

REVIEWS

DVD

MILES DAVIS

*Live at Montreux: Highlights 1973-1991*

[Montreux Sounds/Eagle Eye Media]

Let us now praise Claude Nobs. For founding the annual Montreux Jazz Festival, for sure—it's one of the world's most venerable and beloved music showcases. But also for having the foresight to document the sights and sounds from as many festival performances as possible, creating a tremendous archive from which a great many essential archival releases have appeared over the last few years. And let us praise his ability to form such a unique bond with jazz giant Miles Davis, a circumspect character who trusted Nobs enough to play his festival eight times over 18 years and to record the results each time.

Live at Montreux offers a mouth-watering sampler of Davis' festival shows, kicking off with a combustible rendition of "Ife" from 1973 that constantly changes shape for 27 mesmerizing minutes. The 1980s performances are comparably hit-and-miss, as the forward-thinking Davis perhaps too eagerly embraced the glossy and now dated sounds of the era. Nonetheless, Davis sounds confident and assertive no matter what sonic territory he's navigating. A moving final act arrives with his July 1991 Montreux appearance, which found him—at Nobs' affectionate insistence—uncharacteristically revisiting old musical ground by playing selections from his classic works with arranger Gil Evans for the first time in decades. Davis passed away just two months later, leaving behind a body of work that continues to dazzle and confound in equal measure. Here's hoping *Live at Montreux* is only an appetizer for fuller future releases of these vital documents. —CN

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