

Troubadour Blues

(2011) 91 min. DVD: \$24.95. Tom Weber Films.

Tom Weber roams the country to speak with roots-oriented musicians who travel from town to town, much like the troubadours of old. Since most only use a guitar as accompaniment, they can cover a fair amount of territory for a modest amount of money. If some, like Dave Alvin, don't necessarily enjoy the rigors of touring, they still feel it's worth the effort in order to perform in front of live audiences. As RB Morris puts it, "I feel like a circuit preacher." Although the tools of the trade—guitar and harmonica—have virtually remained unchanged from the heyday of Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, the ability to use the Internet for promotional purposes represents a significant difference. With overhead costs going down over the years, Chris Smither feels that he's "doing better than I ever did in my life." Artists who have been burned by the record business, such as Gurf Morlix, also appreciate doing things for themselves, even if that means more work on their part. Morlix plainly states, "I detest the music industry." Weber spends most of his time with Peter Case, who played in the Nerves and the Plimsouls in the 1980s. The Plimsouls had an alternative radio hit with "A Million Miles Away" and appeared in *Valley Girl*, but Case has been a solo act for decades now (and says he originally started out as a street singer). During filming, Case undergoes heart surgery, but soon returns to the stage. In between the performance clips, Weber works in thoughts about songwriting and the risks of the road. An interesting documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)