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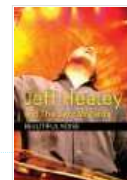
"A sinister cabal of superior writers."

Music DVD Review: Beautiful Noise by Jeff Healey and the Jazz Wizards

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Like Ray Charles, he became blind as a child. Like Dave Thomas, he was adopted. Like many kids, he learned to play guitar at a young age (3). Later, he would tour with, or sit in with, such notable stars as Jerry Lee Lewis, George Harrison, Eric Clapton, B.B. King, Stevie Ray Vaughn, and Buddy Guy. Then, sadly, he died young (41, of cancer).

Beautiful Noise was a television series produced in Canada that ran for three seasons from 2006-08. The series featured profiles, biographies, and performances including this one filmed in Toronto in January of 2006. MDV Visual released this DVD in March of this year for the second anniversary of Jeff Healey's death.

Those of us who really enjoy music and consider ourselves enthusiasts (notice how I stopped short of saying "aficionado") might not have been familiar with Healey as a jazz musician. Indeed, he got his start as a blues-rock performer. It is some consolation to me that several rock-blues fans I've spoken with were not familiar with Healey's interests

in classical jazz. And his is not the same jazz as that of George Benson, Lee Ritenour, Zachary Breaux, Dave Brubeck, or Dave Grusin. When I first put on this DVD, my wife walked in and said, "Is that Django? It really sounds like gypsy jazz!" A few minutes later, "Sweet Georgia Brown" came on and I teased, "It's the Preservation Hall Jazz Band from the French Quarter!" In reality, it was neither — but heavily influenced by both.


In a telephone conversation with Colin Bray, the bass player for the Jazz Wizards, I learned that Jeff Healey had indeed played gypsy jazz and used the same type guitar as Django. Bray also made it clear that Healey had also been heavily influenced by Louis Armstrong's style, methods, and sound. Like Armstrong, Healey also played trumpet. It's no wonder that Miss Bob and I had the initial reactions mentioned above. Bray and Healey had been friends since they met at age 16 and shared their interests in classic jazz of the 1920s and '30s. Bray's interest never strayed while Healey spent much time and energy making a significant income in the rock/blues genres. Simply stated, Jeff used the income from his rock and blues endeavors to support his jazz habit. By the time of his death, Healey had collected close to 30,000 jazz records, bringing his vinyl collection to almost five tons!

Healey and Bray had begun playing jazz at festivals and clubs when time permitted, and once Healey's contractual obligations to the rock industry ended, they formed a premier jazz band. The group was assembled from previous experience, referrals, and word of mouth. In addition to his own amazing talent, Jeff Healey displayed a remarkable ability to judge and select other talented musicians to form the Jazz Wizards. Again following in the tradition of Armstrong, Healey always liked to have a female vocalist. One of the first to sing with the Jazz Wizards was Alex Pangman. Nicole Stoffman (of Canadian television fame) followed and then Terra Hazelton who appears in this DVD segment as well. She sings beautifully with her own style and... with...






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