

Music DVD explosion mines gems

TECHNOLOGY | Blasts from the past with live performances, high-quality sound a thriving new market

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There was a time when a musical group or artist could release a music video of their latest hit and the fans would buy it.

DVD technology has changed the landscape. Because a DVD can hold hours of material, consumers expect more bang for their buck. And because DVDs have been recorded for home theatres with digital theatre sound, every live concert offers an opportunity for a DVD spinoff.

The result is an explosion in music DVD releases — live concerts, music documentaries and titles that combine the forms.

"Fans are looking for something special with a DVD," says Ed Seaman, vice-president of Music Video Distributors (MVD), based in Pennsylvania. "That material can be rare video clips or a great live performance, or bonus materials of backstage interviews."

"There are more music concerts now, because it's so much cheaper to get good audio and good video at a concert. A documentary is a bit more ambitious than a concert. You need a director, and someone has to write the story."

"The biggest trend I see is the quality of the sound for these releases," says David MacMillan, director of Canadian operations for Eagle Rock Entertainment, a leading DVD distributor. "Everything we shoot now is in high-definition, with 5.1 and DTS sound." (5.1 refers to a five-speaker sound setup with a bass woofer, and DTS stands for Digital Theatre Sound.)

In 1998, MVD put 15 music DVDs on the market. Last year, the company released close to 100.

Asked if, like the CD industry, there's a lucrative market in taking vintage concerts and enhancing the sound for DVD, Seaman says, "To some degree, yes, but it's only as good as the source material."

"Still, I'd much rather have crappy footage of a band when they were great, than great footage of a band when they were crappy."

Eagle Rock has released enhanced-sound versions of old concerts from the 1960s and '70s, and is about to release *The Who Live at the Isle of Wight*, a 1970 concert with 5.1 sound.

"There is a lot of restoration and fixing up of some poorly recorded items, and the results are spectacular," says MacMillan.

Some of Seaman's biggest sellers have been *Sublime: Stories, Tales, Lies and Exaggerations, Collector's Edition*, which blends concert and documentary mater-

ial, a Danzig video clip compilation entitled *Archive de la Morte*, and CBGB's: *Punk from the Bowery*, comprising footage of punk-rock acts shot at New York's famous CBGB's nightclub.

One of Eagle Rock's biggest sellers has been *Pink Floyd: Dark Side of the Moon*, originally a one-hour Classic Albums TV show which contains another hour of documentary material. That release has sold more than 25,000 units in Canada. (Gold sales status for a DVD in Canada is 5,000 units.)

Other big titles for Eagle Rock are the *Up In Smoke*, which contains footage of Eminem, *Diana Krall, Live In Paris* and *Janet Jackson: Live in Hawaii*, in which she keeps her top on.

Unlike CDs, which have dipped in sales because of downloading, the DVD business is surging as more people buy the technology.

"After 22 years in the record business, I'm glad to be in the DVD business," MacMillan says.

Here are some DVD music titles that offer a little extra:

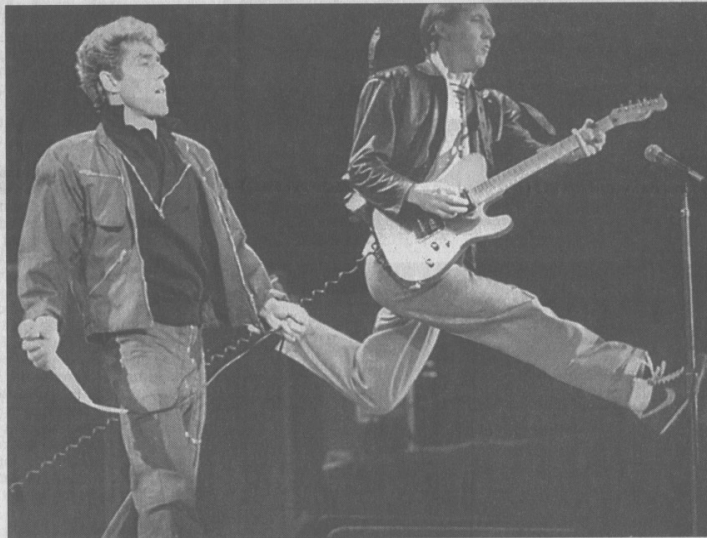
Bob Marley: Legend (Universal). A 90-minute documentary on the late reggae star — with performance footage from more than six concerts, along with music videos of Marley's big hits. Marley shows that he was one of the most dynamic live acts of his era, and this is one of the best music DVDs out there.

Pink Floyd: The Making of Dark Side of the Moon (Eagle Rock). The one-hour making-of TV documentary comes with another hour of material, including band members making music in their home studios.

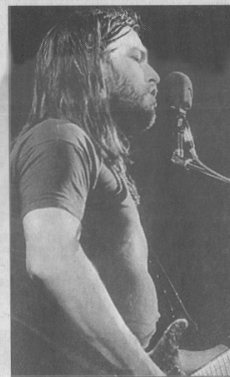
Warren Zevon: Inside Out (Artemis). When the late singer-songwriter Warren Zevon learned he had terminal cancer and was given just months to live, he set out to record one last CD. This is a video diary, extremely moving at times, of that process.

