

# BULLZ-EYE



Europe: The Final Countdown Tour 1986 ★★☆☆☆

★ Label: MVD Visual

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“Europe is considered one of the best live [rock bands](#) of all time,” boasts the biography section of this DVD, thus setting the tone for what is surely one of the most absurdly over-the-top retrospectives of any also-ran band in any musical genre, ever. To be sure, the very idea of a “20th anniversary” *anything* with regards to Europe reeks of silliness, but this is something special: At one point, drummer Ian Haugland – [without a trace](#) of irony – indirectly compares “The Final Countdown” to both “Smoke on the Water” and “Stairway to Heaven.”

It’s that [love](#) of hyperbole and lack of irony that typified bands of Europe’s ilk, of course, and what helped to do them in once the ‘90s kicked off. Changing trends alter and kill careers all the time – just take a look at the cover of Aretha Franklin’s *La Diva* to see the havoc disco wrought on veteran soul [artists](#) – but for bands like Europe, the birth of grunge only told half the story. It wasn’t just that keyboards, spandex, and hair spray were out of fashion; again, musicians have been weathering changes in style forever. What a lot of people forget – and what “The Final Countdown Tour 1986: Live in Sweden, 20th Anniversary Edition” makes clear, in one convenient, awful package – is that it wasn’t anything as superficial as sound or appearance that purged Europe, et al. from the charts. It was their entire artistic outlook.

Put another way, Europe – and bands like Europe – used too much hairspray and synths, wore too much spandex, *and* took themselves way too seriously. Consider, just to use three examples from this DVD, the equally reverent treatment afforded Japanese warriors, a Native American tribe, and nocturnal rocking:

*“If I were a noble ancient knight / I’d stand by your side to rule and fight / It will always feel the same / When I call out your name”* – “Ninja”

*“They lived in peace, not long ago / A mighty Indian tribe / But the winds of change / Made them realize that the promises were lies”* – “Cherokee”

*“Rock now, rock the night / ‘Til early in the morning light / Rock now, rock the night / You’d better believe it’s right”* – “Rock the Night”

A lot of words have been devoted to the way grunge's authentic howl silenced hair metal, but that's overly simplistic; it wasn't [Nirvana](#) that killed these bands, it was the raised eyebrow of the slacker generation, greeting these songs with the air of detached boredom they deserved. They died with a yawn, which makes sense, because when you're wearing tights and makeup and singing about ninjas, any success at all requires a total suspension of irony.

This is an awful lot of exposition for a DVD of a 20-year-old concert from a band that was only marginally relevant at its peak, and that's because the back story is more interesting than the [music](#). It's all technically proficient, of course – often mind-numbingly so – and no more or less ridiculous than anything Bon Jovi was doing at the time. But then, it's hard to imagine Tico Torres comparing "Livin' on a Prayer" to "Stairway to Heaven."

***~Jeff Giles***

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