

Slaves to the Rhythm

A Tribute to Trevor Horn

Trevor Horn & Friends

MVD Visual - MVDV4876 (DVD)

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A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange

by **Mark S. Tucker**
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If Trevor Horn had only ever created the Buggles, who released the epochal *Video Killed the Radio Star*, one of about a half dozen absolutely radiant pop releases, there would be quite sufficient reason to memorialize his (and Geoff Downes') name, but the guy went on to become not only a member of Yes but also the crucially important producer of a number of highly influential recordings, most particularly the *Welcome to the Pleasure Dome* twofer by Frankie Goes to Hollywood. A tribute to a producer, however, may seem a tad unusual, but, when you view this gorgeous spectacle, that momentary twinge of quizzicality is completely erased. As has been the case with many of these increasingly lavish productions, the attention paid to visual and sonic perfection is impeccable, so the documentation becomes a musical event, not just a matter of homage.

The DVD starts with a stunning reading of two of the Buggles' hits—in truth, the entire short release was nothing but hits, 100% perfection—before passing on to a continuing showcase of the ensembles Horn produced into some of the best manifestations of their variegated careers. Lacking only Jon Anderson, the entirety of Yes troops onstage, this version featuring both Steve Howe and Trevor Rabin (who gives a very credible rendition of Anderson's singing timbre) in a couple of cuts, including their monster *Owner of a Lonely Heart*. Though Yes is itself a symphonic unit, they're augmented by a cadre of backing musicians who augment all the groups for the evening, including a small orchestra. That unit is a riveting rhythm section composed of highly polished individuals (including Lol Creme, Gavyn Wright, and others) giving their best.

This then drives the rotating roster to do likewise, resulting in some exceedingly driving renditions. The Pet Shop Boys turn in a mesmerizing take on *It's Alright*, a lengthily dreamlike extension that keeps blissfully snaking its way into the audience. Seal, ABC, Belle & Sebastian, and others appear, join the groove, and rock out hit after hit in elevated versions, several standing higher than the others: T.A.T.U., for instance, comes on for only one song, *All the Things She Said*, but hypnotizes the audience with a prog / cheerleader / lesbian rock anthem that's infectious as hell. Climaxing the long (nearly 3 hours!) event, Frankie Goes to Hollywood presents a closing trio of tunes that just slay everyone there, keying in on the outrageous performance of newest and youngest member Sean Molloy, replacing the much lauded Holly Johnson, lead vocalist.

Johnson refused to re-band with his mates and so the group launched a frantic search for a replacement, finally landing on Molloy, who, in just a couple of weeks, went from an unknown to a killer performance with one of the more infamous groups of modern rock. All and sundry were extremely nervous whether the guy could pull it off in front of a huge audience in the heat of the press, and not only did he do so, but Molloy topped damn near everyone in a dramatic, artful, and sonorously perfect replication of Frankie's huge bestseller.

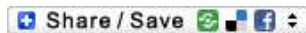
Throughout the extravaganza, Horn remains an active participant, playing bass and providing backing vocals, and the affection the groups have for the man is obvious. Not only was he the tech genius in the studio and behind the boards, but Horn, being a top musician, understood many of them better than they themselves did, wringing every last iota of creativity that may otherwise have gone undetected. In sum, then, *Slaves to the Rhythm* is a highly entertaining parade of engrossing performances from musicians determined to honor the gifts of the man who pushed them over the top and into pop heaven.

Oh, and if this sort of offbeat tribute should turn into a tradition, and I think it should, then I'd like to suggest a few names to whomever will be the discretionary centerpoint in this: Tony Visconti, Eddie Offord, Tony Clarke, Tim Friese-Greene, Conny Plank...

Track List:

- **The Buggles:** Video Killed The Radio Star
- **The Buggles:** Living In The Plastic Ae
- **Yes:** Cinema
- **Yes:** Owner Of A Lonely Heart
- **Frankie Goes To Hollywood:** Two Tribes
- **Frankie Goes To Hollywood:** Welcome To The Pleasure Dome
- **Frankie Goes To Hollywood:** Relax
- **Pet Shop Boys:** Left To My Own Devices
- **Pet Shop Boys:** It's Alright
- **ABC:** Poison Arrow
- **ABC:** All Of My Heart
- **ABC:** Look Of Love
- **Belle & Sebastian:** I'm A Cuckoo
- **Belle & Sebastian:** Step Into My Office
- **T.A.T.U.:** All The Things She Said
- **Art Of Noise:** Close To The Edit
- **Propaganda:** Dr. Mabuse
- **Lisa Stansfield:** Takes Woman To Know
- **Seal:** Killer
- **Seal:** Kiss From A Rose
- **Seal:** Crazy
- **Dollar:** Give Me Back My Heart
- **Grace Jones:** Slave To The Rhythm

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