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March 29, 2010...10:00 pm

### New DVD: Muse Under Review

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Thanks to the exquisite taste of my younger daughter, I've had the good fortune to see **Muse** in a club not once but *twice*, which today seems absurdly intimate. The first time I was the willing driver and back-of-the-room hanger-on at the local rock club, a duty that gave me immense pleasure even if I didn't know the bands that well. (My daughter was interested in going to concerts – *what else mattered?*)

Sure, I suffered through some total dreck like the manipulative choreographed *faux-punk* of **Fall Out Boy**, but the karmic payback was in this trio that seemed to blend **Radiohead**, **Queen** and **ELP** into something greater than the sum of its parts. And not only were they phenomenal musicians, they had a light show that was probably better than many I've seen in outdoor arenas - and this was in an 800 seat *club*! Flat out *mesmerizing*.

The next time I saw them, I drove to Buffalo which meant enduring a carload of hyperactive and excited teenage girls talking over each other in a high-pitched cacophony that I imagined could strip the asbestos from

old pipe insulation a hundred yards away. But by now *I* was as interested in seeing the band as *they* were, and **Muse** did not disappoint. In this slightly larger room – perhaps 1200 capacity – they played like they were rocking **Wembley**, albeit with appropriately scaled impeccable sound and an even *better* light show than before. Little did any of us know that they would be *actually be rocking Wembley* within a year.

I'll save the dissertation on **Muse's** music for another time; suffice it to say they are becoming one of the most popular bands on the globe and deservedly so. But their back story is almost as interesting as their rise; three musicians who united as teens and remain a trio to this day through hard work and careful career planning. They deserve their success, and when it comes to entertaining an audience, *they get it*.

I'm a big fan of music documentaries when they are done *well*; I don't mind those talking heads if they're actually providing some useful information. Fortunately there have been several DVDs released in the last couple of years that are the antithesis of the gossipy tabloid crap you'll find clogging channels and programs that I won't even validate by naming them.

So if documentaries are your cup of tea, and you like **Muse**, check this out. And *a shout out to Eli* for turning me on to this great band in the first place.



*Matthew Bellamy, Muse's principal songwriter, had always believed that their concerts required spectacular production as well as pristine sound. His earlier songs focused on spiritual and mystical topics; veritable space operas that leveraged his instrumental versatility and classical music background. As each successive tour brought more confidence, the band's stage show expanded to include more and more spectacular lighting and visual effects from multiple video screens to giant fluorescent glitter-filled balloon orbs dropped over the audience.*

*He also displayed an uncanny balance of following sage advice and taking chances; willing to work a long term plan true to his artistic vision rather than aim for the bigger dollars a more commercial sound would bring. **Muse** began road-testing songs prior to recording, lyrics and themes became both mature and otherworldly, and the band changed producers from album to album before finally taking the reins themselves.*

*By the time of their global breakout headlining **Glastonbury** in 2004, any doubts about their abilities vanished with a stunning performance that had fans and critics raving. That their stature has only gotten larger is impressive; as of 2010 they are arguably among a handful of the world's most successful bands and only getting bigger.*

[Read my full review](#) of this documentary at **PopMatters**

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