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Trevor Horn & Friends - Slaves to the Rhythm

Score: **79%**
 Rating: **Not Rated**
 Publisher: **MVD Entertainment Group**
 Region: **A**
 Media: **DVD/1**
 Running Time: **170 Mins.**
 Genre: **Musical/Biographical/Live Performance**
 Audio: **Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround**
 Subtitles: **English**

Features:

Documentary Feature
 "Frankie Says Reform" Documentary
 Jukebox Playback Feature

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chronicles a single concert, in 2004 at Wembley Arena, for Prince's Trust. Prince Charles (or a strikingly similar likeness) attended dutifully, along with a star-studded cast of performers, and what appears to be tens of thousands of well-behaved Brit baby boomers. The artists that appear during the concert share one common thread: All of them were produced at some point by the legendary Trevor Horn. If you don't know the name immediately, it probably means you're on the left side of the pond. America didn't get worked up about some of Horn's acts that were megastars in the U.K. Examples are bands like *Dollar*, *Propaganda*, and *ABC* or artists like *Lisa Stansfield*. These all had major success in the past two decades, and shared little else but Trevor Horn, considering their wide stylistic differences. Horn absolutely deserves his reputation as a consummate producer, but his eye for talent was at least equal to his skill in the studio.



What is a producer, anyway? A good working explanation is that anything that goes into making a record that doesn't require playing an instrument is probably directly or indirectly controlled by the producer. Horn's band, *The Buggles*, were chart-toppers in the U.K. before their single, *Video Killed the Radio Star* became the introduction to that pop-culture phenomenon, MTV. Suffice it to say that Horn made good money as a musician, and even did a brief stint with a little band called *Yes* before stepping into his real place in the limelight. Instead of retiring or touring his way into obscurity with either band, Horn invested his time and we can assume his money into producing other people's music. Acts like *Yes*, *Grace Jones*, *Pet Shop Boys*, *Seal*, *Belle & Sebastian*, and *t.A.T.u.* that play during this concert were definitely heard across the pond. Few young people in the '80s or '90s haven't come into contact with at least one of these acts, at least on the radio.

For a guy that killed the radio star, Horn does a masterful job recognizing, shaping and promoting "hit" talent. Making a radio hit is a bit like writing a commercial jingle. Substance isn't always as important as style when the point is to embed a small message into the brain and hips and pocketbooks of listeners. Three-minute heroes to a man and woman, the radio stars collected on stage at Wembley for the **Slaves to the Rhythm** event aren't the most prolific artists in music history, but have amassed some great fortunes by selling huge quantities of singles, albums and sold-out shows. To listeners more attuned to independent artists, "sold out" will be the best descriptor for Horn's style of band. Jingly rock and pop are good Top 40 material, but few of the numbers featured here have really lasted that well. Few of the artists, for that matter...*Grace Jones* is really just totally embarrassing on stage until you realize she was pushing 60, and then her performance is only mildly embarrassing.

Other similarly over-the-top or flat performances betray Trevor Horn's legacy as primarily studio-perfect music from studio-perfect artists. Removed from the comfort of post-production and effects, artists like Grace Jones just don't have the same allure. Artists like *Frankie* seem like poor imitations of themselves, a parody of what came across the radio so many years ago. There are some great moments here, and enduring musicianship from the guys in *Yes* that always had mad skills. Whether you lean more toward electronica or prog rock, you'll find something endearing in this tribute to Horn's work. The concert is filmed and edited well, and the acts are clearly giving it their all. If nothing else, there's huge nostalgia value here for those snolent baby-boomers that used to like to rock and roll...

-Fridtjof, GameVortex Communications AKA Matt Paddock