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DVD Review: Cat Stevens: A Classic Concert: Tea For the Tillerman Live



Cat Stevens A Classic Concert: Tea For the Tillerman Live MVD Visual Rating: *** and 1/2 The title's a bit of a misnomer: this 36-minute document, taped at KCET Studios in Los Angeles on June 8, 1971, includes only seven songs from Stevens's breakout album. Moonshadow, from the subsequent Teaser and the Firecat, both opens the DVD and closes it in the form of a cartoon. The animated short, however, appears in far superior quality on the live Majikat, released in 2004.

But that's it for the quibbling. This is a wonderfully intimate little performance before a small, strangely subdued, audience sitting at the Cat's feet. Accompanied only by guitarist Alun Davies and bassist Larry Steele, Stevens delivers stripped-down (make that further stripped-down) selections from the hit album, then less than seven months old.

There's something to be said for unadorned recordings that simply capture the moment, without the weight of historical perspective or the foreshadowing of future milestones. Yes, the singer-songwriter's withdrawal from the music business and conversion to Islam was six years away, but the unassuming innocence of this snapshot draws you in without baggage. And you won't be able to resist.

--- Bernard Perusse ---

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