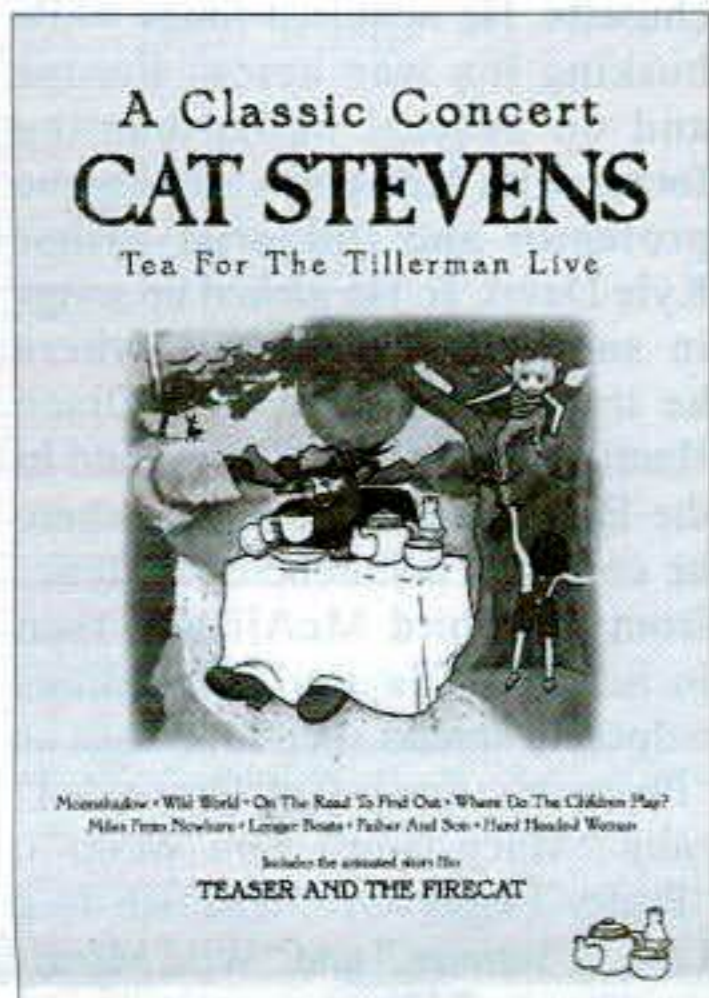


# DVDs



## CAT STEVENS - A CLASSIC CONCERT: TEA FOR THE TILLERMAN LIVE

MVD Visual MVDV4778 (2008)

It's easy to forget how effective Cat Stevens was as a singer/songwriter before he converted to Islam in the late 1970s, when he auctioned away his guitars and began a 27-year retreat from music. Filmed in June 1971 in the studios of Los Angeles' KCET, *Tea for the Tillerman Live!* helps to remind us. Backed by guitarist/vocalist Alun Davies and bass guitarist/conga player Larry Steele, Stevens is captured at a crossroads. Spending most of 1968 and '69 either in the hospital or at home convalescing from tuberculosis and a collapsed lung, he had resurfaced with a revitalized musical vision. Forsaking the orchestration and over-production of his previous work, he scaled things down to the simple acoustic-based arrangements and spiritually minded lyricism that enabled him to sell more than one hundred million albums. With a set list culled from Stevens' platinum-selling comeback albums, *Tea for the Tillerman* and *Teaser and the Firecat*, this DVD spotlights the Greek-British singer/songwriter at his prime and showcases some of the 1970s' most enduring music. Most of the songs, including "Where Do the Children Play," "Father and Son," and the top-20 hit, "Wild World," stick to arrangements heard on the studio albums (though a third verse is added to "Longer Boats" not found on the original recording). An animated short, "Teaser and the Firecat," drawn by Stevens and

narrated by the late Spike Mulligan, is included.

