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Starz: Back In Action - Live In 2003 (DVD-Video/Concert)

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Picture: B- Sound: B- Extras: D Film: B

Starz is perhaps one of the most overlooked and underrated hard rock bands of the late 70s. Managed by Bill Aucoin (who had found success managing another little band called KISS), Starz released four albums, played the Arena Rock circuit as the opening act for KISS, Aerosmith, Blue Oyster Cult.

Lead singer Michael Smith's vocals were powerful, backed by lead guitarist Richie Ranno. Their songs were hard and driving yet melodic and hook laden. Their lyrics were smart and, in those days, a little bit dirtier than most, a sure appeal to the adolescent male audience who were their target demographic.

In spite of having all the elements that should have assured success in that market Starz never caught on. It's hard to tell if they were influenced or simply on the cutting edge of a movement that would only catch on after their demise. Only a few years later bands like Motley Crue, Poison and the whole glam/Trash Hair Metal movement would be plastered on MTV and radio playing rock that sounded a lot like Starz.

The **Back In Action** DVD captures a live performance from the Starz reunion in 2003. Though they have aged they have lost none of their power. Michael Smith in particular is portly and balding, a stunning contrast to his thin Mick Jagger-like 70's swagger. His voice still soars. Their set-list spans their career:

1. *(She's Just A) Fallen Angel*
2. *Monkey Business*
3. *Detroit Girls*
4. *Rock Six Times*
5. *Subway Terror*
6. *Nitecrawler*
7. *Tear It Down*
8. *She*
9. *Any Way That You Want It*
10. *Cherry Baby*
11. *Pull The Plug*

Review)

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> Beastmaster - Divimax
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> The House on Haunted Hill
(Acme/VCI vs. Key/20th
Century Fox DVDs)

12. *Violation*
13. *Cool One*
14. *Waiting On You*
15. *Coliseum Rock*
16. *It's A Riot*
17. *So Young, So Bad*
18. *Outfit*
19. *Boys In Action*

The DVD opens with a collage of images of them setting up for the show interspersed with still photos of their past. The small club is filled with a loyal audience (you can see they know all the words), but it's quite a contrast with the Arenas they used to fill. Their energy is great; it's obvious the band is really enjoying playing together again. While it would have cost more to produce, some sort of documentary would have been nice. There is really no information about the band or their history anywhere in the package. If you don't already know about Starz this will not help. It's a great chance for old fans to see a live performance and for new fans to discover what the fuss is about.

- Wayne Wise

Wayne saw Starz open for Rush at the Civic Arena in Pittsburgh in January 1979. At the time he thought he was the only person there who knew who they were. He was probably wrong. Go to www.wayne-wise.com for more.