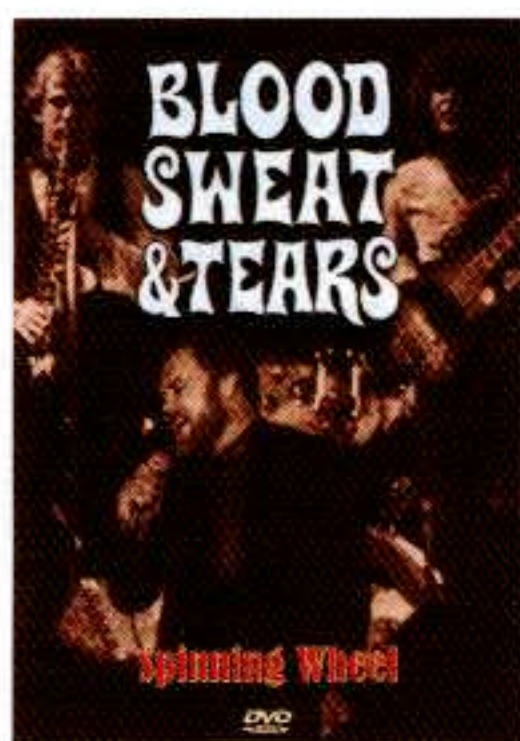


with Herb, Earl and Cosimo Matassa are wonderful, with each reminiscing about the sessions that took place at New Orleans' J&M Studios, owned by Cosimo.

The 13-track CD featured the same musicians, with special guests Charmaine Neville, Maria Muldaur, Tex Stevens and John Mooney. Mitch wrote all the songs on the DVD and all but Fats Domino's "I'm Ready" on the CD.

So how did Mitch do with all this talent behind him? On my first listen to the CD I thought he sounded "too white" (which he is). The music is sensational but I think I expected more. I then watched the DVD and really enjoyed it, as I saw how Dave Bartholomew worked with Mitch's phrasing and vocal delivery. When I listened to the CD again, I decided that this is a fun tribute to the music of New Orleans.

—Dan Guilfoyle



**BLOOD, SWEAT & TEARS**

*Spinning Wheel* DVD

(Cherry Red)

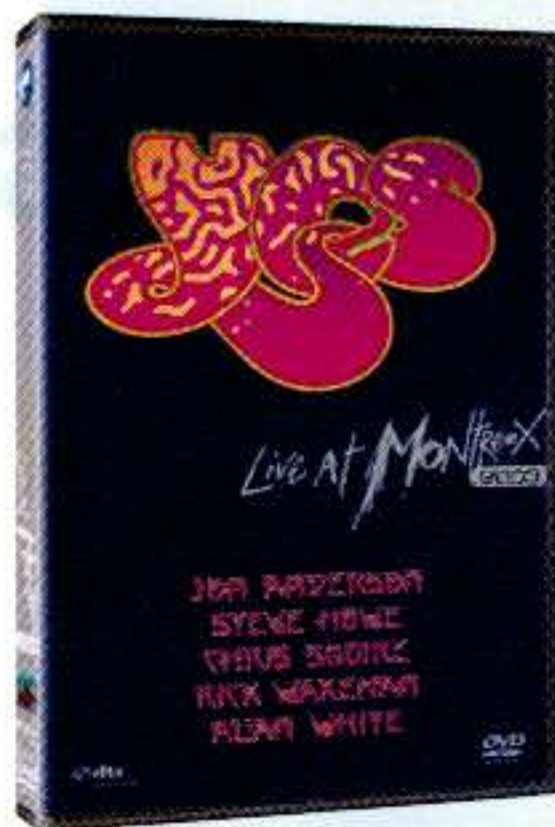
In 1980, vocalist David Clayton-Thomas and the remnants of Blood, Sweat &

Tears made an ill-fated stab at relevance with *Nuclear Blues*. The album flopped and this once-mighty jazz-rock collective formed by Al Kooper continued its slide toward the casino circuit.

This 58-minute DVD documents BS&T at a 1980 concert in Halifax, England. The title is particularly ironic because the band truncates hits like "Spinning Wheel" into medley form to make room for fusion-flavored expositions like "Spanish Wine Suite" and a cover of Hendrix's "Manic Depression" that inexplicably fades out mid-song.

Although *Spinning Wheel* is poorly filmed and recorded, die-hard fans may not mind since it's also the only BS&T concert commercially available on DVD.

—Greg Beets



**YES**

*Live at Montreux 2003* DVD

(Eagle Rock)

Live from the Auditorium

Stravinsky, this is an amazing example of a powerful band caught on a good night.

Legendary prog-rock band Yes has seen members come and go for decades, but this could be the definitive configuration (though there are varied and heated opinions about that), with singer Jon Anderson, guitarist Steve Howe, keyboard player Rick Wakeman, bassist Chris Squire and drummer Alan White.

The 17 tunes on the two-hour and 18-minute DVD provide a good balance of older and newer material. The explosive "Siberian Khatru," perhaps the only song in the world to rock out in 15/8 time, sets the tone here. Howe starts it out slow, too slow, and the band corrects him at a faster tempo, and the push and pull between them creates the tension that powers the intricate yet visceral song. Howe's outro solo is just jaw-dropping, from his clever ideas and phrasing to his amazing technique and perfect, pure guitar tones.

The majestic "And You and I" is a powerful highlight, as is the more sinister "Heart of the Sunrise" and stunning epic "Awaken." Each member has a solo turn, and none of them disappoint.

The production values of the DVD are high, though sometimes the solos are a bit too loud in the mix. *Montreux 2003* is as much fun to watch as to listen to, and is an exercise in contrasts. Here Howe stands serious and still, the angelic Anderson flits around the stage, and Squire charges around like a bull. Remarkably, the musicianship—which was always staggering—is still here 30-odd years later, in some ways with more depth and weight. "Roundabout" is a fitting closer, juxtaposing frantic and ethereal all in one tune.

Long overlooked by the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Yes proves itself worthy and then some in this spectacular show.

—David Malachowski



**WAR**

*Loose Grooves: Funkin' Live in England 1980* DVD

(RPM Records, UK)

This premier

rock-funk-jazz-Latin-soul fusion group still has what it takes to get your body moving, whether sitting or on the dance floor.

Some may question War's place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but bear in mind that their tracks are downloaded today to the tune of 80,000 annually. Eric Burdon's fame may have brought War to our attention, but innate musicianship and showmanship keep them there. The inclusion of fellow West Coast trailblazers Tower of Power horn section on this video makes a dream lineup.

The performance's opening, Lonnie Jordan's quiet intro, made me wonder if I had stumbled into an MJQ performance. In quick progression though, a rousing version of "Spill The Wine" brought me up to speed.

I also liked this version of "Slippin' Into Darkness" more than most I've heard War perform, but I felt it was too short. Their improvisational mastery makes up for it somewhat, however. Watching this video reminded me that War was one of the first and best improvisational jam bands playing in the '60s and '70s, long before the term "jam band" became fashionable. Their earlier released recordings were cobbled together from their memorable, much longer improvisations.

Lee Oskar's harp solos are innovative and mesmerizing, while his wail on "Gypsy Man" leaves nothing to be desired.

As if all this isn't enough, the interaction among the various musicians is fascinating to watch. The way they challenge and play off of one another reminded me of a musical version of "The Dozens," played out. "Yo Mama!!" put to music, as it were.

Then the memorable "Me And Baby Brother" brings the funk into the fore of this performance, its length, depth and complexity making up for the brevity I complained of earlier.

—Lou Novacheck