

Albert King

SCREEN TEST

DVDs in Review

Various Artists

Wattstax
(Warner Bros.)

★★★★★

Way back in 1972, 100,000 brothers and sisters gathered for a festival called Wattstax, a seven-hour soul, funk, and blues revue at the Los Angeles Coliseum. Billed as the "Black Woodstock," its bill represented not only the best in black music at the time but, like Woodstock, also served as a cultural phenomenon. This disc captures this period with candid interviews, talks with Watts residents,



and incisive commentary by Richard Pryor.

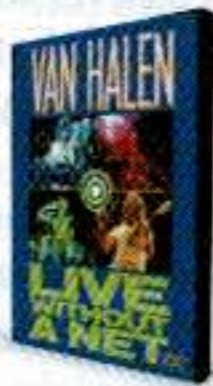
SCENE STEALER: Excellent wah-guitar moments come from the Bar-Kays and Isaac Hayes, but it's Albert King's stinging Gibson Flying V that carries from one end of the Coliseum to the other.

Van Halen

Live Without a Net (Warner Bros.)

★★★★★

Unlike the recent debacle known as the 2004 Van Halen tour, this zesty date, from New Haven, Connecticut, in 1988, features an exuberant, Hagar-led



lineup still at—OK, *near*—the top of its game revving through a well-balanced set of classics and period tunes.

SCENE STEALER: Stunning throughout, and certainly having a great time, Eddie adds his signature dives and squeals, not to mention a wicked solo, to VH's version of Led Zeppelin's "Rock and Roll," placing an emphatic exclamation point on an exhilarating show.

Ramones

Raw (Image)

★★★★★

The first officially authorized Ramones video is a joyride through the punk act's 1980

European tour, where "fan" truly was short for "fanatic." So, it's no surprise that the boys in black were primed for a little hijinks. There's a nice mix of silliness—some of which is especially poignant in light of the band's recent losses—and music, during which they bear down on three chords, leaving only a cloud of dust in their wake. Five hours of material.



SCENE STEALER: Doors six-stringer Robby Krieger joins Johnny Ramone on "Take It As It Comes," adding a welcome lead counterpoint to Johnny's punk riffing.

NRBQ

One in a Million (Creem/MVD)

★★★★★

So often referred to as a "national treasure," which often translates as "they're a great bar band," NRBQ has always played its R&B-hued rock with tremendous flair and fun, as well as a ferocity few bands could muster. In this top-quality show, filmed in Montreal in 1989, the band, which at the time included excellent guitarist Al Anderson, demonstrates enviable chops with an immaculate, inimitable looseness.



SCENE STEALER: In "I Got a Rocket in My Pocket," the surprisingly soulful Anderson cranks out some impressively noisy runs. —BOB GULLA

EXTRAS

Kansas

Sail On: The 30th Anniversary Collection 1974-2004 (Legacy)

★★★★★

This DVD-plus-two-CD set comprises a nice history of the eccentric, proggy hippie rockers. The video portion loses oomph during its contemporary footage, but some early

Don Kirschner celluloid from 1974 makes for good watchin'.

Johnny Cash

A Concert Behind Prison Walls (Eagle)

★★★★★

The real Man in Black entertains inmates at the Tennessee State Prison where, had

things turned out differently, he himself could've ended up. Included are classics like "Sunday Morning Coming Down," Roy Clark's awesome banjo duet "Shuckin' the Corn," and an array of other guest appearances.

Social Distortion

Live in Orange County (Time Bomb)

★★★★★

Mike Ness and Social D played 20 sold-out shows at Anaheim's House of Blues in 2003, and the gig on this DVD has to be among the best, with tunes spanning their 25-year career. The band's crackling punkabilly energy fits each song just right, like a well-worn leather jacket.

Big Head Todd and the Monsters

Live at the Fillmore (Sanctuary)

★★★★★

Good performance from Todd Park Mohr's bunch, but washed-out camera work detracts from any sense of immediacy. Monster MX—or composite camera view—helps mix things up, but more humor would've been nice. —BG

