

'89 LIVE IN JAPAN

Quiet Riot

Hauptfilm / MVD, 2004



Review by: Christopher Thelen

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By 1989, Quiet Riot was a band that was barely treading water. They had undergone the stigma of having lead singer Kevin DuBrow badmouth anyone within shouting range to the point that his actions were hurting the band -- leading to his unceremonious firing. With only two remaining members -- guitarist Carlos Cavazo and drummer Frankie Banali -- from their glory days, Quiet Riot had two choices: try and salvage their career, or call it a day.

Bravely, they soldiered on, adding bassist Sean McNabb and Rough Cutt vocalist Paul Shortino to the lineup and recording one poorly-received self-titled disc. That lineup, though, did try their best to make a name for themselves, as evidenced on the home video *'89 Live In Japan*.

Two things immediately jump out at the viewer with this set. First, while Shortino has a good set of pipes on him, he was not cut out to attempt the high-pitched whines that were DuBrow's vocal trademark. This is probably the reason why this set is light on selections from the DuBrow era of the band, featuring a whopping three selections. (From the outro, it does sound like the group played more, as you hear "Mama, We're All Crazee Now" -- one wonders why the whole show isn't included.)

Second, Shortino was not the right person for the band. Nothing against him, but with Shortino fronting the band oozing Robert Plant-like sexuality, Quiet Riot almost seems like they've turned into a second-rate Whitesnake.

Need proof? Listen to Shortino go through the motions on "Stay With Me Tonight," the single from Quiet Riot (and also featured with the video shot for the single). Shortino seems to have taken every move directly from David Coverdale, who in turn snatched them from Plant. It's not a good fit, especially when one thinks that Quiet Riot was not previously noted for doing material such as this.

This isn't to say that '89 *Live In Japan* is terrible. There are moments on this video where one can see flashes of potential. "I'm Falling" is a track which, admittedly, is basic hard rock, but is one that worked well for the band, and could have been something more than the afterthought it is today. (Admittedly, I've never heard the Quiet Riot album, so this is a gut feeling.) Likewise, both the band and the crowd seem to come alive when "The Wild And The Young" and "Cum On Feel The Noise" kick in -- the former possibly being one of the band's underrated numbers. "The Joker" is also a highlight of this set, capped off by a brief -- edited? -- drum solo by Banali.

One can argue that Quiet Riot should have called it a day when they stranded DuBrow in a hotel and left for home, or at least continued under a different name. But one also can't blame the group for trying to undo some of the damage caused by their former bandmate, and '89 *Live In Japan* showcases a group determined to keep fighting, despite the circumstances. Maybe, had they selected a vocalist who fit their style a little better, they could have succeeded -- and I'm not laying total blame at Shortino's feet, either. But while this DVD is by no means a showcase of a band's funeral, it also isn't the picture of a phoenix rising from the ashes.

RATING: C-

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