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The DVD Diary III by Adam Bernard



It's time for another edition of

everyone's favorite recurring column on FreeHipHopNow.com, The DVD Diary. This time around we're taking a look at *Michael Franti and Spearhead Live in Sydney*, *Tupac Live at the House of Blues* and *Mint Condition Live from the 9:30 Club*, as well as the trailer for *Street Credentials* and *Some Videos* by Stones Throw Records.

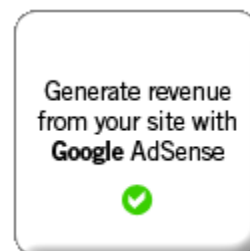
Michael Franti's DVD effort is an impressive one. For starters the DVD is a dual disc, meaning you have the actual DVD on one side and the CD of the live show on the other, which is a concept more companies should consider doing being that the replay value of a CD is always great than that of a DVD. Franti's live performance is an inspiring one. He's filled with so much positivity and peacefulness it's like watching some new brand of Hip-Hop, Hippie Hip-Hop, if you will. The crowd was completely into it and at times Franti even pulled people up on stage that were obviously not plants. At one point he pulled a girl up to dance with him, but unlike the majority of Hip-Hop or R&B shows this wasn't done in a nasty, I-want-to-grind-with-you, sort of way, but more of a fun loving, let's just be crazy, kind of way. A refreshing change from the norm. The second person he

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pulled on stage came after a short speech about how public speaking is the number one fear of people and he wanted to know how many folks in the audience were artists who've just been afraid to hit the stage. A bunch of hands went up, he scanned the audience, pointed to one lady and said "you're it!" What ensued after she was pulled on stage was pretty cool and worth the price of admission alone. Overall I highly recommend *Michael Franti and Spearhead Live in Sydney*, this is what a concert should be like.

Moving to the opposite end of the spectrum, and the globe, we have the latest DVD to use Tupac's name to move some units. I refuse to call this a 2Pac DVD because, despite his presence on the cover, it's not. *Tupac Live at the House of Blues* is really a Snoop Dogg DVD. The performance is a Snoop Dogg performance, it was his show at the House of Blues, Pac just opened for him. Pac's set is only half as long as Snoop's and the five Pac videos added to the DVD, four of which we've all seen hundreds of times, don't make up for the false advertising on the cover. To make matters worse, unlike the Franti DVD, which is a dual disc, Eagle Vision and Eagle Records expect listeners to buy a separate live CD if they want the show both on DVD and CD. Overall *Tupac Live from the House of Blues* is yet another exploitation of the fallen MC.

For the final full length DVD of this installment of The DVD Diary we have *Mint Condition Live from the 9:30 Club*. One of the most criminally underrated R&B acts of all time, Mint Condition gives a killer live performance. There's just something about a great band that makes for a fantastic show. The main difference with this concert DVD from the previous two is that footage from the included 15 minute documentary on the band is interspersed with the live show. Every couple of songs a new clip explaining something about the band is thrown in. It's not done intrusively and usually comes at a time when you'd be expecting the band to rest for a bit after an extended song. That's another thing about Mint Condition's DVD, like all great bands their live performances are markedly different than what one hears on their albums. Expect longer versions, more rocked out versions, and more intense versions of the majority of their hits. It's a true testament to a band's talent when they can both play their music and play *with* their music. Though the crowd shots showed mostly thirty and forty-something year old African-Americans in the crowd, *Mint Condition Live from the 9:30 Club* is a



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must for R&B fans no matter their race or age. If you're young and don't know about Mint Condition this is one group that it's OK to let the old folks learn ya about.

Finally we have two sampler DVDs to report on this issue, the trailer for *Street Credentials* and *Some Videos* by Stones Throw Records. The trailer for *Street Credentials* is so short I could only finish half of a sandwich during its runtime. What I saw was something that didn't seem to match the title of the DVD at all. *Street Credentials* looks like it's going to go more in depth into where Hip-Hop's going and how the underground has been affected by, and may possibly affect, things. Saul Williams, Poison Pen, Immortal Technique and Kool Keith are all featured prominently in the trailer.

The Stones Throw release that managed to make it to my desk, *Some Videos*, features six music videos and an NPR audio short. The NPR audio short on Madlib is interesting, especially in that it's an NPR short on Madlib, not exactly the kind of thing one might expect. The first few videos on the DVD are slightly stereotypical, but once the Quasimoto vids start things get moving. Gary Wilson's "Gary's In The Park" is also one of the weirder things I've seen of late, it seems tailor made for commentary from Beavis and Butthead. One very big note on *Some Videos* is that two of the entries, M.E.D.'s "Push" and Oh No's "Move (Remix)," feature the late J Dilla in what are, more than likely, his last appearances in music videos. That alone might make this worth searching out for Hip-Hop fans.

Final Grades

Michael Franti and Spearhead Live in Sydney: A

Tupac Live at the House of Blues: C-

Mint Condition Live at the 9:30 Club: A

Street Credentials Trailer: INC

Some Videos from Stones Throw Records: B

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