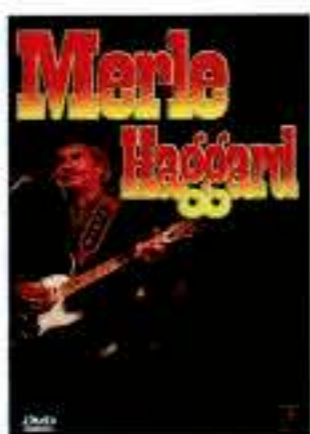


Merle Haggard ★★1/2
(1983) 80 min. DVD: \$12.95.
Music Video Distributors
(avail. from most distributors).



Backed by a big band, Merle Haggard performs over two dozen songs before a rapt audience in this 1983 concert recorded at the jam-packed Church Street Station in Orlando, FL. Haggard sings a ten-gallon cowboy hat's worth of his hits (including "Mama Tried," "The Fightin' Side of Me," "The Bottle Let Me Down," and "Okie From Muskogee"), picking some mean guitar and displaying his fiddlin' acumen on six of the songs during this generous set. Unfortunately, the Dolby Digital 5.1 sound and visual quality of this DVD don't measure up. The proceedings appear dark and murky throughout, and the audio seems to be keyed exclusively to Haggard's Telecaster—everything else, including horns and backup singers, range from downplayed to downright inaudible. Given the fact that there are several other Haggard music DVDs available—including 1985's *Merle Haggard: Live From Austin, TX* from the *Austin City Limits* concert series, this inexpensive disc is definitely optional. Aud: P. (M. Moore)

Moogfest 2006 Live

★★★1/2
(2006) 142 min. DVD: \$19.95.
Music Video Distributors
(avail. from most distributors).



Moogfest 2006 Live captures a handful of the world's virtuoso keyboardists performing at the B.B. King Blues Club in Times Square. The big stars—Jan Hammer and Keith Emerson—deliver impressive turns: Hammer with a long, jazzy set backed by the five-piece Mahavishnu Project (no slouches in the musicianship department themselves) and Emerson and his band in a strange but intriguing three-song outing highlighted by a full-length performance of "Tarkus," the old Emerson, Lake & Palmer staple. Earlier offerings by Dream Theatre's Jordan Rudess and the Cure's Roger O'Donnell are, respectively, too showy and not showy enough, but Moog fans are likely to enjoy the amiable, almost minimalist groove of P-Funk's Bernie Worrell, backed by DJ Logic and his band. While in some cases, the Moog plays a decidedly supporting role at its own party, this is a wonderful concert overall (presented in Dolby Digital 5.1), and a fine introduction to the versatility of Robert Moog's famous synthesizer. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (M. Moore)

Musica Cubana: Live in Tokyo

★★★
(2005) 90 min. DVD: \$14.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

There's something utterly irresistible about the best Cuban music: when horns, percussion, and voice come together just right, the

groove will sweep you up like a tropical breeze that's exotic but also somehow universal. On the downside, this stuff can get a little monotonous, especially for those who don't understand Spanish. Fitting both descriptions, *Musica Cubana: Live in Tokyo*, directed by German Kral (and executive produced by Wim Wenders—misspelled as "Winders" on the back of the DVD—whose 1999 *Buena Vista Social Club* was very popular), is billed as one of the last performances by BVSC singer Pio Leiva, but Leiva actually plays a relatively small role (no surprise, considering that he was pushing 90 at the time), shuffling forward to croon a tune or two in a voice that's willing but weak. In fact, anyone expecting a reprise of the traditional, mostly acoustic sound featured in Wenders' acclaimed film will likely be surprised, if not disappointed, as electric instruments abound, and there's even a considerable amount of rap, courtesy of the dynamic Telmary Diaz (the outfit is billed as the "Sons of Cuba," but Diaz is just one of several Daughters on hand as well). That said, the musicianship is uniformly topnotch, the performances energetic, and the 13 tunes are catchy. Presented in solid Dolby Digital 5.1, DVD extras include a music video. Recommended. [Note: two companion titles are also newly available—*Musica Cubana: Live in Amsterdam* at the same price, and from Cinema Libre Studio, the documentary/performance film *Musica Cubana*, priced at \$24.95.] Aud: P. (S. Graham)



New Morning: 25th Anniversary 1981-2006

★★★1/2
(2007) 2 discs. 240 min.
DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



On this two-disc, four-hour compilation, solid live performances overcome a presentation that's adequate at best, shoddy at worst. Although billed as an "anniversary" release, no history of Paris' "New Morning" nightclub is offered here (owner and "high priestess" Eglal Farhi is seen briefly, but isn't interviewed), and while the club has been around since 1981, not a single performance here dates back prior to '94. No musicians other than the bandleaders are identified, nor are all the tunes (*conguero* Ray Barretto introduces a song as "a Wayne Shorter composition," but doesn't give the name; so instead of doing some research, the DVD compilers simply list it as "Wayne's Composition"). These will seem like minor quibbles to many, and it's true that some of the music transcends such annoyances. The range of musical styles is impressive, from Delta blues (John Hammond's "Walking Blues") to straight-ahead jazz (by Clark Terry,

Ray Brown, Joe Lovano, and others) and Latin (Barretto, Omar Sosa, Paolo Fresu). There's also a whole lot of guitar picking, ranging from tasty offerings by Robben Ford, Duke Robillard, and the trio of Larry Coryell, John Abercrombie, and Brazilian songstress Badi Assad, to Mike Stern's heavy jazz-rock and a lengthy jam by Larry Carlton and Steve Lukather on a version of Jimi Hendrix's "Red House." A decent musical grab bag, this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (S. Graham)

Rock Relief: Live in Concert

★★
(2005) 90 min. DVD: \$14.95.
Music Video Distributors
(avail. from most distributors).



Considering that the musicians who appeared at this concert donated their services to a very worthy cause—a charity called Musicians for Disaster Relief, whose

goal was to raise money to help victims of the spate of hurricanes that devastated Florida in 2005, it would be churlish to criticize their actual performances. But, here goes. What can you say about Loverboy except that they were a perfectly serviceable but faceless '80s band whose songs "Working for the Weekend" and "Turn Me Loose" are only a handful of listeners' idea of classic rock? And what about Dickey Betts? "Ramblin' Man" was a neat song 35 years ago, but today the former Allman Brothers guitarist looks and sounds haggard. And how about that Michael Bolton? Let's just say that if you loved Eddie Money in his heyday, if you dug Mark Farner when he fronted Grand Funk Railroad (and can overlook the fact that he *still* sports one of the worst mullets ever created), and if Rick Derringer's "Rock & Roll, Hoochie Koo" is still front and center on your iPod, then you're gonna love this. If not, well...you can still buy this Dolby Digital 5.1 blast from rock's past and remind yourself that it's for a good cause. Optional. Aud: P. (S. Graham)