



Live at the Boston Esplanade

[Marty Balin](#)

[MVD Visual](#) - MVDV4851 (DVD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange

by **Mark S. Tucker**

(progdawg@hotmail.com).

Marty Balin's history in rock and roll is long and rather key. As a member of Jefferson Airplane, he was a rogue figure in a maverick band as much remembered for its brilliant early record (the *Surrealistic Pillow* and *Crown of Creation* LPs are absolute masterpieces) as for drug consumption. Balin wrote and co-wrote a good deal of the group's material and sang in a distinctive tenor. Among a gaggle of rebellious creatives, he stood out as much as Grace Slick or Jorma Kaukonen, then became a part of the transformed Jefferson Starship MOR hitmaking machine before splitting off to go solo and create a couple of LPs that yielded gold.

This recent gig (2008) covers all his involvements under the Hollywood Bowl-ish Hatch Shell in Boston, an outdoors date that presents good music while suffering from a number of flaws, so let's get them out of the way. First of all, the camera crew appears not to have been exactly professional (jitters, blackouts, abrupt jumps, infelicitous panning, the color's washed out, etc.) and the sound is not the best though quite adequate for a live atmosphere. And I'm not sure if the band's "keeping it real" or just not terribly professional by having one of the roadies repair a cymbal in the drummer's kit...while he's playing! Lastly, when the credits run, the band members are listed and singer Didi Stewart's name is conspicuously absent...in fact appearing nowhere at all on screen and that's a really really cold shot, as she puts in a good effort. The date appears to be a part of a festival perhaps, kind of like Orange County's (Calif.) annual aggie/arts confab. The crowd is good-sized and the entire feel somewhat walk-through.

More problems, though, crop in the bonus section: the Bratfest gig lists *Somebody to Love*, *Summer of Love*, and *Today*, yet only the first song appears; *Later On* is shot from a hotel room, a song without lyrics, just a buncha dee-dee-dee's and doo-doo-doo's; and the best sound anywhere occurs during what's cited to be a studio three-spot, though the camera shot is purely amateur and, once again, only one of three songs actually makes it to the light of day. Who the hell was looking after the making of this DVD?

Still, the main gig's a cool nine-spot of songs. The band's capable, the atmosphere mellowly rockin', and the song choices very good. Stewart handles Gracie's parts on the pertinent tracks, several of Jesse Barish's hits are covered, and then a rousing version of Bruce Cockburn's *If I had a Rocket Launcher* as

well as a real surprise, Essra Mohawk's *Shaping the Night*. Of note throughout the concert (Balin was opening for America, and Dewey Bunnell pops up briefly to cite Marty as one of his heroes) is lead guitarist Mark Aguilar, who turns in a very satisfying performance.

Sum up: boy, this is the sort of thing that really irks the hell out of critics. I want to recommend it but the product itself is so busy committing suicide that I'd be a Benedict Arnold in my critical duty in doing so. Thus, with regrets, pass it up. If Balin can get his shit together next time around and not poot out a commodity so ridiculously slapdash, well...

Track List:

THE ESPLANADE GIG

- 3/5 of a Mile in 10 Seconds (Marty Balin)
- Runaway (Nicholas Dewey)
- Count on Me (Jesse Barish)
- Somebody to Love (Darby Slick)
- Miracles (Marty Balin)
- Hearts (Jesse Barish)
- White Rabbit (GRace Slick)
- Volunteers (Balin / Kantner)
- If I had a Rocket Lancher (Bruce Cockburn)

BONUS TRACKS

- Do It for Love (Jesse Barish)
- Somebody to Love (Darby Slick)
- Summer of Love (Marty Balin)
- Today (Marty Balin)
- Shaping the Night (Mohawk / Williams)
- Somehow the Tired Reach Home (Marty Balin)
- Count on Me (Jesse Barish)
- Later On (Marty Balin)
 - Interview with Marty Balin (50:00)
 - Interview with Jeff Tamarkin (4:15)
 - Interview with Signe Anderson & Craig Fenton (4:25)

Edited by: David N. Pyles
(dnpyles@acousticmusic.com)



Copyright 2009, [Peterborough Folk Music Society](#).

This review may be reprinted with prior permission and attribution.



[Return to FAME Reviews](#)

[Return to FAME Home Page](#)



Return to [acousticmusic.com](#) Home Page

Website design by David N. Pyles
DNPyles@acousticmusic.com
acousticmusic.com