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Case Number 21903: Small Claims Court



Robert Plant's Blue Note

[MVD Visual](#) // 2011 // 157 Minutes // Not Rated
Reviewed by Judge Victor Valdivia // July 30th, 2011

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Note: This is a pre-release re **Plant's Blue Note** will be av purchase on August 23rd, 201

All Rise...

Judge Victor Valdivia claims to be musically adventurous, but ends up listening to the same two songs over a

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The Charge

Robert Plant's journey through the territories that have most acutely inspired his music.

The Case

MVD Visual's unauthorized music DVDs are such a step above those of any other label that it can be easy to excesses. **Robert Plant's Blue Note** clocks in at an astounding 157 minutes. At times, does sometimes see a slog. Nonetheless, if you stick with it you will rewarded with some genuine insights and great music you m heard. It actually does a good job of examining Plant's musical career without either rehashing his time in Le

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make this one the better DVDs in MVD's catalogue.

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The obvious comparison is to [The Man Who Fell To Earth](#), MVD's unauthorized DVD bio of Brian Eno. Like one also took two-and-a-half hours and examined an influential and important artist's music. The key difference is that the Eno DVD only covered five years and thus was overlong and overwrought. This DVD covers Plant's musical career, from his teenage bands to his most recent works with Nashville session musicians in 2010. Plant's solo career, unlike Eno's, has never really been examined in much detail, even though in many ways arguably the most adventurous and ambitious of any British rock superstar apart from Peter Dinklage. Neither nor Roger Daltrey nor (sad to say) Jimmy Page have ever released albums as diverse and fascinating as *The Moments* (1983), *Now and Zen* (1988), *Mighty Rearranger* (2006), and *Raising Sand* (2007), his collaboration with bluegrass superstar Alison Krauss. These albums range from electronic world music to guitar-driven blues-rock to traditional country. The only thing they have in common is Plant's voice and his stubborn refusal to rest on his laurels as Led Zeppelin's front man. It would have been easy for Plant to assemble a band that merely rehashed Zep's sound (to say, Zep guitarist Jimmy Page has done at times) but instead, he has consistently explored different sounds that appeal to him, even if that sometimes results in albums that hardcore Zep fans might find confusing or

What **Robert Plant's Blue Note** does right is examine Plant's musical history by examining his biggest influences. It may sound academic but it isn't, partly because Plant's influences are so radically diverse and also because it examines each of them with respect and authority. There are rare film and audio clips of such artists as Mali Tiniwene, Egyptian singer Oum Kalthoum, and Delta blues singer Son House. Here MVD Visual's policy of spending necessary money to license key pieces of music pays off handsomely, as it makes it easy to hear how Oum Kalthoum's music and singing shaped Plant's "Slow Dancer" (from his 1982 solo album *Pictures At Eleven*) or how Plant's collaboration with Eastern music influenced Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir." Refreshingly, Plant's time in Led Zeppelin is discussed as the main focus of the DVD. The band's story has been told so many times in so many places that a mere retelling would be a waste of effort. Instead, the DVD wisely focuses on how Plant's musical adventurousness, from his earliest days in his bands to his time in Zeppelin to his solo career, has always been the driving force in how he creates music. It is clear that Plant was more than just Zep's singer—he was every bit a valuable collaborator with Jimmy Page. In many ways that the DVD adds plenty to the existing lore on Led Zeppelin.

Another reason this DVD is worth seeing is that the insights and discussion of how Plant came up with his solo work is both superb. There are clips of an interview with Plant from 2010 that provide some context but there are also interviews with Plant's closest musical collaborators, such as guitarist Robbie Blunt, producer Phil Johnstone, and singer Hossam Ramzy. All have plenty to say about Plant's solo albums and his brief reunion with Page in the mid-1990s, describing how those albums were written and recorded. The discussions of Plant's solo work makes it possible to reassess these albums that were sometimes underrated when they were released, but also to see that there is a common thread that runs through all of them. The footage of some great though unheralded (in the West, at least) collaborations, particularly those scenes of Plant collaborating with them, is so absorbing that you'll be intrigued and want to hear new music to explore and listen to.

Robert Plant's Blue Note, then, is a valuable release, and not just for Led Zeppelin fans. It serves as a wonderful way to rediscover the roots and influences of a performer who, for all his fame and fortune, is too often underrated. The documentary is too long by about a third, but it's not because any one section is unnecessary, just that each section stands a bit of pruning and editing. Even then, however, the footage of some truly remarkable Eastern artists and bluesmen is a feast for anyone looking to expand their musical horizons. Viewers unfamiliar with Plant's story should get a quick overview (see *Accomplices* section) before watching it but once they do, those who are patient and open-minded will find plenty to enjoy here.

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sound a bit rough. The only extra of note is a collection of bonus footage (5:52) that examines Plant's affect legendary bluesman Leadbelly. It's of minor interest. There are also text bios of each of the interviewees.

The Verdict

Not guilty.

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Did we give **Robert Plant's Blue Note** a fair trial? [yes](#) / [no](#)

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