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Various Artists

Moogfest 2006 - Live [DVD]

(Video Music, Inc.)

US release date: 17 July 2007

by **Dan MacIntosh**

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The Moog synthesizer has revolutionized popular music in more ways than can be listed. Almost everyone, from The Beatles to Stevie Wonder, has incorporated this cool device into their sound at one time or other. But the main problem with this DVD is that it focuses too heavily on the whole progressive realm of music. How much you enjoy this new release is fully dependant on how much you enjoy (or don't enjoy) Emerson, Lake & Palmer and the like.

This DVD opens with commentary and a live performance from Jordan Rudess, who is also a host of some sort. His "Phat Overture" and "Insectsamongus" are filled with spacey sounds that show off the Moog's range, but these sound effects—which are trying to pass for compositions—get old fast.

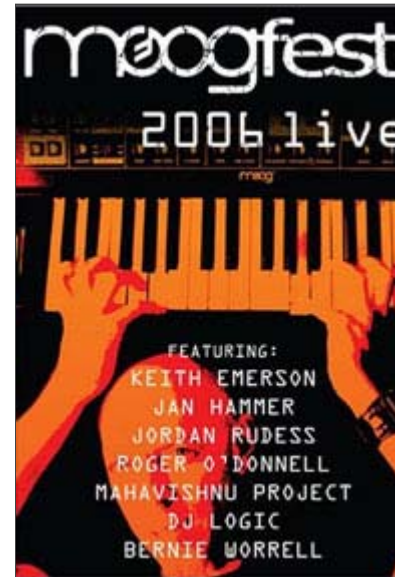
When Bernie Worrell (wearing a cowboy hat, no less) and DJ Logic take the stage, it makes you wish they could have played the whole time. Worrell is an amazing keyboard player who has been a longtime George Clinton sidekick, as well as a man who juiced the Talking Heads with plenty of natural funk in the '80s. While Worrell throws in nursery rhymes and other familiar melodies during "Astrological", DJ Logic – the thinking man's scratch-er – keeps up the groove.

Worrell is also assisted by Ron Jenkins (bass) and Deantoiné Parks (drums). It's truly a delectable combination.

Roger O'Donnell (from The Cure) is up next. Before he performs, O'Donnell speaks at length about the influence of Moog, and also how intimidated he is to be on the same stage as Jan Hammer. His "This Is A Story" is the kind of moody instrumental worthy of Robert (The Cure) Smith's usual dirge fests.

The Mahavishnu Project is led by Adam Holzman (keyboard), Rob Thomas (violin), Glenn Alexander (guitar), Dave Johnsen (bass), and Greg Brendian (drums). The best part about the act's contribution, "Meeting Of The Spirits/ Dance Of Maya", is that it sounds like a full band, instead of a guy fooling around on a keyboard. Rob Thomas' violin is especially noteworthy, and it gives this rock-jazzy tune the touch of a gypsy feel.

Jan Hammer is backed by The Mahavishnu Project. Hammer is more of a studio artist than a concert performer, and Adam Holzman, during his interview segment, notes what a thrill it is to play with Jan Hammer. Hammer is introduced as the man that revolutionized TV music; you may recall his theme for the *Miami Vice* program. His opener, "Oh, Yeah", breaks from the all instrumental norm with backing vocals. It's also fascinating to hear Hammer take a solo that sounds almost exactly like a guitar solo, only with keyboards. His interplay with Thomas' viol also stands out.



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Keith Emerson is given a full 39:26 of stage time. He closes out the show with "Living Sin", "Lucky Man" and "Tarkus". Emerson is backed by Marc Bonilla (guitar, vocals), Phil Williams (bass), and Pete Riley (drums). Emerson's performance is the disc's most prog-y moment. These compositions are big, bombastic blasts of sound. Emerson and the like took the simplicity of rock 'n' roll and turned it into an operatic mess. But that's just one reporter's opinion. Some people still love this stuff. But to me, it's the kind of music that annoyed more than pleased me. And that negative opinion hasn't changed much over the years. I always feel like an unlucky man every time an Emerson, Lake & Palmer song came on the radio.



Image from Bernie Worrell's website

There are no bonus segments on this DVD. Although it does contain interviews interspersed among the performances, these are sometimes oddly placed. For example, one has to wonder why Bernie Worrell and DJ Logic's comments come just before Keith Emerson's disc-closing set—especially when their own appearance came right at the beginning.

Even with its overabundance of progressive rock, this concert DVD is still relatively entertaining. You can argue over what the artists have done with their Moog talent, but it's hard to dismiss their obvious skills. I would have much rather had a more eclectic cast. But for now, this group of likeminded players will have to do for 2006's Moog tribute concert.

RATING: 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10

— 13 September 2007

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