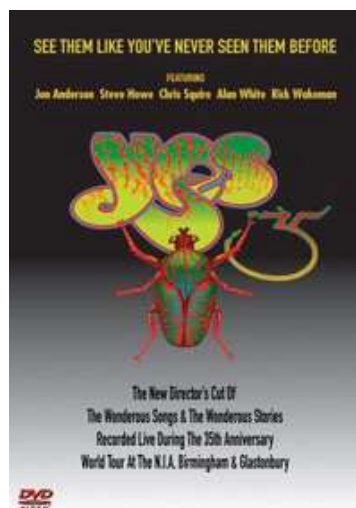


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The Director's Cut Yes



It's like assembling a great baseball team. They score and field with fewer errors, becoming the stuff of legends so much so that the individual players, despite their obvious abilities, make the whole better than the talented parts...and the entire experience so much better than the fans ever dreamed. Such is the case when the 'dream team' of Yes — guitarist Steve Howe, drummer Alan White, vocalist Jon Anderson, bassist Chris Squire and keyboardist Rick Wakeman — get together and play. These five nearing 60-something prog rockers did just that for their 2003 35th anniversary tour captured on **The Director's Cut**, a double DVD set.

Now, for those of you keeping score, Yes have released a few DVDs from the 35th anniversary. There was **Yesspeak**, a documentary with some concert footage and narration courtesy of Roger Daltrey (!). **Live At Montreux 2003** is a fantastic concert DVD taken from the famed Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland. **Songs from Tsongas - 35th Anniversary Concert** is another solid concert DVD celebrating the band's music. And then there's **Yes Acoustic: Guaranteed No Hiss**, a short unplugged set, also taken from the band's 35th Anniversary tour. So where does that leave **The Director's Cut**? Fortunately, this set is wholly different than its predecessors.

Most of the DVD features Yes playing indoors, recorded at the Birmingham NIA on a relatively sedate stage, but as powerful as ever. I saw Yes twice on this tour, and I can't begin to tell you how excited — and fearful — I was, see them 35 years on (Excited for obvious reasons, but fearful that the guys wouldn't be able to pull it off.). I couldn't have been more wrong, as these performances reveal from the opener "Siberian Khatru" through "Don't Kill The Whale" to a bulk of the **Fragile** album — "We Have Heaven," "The South Side Of The Sky," "Heart Of The Sunrise," "The Fish," "Roundabout" and "Long Distance Runaround." In 2003, the classic line-up was still at the top of their game.


The camera work puts you right on stage (And thankfully stays on the players when they solo!). During interviews peppered in between performances, each member of Yes fawns over the band's chemistry (plus a few humorous stories from Wakeman) and all the elements that is Yes music. And that's what comes across most: the unbelievable shadings of "Awaken"; the ups and downs of "Heart Of The Sunrise"; Wakeman facing off with Howe during "The South Side Of The Sky"; Squire's twirling, precise bass notes; Alan "God-knows-how-he-keeps-a-beat-in-all-this-madness" White's drumming; and Jon Anderson singing nearly as well as he always has. You can't watch any of this without being amazed. Even when it gets a little shaky — and it does for me during the middle of "And You And I" — Yes are still one of the best of its kind.

Midway through the second DVD we are taken outdoors for Yes at Glastonbury. It's a little jarring coming out of the intimate theater setting, but the band are in perfect form, perhaps a little looser (Anderson certainly has a little more to say to the crowd). Howe even plays better here, like Steve Morse meets Jose Feliciano. He is one of only a handful of guitarists I have seen who never, ever misses a note. Sure, we don't get the close-ups we had for the previous show (and certainly this is a shorter set of songs), but it's still a special treat to see Yes play in the sunlight and as well as ever. With the 40th Anniversary celebration suffering from a number of


disappointing setbacks, fans might have to satisfy their failing memories with a dose of **The Director's Cut**.

~ Ralph Greco, Jr.

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