



Al Jarreau

"friendships and first loves" which found Jarreau and his quintet playing a relaxed run through hits like "Take Five" and "After All." Jarreau surprised the audience with sublimely delicate renditions of James Taylor's "Fire and Rain" and the Beatles' "She's Leaving Home."

After two hours it was apparent that the crowd took in a beautiful evening of extremes, the vicious, biting lyrical performance of Scott and his band and the festive, carefree disposition of Jarreau. One thing they have in common: each is a phenomenon.

—Matthew Allen

JEFF HEALEY AND THE JAZZ WIZARDS

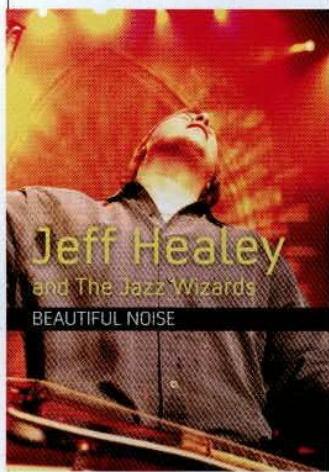
Beautiful Noise DVD
(MVD Visual)

In September of 2006, I attended a concert honoring jazz historian Richard Sudhalter with Jeff Healey on the bill, only vaguely aware of Healey's pop music history and ignorant of his lifelong fascination with jazz performers of the 1920s and 1930s. His remarkable laptop guitar playing (strongly influenced by Eddie Lang and other early jazz masters) and heartfelt singing of Tin Pan Alley hits made me an instant Jeff Healey fan; seeing him pick up a trumpet and blowing Louis Armstrong-inspired choruses only added to my amazement.

Beautiful Noise was taped earlier that year for a Canadian TV program, and captures a live set by Healey

and his working octet of jazz players. Reedman Christopher Plock's booming bass saxophone recalls the sound of '20s jazz ensembles; he has a striking Roland Kirk-esque moment on "Sugar Blues," simultaneously playing soprano and alto sax. Other highlights include violinist Drew Jurecka recalling Joe Venuti on "Wild Cat," performed in duo with the leader; Terra Hazelton, the band's blues diva, lays the double entendres thick on "Long John;" and, of course, Healey demonstrating his multiple talents. He excels as a vocal balladeer on "If I Had You," which also contains an inspired trumpet solo. Healey's premature death, barely two years after this performance, was a tragedy for all lovers of swing.

—Cliff Preis



FREE

Forever 2-DVD
(Eagle Vision)

Free single-handedly turbocharged blues-based rock 'n' roll as we know it, with a brick wall riff in A known as "All Right Now." The rest is history. Just ask any of the legions of wannabe rockers toting a Les Paul and snarling through a near-meltdown Marshall amp.

Free, which introduced the world to the hungry, soulful vocals of Paul Rodgers and the biting guitar of Paul Kossoff, is profiled in *Forever* through a series of almost spiritual, intense live performances. A full audio set from the band's 1970 performance at Isle of Wight, and cuts from Germany's *Beat Club* and England's Granada TV performance are polished up with 5.1 surround sound and superb video quality. Seeing Kossoff nail the eternally cool opening riff to "Mr. Big," while bassist Andy Fraser putters away on a four-string tangent and Simon Kirke lays down a relaxed, confident groove is simply as good as it gets anywhere in blues-rock.

Packed with special features, this 2-DVD set includes candid new interviews with the band members (including Paul's brother, Simon Kossoff), multi-angle camera access and brilliant photos of the band at the height of its powers. If you didn't know Free's scope as a live band, you will by the end of this collection.

Led Zeppelin may have been the thundering blues-based juggernaut of the late '60s/early '70s, but Free injected the blues-rock genre with deep unadulterated soul. The passion and burning drive in these performances says Free's influence is far from over.

—Mark Uricheck

CHRISTOPHER CROSS

Scullers Jazz Club
Boston, MA

"He defined my summer in 1980," one Christopher Cross fan asserted when she saw me scribbling notes. Inside the dimly-lit Scullers Jazz Club, the unassuming musician—a multi-Grammy award-winning megastar playing to 200 people eating sliders—was working his wistful magic during a 13-song, 80-minute set.

"I don't see the passage of time...I feel good," Cross quipped, alluding to his meteoric rise between 1980 and

1981 and subsequent fall from the charts. With absolutely nothing to lose, Cross and his stripped-down musical affair (four backup jazz musicians) didn't waste time showing off new songs but rather played a wide range of actual hits and songs that should have been hits, all fueled by his still-flawless tenor.

— Gems included the obvious "Sailing," featuring a gorgeous piano intro by pianist Andy Ezrin; the lush "Sweet Away;" the plaintive "Think of Laura;" and the faster-paced "In a Red Room," kept in glorious time by drum virtuoso Dave Beyer. "I Really Don't Know Anymore," a long-neglected track off Cross' eponymous debut album would prove an unexpected surprise, sounding as crisp and tight as the version first laid down in 1979.

After "Arthur's Theme (Best That You Can Do)," only one song left could end the show on a perfect note. Cross didn't disappoint as he and his band launched into the catchy-as-hell chords of "Ride Like the Wind." Michael McDonald wasn't on hand to sing backup but we couldn't have cared less. All we knew was we didn't want Cross to leave the stage out of fear we'd never see him again.

—Ira Kantor

RICH PAGANO AND THE SUGARCANE CUPS

City Winery
New York, NY

Newcomer, Natalie Mishell opened the show with a solo acoustic set that was beautifully delivered and shows an artist with great promise, setting us up for Rich Pagano.

Pagano has recently begun testing the waters with his new outfit, the sugarCane cups, in support of their self-titled release. When you have an incredibly solid product to support, an amazingly tight band behind you and a razor-sharp mind for "the business," things look promising, even in this economy and in one of the toughest markets in the world, New York City.

The release is a stunning collection of rock and pop songs that Pagano and company rock up and pull it off exquisitely live. Tearing through 11 of the CD's 12 tracks, including rockers "Nine