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America's Music Legacy DVD Series



Leave it to a British company to take a good look at the roots of American music. Actually the performances contained in the *America's Music Legacy* series were all commissioned for American television but this footage probably would have been lost or just gathering dust somewhere if not for English outfit Quantum Leap. The four DVDs in the current flight of releases spotlight the genres of country & western, rhythm & blues, rock'n'roll and gospel. Each video is two hours long and as with any presentation that features a wide variety of artists, some viewers will need to fast forward through the parts they don't particularly like. But each DVD has its moments, for example the late Billy Preston's portion of *America's Music Legacy: Rhythm & Blues* where he performs a rousing version of "Will it Go Round in Circles" and a spot-on imitation of Ray Charles. Filmed in 1985, Preston is the most contemporary performer in a roster that also features Sam Moore, Gloria Lynne, Brook Benton, a particularly sassy Ruth Brown and others. Each show has an emcee; for the r&b show it is Billy Eckstine and for the rock'n'roll film, featuring acts like Little Anthony, Leslie Gore, Chubby Checker and Lou Christie it is Fabian. These shows are not meant to be be-all-and-end-all explanations of the particular genre they represent; rather they are quick looks into the evolution of a particular style of distinctly American music as showcased by noted performers from that genre. *America's Music Legacy: Country & Western* features Razy Bailey, Moe Bandy, Jerry Lee Lewis, Ricky Skaggs and others while the gospel DVD holds performances from Andre Crouch, the Winans, the Archers and the Chambers Family along with vintage film clips featuring Mahalia Jackson.

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