

Various Artists

*The Mooney Suzuki — Live
June 29, 2001 — The Bowery
Collection*

MVD Audio (MVDA4674)
Grade: ★★★★★

*Terror — Live June 10, 2004
— The Bowery Collection*

MVD Audio (MVDA4700)
Grade: ★★

*The Toasters — Live June 28,
2001 — The Bowery Collection*

MVD Audio (MVDA4699)
Grade: ★★★★★

A dirty little hole in an equally dirty part of town — Manhattan's Lower East Side to be precise — CBGB is where New York City's late-'70s punk scene grew up. As filthy and claustrophobic as the club was, it was home to Blondie, The Ramones, the Talking Heads, Television and other musical renegades of the period, and there was no place like it.

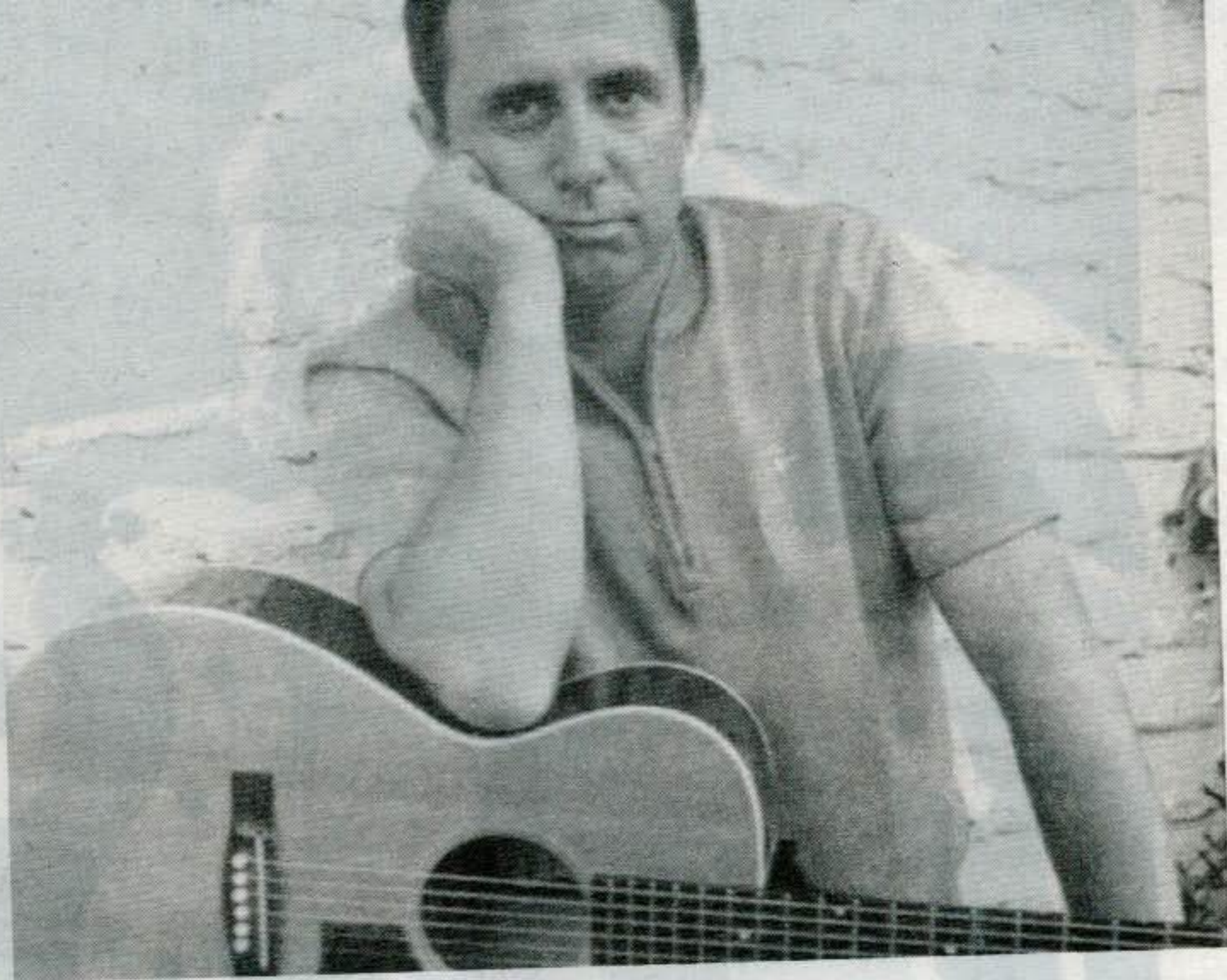
What many forget is, CBGB, which closed in 2006, had a purpose-driven life that lasted well beyond punk's heyday. Serving as a launching pad for indie hopefuls and veteran DIY acts 'til its death, CBGB hosted hundreds of incendiary shows over the years. Now comes MVD Audio's series of live recordings — titled "CBGB OMFUG Masters Series: The Bowery Series" — celebrating CBGB's legacy. Some of the proceeds will go to the Hilly Kristal Foundation For Musicians And Artists, making these archival releases a worthy cause.