— Craig Harris (Chicopee, MA)

## GUITAR GROOVE: A SESSION WITH BROOKS WILLIAMS

Woodhall Music WM-G-001 (2008)

Brooks Williams takes viewers past the basics of what he calls "cowboy chords," in this 90-minute DVD, *Guitar Groove: A Session With Brooks Williams*. Demonstrating how to bring three-dimensional life to a tune, the Statesboro, Georgia-born and western Massachusetts-based guitarist touches on how to use moving chords and add bass lines, funky right-hand rhythms, and bluesy riffs. In addition to teaching three songs — W.C. Handy's "Careless Love" and his own songs "Knife Edge" and "Rich Tonight" — Williams also shows how to apply depth to his instrumental "Belfast Blues." A bonus section, with additional licks, is included, as well as a tab booklet.

— Craig Harris (Chicopee, MA)

## BATTLEFIELD BAND IN CONCERT

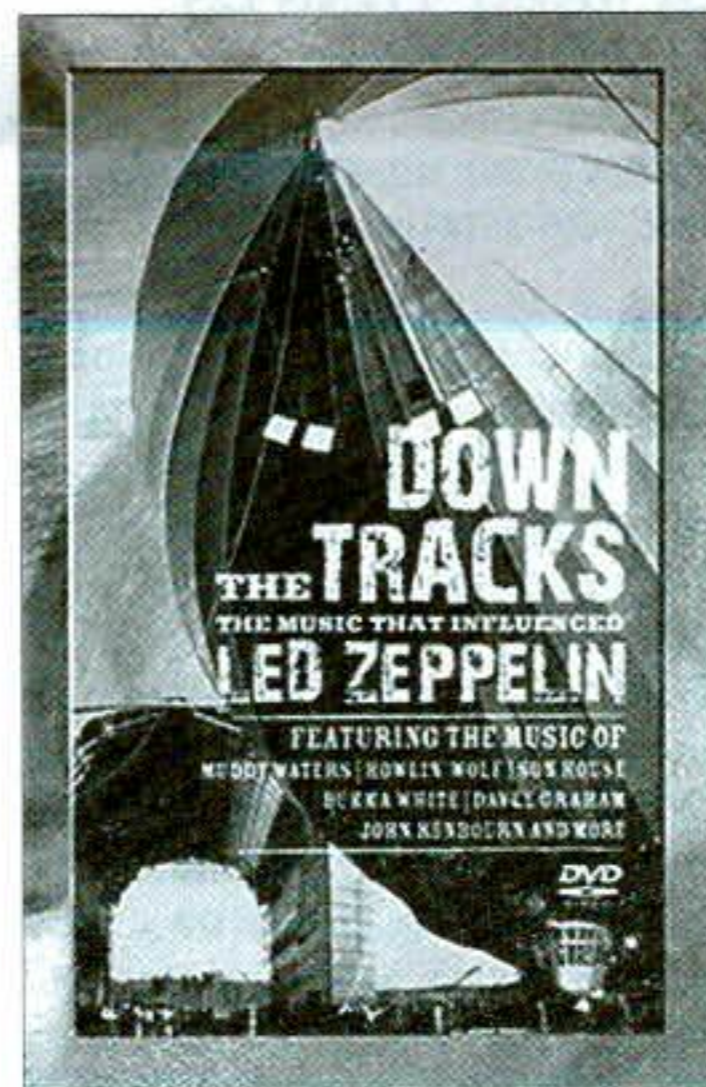
Tonn-Mor/Temple DVD0801 (2008)

Thirty-six years after it first assembled in Glasgow amid the Scottish traditional-music revival of the 1970s, Battlefield Band isn't yet quite as old as the Highland hills, but it seems to be almost as enduring. There have been a vast number of different lineups over the decades, but the group has always remained true to its original mission of spreading the robust spirit and cheerful skirl of Scottish music around the world. These days the band comprises founding member Alan Reid on vocals and keyboards, U.S.-born piper and whistle player Mike Katz, singer/guitarist Sean O'Donnell, and fiddler Alasdair White. This 70-minute concert video, capturing that quartet onstage in Musselburgh, Scotland, documents one of the major reasons the group maintains an enthusiastic following after all these years: It still puts on a fine show.

