

RANDY JOHNSTON
LIVE AT THE SMITHSONIAN JAZZ CAFE
Mel Bay Records MB21188DVD

Randy Johnston is one of the top archtop solo artists today. He has toured with Lou Donaldson and others. This DVD features Johnston in fine form on standards such as "Impressions," "Secret Love," and "Billie's Bounce." His original compositions are especially strong, such as the rhythm changes "Green Curry" and the boogaloo "Fringe Benefits." "The Nite Bird," another Johnston original, is a minor blues with a fiery solo showcasing bluesy licks, octaves and block chords a la Wes, and more modern chromatic/outside stylings. A highlight is the tasteful solo arrangement of "Here's That Rainy Day." Sympathetic accompaniment throughout is provided by bassist Tom Pietrycha and drummer Tony Leone. The only drawback is the video, which often has the recording engineer and passersby in the shots, taking attention away from the great playing.

Reviewed by Paul Colombo