Three of the initial offerings excavate concerts from ska heroes the Toasters, garage-rock showmen The Mooney Suzuki and hardcore/metalcore insurgents Terror, and the sonic quality is first rate, as the recordings come direct from the soundboard.

As expected, Toasters deliver a high-octane performance, high-stepping their way through a punched-up "Shocker!" and letting burnished horns ooze all over "2Tone Army." The percolating grooves of "I'm Running Right Through The World" and the buttery soul of "Mona" simmer on the CBGB stove, setting up skankin' throwdowns "Social Security" and "Ploughshares Into Guns." All in all, it's a big, ganja-fueled party that never lets up.

If the Mooneys' last album was a tepid false step, as some contend, their contribution here is reminder of just how raucous and exciting they can be live. Sweat pours from the song

Smells Like Records



"In A Young Man's Mind," while the slashing guitars of "Singin' A Song About Today" and riotous energy of "Everything Gone Wrong" and "Half My Heart" bring the house down. They continue upping the ante all the way through. The distorted howl of the British Invasion-style rave-up "Make My Way" injects The Animals with steroids and sucks down Ritalin, and then, just when it seems exhaustion has finally set in, a gasoline-soaked "Oh Sweet Susanna" lights up a countrified melody and lets it burn.

As for Terror, aggression only gets them so far. Growling, barely intelligible vocals, predictable guitar thrashing and punishing rhythms stuck in a rut doom "Not This Time" and "Nothing To Me." Tinny opener "Better Off Without You" is a sign of awful things to come, and while there is incredible fury and Bad Brains-like intensity in "What Have You Done," all the angry cheerleading and shouted expletives in the world can't save this from the landfill.

With liner notes filled with memories and heartfelt tribute from Handsome Dick Manitoba repeated in each LP, these are nice eulogies to one of rock's greatest institutions. And hearing The Mooney Suzuki in its native habitat is an absolute treat.

— Peter Lindblad

Nik Freitas

Sun Down

Team Love Records (TL-30)
Grade: ★★★★★

That Nik Freitas is a real charmer. In true

DIY fashion, Freitas, whose voice has an unmistakable Dylanesque quality — only light years warmer and a damn sight more coherent — does it all on *Sun Down*, writing, arranging, producing and playing the whole thing all by his lonesome. While that fact alone doesn't qualify him for sainthood, *Sun Down's* dewy blend of sun-dappled, bittersweet folk-pop and classical influences, a la Sufjan Stevens, should get him close.

Wearing a sad, world-weary smile on his face, Freitas tells tales of unmet expectations and mistake-prone, fallen angels over immaculately arranged instrumentation and vocals on an album of picture-perfect, easy-going songs that echo the pop elegance of Burt Bacharach and the light country touches of Lee Hazlewood.

Freitas' fourth record, *Sun Down* opens with a mellow title track of miniature character sketches drawn with delicate, acoustic guitar, rich, electric-guitar glow and tender piano. In the rollicking "All The Way Down," finger snaps and dancing piano waltz right into a gorgeous, sweeping chorus of voices, and it's followed by the nakedly vulnerable "What You Become," the rambunctious, horn-fueled ramble "Sophie," and two Wilco-styled comedowns ingrained with fragile hope, "Love Around" and "Comes To Me," all of which traffic in guileless melodies, heartbreaking swoons and lush sonics.

Nostalgic without wallowing in someone else's past glory, Freitas' work doesn't imply that he's applying to be the next Dylan. That's a position that'll never be filled. But, he's well on his way to establishing his own identity as a pop craftsman of the highest order.

— Peter Lindblad