

The Michael Schenker Group: The 30th Anniversary Concert - Live in Tokyo Blu-ray

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Video Video codec: MPEG-4 AVC Video resolution: 1080p Aspect ratio: 1.78:1 Original aspect ratio: 1.78:1

Audio Music: DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 Music: LPCM 2.0

Subtitles None

Discs 50GB Blu-ray Disc Single disc (1 BD)

Price List price: \$29.95 Amazon: \$21.49 (Save 28%) Third party: \$20.88 (Save 30%) Usually ships in 24 hours Buy Now

Blu-ray review Movie 4.0 Video 4.0 Audio 4.5 Extras 3.0 Overall 4.0

Playback Region A (B, C untested)

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The Michael Schenker Group: The 30th Anniversary Concert - Live in Tokyo Blu-ray Review

Michael Schenker rocks you like a hurricane. Reviewed by Jeffrey Kauffman, October 22, 2010

MSG is usually thought of as that stuff you don't want in your Chinese food. But for a certain segment of the hard rock, head banging population, MSG has stood for only one thing for well over 30 years: The Michael Schenker Group. Though Schenker's reputation may not have permeated the sometimes chauvinistic consciousness of the American rock fan, in Europe, and especially his native Germany, he is an iconic figure, one of the founding members of Scorpions (though he left the group prior to its biggest U.S. hit, "Rock You Like a Hurricane"), who went on to great acclaim leading his own group. Schenker plays an equally iconic V-shaped guitar, and though the rocker is well into his 50s by this time, he proves in this 2010 concert from Tokyo that he and his band still have the heavy metal goods as they shred through a number of well known MSG tunes from the past several decades.



As Schenker describes in one of the interviews included as a supplement on this Blu-ray, he was all of 15 when he first recorded with Scorpions. After his years with that band, he spent quite a bit of time with UFO honing his skills, until his own Michael Schenker Group hit the big time in 1980. In the insert booklet's liner notes, Schenker proclaims, "MSG is one hundred percent mine, I can feel free to unfold

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here. I'm the creative type, I'm always having visions. And here I can do what I want, without compromising." That balls out, go for broke spirit is completely on display throughout the eighteen songs of this set, which rarely if ever lets up from head banging excess, moving from one propulsive rhythm and ferocious guitar riff to the next.

Schenker starts the show with a little gimmick he returns to once or twice throughout the concert. He plays a lightning fast lick (in this opening case, with echo effect), then pauses and waits for the rapt Tokyo audience to respond with thunderous shouts of approval. After doing this "call and response" for a few iterations, he and his band are off on a rambunctious tour through a bunch of MSG favorites, as well as some newer tunes which may not be quite as familiar to some viewers and listeners. Schenker has reassembled several of the original MSG band and/or recording sessions, including Gary Barden on vocals and Simon Phillips on drums. Rounding out the group are Neil Murray on bass and Wayne Findlay on guitar, keys and backup vocals.

From the first rousing strains of "Feels Like a Good Thing" to the closing tones of one of Schenker's best known tunes, "Doctor, Doctor," which closes the concert about an hour and forty five minutes later, the group is in fine form, thrashing through a series of impressive heavy metal riffs and occasionally (very occasionally) stopping to catch their collective breaths with a moment or two of relatively lyrical passages. Barden, whose gritty tenor is at times reminiscent of a slightly more gruff Steve Perry, sounds great, even if his voice sometimes gets buried beneath the pure onslaught of Schenker's guitar work. Phillips is a formidable drummer, pounding out a series of successive battering that keeps the large audience thrashing in unison. And while Findlay and Murray are exemplary as well, it's indubitably Schenker's solid work on his V-shaped guitar that is almost always the focus, certainly as it should be. While there's really nothing revolutionary here in terms of either songcraft or musicianship, there's completely solid professionalism on all counts, and Schenker's blistering solos are highlights throughout the concert.

