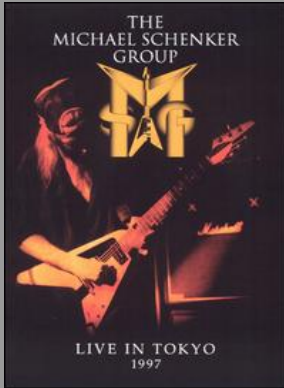


Rock is Life

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MSG: THE MICHAEL SCHENKER GROUP
Live in Tokyo 1997
 Music Video Distributors 2005
www.michaelschenkerhimself.com

What's the 4-1-1?

The "Master of the Flying V" takes a wild and varied trip down his musical memory lane in this newly released 1997 concert performance in Japan. The DVD was recorded in Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound. It includes a bootleg performance from 2000, an interview Michael Schenker, website links, desktop images and a logo screen.

Genre

Hard Rock

The Good

The concert itself is very good. It's a celebration of Schenker's 25 year recording history, and the 30 songs performed in the 2 ½ hour plus concert charts his entire career with The Scorpions, UFO, Contraband, and the various permutations of his solo band. I thought the singer for the 1997 concert did a fine job handling the differing material, and if there was any question that Schenker deserves his "guitar god" title, they should be laid to rest here.

The sound quality is actually very good. I know that's the general idea when you record a DVD, but not every band manages to truly capture a great sound. I liked how the set list design mixed things up a bit so that we didn't have just a grouping of each stop on his career but rather the songs were jumbled up throughout the set. If you haven't heard any material from the bands mentioned above, you'll really like this DVD. You get to hear rock classics like UFO's "Rock Bottom" and "Lights Out", Michael Schenker Group's "Armed and Ready" and "On and On", plus "Another Piece Of Meat" from The Scorpions.

There are 25 more songs to check out including 3 from my own personal favorite



Michael Schenker variation, McAuley Schenker Group. The 25 minute plus interview with Schenker is pretty illuminating. If you have followed his career at all, you probably know at least some of the information he talks about, but there are some pretty interesting tidbits in there.

The Bad

I thought the concert got off to kind of a tepid opening. I would think that even in this archival type of performance you'd still want to come out blazing, but it was a few minutes before the power chords got underway. The only real issue I had with the singer in the 1997 lineup was when David Van Landung was singing the McAuley Schenker song "Never Ending Nightmare." It sounded to me as if he kept missing the higher register the song called for. I wasn't particularly impressed with the bootleg video footage from the 2000 Japanese concert. The sound was good, but as you might imagine with a bootleg, the video images spent more time being fuzzy than anything else.

When I'm watching video, I want a clear picture or I'm unsatisfied. All the great sound goes for naught if I continually have to deal with poor video quality. In regards to the 1997 performance, the angle the concert is shown from does tend to grow a bit monotonous. There is little if any close-ups of the band, and I saw cameras winding through the crowd from the shots that were on the DVD, so I know they had to have at least some close-up material available when editing the disc together. They changed camera angles more times in the Schenker interview than they did in the main concert.

The Verdict

I've long appreciated Michael Schenker's guitar histrionics but have never had available at my fingertips so much of it in one place. While the DVD isn't perfect, this disc gives music fans a chance to really delve into one of the under appreciated guitarists of the past few decades. It's something well worth having!

Did You Know?

Michael Schenker's brother is Scorpions guitarist Rudolf Schenker. At various points in his career, Schenker was asked to audition for or join The Rolling Stones, Aerosmith, and Ozzy Osbourne's band. Barry Sparks, the bassist in both concerts on the DVD, is currently the bassist for Dokken.

Rating:  **out of 5**

-- Jay Roberts