

## Live In Concert 2006 (DVD)

### The Osmonds

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The Osmonds are one in a million. This new DVD is a testament to their enduring legacy in the fickle and often unfair world of music.

"Only in Britain can something like this happen" says Alan Osmond upon joining his four younger brothers for a rousing and unbelievable encore that included "He Ain't Heavy (He's My Brother)" and a new, positively blistering version of their classic "Crazy Horses." The fact that Alan had to sit out the rest of the show (due to multiple sclerosis) certainly didn't hinder the other brothers from putting on one hell of a show for their rapturous and adoring fans. Donny and Marie may not have been there, but their absence wasn't felt in the slightest by this sold-out crowd.

*Live In Concert* is a joy to hear, as old age certainly wasn't going to prevent this talented group from taking the stage again, even if it may be for the last time. Their deep, resonant harmonies and exceptional musicianship in this performance shows that they still have what it takes, and they actually sound better than ever. Perhaps this is due to a lack of pressure for pop charts, but the brothers Osmond make it clear from the start that they choose to perform because they love the music and their devoted fans.

I am an admirer of the Osmonds' work, which I know many men would never admit. I saw them in concert 25 years ago at the Cape Cod Melody Tent and was able to get all their autographs. Jimmy was the only Osmond missing from the lineup back then, but now in 2006 has become the group's fearless leader.

He leads the group on this March 16 performance, where the guys first performed more than 30 years ago, and the homecoming is complete with sparks, smoke, confetti and impressive audience chants of "We Want Osmonds!" A lot of songs are crammed into two hours, and some hits suffer the inevitable and overused medley treatment; "One Bad Apple" is carved down to just one verse and the chorus, which undoubtedly left a sour taste with some.

However, it was pleasing to hear lesser known songs like "Back On The Road Again," "Rainin'" and "That's My Girl" being performed live for the very first time. Classics like "Down By The Lazy River," "Yo-Yo," "Hold Her Tight" and the audience favorite "Love Me For A Reason" all sound as fresh as ever.

Right from the start, the Osmonds have the audience in the palm of their collective hands. Adept at many genres, this show switches from rock to soul to country without batting an eye. Each brother gets a chance to shine: Jay on drums, Wayne on guitar, Jimmy singing his "cheeky" novelty tunes (thankfully in his adult voice) and Merrill greeting as many fans as he can while singing. As the longtime lead vocalist, Merrill proves that, while he may now bear a striking resemblance to Kenny Rogers, he can still outsing the man by a mile.

Thankfully, the heavy-handed patriotic overtones of their Branson shows are now a distant memory and only a few songs are obvious ties to their Mormon faith. Their 1973 masterpiece, *The Plan*, was actually showcased at the midpoint of the show, no doubt giving the audience some food for thought during the brief intermission. The show ends on an uplifting note with "Are You Up There" and "I Believe," two songs that not only express the importance of family but also address concerns on the current state of our planet. It's always tricky business trying to enlighten through entertainment, but the Osmonds can pull it off. In fact, this DVD demonstrates they still have some fight left in them yet.

In short, the Osmonds have nothing to prove, especially to the media who have dismissed the band and laughed at their clean-cut image and wholesome values. That, my friends, is a tragic and short-sighted view of what the Osmonds are all about. They certainly deserve more respect and attention from the industry at large than they have received during their 40 years in show business, and this DVD shows why.

**Rating: A-**



