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Bernard Allison Energized-Live In Europe (Ruf)

Bernard Allison played with his father Luther for several years, but carefully developed a sound and a style that was quite different, though it certainly contained elements of that influence. Bernard doesn't quite range over the guitar or do as many on-stage tricks as Luther, but he's developed into a fine player and vocalist, and those skills are spotlighted on Energized-Live In Europe (Ruf).

Heading a band with bassist Jassen Wilber, keyboardist Mike Viahakis and drummer Andrew Thomas, Allison goes through a mixed menu of numbers with prototype blues lyric structure ("Bad Love," "A Woman named Trouble," "Too Many Woman") and also delves into country-soul territory ("A Change Must Come," "I Just Came Back To Say Goodbye"), and powerhouse instrumentals ("Another Ride To The City," "The Walk" and "Wah Wah Action," where he displays his forte with feedback and pedals).

This is an exciting, musically delightful session, with Allison showing that he's among the best entertainers and performers in the contemporary blues arena.

Guitarist Tal Farlow was a brilliant soloist, so skilled and gifted that he made incredibly intricate playing seem loose and easy. But just as he'd risen to the very top of the jazz world, Farlow quit and became a sign painter in 1958. He didn't emerge from obscurity until the early '80s, when widespread reaction to the film Talmage Farlow and the discovery by fans that he was still alive led to his return.

Farlow remained a revered player until his death in 1998, and now Lorenzo DeStefano's original film Talmage Farlow (MVD) is available again, with several great extras. These include a photo gallery, outtakes of Farlow with Lenny Breau, another marvelous and obscure guitarist, and material featuring Farlow's original trio, plus contributions from George Benson (a longtime admirer), Tommy Flanagan, Red Mitchell, Jimmy Lyons and Red Norvo.

Farlow loved music and hated the spotlight. His intensity and devotion to his craft are reaffirmed by his comments throughout the film, and it's a real pleasure to have it widely available again.

By Ron Wynn