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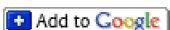
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US Festival 1983: Days 1-3

[MVD Entertainment Group](#) // Unrated // December 3, 2013**List Price: \$19.95 [Buy now and save at [Amazon](#)]**

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Review by [Bill Gibron](#) | posted January 1, 2014 | [E-mail the Author](#)

THE FILM:

After he was dethroned as one of Apple's guiding executives, the personal PCs co-founder, Steve Wozniak, decided to focus on all things pop culture. His first major idea was the US Festival. Personally paying for the creation of a venue near San Bernadino, California and inviting such known acts as The Police, The Cars, and Fleetwood Mac, the original 1982 event was perceived as a success (though Wozniak ended up losing almost \$12 million on the deal). The following year, artists like David Bowie, Van Halen, and The Clash signed up, though the punk icons couldn't cop to the corporate charade behind the four day celebration of music and technology. Considered by many to be one of the great music festivals (though many who performed at it consider their contributions to be among their worst) there has been a Holy Grail assessment of the shows (oh - and Woz lost even more money this time around). Like **Urge: A Music War** and **The Concert for Kampuchea**, these performances have been sought out by fans who have long heard about the concert and the enigmatic events that occurred backstage.

Well, there's no name calling or behind the scenes fisticuffs on this three DVD set, just a selection of songs from the 1983 version of US along with some interesting views of drunken Californians. Oddly, the fourth day, featuring all country acts (including Ricky Scagg, Hank Williams Jr., and Alabama) is not highlighted here. Instead, we get a few selections from a select few, and that's it. This is *NOT* the complete concerts. Some of the acts present - Triumph, for example - have already licensed their own appearance and released it separately. Instead, this is an interesting overview which barely breaks the surface of why so many have such fond memories of what Wozniak was working toward. As a courtesy, here are the bands and selections offered:

Disc 1

INXS - "The One Thing"
 Divinyls - "Boys in Town"
 English Beat - "Jeanette"
 Stray Cats - "Rock This Town," "Please Make Up Your Mind"
 Men At Work - "It's A Mistake," "Who Can It Be Now"
 The Clash - "Should I Stay or Should I Go"

Disc 2

Judas Priest - "Breaking The Law," "You've Got Another Thing Comin"
 Triumph - "Magic Power," "Fight The Good Fight," "Lay It On The Line," "A World Of Fantasy"
 Scorpions - "The Zoo," "Can't Get Enough"

Disc 3

Berlin, "Sex"
 Quarterflash, "Find Another Fool"
 U2, "Sunday Bloody Sunday," "The Electric Co."
 Missing Persons, "Words"
 Stevie Nicks, "Stand Back," "Outside The Rain"

It's an eclectic mix, and a bit of a mess when you think about it. Absent from the Day 1 disc are A Flock of Seagulls, Oingo Boingo, and Wall of Voodoo. Disc 2 finds Quiet Riot, Motley Crue (who are generally acknowledged as being godawful that day) Ozzy Osbourne, and headliners Van Halen missing in action. Finally, Day 3 is without The Pretenders, Joe Walsh, David Bowie, Los Lobos, and Little Steven and the Disciples of Soul. Fans of any of these acts would gladly trade a tune or two for the lame MOR of Quarterflash, while those represented aren't given the proper

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showcase ("Jeanette" for the pop ska of The English Beat? Seriously?). Why "All The Boys" or The Divinyls, since most would only know them from their 1991 hit "I Touch Myself" (still a good eight years away from being released)? Does the Clash always have to be represented by that one stupid song that overplay on the radio constantly? ("Should I Stay..." should be banned from airplay in perpetuity). Granted, it's nice to see "The Electric Co." from U2, and "It's a Mistake" is a nice forgotten bit of Downunder pop (ala Men at Work), but one can only envision a collection which includes known quantities, not a smattering of nonspecific album filler.

As for the actual show...well, it's what you expect. Decent work by some. Off key caterwauling by others. No doubt the venue and the heat play a part here. Judas Priest do their best to raise interest, but the crowd is so overcome by the elements that they're barely breathing (the sing-along for "Breaking the Law" is just limp). Sans their most significant songs, the Scorpions set is like walking into the middle of their attempt to dip into their latest release while Berlin and Missing Persons offer little beyond the standard synth stumbles. Surely some with a need for nostalgia will feel a desire to buy this package, but without the complete picture, without all the acts and all the tracks, this is an incomplete sampler, similar to the weird "selected tracks" LPs record companies would send radio stations in the '70s and '80s offering up the songs they wanted featured, nothing else. Mr. Apple may have missed the mark with his Wozniak's Woodstock, but overall, the US Festival was just a product of its time. It didn't transcend it so much as amplify its disposable nature.

THE DVD:

Polished up a bit for this digital release, the tech specs for The 83 US Festival aren't bad. The show was captured in 1.33:1 full frame and it remains that way here. The colors have been perked up and some of the obvious recording limitations tweaked, but overall, this is a thirty year old product that often looks it. The Dolby Digital Stereo mix is surprisingly strong given the often uneven performances, but we do get a lot of heft for such a simplistic sonic presentation. Sadly, there are no bonus features present.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

Thanks to rights issues, drunken antics, personal lawsuits, and other typical rock 'n' roll ridiculousness, this may be the best version of The US Festival we will ever see. Many acts just don't want their current cash cow fanbase to see them drugged out and discombobulated onstage. For those who are willing to enter these uneven waters, a rating of **Rent It** is recommended. That way, you can see what you want, ignore what you don't, and then return the whole thing to your local RedBox. Apple may have itself supplanted such events as the cultural benchmark for a new millennia, but back thirty years ago, US wanted to reflect the musical zeitgeist. Within limits, it almost did.

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Thanks for the review. Just a quick question if anyone knows. I see only 40 minutes or so of music listed on the discs. Sure there must be more content than that. All of what's listed above could easily fit on one disc. Is there a significant amount of documentary or other content along with the music?

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Snowden Wyatt · The University of Arizona

Since "I Touch Myself" was released in 1991, I suspect the makers of this DVD had a very good excuse for not including it as the Divinyls contribution on this release...

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Bill Gibron · Editor/Contributor at PopMatters.com

You are SO right. I got my discography time line all screwed up. Thanks for pointing this out. Will correct...

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