



Arena

Smoke & Mirrors (DVD)

Metal Mind/MVD

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Admittedly I'm not all that familiar with Arena. I have really enjoyed their last couple of releases but that is pretty much the extent of my exposure to the band, so longtime fans keep that in mind if my opinions differ from your own.

Smoke & Mirrors is a really interesting DVD in the sense that you really have two different live shows from two different bands on here- yet they are both Arena. The first show was recorded in 2005 in Poland and features the current lineup of Arena (the lineup I am familiar with). The band sound great at this show- their live sound is much more dynamic than they are on CD in my opinion, the sound really comes alive. Where this really suffers though is the performance. A band can only do so much since they are bound by instruments (unless you are Arch Enemy) and the frontman, Rob Sowden, doesn't seem the least bit interested in try to keep your attention. He's got this weird Pirates of the Caribbean look going on and just seems lost in his own world. Fortunately he sounds good, it just gets kinda boring.

The second show is a reunion concert featuring what I assume to be the original lineup (or at least the classic one) of Arena. It's a six song set that was also recorded in 2005, this time in Holland. While I don't like the songs as well as the band's more recent material the show was much more interesting. For one, the band looked a bit excited to be playing together again but more importantly the singer was tremendously interesting to watch. Sure he's a bit over exaggerated and his voice takes some getting used to but he leaves no doubt that you are living in his headspace when you are watching the show.

The DVD also includes an extensive interview that was very helpful to a semi-new fan like myself as well as the standard biography, discography, weblinks, and desktop images. Overall this DVD is best left to die hard Arena fans in my opinion. It was nice to see once but I doubt I'll find myself going back to it often.

Reviewed by: **Mark Fisher**



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