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Pendragon

Concerto Maximo DVD

Review by Mark Johnson

I must state before writing the review that I have been a fan of the band for about five years. I have most of their albums, but only one of their DVDs.

The band was celebrating their 30th anniversary during the tour which was used for this DVD. They also wanted to showcase their new drummer and some songs off their latest album *Pure*.

It must have been a difficult choice to try to capture the moment of the 30th anniversary while at the same time capture the power of a new album release. So many old fans want to hear the classics, while a new building fan base want the new stuff.

The band is going to play the full *Pure* album live in the near future, and perhaps they will film the show to try to capture what their fans and the band feel is their best effort yet. With a title like *Concerto Maximo*, you are setting the bar high as the best you have ever done.

What features make this DVD stand out amongst their other DVDs? There was a heavy concentration of time and effort on the visual image and artwork for the new *Pure* album and this DVD. The *Pure* images dominate this DVD, pointing to the inner struggle to create something for that album, while at the same time showcasing some of their classics.

I also have their last DVD, released in October 2006, *And Now Everybody to the Stage...*, and I was surprised when Pendragon announced that they would be releasing a new DVD so soon.

The theater is the same one they used for the last DVD. the band are a little older, but the music sounds the same. When I bought the *And Now Everybody...* DVD, I was just a fan, not a reviewer. The band's performance and the music were all I cared about. Now as a reviewer band/audience interaction becomes more important. I listened to the interview before previewing the concert and was surprised the interviewer kept asking members of the band how many times they had filmed at the theater.

From a fan's perspective, especially someone who hasn't seen a live Pendragon show, I was looking forward to being completely part of the feeling and power of a live Pendragon show.

One cost/benefit analysis of doing a scheduled DVD shoot at a theater that is not part of the regular tour is that you may not get enough true diehard fans. The benefit is that you save money, making sure everything is set up the way you want it at reduced cost, with friends you have worked with in the past. When music is not your full time job saving money is very important.

However, when you are making your *Concerto Maximo* and celebrating over 30 years of success, money should be no object. If it is really is your best, choose a site that is important to you and your 30 year history, full of your favorite fans. The fans in this video needed more inspiration, either from the band or maybe to be told this was going to be the *Concerto Maximo* and to cheer loudly. It would have been nice to see how Pendragon's traditional fans from England would respond to the old and new songs. When you're planning the *Concerto Maximo* why not make it into a celebration for all of those fans who may have given Pendragon the most support over the years?



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However, the band must make sure the audience is involved with what they are doing. You could see some of this during the *Pure* songs and when the band really started to interact, at the end of the show during "Queen of Hearts." Just in time to end the video.

One thing that I'm sure did not help was the comparison of "doing time," during the band introductions. If you are celebrating 30 years of having fun delivering great music to the world, it doesn't help to compare it to doing time in jail. Even just to be humorous. There was a definite feeling throughout this show that the band seemed to be going through the motions. Sometimes that feeling is hard to shake and comes out in words, when you least expect it.

The band has invested allot of time and effort into the new album *Pure* and the new sound and direction it signals for the band. You could see their excitement change measurably when they played the *Pure* music.

This DVD was also a showcase for their new drummer Scott Higham. Scott was at times the only member who played with consistent inspiration. He seemed to be genuinely glad to be there and often times tried to pick up the level of the audience participation.

This DVD celebrates a historical record of the band's transition from the past to the present. Although it celebrates the past, it does so in a venue without its closest and dearest fans.

This review was adapted from an article that originally appeared at Prognaut.com.



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