

**REVIEW****DVD Review: Leo Kottke - *Home & Away Revisited***

April 05, 2006

Mark Saleski

The music starts playing and every little bit of you pays attention. This is a **musical** connection.

The listener-artist connection can go much farther than that. Years of record purchases, concert attendance, magazine articles, and television appearances can fill a person's head and ears with all sorts of information. You "know" a lot of facts about the artist but...do you really **know** him?

One one level, the answer is an obvious "No". I've never met Leo Kottke, much less had a single conversation with him, so of course I don't know him. On the other hand, all of the lyrics & stories told at shows — even those Prairie Home Companion apperances — have me convinced that, were I to bump into Leo in a hotel lobby, we might actually have something to talk about. The re-release of Kottke's concert video *Home & Away Revisited* has served as a huge reminder of our "friendship".

...that and the fact that Kottke's guitar playing pretty much defines its own genre.

Shot at Bathurst St. Theater in Toronto, *Home & Away* shows Leo at his most self-deprecating, funny, and virtuosic best. In addition to a selection of tunes from early in his career ("Vaseline Machine Gun," in particular), several "new" songs (new in 1988, that is)

are played that have gone on to become Kottke standards: "Jack Fig," "Pamela Brown," "Regards From Chuck Pink."

If you've never heard Leo Kottke's guitar playing (and "folk" is a totally inadequate word here) then this video would be a perfect introduction. You'll hear the Midwestern-ish ballad of "Ojo," the acoustic blues-on-acid that is "Air Proofing Two," the spooky and foreboding "The Ice Fields," a beautiful cover of the Allman's chiming "Little Martha," and the weird angularity of "I Yell at Traffic."

It's with the inter-song stories where you get to know Leo Kottke the person: a trip to Leo's basement to visit the "bad" guitars, Kottke's boat (which sits on the lawn facing the woods), the story of an old girlfriend (sort of) who used to expose herself to moving freight trains, Leo's failed (sort of) attempts at home auto repair, the recounting of the drool-on-guitar during a live show incident, the Gene Pitney one-handed bassist story, the visit to Lawrence Bros. Records & Souvenirs in Nashville. Kottke may be an elite guitar player, but he remains one down to earth guy.

*Home & Away* contains some inspiring bonus material including a backstage jam with the late Michael Hedges and a meeting (with guitars!) between Leo, Chet Atkins and Doc Watson, they **tear up** "Last Steam Engine Train."

My favorite moment on this video, one that connects me to Leo Kottke more than any other, is his short walk down a row of guitars at [Gruhn Guitars](#) in Nashville. As he's about to proceed, surrounded by guitars on both sides, Kottke turns back to the camera and says

When I go down this row  
all I'm gonna do is **breathe**  
There's a special smell...

Now **that** is my kind of musician.

Mark Saleski is a writer and music obsessive based out of the Monadnock region of New Hampshire. On his best day, he hopes to channel the ghosts of Lester Bangs and Jack Kerouac. He spends the hours of 9:30PM to 1:30AM carving out music reviews and essays for Blogcritics.org and other publications.

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**#1**  
Tim Gebhart  
April 5, 2006  
12:07 PM  
Nice review -- maybe even better than mine. I agree wholeheartedly about feeling that "connection," and I've felt it each time I've seen him perform in person.

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**#2**  
Mark Saleski  
besides the great stories (some of which can be quite dark)...i love the way he makes faces during songs...as if related ideas are popping into his had while playing.

April 5, 2006  
12:09 PM



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