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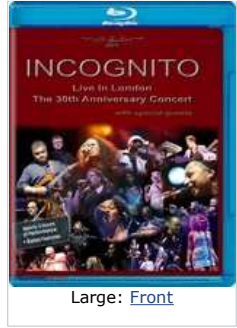
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Incognito: Live in London the 30th Anniversary Concert Blu-ray
in-akustik | 210 mins | Not rated | Apr 20, 2010 (5 Days)



Large: Front

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Video
Video codec: MPEG-4 AVC
Video resolution: 1080p
Aspect ratio: 1.78:1
Audio
English: LPCM 5.1
French: LPCM 2.0
Subtitles
None
Discs
50GB Blu-ray Disc
Single disc (1 BD)

Price
List price: \$29.95
Amazon: \$26.99 (Save 10%)
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Blu-ray review
Movie: 4.5
Video: 4.0
Audio: 5.0
Extras: 3.0
Overall: 4.5

Playback
Region A (B, C untested)

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Incognito: Live in London the 30th Anniversary Concert Blu-ray Review
High octane barely begins to scratch the surface of this amazing nearly three hour concert by acid jazz pioneers Incognito.

Reviewed by Jeffrey Kauffman, April 14, 2010

Pop music success is often predicated on strange things, but having a memorable name certainly doesn't hurt. One therefore wouldn't think a band coining its name after a word which means hiding one's identity would be a smart marketing idea. But perhaps Incognito's moniker means something a bit more subtle, namely that there isn't a star front man, that this is instead a team effort with each individual blending seamlessly into the greater whole. And what an incredible, unbelievably visceral whole this band is, as is amply documented on this riveting 30th anniversary concert, recorded in London in 2009. I'm a little embarrassed to admit I wasn't overly familiar with British band Incognito, having only seen their names on a couple of remix efforts before becoming overwhelmed with their soul and virtuosity on this release. Acid jazz is a genre that can be hard to define, but Incognito has rightly been hailed as one of the progenitors of this groove-centric music that combines elements of jazz, funk and looped beats to create a music that, at least in Incognito's case, might be likened to old 70's Scottish funk icons The Average White Band riffing behind a bevy of soulful vocalists stylistically akin to Chaka Khan. In fact, Incognito's low key founder, Jean-Paul "Bluey" Maunick, has produced for Chaka, as well as other notable music stars such as George Benson and Maxi Priest. Maunick creates unbelievably propulsive rhythmic grooves which are punctuated with perfectly synchronized brass outbursts and then gorgeously segue into cool chords with layered voices drifting over extended tones like sevenths, ninths and elevenths to create a unique and undeniably forceful sound.

The British music scene seems to have a more serious love affair with retro-R&B inflected funk than its cousin across the pond. So many fantastic British artists have mined this idiom, including everyone from Lisa Stansfield to Portishead, that the Brits seems to have cornered the market on driving rhythms infused with cool jazz and funk elements. Incognito has really only had two chart hits of any impact, but they have fostered a rabid fan base by virtue of their dynamic live performances. And indeed this concert proves why the band is such a visceral experience. In a staggering set lasting almost three hours, the group traverses through 23 songs barely stopping long enough to catch their collective breath.

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[Blu-ray studios](#)*Incognito takes the stage.*

Incognito is, to paraphrase the name of another band, a soul collective of sorts, with a rotating group of members augmenting "Bluey"'s foundation. Frequently the main man has notable guest stars on his tunes, and several of them are in attendance for this concert, including disco diva Jocelyn Brown, who recreates her gravelly delivery on Incognito's biggest hit "Always There." Also on hand is American jazz singer Maysa, who joins Jocelyn on the finale, "Nights Over Egypt," as well as contributing some great solo numbers. But the perhaps lesser known regular vocalists, including Joy Rose and Vanessa Haynes, who contribute some of the lovely backups throughout this evening's performances, also step into the spotlight for some absolutely amazing vocal turns. In fact, I'd rate Rose's "Step Aside" as the overall highlight of an evening filled with exceptional singing. Strangely, the only partial let down of the evening was the surprisingly restrained (and strangely and not always effectively re-harmonized) Stevie Wonder tune "Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing," the band's only other significant chart hit.

