



CHICK COREA ELEKTRIC BAND

Live at the
Maintenance Shop
QUANTUM LEAP DVD

One of the most significant jazzmen of the past four decades, pianist Chick Corea has always pushed the edge with important musical projects. After his band Return To Forever disbanded, Corea formed his jazz-rock fusion group, The Elektric Band, in 1985 with drummer

Dave Weckl, bassist John Patitucci, guitarist Frank Gambale and saxophonist Eric Marienthal. That band made five recordings for the GRP label, including a 1986 self-titled disc that includes four of the five tunes from this DVD.

This remarkable live-recorded performance "circa 1987" features Corea laying down five tunes with Weckl and Patitucci at The Maintenance Shop at Iowa State University. DVD tunes include: "Sidewalk," "King Cockroach," "India Town," "Rumble" and "Malaguena." No composition credits are listed but one can assume that all but "Malaguena" are Corea originals.

No exact date is listed for this performance, but some online sleuthing reveals that Corea appeared in October 1986 and January 1987 at the Maintenance Shop in concerts filmed by the University in conjunction with Iowa Public Television, which broadcast the performances nationally on PBS and, in some cases, internationally. This DVD was originally released in 2005 in Australia only. (Quantum Leap is a UK company.)

As this may be the only existing DVD documentation from that era featuring these three musicians, it would thus have some historic value. Yet, while the sound quality and camera work are fine, production quality is not. The DVD is in 4:3 aspect ratio and color picture quality is not very crisp. Sloppy work such as an out-of-order play list on the jacket and a missing track on the disc menu detract somewhat from the finished product. Total time on the jacket is listed as "75 mins approx," but when you add up the times indicated for each tune, it totals around 50 minutes (The original PBS videotapes were one-hour programs). Bonus disc materials include bios on the band members and their discographies.

Still, despite some of the abovementioned drawbacks, Corea's fans should find this DVD a worthwhile purchase. And since it was just released October 28, it would be a good as well as timely gift choice for a Chick Corea Elektric Band fan.

Nancy Ann Lee

GEORGE BENSON

Absolutely Live
EAGLE EYE MEDIA DVD

George Benson became an international star with the release of his 1976 album "Breezin'," but before that he was well known in the jazz world as an incredible guitarist. Once he made the big-time, the guitar took a back seat to his rich vocals, but in recent years, especially in live performances, we have seen more and more guitar work popping up.

This concert from 2000 took place at Waterfront Hall in Belfast, Ireland and finds Benson in fine form in a number of settings. It starts off with three songs for which Benson is backed by the BBC Big Band as he sings straight jazz on "All Of Me," "I Only Have Eyes For You" and "Beyond The Sea," with no guitar strapped on. Next up he is backed by a smaller band, which includes pianist Joe Sample, as they work through three instrumentals, so Benson's guitar is front and center here on "Deeper Than You Think," "Hipping The Hop" and "Lately." Benson goes back to singing, as they get more into contemporary jazz/R&B with "The Ghetto" and "In Your Eyes," the latter of which adds a string group with members of the Ulster Orchestra. Sample is gone now but the small band continues with a different pianist as they switch back to straight jazz, with the small band and strings, for "Moody's Mood" followed by Benson doing a fantastic solo guitar version of "Danny Boy" that certainly revved up the Irish audience.

Now it is time for George to give the crowd some of his contemporary hits as he covers "This Masquerade," "Breezin'," "Love X Love" and "Turn Your Love Around" with the small band and little orchestra. Then they take it home with three more songs for which the small band is backed by the BBC Big Band and strings for "Never Give Up On A Good Thing," "Give Me The Night" and "On Broadway."

The sound is very good, especially in DTS Surround, and the camera work, while mostly featuring Benson, does spend some time on the crowd dancing, especially near the end; however, for some reason it was not really a distraction for me. This would make a fine gift for any George Benson fan out there.

Bill Wahl

THE CRUSADERS

Live At Montreux 2003
EAGLE EYE MEDIA DVD

Just released as a part of Eagle's Montreux Jazz Festival series, The Crusaders are featured in a 2003 concert. Originally formed in 1961, they were quite popular in the soulful, straight-ahead and hard bop vein when they were known as The Jazz Crusaders. When they moved in a new direction in the 1970s they shortened the name to simply The Crusaders. Joe Sample began playing the Fender Rhodes electric piano and they added an electric guitarist and forged their own soulful, funky style in what was known as jazz-fusion. The band's trademark sound comes from a perfect blending of tenor sax and trombone. The original tenor player, Wilton Felder, is on hand here, and is the only other remaining founding member here along with Sample.

On this night in 2003 Sample and Felder were on

