one constant is Dickey Betts' tasty guitar playing. Although Dickey allows his bandmates to shine at various points during both concerts, the primary

spotlight rightfully remains mostly on Dickey and his immediately identifiable sound. Every time he plays a note, one cannot help but think of his roots in the legendary outfit from where he gained his notoriety. While the 1978 show features lots of Dickey's solo material, the show from thirty years later leans heavily and gloriously on classic tunes famously written and/or performed by the Allmans such as "Statesboro Blues", "Blue Sky", "One Way Out" and "No One To Run With". Great renditions of "In Memory Of Elizabeth Reed", "Jessica" and "Ramblin' Man" are played at both shows and are as magnificent and majestic as expected. Although the band is comprised of great musicians, the earlier show sounds at times a little messy and unrehearsed. But that only adds to the raw barroom feel of the presentation. Dickey and company in 2008 are not overly slick, but they are a well-oiled machine with fantastic chemistry. A standout from 1978 is a version of the fairly obscure Allmans track "High Falls", a simply wonderful piece of music performed exquisitely and clocking in at just under a half hour, double drum solo and all. A nice little bonus to this presentation shows Dickey sneaking onto the stage in 1978 with the band Spirit to trade off licks with guitarist Randy California. Also included on one of the DVDs are full-song clips of other artists that have been featured on Rockpalast. These include George Thorogood, Pat Travers and The Charlie Daniels Band.



SEMISONIC
Feeling Strangely Fine – 20th Anniversary Edition
(Geffen/Universal)

Semisonic's second album, **Feeling Strangely Fine**, originally released in 1998, was one of those refreshing records that has a sound of its own and on which there are several tracks that are immediately infectious while still having a little more of something to say than your typical pop-rock tracks.

According to the short essay included with this twentieth anniversary reissue, **Feeling Strangely Fine** was a do-or-die record for Semisonic. Their previous album was a commercial flop and the band would most likely have been dropped by their record label if this one had not fared better. This is very common in the fickle music industry just before an artist blows up the charts with a career-making album that reveals the idiocy of those charged with making business decisions. Their fate hanging over their head, the artist usually buckles down, follows their instincts and records a piece of work that makes themselves happy without worrying too much about commercial pressure, the result ironically becoming a critical, as well as a commercial success.

Feeling Strangely Fine is a fine example of a pop record that transcends the medium of pop music and becomes a piece of work that stands the test of time. Opening track "Closing Time" was ubiqui-

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