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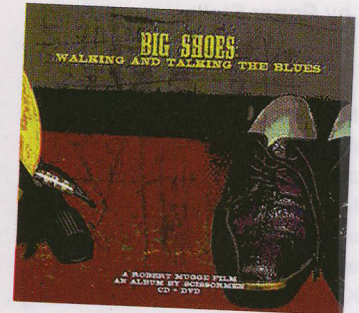
DVD ROUNDUP

THE SCISSORMEN

Big Shoes: Walking and Talking the Blues

VizzTone

If you are not familiar with the Scissormen, heed the words of guitarist Ted Drozdowski: "Playing the blues is not for sissies; you've got to strap yourself in, lock yourself down, and let it go." With the warning, the Scissormen launch themselves straight to the marrow of their version of Mississippi Hill Country blues.



This 90-minute Robert Mugge DVD and accompanying CD recorded live at the Charlie Noble's Key Palace Theatre in Redkey, IN. capture Drozdowski and drummer R.L. Hulsman at full force. The Scissormen's music springs from haunting, hypnotism of Hill Country drones mixed with carefully detailed excursions through rock and psychedelia.

Drozdowski is a veteran journalist with an encyclopedic knowledge and love of the blues who bursts forth with articulate stories at every turn. His reverence for Hill Country blues was fueled by relationships with R.L. Burnside and Jessie Mae Hemphill, each of whom spent countless hours encouraging his work. He believes that too many blues bands lean on copying tradition, rather than facing the challenge of reinterpreting the music that has inspired them as the Scissormen have done.

Mugge captures him sharing stories of blues life as he drives by car through the snowy flatlands of the Midwest with Hulsman. The DVD is centered around the Key Palace show, as well as a slide-guitar workshop at the Slippery Noodle Inn in Indianapolis, a show at the Beachland Ballroom and Tavern in Cleveland, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, and a stop in Richmond, IN. home to the legendary jazz and blues label, Gerrett Records.

On the road, Drozdowski interviews Noble about his renovation of the Key Palace Theatre and the four cabins he has built outside his theater to house musicians. He borrowed the idea from the historic Hopson Plantation shacks outside Clarksdale, MS. Eighteen years of work and he's never made a penny, Noble swears. It is a true bluesman's story.

In Richmond, Hulsman and Drozdowski shovel snow off the town's Walk of Fame to reveal monuments to pioneering blues men such as Lonnie Johnson and Charley Patton, complete with Drozdowski stories about each that come without hesitation or prompting.

The DVD is part documentary, part concert, part sit-down-at-the-kitchen-table. Mugge doesn't interfere with the stories or musical expression and is respectful of restless professor approach.

There is a lot here to digest and appreciate. It's a tour-de-force of Drozdowski's slide playing peppered with his nonstop commentary, a potent mixture that will require you to strap in, lockdown, and let it go. (Disclosure: *Big Shoes: Walking and Talking the Blues* is issued by the VizzTone Label Group, co-owned by *Blues Revue's* parent company, Visionation.)

— Michael Kinsman