

LEO WELCH
MISSISSIPPI VOICES



Leo "Bud" Welch
Sabougla Voices

In this day and age, it's downright incredible that 81-year-old Mississippi bluesman Leo "Bud" Welch has remained unknown to the broader musical world. Unknown – until now, that is. Welch was born in 1932 in Sabougla, a crossroads burg in central Mississippi that's so small most maps can't find it. Welch has called the area home for his entire life.

And throughout that life he's played music – fiddle, harmonica, and guitar, among other instruments. Perhaps due to his home away from the Delta proper, his playing style owes more to R.L. Burnside or Junior Kimbrough than to Son House or Robert Johnson.

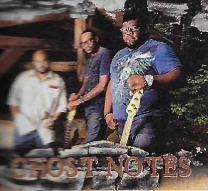
But Welch would agree with House that a musician has to decide between the church and the blues. Welch chose to play his guitar in the service of the Lord, and while this album rocks with loud electric guitar and blues licks, it's a gospel album through and through.

Opening track "Praise His Name" is typical, with Welch picking a rocking riff and then echoing the religious lyrics with his overdriven leads. "I come to sing my song," he testifies, "I come to praise his name."

Like the sacred steel tradition or House's own religious songs, Welch's music rides on powerful guitar. Tunes like "Praying Time" and "His Holy Name" celebrate the Lord with raucous boogies, fuzzed-out solo lines, and plenty of deep, soulful overb.

If you're into the blues, gospel, or the legacy of guitar music, this album marks history. – *Michael Dregni*

ERIC GALES TRIO
GHOST NOTES



Eric Gales Trio
Ghost Notes

Eric Gales is arguably the most underrated guitarist of his generation. Emerging in the early '90s with a post-Hendrix blueprint that combined a fusion of blues, rock, and gospel, he never sustained the visibility of artists like Kenny Wayne Shepherd or Joe Bonamassa. Perhaps it's because they



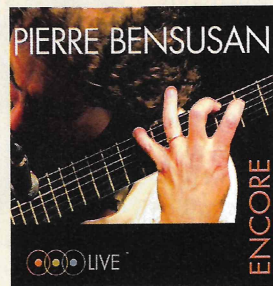
Pierre Bensusan with his trusty Lowden guitar.

AN ETHEREAL JOURNEY

In a career spanning four decades, acoustic virtuoso Pierre Bensusan has created some of the most enchanting guitar music ever heard, much of it in his beloved DADGAD tuning. Oddly enough, even with near-continuous touring, he's still a cult commodity. *Encore*, his three-CD set of live recordings from the mid '70s to today, may cure that.

On *Encore*, you can hear this style in "Happy Feeling" and "Demain, dès l'Aube," both fine live examples of his otherworldly approach. Listen for the soaring melodies and arpeggios, bent strings, rippling harmonics, changeable time signatures, tapping, and moving basslines – sometimes all at once. It often

sounds at times like two – maybe three – guitarists. But it's all Bensusan laying it down live. That style is the just



Pierre Bensusan
Encore

the tip of the iceberg. In the mid '70s, Bensusan played straight-up bluegrass mandolin with banjoist Bill Keith and, in fact, was a smokin' eight-stringer. The Frenchman has a deep affinity for Irish music and shows it

here in his wonderful "Celtic Medley."

Also included is one of his best-loved songs, the instrumental "Wu Wei." It may have an Asian title, but his guitar work here is genre-smashing, as he mixes world folk with pop hooks, classical structure, and jazz chord changes in uncanny fashion. If a guitar could make you feel like flying, this gem might be the one to do it.

Whether you like acoustic/DADGAD and other fingerstyle virtuosos, or are a music-culture traveler by nature, this is a must-grab release. More broadly, it's long past time for Bensusan to be acknowledged as one of the acoustic giants of our era. – *Pete Prown*