Classic Rock (Home) Theater

From Dave White,
Your Guide to Classic Rock.
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Video Gems for Classic Rock Fans

There's a good argument to be made that a full appreciation of a musical performance involves all of the senses. There's a big difference in listening to a performance, and experiencing it as it happens. Why else would we pay big bucks to buy concert tickets?

Of course, life is all about compromises, and in this case we have to rely on DVDs to augment the aural sense.

Several worthy examples have been released of late. Prepare your senses to enjoy them.

The Beatles - *Help!*

Yes, there have been other DVD releases of The Beatles' second feature film in the past ten years, but this release of 1965's *Help!* is in widescreen video format with Dolby 5.1 sound. Talk about updating! Considering how long ago it was made, this re-engineered version is stunning.

The bonuses in this two-disc package include a "making of" documentary, a missing scene, a piece on the process of restoring the film, cast and crew reminiscences, trailers and radio spots.

Not only did the film (which marked the first time The Beatles were seen in color) successfully capture the essence of Beatlemania, it was a good example of the kind of farcical British comedy that made Monty Python and Benny Hill household names.

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Paul McCartney - *The McCartney Years*

This may not be a complete visual record of Paul McCartney's solo career, but it's a definitive one.

The first two the three DVDs in this set contain music videos -- 50 in all -- accompanied by the artist's commentary on each.

There's even room for a full length documentary.

The third disc is devoted to live performance footage -- from Wings' 1976 tour, Live Aid in 1995, MTV's *Unplugged* in 1991, the Glastonbury festival in 2004 and at halftime of Super Bowl XXXIX in 2005.

Throw in some home movies from Macca's personal archives, and you have more than six hours of material, all adapted to state of the art widescreen format video and 5.1 surround sound.

On balance, this is a compelling retrospective of McCartney's post-Beatles career.

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Queen - *Queen Rock Montreal*

It was November 1981 and Queen was riding the crest of a wave of success, setting live performance attendance records, topping both album and singles charts.

Their show at Montreal's Forum were significant in two ways. They were the last that featured only the four original members of the band -- Freddie Mercury, Brian May, John Deacon and Roger Taylor -- before they added keyboards and horns. And it marked the first live performance of "Under Pressure," which had been released earlier that year, recorded with David Bowie.

Queen Rock Montreal was shot on 35mm film, which was cleaned up and digitized, and the sound remixed and remastered. A two-disc version also includes Queen's historic Live Aid performance in 1985.

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Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers - *Runnin' Down a Dream*

By itself, Peter Bogdanovich's documentary film appeals to most all of the senses.

This three-DVD/one-CD set, contains the director's cut of the film, the band's 30th anniversary concert in their hometown of Gainesville, Florida, and a CD full of rare and previously unreleased tracks.

The combination of home movies, TV shows and interviews documents Petty's prolific, sometimes stormy career as leader of The Heartbreakers.

The focus is on the music, with little in the way of glimpses into Petty's personal life. The result, created by a director with Bogdanovich's credentials, is compelling.

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Stevie Ray Vaughan - *Pride and Joy & Double Trouble*

Stevie Ray Vaughan's career was tragically short. By the time he died in a helicopter crash in 1990, he had recorded five albums and had set the standard for blues rock guitar.

Pride and Joy & Double Trouble is an expanded version of a compilation of SRV music videos released shortly after his death. Added in the new version are the video for "Little Wing," his three performances on *MTV Unplugged* and videos from the *Family Style* album that he recorded with his brother, Jimmie.

Being able watch and hear this gifted artist gives his music added dimension.

A worthy companion to the DVD is *Stevie Ray Vaughan & Friends*, a CD of live and recorded performances with the likes of David Bowie, Bonnie Raitt, Jeff Beck, and Paul Butterfield.

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Donovan - *The Donovan Concert Live In L.A.*

Donovan was sometimes called The Fifth Beatle because of his connection to the band musically (he was one of only a handful of artists to collaborate with them) and through a shared interest (especially with George Harrison) in transcendental meditation.

These days, his interest in meditation continues. This January 2007 concert was a fundraiser for director David Lynch's foundation which promotes TM awareness.

The Donovan Concert Live In L.A., the artist's first DVD, contains many of the songs that established him as a Folk Rock hit maker. There's a new song, performed with his daughter, Astrella Celeste, and a surprise cameo by the Beach Boys' Mike Love.

Donovan still has the ability to gently but persuasively set poetry to music.

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Blackmore's Night - *Paris Moon*

If you know Deep Purple and Rainbow, you know Ritchie Blackmore's work as a hard rock guitar virtuoso.

If you're a fan of the brand of Progressive Rock favored by Jethro Tull, Emerson Lake & Palmer and Yes, you know his work as half of the duo Blackmore's Night, with his significant other, vocalist Candice Night.

Paris Moon is a DVD-CD set shot during a 2006 Paris concert, released in 2007 to commemorate their 10th anniversary.

The visual component captures the personal and musical chemistry between Blackmore and Night. It also showcases Night's vocal and songwriting abilities and Blackmore's mastery of any instrument that has strings.

Watch a sample track

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