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NILS LOFGREN Reissues Wienerworld (2010)

Both these albums nicely showcase the full of extent of Nil Lofgren mighty talent with 'Sacred Weapon' focussing on his multi instrumentalism while the 'Live' album is more about his guitar playing.



In fact 'Nils Lofgren Band Live' ultimately rocks out and offers a decent career retrospective outside of the most obvious material from Lofgren's extensive back catalogue.

The rootsier **Sacred Weapon** (Wienerworld VMCD1011) isn't the kind of album you could imagine an early career Lofgren making. The songs are reflective, spiritual and dark by turns and infused by his trademark guitar work. But there's also a strong Americana and Country feel to some of the material, not too mention a significant choral and backing vocal presence. The latter works well in part, especially on the guitar led and sad lyrics of 'You're Not There'. Nils also go country on the hymnal Crazy Horse sounding 'Whisky Holler' with its strong pedal steel line, but the slow Southern sounding dobro led shuffle 'Pay Your Woman,' plods with Nils's croaky vocals not helping.

Both 'Tried and True' and Mr' Hardcore' are better, being heartfelt laments to a fallen football star Walter Payton and former Grin producer David Briggs, but only 'Frankie Hang On' with its 'Cry Tough' vibe pulls the album out of its languor. For fans only. ***

Nils Lofgren Live (Wienerworld VMCD 1012) (at The Rams Head Annapolis) was recorded in June 2002 and includes four tracks from Nil's early Grin career and some highlights from his lesser known albums such as 'Breaking Angel' and ('Shot At You') from 'Crooked Line'. And overlooking a forgettable bass and drum solo interlude - it's a live gig right? - this live outing finds Nils in

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sparkling form.

But in rock and roll context is everything and given his touring commitments with Springsteen this album finds Nils rebuilding his solo career.

He opens with some fine acoustic picking on 'Puttin Out Fires' and wastes little time in rocking out some muscular guitar work with Buck Brown on 'Daddy Dream' from 1983's oft overlooked 'Wonderland' album, on which the band interplay is superb and Nils excels himself on some lyrical soloing. There's also an interest Lou Reed co write 'Drifting Man' featuring Nils on acoustic over a lush synth sweep. The crowd also picks up on the band's rocking version of 1995's 'Damaged Goods' and the lovely guitar textures and expansive melody of 'Shot At You'.

But it is disc two's 'Girl in Motion' that provides the high point, starting with some restrained playing over a hypnotic beat before Nils sprinkles magic dust on his guitar over eleven captivating minutes of brilliance.

A fine band effort then, with Nils occasionally showing glimpses of his underrated ability, definitely worth a punt. ****

Review by Pete Feenstra



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***** Out of this world | **** Pretty damn fine |

*** OK, approach with caution unless you are a fan |

** Instant bargain bin fodder | * Ugly. Just ugly

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