

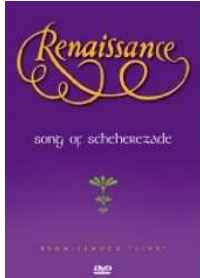
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Artist: Renaissance
Title: "The Song Of Scheherazade"
Label: MVD Entertainment
Release Date: 6/19/2009
Genre: Progressive Rock


Rating: 4/5

Written By: Ken Pierce (copyright 2009) for PiercingMetal.com





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The music of Renaissance will always hold a special place in my heart as a fan of music and that's because I remember their albums as stuff that my Mother used to play for me from her own record collection when I was younger. It was this along with some of her other vinyl platters that really helped me formulate my interest music as a whole. There was something unique about the band and something very classy and warm in its overall charm. For those who might have never enjoyed this wonderful band, they are a blend of Classical meets Progressive along with Folk and Rock elements and are often considered to be one of the finest bands of this type in Progressive Music history. This makes sense based on the number of wonderful compositions that the band had offered up to the world on albums such as "Ashes Are Burning", "Turn Of The Cards" and "Scheherazade and Other Stories". While the group formed in 1969 and had released a number of albums previous to the ones referenced, it was the lineup from around 1973 up until 1979 that is considered the bands signature and most beloved roster and this was largely because of the bands second singer, Annie Haslam. Annie's voice was my own introduction to the band and probably one of the highest points in what they were doing for me, and this made the release of this DVD something wonderful. Despite having released about fourteen albums over the course of their career, there was never an official DVD release of any kind which makes this footage a welcome thing to their fans. The home viewer gets to enjoy not one but two different shows from two distinct points in the bands history. The first is from a show in 1976 where they were playing the Capitol Theatre in Passaic, NJ while the other is circa 1979 and done at the Convention Hall in Asbury Park, NJ.

Given its age in terms of footage the home viewer should be aware that there are some severe limitations to its visual sense and that the angles are extremely standard. It's essentially a camera standing on one side of the band shooting them and giving the occasional close-up as opposed to those concert films we see nowadays where the camera is right up in the artist's face or focused down the neck of the guitar. Despite the limited angles and stage goings on, the music is superb and the band sounds amazing given its means of being recorded. I was not clear what this footage might have been intended for when it was recorded, but it is nice to see it finally come to light considering the bands now legendary place in the genre. As mentioned the band was considered the classic lineup and that means its Haslam (vocals), John Tout (piano), Jon Camp (bass pedals, vocals), and Terence Sullivan (drums). The material being delivered comes largely from three of the bands most important releases. Highlights for me were "Ocean Gypsy", "Mother Russia" and the three part epic "Song Of Scheherazade" which is where the DVD film takes its name from. All of these tunes brought back memories and would be the closest that I came to seeing the band live since the chance to catch a concert was not something that happened for me way back then when they were most active.

The film is entirely shot in black and white which is a little bit of a bummer but its better to have it delivered in this fashion than never at all. One critique was how the second show only used the introduction portion of "Can You Understand" as opposed to playing the entire track which I have always loved. The pair of shows run two hours when played back to back and that is sure to appease the bands existing fans who I know are still out there and hopefully this shall generate some new interest in their back catalog which should be able to be found with the proper searches at any of the fine online retailers. There is no booklet inside, nor much in the way of photos on the overall packaging which is normally a pet peeve of mine, but I was so happy to finally be holding and enjoying a visual presentation of this band that I let them slide on it. This is a recommendation for anyone who enjoys not only the Progressive Rock meets Classical Rock side but also those who enjoy the presence of an incredible female vocalist and well-thought out compositions and I hope it inspires those who wish such a life for themselves in music. Let's hope that this release finds more footage from this band surfacing and being released.

Official Web Site: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_\(band\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_(band))

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