



DVD review – ‘The Pat Travers Band’

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Reviewed by Sook

Question: How many unsigned guitarists from Los Angeles does it take to screw in a light bulb?

Answer: 10. One to actually screw it in, and nine to stand back with their arms crossed and proclaim, “I can do that.”

That may very well be true, but can they emulate the warmth from that light? Such is the predicament with the majority of guitar players the world over. Speed and technique do not mean very much if you cannot make the listener experience any emotion. It takes a special kind of player to channel their emotions via the six strings connected to wood with any degree of consistency and/or with the kind of passion that sets you aside from the thousands of players one will inevitably be compared against. The mastery of rock’s weapon of choice is a title earned by the recognition of those swimming high up the same stream, from a literal ocean of musicians.

Pat Travers is one of the few elite players in this stream of musical consciousness.

Long considered a “guitarist guitarist” by an illustrious class of peers, this Canadian born legend has been wowing his loyal audience for more than 30 years. Little known to the youth of today, Pat Travers harkens back to a time and day when what you played and how you sounded mattered far more than what your look was like or what Hollywood starlet you may of been screwing. Crazy, huh?

Cherry Red Films release of THE PAT TRAVERS BAND: HOOKED ON MUSIC is yet another DVD in a long list of recently available obscure time captures that most fans probably never knew even existed. Shot on April 11th of 1976 in a Köln, Germany television studio, this 60-minute jam, set before a mixed audience of 100 or so bemused viewers, captures Travers on the rise before his inevitable ascent to international fame. For rock aficionados such as myself, it is this kind of classic and understated footage that flat out makes me salivate.

Travers whirls through 11 early band classics and covers in what can best be described as a “glorified rehearsal” that was probably slated (by his then management team) to be his introduction to a new and curious German audience. Complete with apologetic tunings between numbers and calls for the technician to fix the microphone, this laid-back performance has a quiet, yet electrifying charm.

From the lead off tune AS MY LIFE FLIES to the closing staple MAKES NO DIFFERENCE, Travers and company shows what it means to be a highly competent

rock n roll force in the mid seventies bent on clawing their way to rock's seemingly unreachable precipice of fame. Impressively supported by England's own Peter Cowling on bass and a very young "Nicko" on drums (That's Nicko McBrain pre-Iron Maiden, kids), this trio of musicians fire on all cylinders throughout the set, save one glitch in an unlisted cover version of "Statesborough Blues" for much of the disc.

Travers shows how fluidity and tone can dominate over speed and technicality in his live performance like only a few are able to do. Solidly based in the blues, but smothered in boogie, Travers delivers his chops with ease and grace with a tonality that bites down hard. Look no further than the slide work on YOU DON'T LOVE ME or the familiar riffing of PT's popular version of Little Walter's BOOM BOOM to see why Travers is considered one of rock's best players.

This was a time when guitar solos where revered as holy moments, and Travers lets us know it is his church as he rips through HOOKED ON MUSIC, NEED LOVE, and the early genius of MAKES NO DIFFERENCE. If you are looking for the early gestation of the tunes found on GO FOR WHAT YOU KNOW (Travers' most acclaimed live work), you will find it hear on this DVD. This is arena music being played in an intimate setting, which makes for both an understated and powerful hour of seventies rock bliss.

Sadly, Travers is one of those unsung heroes in the rock world that will never get his complete due. However, for those of us in the know, and for those of us that have gone beyond the noodling stage of guitar 101, this early testament to a legend of the six string is a must have. THE PAT TRAVERS BAND: HOOKED ON MUSIC DVD is strictly for collectors, guitar junkies, and of course, the legion of Pat Travers fans that are spread all over the globe.

Dig it, man.

SET LIST

AS MY LIFE FLIES
STOP AND SMILE
HOOKED ON MUSIC
FEELIN' RIGHT
NEED LOVE
YOU DON'T LOVE ME
STATESBOROUGH BLUES (not listed)
MEDLEY 1 & 2
BOOM BOOM
ROCK N ROLL SUSIE
MAKES NO DIFFERENCE

No extras on this DVD.