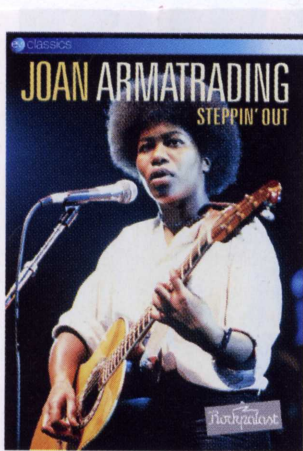


Elmore

SAVING AMERICAN MUSIC

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JOAN ARMATRADING

Steppin' Out DVD

(Eagle Rock Entertainment)

British singer/songwriter Joan Armatrading already had five albums, an EP and a live album under her belt in 1980 when she toured internationally behind album number six, *Me Myself I*.

Taped for the German television program *Rockpalast* at the Grugahalle in Essen, Germany, this low-key but satisfying 15-song set is a "greatest hits" package spotlighting her unique voice and her crack band—guitarists Rick Hirsch and Richard Belke, bassist Bill Bodine, flutist/saxophonist Lon Price, keyboardist Dick Sims and drummer Richie Hayward—behind Armatrading's acoustic guitar. The band is strong, a real rock band, with members of Wet Willie. They can rev it up

and they can play soft and sweet when the singer goes into one of her reggae-inflected poetic reveries.

"Tall In The Saddle" builds to a dramatic bluesy climax. Favorites like "Mama Mercy," "Down To Zero," "I Really Must Be Going," "Ma-Me-O-Beach," "You Rope You Tie Me" and more sound just as good live as they do in studio. Her voice is an instrument that dips swirls and swoops into falsetto, the band anticipating her every move.

And that Afro! —Mike Greenblatt