The instrumentalists here are, to put it simply, all superb. The brass trio is funk-tastic, punctuating each tune with perfect eruptions of riffing. Keyboardists Matt Cooper and Graham Harvey also contribute mightily to the sound of the band, and Cooper lets loose on a couple of extended solos that bring to mind Chick Corea's exploratory work. But my strongest props have to go undoubtedly to drummer Pete Biggin, who is absolutely one of the most in the pocket players I've ever experienced. And if you want to see a great example of how cool this cat is, watch carefully during the aforementioned "Step Aside," as evidently either Biggin's throne or one of his cymbals needs adjusting, and the guy temporarily places one of his drumsticks in his mouth—not once, but *twice*--to effect the change with his free hand while never missing a single beat. It's an amazing feat, especially considering how dynamic the percussion arrangement on the song is.

About the only complaints I have with this amazing concert are two relatively minor issues. First, there are some filming and editing choices which are just annoying at times, including out of focus shots, jiggling camera work and, most distractingly, an overuse of quick zooms in and out, evidently done to mimic the rhythms of each piece, but which largely fall flat. Strangely, guest string ensemble The Millenia Strings, also sound raw, especially in the 5.1 mix (as I'll discuss below), with an overly brittle sound that I have to assume has to do with how they were mic'd. Other than these two passing qualms, this is one of the most exciting and musically rewarding concerts I've had the pure unadulterated joy to experience recently (and maybe even more than recently). Incognito deserves to be incognito no longer.

The band's two hour and 50 minute set includes:

Talkin' Loud
Step Aside
When the Sun Comes Down
Jacob's Ladder
Centre of the Sun
Get Into My Groove
Labour of Love
Ain't No Mountain
Always There
Colibri
N.O.T.
This Thing Called Love
Still a Friend of Mine
Can't Get You Out of My Head
Deep Waters
Wild and Beautiful
Morning Sun
Espresso Madureira
Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing
Reach Out
Everyday
I Hear Your Name
Nights Over Egypt

Video **B B B B B**

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Incognito arrives on Blu-ray with a sharp looking AVC encoded transfer delivered in full 1080p in a 1.78:1 aspect ratio. There are several odd looking moments in this concert, due to the glaring blue light, which gives an absolutely hallucinogenic, "posterization" look to various members of the band. In fact, Vanessa Haynes' Afro assumes almost lifelike proportions at times under this somewhat bizarre lighting scheme, so be prepared. If you can get past that aspect of the concert, as well as the less than perfect camera work, what is here is sharp as a tack and full of abundant clarity. You can see dust mites flying behind Biggin as he hammers the drums, and close-ups reveal every line, for better or worse, on each of the participants' faces. Some of the mid range shots have the appearance of being slightly soft, which I ascribe again to the lighting, which is often garishly bright. However contrast is strong enough to take this well into stride, and even with the overpowering blue moments, no blooming is ever in evidence.

Audio **B B B B B**



There are two rather odd elements at play when one compares the two uncompressed audio tracks that are offered on this Blu-ray. The LPCM 5.1 track has amazing depth and hall presence, with excellent separation, but it is amazingly bass heavy at times (not that that's a bad thing with music in this idiom), resulting in some tunes with omnipresent kick drum actually being aurally painful after a while. Also weirdly present on the 5.1 track is the uncomfortable sound, almost *sul ponticello* dry, of the Millenia String Ensemble. The 2.0 fold down, by comparison, buries the strings much more effectively, and also tends to place the singers out in front of the mix more strongly. There's also less thundering bass on this track. What can't be denied is the amazing fidelity of both of these tracks. I spent most of the time with the 5.1, and I've rarely heard such a fantastically robust track, despite the sometimes overpowering low end. This is definitely one Blu-ray you'll want to "turn up to 11."

Supplements **B B B B B**



Two decent extras are offered, the long form *Interview with Bluey* (30:20) providing more insight and background into the man's career and this project in particular than the short form, largely EPK-esque *Impressions* (4:22) does with its rehearsal footage.

Final words **B B B B B**



All I can say is: wow! This band is phenomenal and this concert presents some of the most funkalicious grooves you're likely to experience this or any year.

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