Martin Scorsese Presents: The Blues — A Musical Journey (Sony/Universal). The PBS documentary series is spread over seven DVDs and seven VHS tapes. Bonus material includes commentaries from all the directors, on-camera interviews with the directors and bonus musical performances.

Peter Tosh: Stepping Razor Red X (MVD). *Da Vinci's Inquest* actor Nicholas Campbell directed this excellent 2002 documentary on the life of the reggae star, who was murdered in 1987. In interviews, Tosh foreshadows his end, saying that "it is dangerous to have the truth in your possession. You can be found guilty and sentenced to death." Good performance footage as well.



The Who Live at the Isle of Wight, with Roger Daltrey (left) and Pete Townshend, is about to come out.



Documentaries include looks at Dave Gilmour (left) and Pink Floyd, as well the Bee Gees (right).

The Bee Gees: One Night Only and The Official Story (Eagle Rock). Here is everything you ever wanted to know about the group which has been going strong for four decades. The two-disc set contains an exhaustive two-hour documentary, plus a live concert from 1997.

The Doors: Nobody Gets Out of Here Alive (Eagle Rock). A 1981 documentary which combines footage of the Doors, who set out to be an avant-garde performance art act, and their outlandish singer Jim Morrison with interviews with surviving band members. The band performs at clubs, in concert halls and on TV.

U.K. Subs: Punk Can Take It (MVD). Julien Temple wrote and directed this 1979 ode to the British punk band, with narration by BBC vet John Snagge, who sounds like someone from a 1950s sci-fi film.

Harry Connick Jr.: Only You (Sony). A sensational concert by the singer-pianist with his jazz orchestra at Quebec City's Theatre Capitale. The bonus materials include moments with Connick and members of his band, and a forgettable interview by a breathless on-camera journalist.

Big Brother & the Holding Company and Janis Joplin: Nine Hundred Nights (Eagle Rock). Everyone knows this band for singer Janis Joplin, but the documentary makes the point that Big Brother was a band first, a star vehicle second. The DVD contains the band's famous performance at the 1967 Monterey festival, and shows them in the studio recording *Summertime*.

If I Should Fall from Grace: The Shane MacGowan Story

(MVD). You'll laugh out loud when former Pogues singer Shane MacGowan, speaking through an alcoholic haze with his front teeth missing, confides: "I've been a babe magnet for quite a few years." This 2001 documentary looks at MacGowan, usually with drink in hand, and has lots of performance footage. One of the funniest moments occurs when he reads a journalist's review of his performance.

Frank Zappa: Does Humor Belong in Music? (EMI). A terrific concert film, with snippets of interviews, of Zappa's 1984 concert at The Pier in New York City. His stellar seven-piece band performs numbers that are far from politically correct (example: *He's So Gay*). For all his accom-

plishments as a writer and arranger, one tends to forget what Zappa could do on the guitar... musically, that is.

Steve Earle: Just an American Boy (Artemis). Cameras follow the outspoken singer-songwriter as he tours the U.S. The documentary covers, among other things, the outrage over his song sympathetic to American Taliban member John Walker Lindt, and shows him performing at a Tennessee prison, where he once served a sentence for drug possession.

Joni Mitchell: Woman of Heart and Mind (Eagle Rock). A feature-length documentary of the Canadian folk/pop/jazz icon explores her early years extensively, and has great footage of her on stage with a superb jazz band that included bassist Jaco Pastorius and guitarist Pat Metheny. Bonus material includes live performances of *Big Yellow Taxi*, *Woodstock*, *Hejira* and *Amelia*.

Athens, GA — Inside Out (MVD). A documentary that explores one of the most musically fertile areas in the U.S. (R.E.M., the B-52s, Pylon).

World Tour 1966, The Home Movies (Ventura). Drummer Mickey Jones uses home-movie footage and lots of material about his own career to tell the story of Bob Dylan's controversial 1966 tour, when the folkie went electric to often hostile audiences. There is footage of Dylan on stage, but the audio does not match. This is something of a vanity project, with as much about Jones and his career as there is on the Dylan tour.

Hey Is Dee Dee Home (MVD). In 1992, the late Ramones singer Dee Dee Ramone sat down and talked about his junkie lifestyle, giving it not one iota of glamour. You want to believe his story of quitting dope, but eight years after this was made he overdosed on heroin. With clips of Ramone and Johnny Thunders performing.

Sublime: Stories, Tales, Lies & Exaggerations, Collectors Edition (MVD). A somewhat dull documentary on the band and its entourage, although the anecdote about revenge on a Denny's restaurant is good, as is the interview with band friend Ron Jeremy.

Norah Jones: Live in New Orleans (EMI). The unslip pop music star gives a winning performance with her band.

The Cry of Jazz (MVD). A group of really bad actors get together to exchange pretentious theories on jazz (sample: "For the Negro, each present moment must be electric, full of meaning and seething with life") in this black-and-white entry from 1959. Great soundtrack from Sun Ra, though.

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