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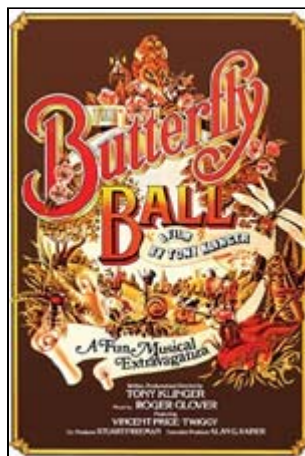
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DVD Review

The Butterfly Ball

Written by Brent Simon

Tuesday, 18 April 2006



In 1973, a children's book called *The Butterfly Ball and Grasshopper's Feast* was published, inspired by a sonnet from William Roscoe, a turn-of-the-19th-century writer. It contained a collection of poems by William Plomer – lavishly and intricately illustrated with 28 color plates by Alan Aldridge, an artist who had penned the Beatles' illustrated lyrics. How is this all relevant in the digital age, then? Well, it was that book that inspired this jubilant, live 1975 production at the Royal Albert Hall in Great Britain, long thought lost, but now finally available on DVD for the first time.

The program was the brainchild of producer-director Tony Klinger, who would go on to produce the critically acclaimed story of The Who, *The Kids Are Alright*. Before Live Aid, and certainly before the musical mash-ups of today, *The Butterfly Ball* brought together a tremendous hodgepodge of musical talents and styles, resulting in a one-of-a-kind experience. Originally conceived as a benefit event for Bud Flanagan's Leukemia Fund and Action Research for the Crippled Child, the show had another powerful proponent in Roger Glover, who had recently departed from Deep Purple and was embarking on his own career in knob-twirling. With a certain amount of cachet still swirling about him, Glover was able to get most of the artists who had participated in the studio recordings to perform, including Twiggy, Ian Gillan, Tony Ashton, Helen Chapelle, David Coverdale, John Gustafson, Eddie Hardin, Glenn Hughes, Earl Jordan, Judi Kuhl, Neil Lancaster, John Lawton, Mickey Lee Soule, Al Matthews, Liza Strike, Barry St. John and John Lord. In an even odder stroke, Vincent Price shows up (yes, that Vincent Price).

Fusing folk rhythms with heavier rock, a pinch of psychedelic soul and a touch of the jam band ethos that would come to characterize later acts like Phish and the Dave Matthews Band, *The Butterfly Ball* is a bit of a "tweener," in that has a little bit of something for everyone, but not necessarily enough of one particular thing to satisfy those looking for less

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POLLS

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- Terrestrial radio
- iPod, MP3 player, other digital music devices
- CDs and cassette tapes

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LOGIN FORM

meandering entertainment. It's an undeniable time capsule, though, full of lively colors, experimentation and some out-there animation.

The Butterfly Ball, as you might expect, wears the trials and tribulations of its source material a bit roughly on its sleeves at times. Running 85 minutes, it's presented in 1.33:1 full screen with a 5.1 surround sound mix that serviceably captures the demands of the show. There are, unfortunately, no supplemental extras that further contextualize and frame this release. While definitely a bit too out-there for mainstream audiences, for Deep Purple fans this is surely worth digging up for a quick look-see. C+ (Show) D+ (Disc)

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