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The Michael Schenker Group – Live in Tokyo 1997 (2005)

Important German rock/heavy metal guitarist with versatile chops



The Michael Schenker Group – Live in Tokyo 1997 (2005)

Studio: Music Video Distributors (MVD)

Video: 1.33:1 Full Frame

Audio: DD 5.1, DD 2.0

Extras: Bonus Video: Bootlegged at The Unforgiven World Tour, Japan 2000 (48 min); Desktop Images; Interview (27 min)

Length: 157 minutes (1997 concert alone)

Rating: *1/2 (heavy metal fans), **1/2**

(sound and video quality)

Schenker has had quite an impressive career as a guitar player and the 1997 celebrates 25 years of playing music. He joined the hard rock/metal band The Scorpions at the ripe age of 15 (in 1972) and went on to UFO (in 1979), until he eventually started his own group The Michael Schenker Group (abbreviated MSG). Over the years many different musicians have come and gone in the group. In the case of this DVD, the lengthy interview on this disc is worth watching before the concert for those unfamiliar with the man. He didn't even speak English in the early days, but in his heyday was asking to audition to join the Rolling Stones as well as Ozzy Osbourne. Interestingly enough, he turned them down and went on to work on his guitar playing. Although the concentration of the music is hard rock and heavy metal, it is clear that he is quite a versatile guitarist. The group that he plays with in the 1997 show are: David Van Landung (vocals/percussion), Barry Sparks (bass, acoustic guitars, backing vocals), Seth Bernstein (rhythm and acoustic guitars, keyboards, backing vocals), Shane Gaalaas (drums, acoustic guitar), and Leif Sundin (vocals, rhythm and acoustic guitars).

The band plays 30(!) tracks at the Tokyo show and it covers the full career of Schenker and includes his solo material as well. The audience

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participation is really good with high intensity. During most of the openings of the songs, the lead singer introduces the track by title and/or group where it originated. [Wish other pop performers would do that!...Ed.] On track 20, the band shifts to a softer, almost haunting, more melodic group of tunes with a large guitar accompaniment on center stage. The audio has some edge, but not as bad as I was expecting based on the video. Vocals were intelligible and electric guitar sound was good. Drums sounded a bit thin and cymbals and percussion was too metallic. The video was a bit soft and fuzzy and had the look of many heavy metal music videos from the early 80s. The flashing strobe early on was giving me a headache.

The bootleg video is just that—a poor quality tape both in video and sound. The audio was off center (which I think they should have taken the time to correct before releasing the disc). Another audio anomaly I noticed was on the main concert right after the beginning of track 16 when they introduce Leif Sundin. He comes from the stage left and the audio goes out completely and comes back sounding terrible. This quickly corrects itself after 10 seconds or so. Fans will surely love the variety of material on this DVD and personally not being familiar with Schenker was quite impressed with his guitar playing ability—he's truly a terrific musician.

Tracks from Tokyo 1997 included: In the Search of the Peace of Mind (Scorpions); Doctor Doctor (UFO); Let it Roll (UFO); Natural Thing (UFO); Lights Out (UFO); Only You Can Rock Me (UFO); Another Piece of Meat (Scorpions); Into the Arena (MSG); Are You Ready to Rock (MSG); Assault Attack (MSG); Captain Nemo (MSG); No Time for Losers (McAuley Schenker Group); Save Yourself (McAuley Schenker Group); All the Way from Memphis (Contraband); Pushed to the Limit (UFO); Written in the Sand (MSG); Back to Life (MSG); Love Never Dies (MSG); Essence (MSG); Never Ending Nightmare (McAuley Schenker Group); Bijou Pleasurette (MSG); Positive Forward (Michael Schenker); Lost Horizon (MSG); Too Hot to Handle (UFO); Attack of the Mad Axeman (MSG); Love to Love (UFO); On and On (MSG); Armed and Ready (MSG); Feels Like a Good Thing (MSG); Rock Bottom (UFO).

Tracks from Japan 2000 included: Cry for the Nations; Let Sleeping Dogs Lie; Rock My Nights Away; 3 Fish Dancing; Pilot of Your Soul; In and Out of Time; The Mess I've Made; Hello Angel; Fat City; Looking for Love.

-Brian Bloom

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