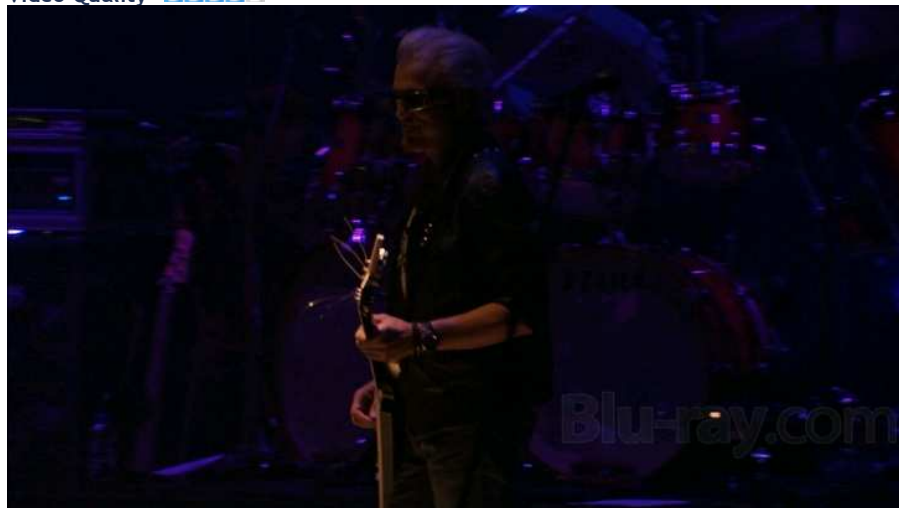
If there's a complaint to be voiced here, it's that this nearly two hour set is so relentless. Indeed, except for a brief moment where Schenker exploits a low drone at the beginning of "Rock My Nights Away," and then a few tunes later, lets Findlay set up "Doctor, Doctor," with some ethereal synth work, there's no relief from the incessant, and very loud, head banging rhythms. Of course, that's probably part and parcel of what Schenker is attempting to present, but it's notable that other shredders frequently let their audiences breathe for a minute or two with at least a couple of ballads interspersed. Even the few moments without the omnipresent whack of the bass drum are noticeable here, though, simply by dint of the fact that your ears cease bleeding for a few seconds.

Schenker shows no signs of slowing down even as he approaches retirement age. Of course in the world of rock, retirement is a state of mind, as everyone from ex-Beatles to ex-Stones have proven. This band is still incredibly energetic, and this Blu-ray captures them delivering one blistering performance after another.

MSG's set list for this 30th anniversary concert is:

Welcome Howl
 Feels Like a Good Thing
 Cry for the Nations
 Let Sleeping Dogs Lie
 Armed and Ready
 Victim of Illusion
 Are You Ready to Rock
 I Want You
 A Night to Remember
 Into the Arena
 Lost Horizons
 Rock My Nights Away
 On and On
 Attack of the Mad Axeman
 Ride On My Way
 Rock Bottom
 Dance Lady Gypsy
 Doctor, Doctor

The Michael Schenker Group: The 30th Anniversary Concert - Live in Tokyo Blu-ray, Video Quality **B B B B B**



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Kudos to inakustik for providing *The Michael Schenker Group* with a full 1080p transfer, delivered via an AVC encode in 1.78:1. That accounts for a superior and very sharp image, especially in the many close-ups which frequent this concert. The one problem with this presentation is the odd and even ghastly lighting scheme, which bathes the players in a sort of Hallowe'en green a lot of the time. That leaves flesh tones looking putrid and actually deprives some of the mid-range shots of at least some detail. The usual rock concert light pyrotechnics occasionally overwhelm the contrast of this Blu-ray, but otherwise this is a solid presentation.

The Michael Schenker Group: The 30th Anniversary Concert - Live in Tokyo Blu-ray, Audio Quality **B B B B B**



The Michael Schenker Group arrives with two blistering lossless audio offerings, a DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 surround mix, and a stereo LPCM 2.0 fold down. Both of these tracks are imposing, especially on the low end of things, and both deliver incredibly clean fidelity. The DTS track is incredibly visceral, with Phillips' incessant bass drum work seemingly changing the air pressure as it erupts through the sub woofer. The entire low end of virtually all of these songs is deep and resonant, but there's so much of it all of the time that I actually was wishing for a little more presence in the high end just to balance things out. Schenker's guitar sounds crystal clear, biting when it's supposed to, but at other times assuming almost a sine wave purity. Instruments are handled very discretely in the surround mix, giving an excellent clarity and allowing the listener to penetrate, if only a little, into this forbidding wall of sound.

The Michael Schenker Group: The 30th Anniversary Concert - Live in Tokyo Blu-ray, Special Features and Extras **B B B B B**



Four good supplements, all in HD, are presented:

- *The L.A. Rehearsal* (21:40), offers the boys getting the show together interspersed with interview segments. Though this featurette sports a lossless LPCM 2.0 track, the audio quality of the music sequences is noticeably inferior to the actual concert footage;
- *Backstage Impressions* (8:15) shows Schenker and his band arriving in Tokyo and setting up the stage for their concert;
- *Michael About Michael* (22:06) is a sit down with Schenker where he discusses his early influences as well as his long career;
- *Gary, Simon, Wayne and Neil—In Their Own Words* (17:54) offers interviews with the rest of the band, some of whom have been playing with Schenker for decades.

The Michael Schenker Group: The 30th Anniversary Concert - Live in Tokyo Blu-ray, Overall Score and Recommendation **B B B B B**



MSG proves that the only "additive" anyone needs is a killer guitar player surrounded by an ace band. This concert may be too loud and too relentless for the faint of heart, but for true heavy metal aficionados, it will be manna from head banging heaven. Recommended.

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