

INsite DVD Reviews

By Forrest Gabitsch



ROCKERS: 25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Russell Simmons had to have seen this movie before he produced *Krush Groove*. The similarities between this reggae classic and the hip-hop movies of the early eighties are undeniable. *Rockers* is basically a snapshot of reggae at its peak. The plot is...well, it's nonexistent. But that's not why you watch this kind of movie.

It's about dreadlocks, ganja, music, ganja, dancing, ganja...and pot. They even threw in some weed. There's some herb, too. It's a kickass movie: this guy walks around and smokes dope with his friends, and then everyone plays reggae music. The squares (in the movie and in real life) don't get it, but we do. If this movie were about speed metal and *Magic: The Gathering*, I'd sue.

The only beef I have with this DVD is a technical one: you can't turn the subtitles off. As with *The Harder They Come* (this movie's better-known predecessor), you'll have a hell of a time deciphering everything these dudes say. Between the slang (a super-cool glossary is provided as an extra, by the way) and the thick accents, it can be grueling. But reading an entire movie can be a pain, too. If you love foreign films as much as I do, you know it's more fun to watch them with the subs off. No such luck here, but again, it's a minor quibble.

METALMANIA 2004

One DVD, one CD, and twenty-two bands. It's hard to go wrong with that much variety (see the *Skate & Surf Fest* review below for a good bad example), especially in a genre as diverse as heavy metal. Here, you get live performances by bands as varied as *Moonspell* and the *Michael Schenker Group*.

Not all of it's that great (there's a bit too much drop-D tuning for my taste), but it's a good sample of where heavy metal is today, even if the genre is once again in danger of death by over-marketing.

Take *Soufly*, for example. Here, they're given the royal treatment. Their sound, though, hasn't evolved since they started: it's the same hop-up-and-down-like-it's-a-Kriss-Kross-concert crap they were doing five years ago. It's basically high-school music, even if the band is fronted by Max Cavalera, a heavy metal legend.

SKATE & SURF FEST

Too bad none of these guys can. I mean, three *Ramones* have died in the past decade, and record companies still can't stop urinating on their legacy.

Here, you have twelve of the most godawful pop-punk bands on the planet (all of them *Blink-182* and *Good Charlotte* booster clubs, I guess), and *Andrew W.K.*, who only stands out by not sounding like anyone else on the bill. (He still sounds like his first crappy album from five years ago.)

If you bought your *Misfits* T-shirt at *Hot Topic*, you'll probably like it. But you'll hate it if you know anything about a certain quintet from the *Motor City*...

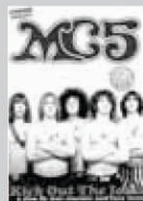


THE MICHAEL SCHENKER GROUP: LIVE IN TOKYO 1997

Much of this performance is presented in one camera shot. (Perhaps the guy in the control booth was watching *Rockers* right before they shot the show.) None of that matters, though, because *Michael Schenker* has returned (eight years ago, anyway) to show you how it's done. If you're a guitar head, you'll love everything here (even "All the Way from Memphis," a song I hated when it was new in 1990).

This is an anniversary show for *Schenker*, covering his work with the *Scorpions* (they were never better), *UFO* (they still haven't gotten the respect they deserve), and *MSG* (not the kind that puts you to sleep and makes you hungry an hour later). It's *Schenker's* entire musical history in one fantastic evening. Don't be put off by the production value. It's kind of like

watching *Robb's MetalWorks* on San Antonio public access...except these guys can play.



MC5: KICK OUT THE JAMS

They were political radicals, outlaws, and jailbirds. They were everything rock music was supposed to be: loud, fast, intense, raw. And they did it in the frigin' sixties, when this kind of thing mattered most. (I'm only 28, by the way. Just floating that out there for you.)

They inspired the *Ramones*, *Iggy Pop*, the *Dead Kennedys*, *Black Flag*, and everyone else on that familiar roster. While this DVD won't give you as much information as *Lester Bangs's* book, *Please Kill Me*, it's a good starter kit for anyone interested in the band.

It's also an odd little art film, featuring footage of the band, the audience, and most importantly, the period. It's trippy, but it's only thirty-five minutes long. I like it, though.



DUKE ELLINGTON: THE BIG BAND FEELING

John Coltrane took the cover photo. Obviously, someone at the *Eforfilms* company has it together.

The *Stars of Jazz Collection* is one of the better resources for some of the most brilliant music of the 20th century. If you're burned out on *Ken Burns*, and you need that jazz fix, then look no further.

This *Ellington* disc is a good start, specifically because the performance was filmed in 1952, a few years before jazz evolved in a radical fashion. This is the peak of the *Big Band* era, and in glorious, old-fashioned black and white, to boot. If *Ken Burns's Jazz* was your core course, this is enrichment. Enjoy it as you would the best American traditions. **TV**

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