The stars of the video are the gigantically bearded Katz and the dynamic O'Donnell, who alternates on lead vocals with Reid. Most of the seven tune sets on the disc feature the stirring blast of the Highland pipes, although fiddler White certainly holds his own in the mix and offers

a crisp medley of solo fiddle tunes, as well. O'Donnell is a singer whose intensity draws the audience into the music, as on a very effective cover of Tom Waits' pensive "Shiver Me Timbers." Reid handles the lead vocals on three of the slower songs, including a couple of originals, like the immigration narrative "The Road of Tears," but otherwise stands to the side behind his keyboards directing the proceedings like a benevolent father. Short interviews with band members are interspersed with the concert footage, and an appended video diary from a Pacific Rim tour provides additional lighthearted background.

— Tom Nelligan (Waltham, MA)



## DOWN THE TRACKS: THE MUSIC THAT INFLUENCED LED ZEPPELIN

Eagle Media EM 35107-9 (2008)

As one of the first "heavy" metal rock bands to explode in popularity on the music scene back in the late 1960s, Led Zeppelin drew inspiration from a wide variety of sources. The Delta and urban blues of Charley Patton, Son House, Muddy Waters, Bukka White, and Howlin' Wolf were particularly fascinating for Jimmy Page (guitar) and Robert Plant (vocals), who took basic blues riffs and chords and gave them an electric growl and thunder. In fact, you can build a strong case that without the blues, there would be no rock 'n' roll, and probably no Elvis Presley, who also is given major credit for helping British teens in the late 1950s grab guitars and shake their hips. This 93-minute DVD goes into great depth about early blues artists, the skiffle movement with Lonnie

Donegan, Sam Phillips, and Sun Records in Memphis, JRR Tolkien, the occult, and the British trad folk movement with Davey Graham and John Renbourn. Music historians, journalists, and producers give their own thoughts on Led Zeppelin's roots, and there are plenty of guitar close-ups of various styles of blues, country, and rock. The best part of this DVD is the engaging and highly entertaining segment on the early American blues musicians from the Delta; the most disappointing part is that we never get to hear any of the members of Led Zeppelin giving us the lowdown on their early idols.

— T.J. McGrath (Woodbridge, CT)

## RICHARD GILEWITZ LIVE AT CHARLOTTE'S WEB

Mel Bay MB21640DVD (2008)

## RICHARD GILEWITZ'S ALL-TIME FAVORITE FINGERPICKING GUITAR TUNES VOLUME ONE

Mel Bay MB21326DVD (2006)

*Live at Charlotte's Web* is a 66-minute live recording of guitarist Richard Gilewitz's show at the Rockford, Illinois, club back in 2005. This simple two-camera shoot captures Gilewitz at his laid-back best, with an equal mix of cover tunes and original compositions and his witty song introductions. Gilewitz has always been a nimble guitarist with a flair for writing the interesting tune, and there are a number of wonderful examples, such as "Thumbsing" and "Synapse Collapse," included here. He also performs some excellent covers, including a couple of John Fahey numbers, one by Ry Cooder, a blues number from W.C. Handy, and Jorma Kaukoenen's "Embryonic Journey." Overall, quite enjoyable, and a nice snapshot of his live performance.

Gilewitz's instructional video, *Fingerpicking Guitar Tunes*, is produced in his same relaxed style. Here, he takes two hours to demonstrate how to fingerpick a cross-section of tunes, including "Freight Train," "Alice's Restaurant," "Scarborough Fair," and three others — though, strangely, none of his own. Again, this is well recorded and presented in a way that should prove very instructive to guitarist of many different levels.

— Jim Lee (Simi Valley, CA)