

## DUSTY RELICS

### Al Stewart UNCORKED

Freeworld/Floating  
World Music

★★★★★

*A charming Al Stewart  
live recording*

*featuring lead guitarist Dave Nachmanoff.*



This acoustic live album surfaced in late 2009 and was originally available via guitarist Dave Nachmanoff's web site, he's the credited producer. It has now received a full UK release to tie in with Al Stewart's 12 date national tour, his first in almost a decade. If you're familiar with the fact that Stewart is a wine connoisseur and collector, and recall his nectar of the grape themed song collection *DOWN IN THE CELLAR* (2000), then you'll appreciate the title of this live recording. The full title being *UNCORKED—AL STEWART LIVE WITH DAVE NACHMANOFF*, it was recorded during the pair's spring-time 2009 East Coast tour.

Across five decades Stewart's lyrical canon has displayed a penchant for embracing historic events and characters. *UNCORKED* opens with a seven-minute plus segue of *Last Days Of The Century* from the 1988 album of the same name, and *Constantinople* from the earlier *24 CARROTS* (1980). Controversy and possible corruption surrounding the American presidency is nothing new, evidenced by *Warren Harding*, who held the post from 1921 until his death from a heart attack two years later, while *Palace Of Versailles* recalls France in the time of Robespierre and Bonaparte. A submariner's life takes centre stage in *Life In Dark Waters*, and the disc closes with an almost six-minute rendition of *Old Admirals* another briny themed tale. Tagged on to the end of the latter is Al's recollection of moving to New York in 1968 with the aim of 'becoming a star,' and the benefits of being, for one night, a Simon & Garfunkel roadie.

Stewart subjectively shifts focus with the recollection of losing a lover in the older tune *News From Spain*—originally released only on a 7" single—and follows with the even earlier *Bedsitter Images*, a poignant recollection of 'flat life' in late 1960's London. In *Auctioning Dave*, one of Al's between song interludes, he amuses the audience with a tale of 'taking Dave home for the night,' particularly the elderly Meridian, Mississippi oil millionaire's widow who returned him 'clothing in tatters and absolutely covered

in oil.' Speaking of Nachmanoff, his tasteful contributions on lead guitar are up front throughout this collection, allied to his occasional contributions on background vocal. **Arthur Wood**

[www.floatingworldrecords.co.uk/albums/uncorked/](http://www.floatingworldrecords.co.uk/albums/uncorked/)

### Blackhawk BLACKHAWK/ STRONG ENOUGH

SPV: 265832

★★★★★

*Two perfect country  
records from one of  
country music's favourite harmony groups*



Over the past year or so, I've been fortunate enough to have been asked to review several SPV double re-release albums by some of country music's finest, never truly forgotten artists including Ray Price, Marty Robbins, Keith Whitley—and now Blackhawk, (which I have to admit, I'm now completely smitten with); the latest edition to this group, as two of their best-received albums (1994's *BLACKHAWK*; 1995's *STRONG ENOUGH*) re-surface to the attention of modern day ears.

Taking their name from an American luxury car, (Stutz Blackhawk), this male trio, which initially comprised veteran Music Row singer-songwriters and multi-instrumentalists Henry Paul, Dave Robbins and Van Stephenson from 1992-2000, is a tightly-knit unit with an unmistakable and distinctive sound, consisting of richly-textured harmonies, image-laden lyrics, stellar musicianship and country-stitched sounds, that leaves you no choice but to stop, listen and favourably take it all in.

With superb numbers such as *Goodbye Says It All* and *Down In Flames*; you know you're listening to something extra special indeed, unavoidably singing along with every gemstone song. In fact, nearly all from their first two albums featured here give a superb listen; from the rocky *Stone By Stone*, infectious country numbers *That's Just About Right*, *Between Ragged And Wrong* and *One More Heartache*, plus softer treasures *Love Like This* and *Let 'Em Whirl* from their debut, to the harmony-laden *A Kiss Is Worth A Thousand Words*, *Hook, Line And Sinker*, the chordally-steady *Big Guitar*, chorally memorable *Any Man With A Heartbeat* plus love song *I'm Not Strong Enough To Say No* (which earned the hawks a number two slot on the country charts)

from their follow-up record—there's a lot here for the listener to take in, and on every note, Blackhawk gets it right.

Despite being reminiscent of Bruce Hornsby and the Range and Don Henley, Blackhawk have their own tasty contemporary sound that is still capable of reaching audiences near and far, nearly 20 years after their first two projects were released, and will, without doubt, remain one of country music's favourite harmony groups for some time to come. **Emily Saxton**

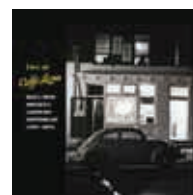
[www.blackhawklive.com](http://www.blackhawklive.com)

### Various Artists LIVE AT CAFFE LENA: MUSIC FROM AMERICA'S LEGENDARY COFFEEHOUSE (1967-2013)

Tomkins Square Records

★★★★★

*Folk music is timeless as this 3-CD tribute  
ably proves*



During 1960, as a folk music revival was gathering pace, the late Lena Spencer (who died in 1989) opened Caffe Lena in Saratoga Springs, New York. Half-a-century plus later it remains the longest continuously operating coffeehouse and acoustic music venue in the United States. This three disc, 47-song, three-hour long box set gathers together 'amazing performances' from the Caffe's stage.

Co-produced by Grammy winning engineer Steve Rosenthal aided by Jocelyn Arem from the Caffe Lena History Project, over a five-year period their investigations involved 'crawling around in attics and digging through basements' of former venue patrons to locate tapes that furnish the music on *LIVE AT CAFFE LENA*.

Accompanied by a 32-page booklet, in his liner note Rosenthal envisions a future where further Lena recordings will be 'uncovered, donated and released.' Following Lena's passing Caffe Lena became a not-for-profit organisation, run by a small paid staff, a Board of Directors and countless volunteers, and in 1998 they purchased the venue assuring its continuance.

Where I alluded in the opening paragraph to Caffe Lena as an acoustic music venue, traditional folk, blues, singer-songwriters, jazz and bluegrass musicians performed there and feature on this set. Disc 1 focuses on the 1960s/70s,