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## FEATURES

- 25-minute interview with John Sinclair

## MC5 Live: Kick Out the Jams

By Surf Monkey

### Disc Details:

Video:	1.33:1
Anamorphic:	No
Audio:	• N/A
Subtitles:	None
Runtime:	35 minutes
Rating:	N/R
Release Date:	2005
Production Year:	1999
Director:	Leni Sinclair and Cary Loren
Released by :	MVD Music Video Distributors
Region:	1 NTSC

# RATING



Outside of the Grateful Dead, no other band is more closely associated with the '60s hippy, free love, abundant drug, activism movement than Detroit's MC5. The hard rocking five-piece band poured body and soul into fomenting a social-psychoactive revolution that they hoped would reshape the buttoned down, conventional landscape of contemporary American culture. The MC5 was founded on the notion that rules are to be broken and they became the very embodiment of no-holds-barred rock and roll.

Though never as widely popular as The Who, The Kinks, Dylan and other '60s icons, The MC5's influence amongst musicians is pervasive. They pioneered approaches to wall-of-sound "sculpted noise", free form art rock, improvisational guitar freak-outs and even glam rock that are emulated by modern bands to this day. If anything, The MC5's legend grows with each passing year.

## QUOTES

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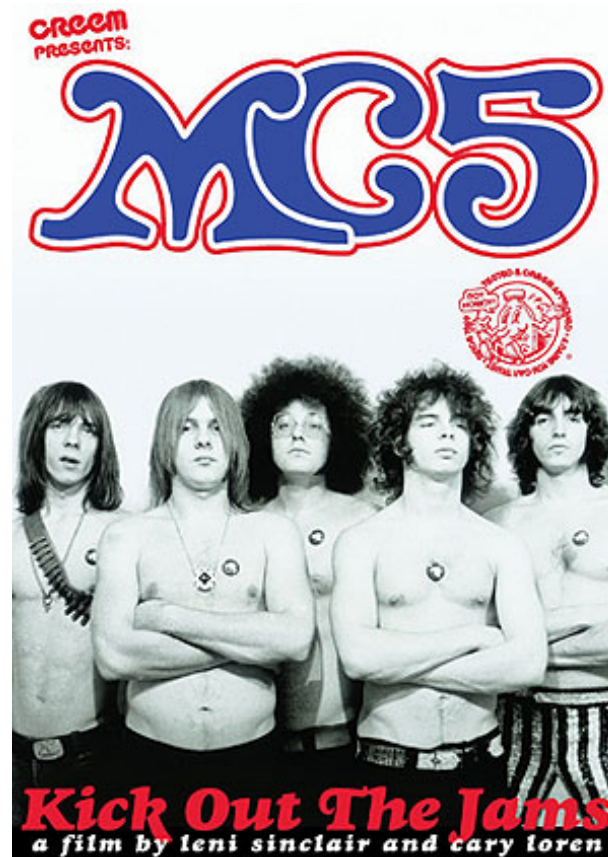
"Clocking in at just over 30 minutes, *MC5 Live: Kick Out the Jams* includes most of the bands best known songs."

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One key figure in The MC5's rise to fame was photographer Leni Sinclair whose images of the band have become emblematic of the '60s and '70s themselves. She and her husband John Sinclair – the radical left-wing activist and psychedelic guru who some believe used the band to inflate his own fame and power – were daily companions of The MC5 throughout the highpoint of their careers. One result of that deep access is a collection of 8mm films of the band that Leni shot at various shows in the late '60s and early '70s. *MC5 Live: Kick Out the Jams* is a collection of these clips, many of them available for the first time on home video.

*MC5 Live: Kick Out the Jams* doesn't have a traditional narrative structure. In fact, it doesn't have much structure at all. The vintage footage of the band is cut together with random images of war protesters, soldiers fighting in Vietnam, band posters, oil-on-water light show effects and flashing strobes. Meanwhile, the audio tracks come from completely different performances, so the two seldom match up. Both images and sounds are subject to hard jump-cuts of a kind that were thought of as cutting edge entertainment thirty years ago but seem very dated today. And on a certain level it does work. By giving the audience a jumble of images against the relentless crash and twang of the band, an impression of The MC5 builds up and suggests the power that their music must have had in the moment it was being performed.

Clocking in at just over 30 minutes, *MC5 Live: Kick Out the Jams* includes most of the bands best known songs. You'll hear *Ramblin' Rose*, *Black to Comm*, *Starship*, *Motor City*



was being performed."

connecting with the movie, which looks only slightly better than the average cable access show at times. Hardened MC5 devotees will enjoy the rare footage but will be left wishing that the audio matched the video performances. Unfortunately, either way, the DVD is a disappointment. It gives the viewer no new insight on the band and only a fragmentary glimpse of the act's raw power.

### **Image is Everything**

Presented in the standard, full-screen aspect ratio, the images on this DVD are about what you'd expect from 8mm transfers of 1960s home movies. There are tons of holes, scratches, flares and other flaws. The colors are faded and the contrast is off the scale. It's far from unwatchable but don't go into it expecting anything better than VHS because you won't find it here.

### **The Sound of Music**

The audio track is available in both Dolby 2.0 and Dolby Digital 5.1 surround. Since the various recordings were made at live shows with fairly low quality equipment, it should come as no surprise that this disc won't put your home theater through its paces. The Dolby 2.0 option renders a sound stage that most closely matches the original stereo (and in some cases mono) recordings. The 5.1 track, while doing a reasonable job of splitting the sound amongst the entire array of home theater speakers sounds more muddy and indistinct, more gimmick than bonus.

### **Extra! Extra!**

The only extra content on this release is a 25-minute "interview" with John Sinclair. The production values on this segment are abysmally low. Sinclair's comments are almost entirely drowned out by the background music and the interview itself is completely unedited. Sinclair seems burned-out and confused as he relates his memories of meeting and working with the band. Over the course of 25 minutes he comes up with one or two interesting comments but the rest is essentially confusion and dead air.

### **Closing Argument**

*MC5 Live: Kick Out the Jams* isn't going to satisfy casual listeners or hardcore fans. It is

interesting in a cultural throw-back kind of way, but doesn't deliver the goods in terms of audio, visual or narrative content. If you're interested in The MC5, you'd be better served seeking out the excellent film *MC5: A True Testimonial*. You may have a hard time finding it though since MC5 guitarist Wayne Kramer has taken the filmmakers to court for violating his rights to the band's songs. So, unless and until *MC5: A True Testimonial* emerges from litigation, fans of the band are best served avoiding this release and seeking their fix elsewhere.



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