



DVD REVIEWS

Brooks Williams

Brooks Williams Teaches Blues Guitar Basics Guitar Groove: A Session With Brooks Williams

This duo of instructional DVDs by Brooks Williams is aimed squarely at the beginner to intermediate player, and though they have a different focus they are a perfect complement to each other.

It's often the case that proficient players can find it hard to impart to others exactly how they do what they do. This only serves to reinforce the belief that good players don't just get where they are with hard work, but also because they possess something us mere mortals don't. Maybe there's something in that, but Brooks Williams has such an easy and engaging presence on screen that you really do feel as if he's sitting right next to you, letting you in on his secrets, and that, hey, you just might be able to play like him one day.

Brooks Williams Teaches Blues Guitar Basics does exactly what its name suggests. Brooks starts off by going through the basic format of the 12 bar blues, and some common variations such as the quick change and also looks at the format of a turnaround. From there he shows you some standard chords and rhythm patterns before delving into some licks and

riffs to spice things up. Rather than focus solely on flashy moves though, everything is put into the context of two classic blues songs 'Statesboro Blues' and 'Sweet Home Chicago'. Each section of the DVD builds logically on from the next and this is the DVD's greatest strength. Brooks also looks at different playing techniques for each example, whether it's fingerpicking, hybrid picking or just using a pick. There's no snobbery here, Brooks encourages you to play how you feel comfortable but also to see that it can be good to get other techniques under your belt. By the end of the DVD you'll be playing the two songs like an old hand, and even better have tons of riffs, licks and turnarounds that you can apply across keys. There is also an added bonus section where Brooks introduces country blues picking using the song 'Louis Collins'.

Guitar Groove: A Session With Brooks Williams takes the same structured

approach, but instead of focusing just on the blues, Brooks takes a look at how you can move beyond simple strumming to put your own stamp on songs. Working on the assumption that viewers know the basic open position chords, he shows you some moveable chord shapes, how to add bass lines and how to break down barre chords into fragments that open up a fresh way of playing, utilising the whole guitar rather than just the bottom few frets. But it's not just about the notes, as the DVD's title suggests what your picking hand does can be just as important and Brooks helps you develop this aspect of your playing, leading to funky rhythms that inject life into any song. Again, all this information is put into context using the old standard 'Careless Love' as well as Brooks' own compositions 'Knife Edge', 'Rich Tonight' and 'Belfast Blues', so you can see how these techniques and tricks can be used and modified

for use in any song.

These DVDs won't give you Brooks' astounding chops overnight (indeed, what could?) but they will offer you a solid grounding in taking your playing past simple chords and strumming patterns. Brooks' laid back manner and ease in front of the camera makes both discs a pleasure to watch, meaning you're in the right mood to take all the information on board. All in all both DVD's are highly recommended for players looking to move beyond the basics and spice up their playing. Follow them both carefully and you'll be wowing people in no time.

Don't forget that Brooks will be performing a master class session at the London Acoustic Guitar Show on Sunday the 11th of September, so come along to learn some tricks from the man himself.

Available from:
www.woodhallmusic.com

