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Tuesday, 26 September 2006

Green on Red: Valley Green – Live at the Rialto

Written by Brent Simon
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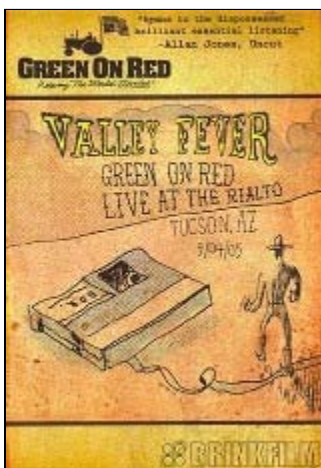
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Green on Red formed in the heat of Tucson, Arizona, in the early 1980s, comprised of singer-songwriter Dan Stuart, Chris Cacavas on keyboards, and Jack Waterson on bass. After relocating to Los Angeles and picking up drummer Alex "Big Dog" MacNicol (guitarist Chuck Prophet also came on board in 1985, and Cacavas eventually departed for a solo career), they found their interests unaligned with the public's appetite for new wave synth-pop. While critical accolades for their neo-psychedelic noodlings never translated into any true and lasting measure of mainstream success Green on Red nonetheless developed a reputation as a solid live act, and this reunion concert offers forth a nice if marginal glimpse at where they are now and what might have been.

The circumstances of *Valley Green – Live at the Rialto's* 2005 recording were less celebratory than erstwhile fans might have hoped. While on the one hand an anniversary of sorts, it was also a gathering to honor their fallen colleague, MacNicol, who passed in January of 2004. Sharing the stage for the first time in more than 18 years, the result is an emotional set full of sloppy, careening brilliance... followed by sluggish passages where out-of-step rhythms tread over one another in awkward fashion. The track list here includes 16 cuts, including "Gravity Talks" and "Hair of the Dog" (!), but it's late-set tunes like "The Drifter," "Sea of Cortez" and

"Fading Away" that most connect.

The filming of the September 2005 show – which takes place at a theater that borders an apparently fashionable hotel in Tucson – is another head-rubbing matter. Non-English-speaking Brazilian tourists were apparently drafted on a whim to record the concert (seriously), and the framing and just about everything else other than the audio quality suffers accordingly over the course of the next 85 minutes. The street-ambling lead-in filmed with the band members gives the piece a nice little filmic feel – Stuart, talking about one of the keys of art and life being knowing when "to go away," comes off as a fragile and fractured ego of the Brian Wilson mold – but the relentless cross-cutting and irksome angles at the show mar what is also an uneven show.

Packaged in a regular Amray case, *Valley Green – Live at the Rialto* is a region-free release presented in full-screen. The picture quality is so-so, but, as mentioned, the editing and directing are annoying, and the main men screen additionally suffers a few hiccups (I had to reload twice after it froze up and rendered all buttons useless, but it played fine from there). A bi-fold paper inset advertises other releases from Brink DVD. C (Show) C- (Disc)

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