

**DON HENLEY Q&A** by Tim Jones

# Fly like an Eagle

**T**he Eagles' *Farewell 1 Tour - Live From Melbourne 2-DVD-V* has just been released by Warner. The HD-DVD-V was recorded in November 2001 and features 29 tracks, including two new ones. It also has behind-the-scenes footage, interviews and sound check performances. Don Henley spoke to *RC* from his sunny Texas home about performing again with Glenn Frey, Joe Walsh and Timothy B. Schmit.

**Are you happy with the way the new DVD-V came out?**

Well, I'm never happy with anything that we do, but for the most part, yeah. It was a good performance. But it's difficult when you're filming for TV at the same time - for an NBC special. Lighting is an issue, as they want it very bright and we don't. So we had some quibbling and squabbles, but it worked out well in the end. There's a couple of new songs without me participating, but that's fine by me. One is an Eagle-esque ballad by Mr. Frey which is quite nice, and he's in charge of anything cinematic that we do. He laid down the law. The TV producers weren't very happy, but we got what we wanted, and he's been editing and mixing, and also written some instrumental music for various sections of the show. He and cinematographer Randy Edwards have created some special segments for the DVD too, including interviews.



**Are you into 5.1?**

No. I still like analogue and mono - or stereo at the most. We've only got two cans and we had quadrophonic before and that didn't work. I don't thrill to that sort of thing, but we've done all the 5.1 mixes for the audiophiles out there.

**Why did you record in Melbourne?**

Because we can! It may sound a little arrogant, but we have an enormous following there. We toured there first in '76, so, in gardening terms, we've been cultivating that ground for a long time. Recording down under also gives it an international flavour, and it was a lot less complicated for us - all our friends showing up and wanting tickets [laughs] and all the drama you get in LA or New York.

**Are you a record collector yourself?**

I still have all my 45s from the 50s - Sun and Atco; Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, Elvis. And some of my parents' big band records - Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, Gene Crooper, Harry James. I've also started to

amass a very nice collection of artists who were on the *Louisiana*

*Hayride* TV shows, which was filmed only 60 miles from my home.

I've got some of Elvis' first broadcasts from 1956, as well as a photo

collection that goes with it. Then there's my blues: Leadbelly, T. Bone

Walker, who was from my home town, as was Scott Joplin.

Also New Orleans music like Piano Red, Dr. Feelgood, Dr. John,

and bluegrass such as The Dillards, and Celtic music - though a

lot of it now is bullshit, 'cos it's crossed over into new age.

**What was the first record you bought?**

Elvis Presley's Hound Dog, though before that I had some

Looney Tunes 45s in red plastic - the coolest thing ever!

**What was the last CD you bought?**

Titi Mettrix's *Tambourine*. Her first, *Bramble Rose*, was brilliant

too.

**What album would you take to heaven?**

The Beatles' *Rubber Soul*.

**What music would you want at your funeral?**

I had to put music together for my mum's a couple of years ago, so

I've thought about that. We had an a cappella of a spiritual, I'll Fly

Away, and Danny Boy with uilleann pipes. And at mine,

I'd pick a Chopin étude or nocturne.

**What would get you dancing at a wedding?**

Today is my 10th wedding anniversary -

a long time in rock'n'roll. We had The

Glenn Miller Orchestra and The

Chieftains at our wedding. My father

was in Italy in WW2 and my parents

loved Miller's String Of Pearls, so we

danced to that. There's also For My

Wedding, from my 2000 CD, and

at my wedding I got up and sang

'The Beatles' In My Life to my

bride.

**Do you have a guilty pleasure?**

Classical music like Ravel and

Chopin piano. I can just sit with a

beer and listen to piano - it's magi-

cal. Then 180 degrees, I've been

listening recently to 80s Merle

Haggard and Rufus Wainwright,

who is a genius. Also Jesse

Winchester, Randy Newman -

the most underrated songwriter

in the world - along with

Leonard Cohen.

**There's been a campaign to**

**give Cohen a Nobel Prize for**

**his writing.**

I'm all for that. Why not... some

of the wankers who've got it!

**Who would you do on Stars In Your Eyes?**

That reminds me of that horrible *American Idol* show. For creating that, Simon Cowell should be ... Anyway, if I was forced on, I'd make a feeble attempt at Roy Charles, which I sometimes do anyway, or Van Morrison.

**What fact about you would surprise fans?**

I'm almost completely blind in one eye, which I have been since birth, and it's not correctable. And I garden a lot - tomatoes and hot chili peppers. I'm very domestic and like to fix things round the house, use tools and fix cars, which is very therapeutic.

**Do you keep a diary?**

No, and that's one of the great regrets in my life. There'd be some incredible stuff, but the long-term memory is kicking in now, and I'm starting to remember things. I'm planning to write an autobiography or two: life before The Eagles, and life during. I love to write - poetry, essays and letters. And I collect books - English literature, all the greats: Hardy, Arnold, Yeats, Joyce. And American poets, Twain.

**Would you change anything in the past?**

Several things. I wish I'd carried on with piano lessons when I was a kid - I can write chords and play a bit, but I don't have the dexterity that I'd hope for. And my father died aged 65. I would've intervened in his medical care and got better doctors for him. But I was too young and not my own man yet. He went down the Veterans' Hospital route to save money for my mother and myself. They screwed him up and shortened his life. In the band, I'd have skipped a lot of the long-taking part (*Long*), which was a waste of time and talent. And I wouldn't have smoked all those cigarettes.

I might have started a family earlier too and handled some of the things in The Eagles differently. I think we all would, had we not been so paranoid from success and money at a young age, which is difficult to deal with even without the drugs and booze. We could've been more mature and professional and had better guidance. But managers and agents don't intervene, 'cos they don't want to piss people off. But everything made me who I am today, there's a lot of wisdom comes from all that trouble and strife. Steel is forged from fire, and what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. And I don't lie awake at nights worrying about it.

**Do you have any unfulfilled ambitions?**

As the Pythons said, I'm not quite dead yet, so I want to spend more time in Europe and trace my family roots in England, Ireland and Italy. Genealogy has become very important to me. Maybe we'll come over in 2006, though we're a bit more trepidatious after the 9/11 tragedy, and we're touring three months in California alone till September. Maybe I'll also get some piano lessons, and I have a lot more environmental work to do - which will take the rest of my lifetime, and my children's.

**Musically?**

I want to record a historical album based on the people we mentioned earlier from my hometown, and also people who are not well known but were a big part of my life. There was a black woman who worked for my grandfather and then my father, and she helped to raise me - she did our laundry using a cast iron cauldron with a wood fire under it till the mid-50s, when I blew it up with a cherry bomb! They had fuses that burned under water, so I wanted to see what would happen! She used to sing hymns and spirituals all the time, and she lived to be 103. I found her grave two summers ago and so I've written a song about her.

The album will be blues and gospel from my home region, and then I want to do an album of bluesgrass and country, which I'd love to do with Rodney Dillard and Herb Pedersen. I'd also like to work with Alison Krauss and my old mate Al Perkins again, on an album of modern standards - Newman, Cohen, Winchester, Costello & Bacharach. I'm sure Randy and Mr. Cohen would be co-operative. I'm gonna be busy, and I guess I'll have to live a really long time to get all this done!

