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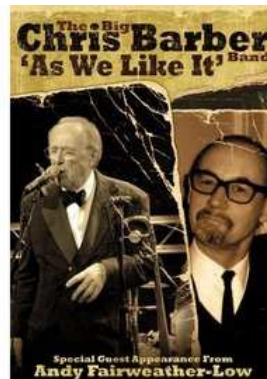
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## The Big Chris Barber Band 'As We Like It' (DVD/CDs/MVD)

Picture: D Sound: C+/D  
Extras: D  
Feature: C-



Raise your hand if you know who Chris

Barber is. Anyone? Yea, me neither. But I do know that I like classic jazz and blues, in which fields Chris Barber is an icon, according to the back cover of the new DVD **As We Like It**. And judging by the quality of the music he and his eleven-piece band put out on this disc, I'm inclined to believe it. Granted, he hit his stride in his career in the 1950s and is now in his late seventies, and the music does reflect his age. It is perhaps not as energetic or crisp as it should be; the result of aging fingers and old lungs. But nonetheless, even just listening to him now, there is no denying that he used to be great, and we can still see the shadow of that in this performance.

As for watching the concert, after about ten minutes one starts to suspect that this release might have been better off as a CD. The picture quality is about on par with what you would expect from a bootleg VHS of a concert from the 80s. Not only is the picture noticeably soft, but there are oversaturated color bleeds that in extreme cases can almost make it look like a band member's face is leaking onto his tux. I suspect that this is due to a poor job in shooting rather than in authoring the actual DVD because the camera crew's stiff repetitive camera movements and occasionally giving each other cameos contrast starkly with the crisp, well-designed and animated menus.

In light of the disc's visual shortcomings, it seems almost a godsend that the audio is so good, because obviously that's what's really important here. Available in your choice of DTS 5.1 Surround or Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround or Stereo, the music sounds like a studio recording and is better than most other live recordings I've ever heard. Really, the only shortcoming is that between songs, Chris

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
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Barber has a tendency to stop and talk. And talk. And he talks so quickly without bothering to annunciate that unless you really concentrate, you'll miss about half of what he's saying.

And for all of you who would rather just buy a CD than just listen to a DVD, as a parallel release, Chris Barber put out three volumes of The Blues Legacy Lost & Found series. Each of these CDs features two groups or artists in live recordings introduced and occasionally joined by The Chris Barber Band. And these are artists that blues fans should recognize like Sonny Boy Williamson, Muddy Waters, and Howlin' Wolf among others.

Unfortunately, the sound quality here is significantly lower than on the DVD. Each performance is very apparently live, and are even low quality for live recordings. But, like the poor picture on the DVD, that does not negate the fact that the music is really good. To be honest, unless you are real Chris Barber aficionado, you're better off just getting the CDs. The music is better, and you won't have to go to the trouble of hanging a blanket over the TV screen when you want to listen to them.

- Matthew Carrick

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