

music review

Everything fans want

Want Two feels a bit like Rufus Wainwright vamping until his next album—but the enclosed concert DVD is a must for devotees of the out troubadour **By Michael Giltz**

Want Two (CD-DVD combo)

■ Rufus Wainwright ■ DreamWorks
■ \$21.95

Elton John has called Rufus Wainwright an “as-yet unheralded American treasure,” and one imagines Wainwright would respond, with the casual confidence he exudes, “Quite true.”

Treasure? Yes. But unheralded? His near-perfect 2003 album, *Want One*, was hailed by critics, hitting number 12 on *The Village Voice*’s annual Pazz & Jop Critics’ Poll. Wainwright has a small role in Martin Scorsese’s Oscar hopeful *The Aviator*. And despite upheavals at his record label, Wainwright has just released this CD-DVD combo.

It’s more than a collection of odds and ends from the *Want* sessions but less than a proper follow-up to that CD. We’ve been told it’s the “weird” stuff, but since *Want One* was already pretty darn eccentric, that doesn’t prove quite true. Sure, the opener, “Agnus Dei,” is a lovely Latin choral hymn, and the closer, “An Old Whore’s Diet” (a duet with Antony of Antony and the Johnsons), is an almost nine-minute wig-out. But almost everything here would have sounded right at home on *Want One*.



strongest tracks here. But they didn’t belong, either thematically or musically, on that earlier album, which is more upbeat than this mellow affair. Wainwright knows the importance of creating an album that flows, that takes you somewhere. He produced a double album’s worth of music, but *Want One* is stronger for not including them all. And *Want Two* is fine for fans who can’t wait for his next magnum opus.

What makes this truly worthwhile, however, is the concert DVD. It has 90 minutes of Wainwright performing at

The witty “Little Sister,” “The Art Teacher” (a lovely man who is the protagonist’s favorite work of art), and concert favorite “Gay Messiah” are among the

the Fillmore Auditorium, interspersed with brief segments of him wandering through San Francisco. He’s in fine form, and the show is mercifully free of frenetic editing and quick cuts.

You know Wainwright is in full control when he segues from the rousing “I Don’t Know What It Is” to the quiet, wrenching “Dinner at Eight,” and the crowd remains in the palm of his hand. His openhearted performance—so self-dramatizing, so self-aware, so funny when it isn’t moving—can’t help but bring to mind another drama queen, Judy Garland. Surely it’s only a matter of time before Wainwright’s gorgeous voice tackles the standards. ■

Giltz is a regular contributor to several periodicals, including the New York Post.



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