

DVD & Blu-ray Reviews

'83 U.S. Festival Days 1-3 (2013)

This New Age Woodstock is an interesting, but uninspired look at the eighties.



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Performers: *The Clash; Scorpions; Judas Priest; Stevie Nicks; Men At Work; Divinyls; Inxs; Berlin; Quarterflash; Triumph; Missing Persons; The English Beat; and Stray Cats; with artist and Steve Wosniak interviews*

TrackList:

Day 1: *The Boy In Town (Divinyls); The One Thing (INXS); Jeanette (The English Beat); Rock This Town, Double Talkin' Baby (Stray Cats); Who Can It Be Now, It's A Mistake (Men At Work); Should I Stay Or Should I Go (The Clash)*

Day 2: *Breakin' The Law, You Got Another Thing Comin' (Judas Priest); Lay It On The Line, Fight The Good Fight, A World Of Fantasy (Triumph); The Zoo, Can't Get Enough (Scorpions)*

Day 3: *Sex I'm A (Berlin); Find Another Fool (Quarterflash); Sunday Bloody Sunday, Electric Co. (U2); Words (Missing Persons); Magic Power (Triumph); Stand Back, Outside The Rain (Stevie Nicks)*

Studio: *MVD Visual Entertainment MVD59460 [12/3/13]*

Director: *Glenn Aveni*

Video: *4:3 color*

Audio: *English PCM Stereo*

Length: *135 minutes*

Rating: *****

After the enormous impact of the Monterey Pop Festival and Woodstock, it appeared that music festivals would be the order of the day. The aforementioned multi-faceted (both were billed as arts gatherings that included music) events would never be equaled. In the summer of 1983, Apple co-founder Steve Wosniak organized a three day Memorial Day event that combined eighties technological developments and contemporary musical acts. It was called the U.S. Festival and for the next thirty years there was not much visual or audio proof of its existence.

MVD Visual has released a DVD of highlights, titled *'83 US Festival Days 1-3*. While this is not a complete, representative documentary (two of the closing performers, David Bowie and Van Halen were not included), there is an

ample cross section of eighties music. Day 1 is noteworthy for the appearance of an emerging INXS who are making the most of this opportunity on “The One Thing”. Stray Cats transform the bleak desert-like surroundings as they amp up the crowd with a spirited version of “Rock This Town”. It is unfortunate that the “highlight” nature of this film only has set excerpts. But seeing the Clash perform “Should I Stay Or Should I Go” demonstrates why they are iconic, even though the band seems to be disintegrating at the time. Observing the raw instincts of this group is compelling. It would have been more optimal with additional material.

Day 2 features three powerhouse metal bands (Judas Priest, Triumph and Scorpions). It is apparent that these bands are bringing serious guitar heat. The structure may be confined but the volume and intensity is not. Day 3 reintroduces some star power. Stevie Nicks whirls and fronts admirably on “Stand Back”. But a pre-superstar edition of U2 is very good. Bono’s manic, scaffold climb showcases a band with a freewheeling, undefined charisma. On “Sunday Bloody Sunday”, the viewer can see how the narrative, emotional resonance uniquely affects the audience.

The DVD is shot in 4:3. This only reinforces Wozniak’s self-amused “I just wanted to throw one big party in the middle of nowhere” comment. At times, the flow of the film wanders into nowhere land. There are interviews that are edited into song intros and solos. Without adequate performer consent, too much of the three day ambitious event is missing. As a snapshot or highlight reel it is good. As a filmed music documentary, it is uneven and falls short of its potential.

—Robbie Gerson

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