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Michael Schenker Group - Live in Tokyo: 30th Anniversary Japan Tour

Score: **88%**
 Rating: **Not Rated**
 Publisher: **MVD Entertainment Group**
 Region: **A**
 Media: **DVD/1**
 Running Time: **135 Mins.**
 Genre: **Live Performance/Musical/Documentary**
 Audio: **Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround**

Features:

Bonus:
 The L.A. Rehearsal
 Backstage Impression

Almost any music is improved through a good live performance. There are also several categories of music that just work best in a live setting, and Metal tends to be on that list. Something about the energy level in a typical performance that just doesn't convey on CD, and probably the special effects that accompany the live show of any group accustomed to rocking out in stadiums. When the **Michael Schenker Group** returned to Japan after 30 years, they produced an album (see below for a link to our review of this CD) and concert video to capture the moment. Playing to a packed crowd in Tokyo, MSG stirs up some memory of what big Metal shows were like in the '80s. Hair rock, massive drum sets, screaming guitars and screaming vocalists competing for front-line honors... it's all here. What you take away from it will depend somewhat on your musical bias, but the DVD makes it even more apparent why Schenker and his colleagues are superstars of Metal.



The band covers a huge number of hits from the days when Schenker was more of a front-page item. Even now, his legacy lives on in the gaming world, as the song performed here, "Armed and Ready," is available in *Guitar Hero: Metallica* for aspiring Metal-heads worldwide. It's clear that the crowd knows most or all of the songs, judging by their prompted sing-alongs on songs like "Are You Ready To Rock" and "Feels Like A Good Thing." One thing you don't get from the CD is the level of interaction that Schenker has with the crowd, getting in close to let them touch his guitar, as front-man Gary Barden plays call-and-response games with them on the microphone. This probably works best in Tokyo, where cultural inclinations toward civility create a generally well-behaved audience. There's no mosh pit or crowd surfing happening, but after all, the guys on stage are no spring chickens. They've aged well, but Barden shows his age at times while straining to hit a few of the higher vocal lines. The backing band of Wayne Findlay, Neil Murray, and Simon Phillips is similarly mature and represent some veteran talent from MSG (Findlay) plus huge Metal acts like *Black Sabbath* (Murray). Phillips' background includes playing for *The Who*, so this is not just some pick-up road band.

Another piece included on the DVD that you won't find on CD is the special features, including a pre-tour rehearsal in L.A. that is a neat look at how this stuff actually comes together, plus a backstage impressions segment from the **30th Anniversary Japan Tour**. The DVD is almost perfectly engineered and sounds great on a big sound system. The camera work was done intelligently, with zero frippery. Close shots of Schenker's finger-work and Phillips on extended drum solos will be manna for players interested in the techniques these guys have honed during years of performance. Findlay and Murray don't get the same level of attention, which is a shame, because the interplay between Murray and Phillips especially is a wonder. They go off on some rhythmic tangents that perfectly balance the frenetic wailing of Schenker's guitar, creating tension as he notches his way up the fretboard into territory that amounts to the Nirvana of classic Metal guitar sound. Schenker is an interesting study, because he seems incredibly calm on-stage, even when his guitar is absolutely screaming. There's more substance than show with these fellows, a fact that



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becomes obvious when you see them captured on video.

-Fridtjof, GameVortex Communications AKA Matt Paddock

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Game Vortex's Review of **Michael Schenker Group - Live in Tokyo: 30th Anniversary Japan Tour** on CD
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