

Steve Vai - Where The Wild Things Are (2009)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Paint your Face* 2. *Now we Run* 3. *Oooo* 4. *Building the Church* 5. *Tender Surrender* 6. *Band Intros* 7. *Firewall* 8. *Freak show Excess* 9. *Die to Live* 10. *All about Eve* 11. *Gary* 12. *Treasure Island* 13. *Angel Food* 14. *Taurus Bulba* 15. *Par Brahm* Musicians: Steve Vai - guitar, vocals Bryan Beller - bass Jeremy Colson - drums Dave Weiner – guitar, sitar Zack Wiesinger - guitar, lap, steel Alex DePue - violin Ann Marie Calhoun - violin, keyboards Live at State Theatre de Minneapolis, Minnesota 29th September 2009.

Taken from a two-hour-and-40-minute sold-out show recorded at the State Theatre in Minneapolis, *Where the Wild Things Are* is yet another live showcase of meticulously mapped Steve Vai compositions. Much of the material is new, and tested out in front of an unfamiliar but eager audience, with Vai exercising his chops to the limits. It's a chance for him to bust out every trick in the book: blazing through ridiculously difficult scales, double hand-tapping extravaganzas (where he plays the guitar like a piano), and sick string bends and whammy bombs to the point where his custom Jem neck should be left, imaginably, in the same shape as the rubbery guitar on the cover of *Flex-Able*. The listening experience is more geared toward frequent guitar clinic attendees than someone seeking background music for a day drive. It's not easy listening. It's the kind of stuff that deserves full concentration, and while most will furrow their brows while focusing on the guitar pyrotechnics, the rest of the instrumentalists are tightly locked and highly ambitious in their own right. Touring for the first time as a collective, violinists/keyboardists Ann Marie Calhoun and Alex DePue join Vai, along with bassist Bryan Beller, drummer Jeremy Colson, and guitarist/sitarist Dave Weiner. The virtuosic tendencies run high, the musicianship is incredible, and as a whole, the group sounds more like one of Zappa's stage bands than, say, Roth's. Things are still flamboyant and over the top, as expected from the owner of a three-pronged heart-shaped guitar, but there are signs of maturity. As a guitarist and as a composer, Vai's only getting better with age, as proven by *Real Illusions: Reflections'* sprawling, elastic "Freak Show Excess" and "Building the Church," running the gamut with haphazard emotional shifts, flawless changes, and otherworldly playing. --- Jason Lymangrover, allmusic.com

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