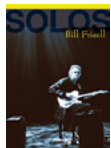


DVDs



Bill Frisell

Solos

MVD Visual

"After all the intellectual stuff gets out of the way, you just play," Frisell says in an interview segment after his opening tune, "Keep Your Eyes Open." "That's the state I like to be in or hope to be in when I'm really playing. I'm not thinking about anything technical... it's just coming out, and there's no thoughts so much, really. Learning a new song, it's takes a while for it to sink down deep enough for it to come out that way. That's why probably a lot of the songs I play, I've been playing them for a long time – just so they feel like they're part of my bloodstream a little bit, I guess."

Not that being part of his bloodstream makes the songs any less fresh – quite the contrary. His familiarity with the tunes here (spanning 1997's *Nashville* to 2003's *Intercontinentals*, and dipping back to his late-'80s ECM days for "Throughout") gives him the freedom to further explore, extract, and reinvent.

The performance/interview, filmed in '04 for Canadian television, presents Frisell alone on stage (no audience) at the Berkeley Church in Toronto. Playing his Telecaster, he weaves soundscapes utilizing loops, delays, and harmonizers. But the technology is integrated in a totally organic way – as much KT Tunstall as Frippertronics.

Adjectives like "meditative" and "introspective" are often used to describe Frisell's uncluttered, melodic style, but a quality he possesses in equal proportion is soulfulness. As he admits, "I used to equate complexity with better music. How could you say that Segovia is more advanced than Robert Johnson or Jimi Hendrix or Wes Montgomery?" His faithful but adventurous rendition of the Carter Family's country standard "Wildwood Flower" – and just the fact that a "jazz guitarist" would care to do it – proves his point. – **DF**



The Rolling Stones

Ladies & Gentlemen... The Rolling Stones

Eagle Rock

The entertainment level of a Rolling Stones show *can* be as high as it gets. But as live performers, they have long been inconsistent, and at times sloppy – and their live recordings follow suit. That was not the case with *Ladies & Gentlemen... The*

Rolling Stones, a concert film released in theaters in 1974.

Presenting the band at its creative apex, the film has been remastered with bonus rehearsal footage, and released on DVD/Blue-Ray.

These performances, from the 1972 *Exile on Main Street* tour, represents the band at its best as a live act. Retouched or not, hearing Richards break into the intro to "Happy" is simply a great guitar moment – one of many from him, and not the only one on the disc. Mick Taylor is more polished, but no less soulful, and his playing made him the perfect co-guitarist for Richards' rhythm-guitar-as-lead style. Taylor's solos on "Love In Vain" and "Midnight Rambler" are "dazzling" as Jagger himself says in interview footage.

Everyone is on their game, including Jagger, with the band augmented by Bobby Keys (saxophone), Jim Price (horns), and keyboardist Nicky Hopkins. It's a straightforward presentation; there isn't a clunker in the song selection, and there are no elaborate light displays or inflatable props – just bass, singer, and guitars (with good close-up shots), drummer in back, and some of the best guitar-driven rock-and-roll ever made. – **RA**



Woody Mann

The Guitar Artistry Of

Vestapol

Mann may be the only guitarist to take lessons from Rev. Gary Davis, study classical music at Julliard, record with Robert Johnson mentor Son House, *and* receive training in improvisation from jazz pianist Lennie Tristano. If that weren't enough, he's certainly the only musician who can add this glowing quote to the above resume; "If there was a category simply called 'great music,' Woody's music would belong there."

The compliment came from guitar legend John Fahey – not a man prone to gushing. But Mann's knack for effortlessly blending blues, folk, and jazz elements can have that effect on even the most jaded curmudgeon.

Mann has released about a dozen albums, either solo or collaborations (with Bob Brozman, Susanne Vogt, and others), but has issued twice as many instructional books and DVDs – on blues in general or specific artists, such as Lonnie Johnson, Blind Blake, and Big Bill Broonzy. This 90-minute DVD is, finally, about the man himself. Interspersed among 13 songs are interview segments in which Mann talks about growing up in New York, where he was fortunate enough to have Josh White perform at his school and go to Davis' home for lessons (he even remembers the Reverend's phone number: AX1-7609), and his musical philosophy. He alternates playing a Monteleone Hot Club maple flat-top with oval sound-hole and his Martin MC-18 signature

model – mahogany back and sides, with a brighter, almost parlor tone.

It's hard to fault Mann's impeccable playing; the only criticism would be some of the songs, written by him and/or Stephen Calt – which, like so many homages to bluesmen (in this case, Little Brother Montgomery, Willie Brown, and Snooks Eaglin), get overly romanticized and a bit trite. On the other hand, it's hard to imagine any higher tribute than his jazz-instrumental interpretation of Davis' "Death Don't Have No Mercy." – **DF**



Rory Gallagher

Ghost Blues:

The Story of Rory Gallagher

Eagle Vision

Irish blues-rock guitarist Rory Gallagher never became a superstar or a guitar hero whose name rolls off the tongue. Why? We get part of the answer in this fascinating documentary.

Gallagher was far more interested in the music than in being a "star," going so far as to throw away the master tapes of a record that would "break him" in America in the '70s, just hours before label executives were to hear it.

He made clear to record labels his

disinterest in singles; he didn't *want* a hit. And in an interview clip here, he makes obvious his thoughts about how an album is a complete work and it should be digested as such. There's no denying his skills as a singer, songwriter, and guitarist, and this film displays through live clips and interviews with people he influenced. He's the obvious equal of plenty of European players who remain "guitar heroes," as demonstrated on bonus disc here showing his appearances from German TV's "Beat Club."

Interviews with players influenced by Gallagher's playing include Johnny Marr, who talks about meeting the affable Irishman and wanting his guitar to look worn like his. U2's The Edge recalls Gallagher as the single most important Irish musician to ever play rock and roll. Slash reminisces about an early-'90s gig in L.A. where he got to jam with Gallagher staying up all night with him, playing acoustics. Fellow Irishman Bob Geldof talks about Gallagher's band, Taste, at the Isle of Wight.

In some ways, his is a tragic story of a player who died too young and just missed hitting it big. In other ways, it's an inspiring story of an uncompromising musician of enormous talent. Along with other recent releases, this revelatory film should push Gallagher to the forefront of his generation's players. – **JH VG**