

# Music DVDs play on lower note

### Suppliers release smaller number of titles

The video industry is feeling dubious about the strength of music DVD, whether documentaries, live concert films or other music-related material.

Executives at several suppliers concede that the number of releases is down. In the last year-over-year comparison available from the Recording Industry Assn. of America, revenue from music video shipped to retail was down 25% in 2006 to \$450 million. Companies are spooked by the specter of digital downloads and changing formats.

But some are looking to capitalize on the competition's hesitation, bringing high-profile releases to retail, targeting collectors or simply moving more onto the shelves into the space abandoned by other suppliers.

"The fact that a lot of the industry has decided that they can't make money on [music DVD] is good for us, because it has allowed us more market share," says Ed Seaman, chief operating officer of MVD Entertainment Group.

In the past year, MVD has seen sales success with titles across myriad music genres, such as the

first-ever Stryper concert DVD, a live Method Man release and an Echo and the Bunnymen title, to name a few. *All My Loving*, the 1968 film featuring The Beatles, Pink Floyd and Jimi Hendrix, has been a strong performer as well, appealing especially to collectors. "It's

HomeVideo. Music documentary *Amazing Journey: The Story of the Who* marks the first time Universal has released a music DVD in

broadcast of *Amazing Journey* on Nov. 6, just before street date. And Led Zeppelin reunited for a one-night concert event in London on Dec. 10, close to Warner's release date.

"We are a society of collectors in this country," says Jeff Baker, Warner senior VP and general manager of theatrical, catalog and domestic sales. "We do want to buy and own and collect those things that are meaningful to us, notwithstanding the availability of those things through downloading."

One strategy for DVD suppliers is to embrace downloading along with physical media. A sold-out 2007 Madison Square Garden concert by indie band Dispatch is being released with a dropcard insert for fans to download all 23 songs from the DVD. *Dispatch: Zimbabwe* will be available Jan. 29 from VDI Entertainment/Universal Republic (prebook now; CD/DVD deluxe package \$19.98).

Getting involved in realms beyond DVD distribution also is working for Shout Factory. Company president Garson Fooks says Shout seeks out music

*continued on page 24*



From indies MVD and VDI Entertainment to majors Universal and Warner, several suppliers keep music DVDs on their release slates.

a collector's business, and collectors' businesses are less affected by downloading," Seaman says.

There's still room for the right titles, as evidenced by recent releases of independently produced music titles distributed by Universal Studios Home Entertainment and Warner

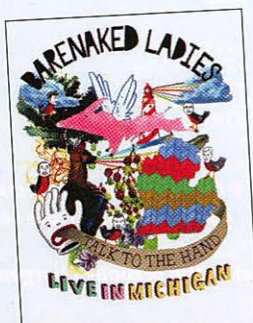
recent years. And Warner has released *The Song Remains the Same*, the Led Zeppelin concert video from 1976.

It didn't hurt that both big-name band titles had stadium-sized marketing support. Universal worked closely with VH-1 and secured a commercial-free

## Music DVDs *Continued from page 21*

projects where it can share in the production responsibilities or take advantage of the broadcast rights.

In the case of Shout's release of the first Barenaked Ladies live concert DVD, *Talk to the Hand: Live in Michigan*, Fooks says the company saw an opportunity to fill a hole in the market for a band with a hard-core fan base and a strong following for its live



Shout targeted Barenaked Ladies' hard-core fan base for its *Talk to the Hand* DVD.

shows. Shout also managed to secure broadcast rights for the program outside Canada, an additional revenue stream that will help with the hidden costs accompanying music DVD releases.

"One of the things that has been challenging for us is that retailers really want [music DVD] at lower prices like \$14.98, but it's really problematic given

music publishing costs," Fooks says. "Most of the ones we've done, we've put out at \$19.98. Possibly a year down the road we can lower our prices, but while we're in the heat of our marketing and facing those costs, we have to be at the higher price."

Shout also has released concert product from artists as varied as Heart (a co-production with DirectTV of music from

the band's debut album *Dreamboat Annie*), the Bangles and a solidly performing Keith Sweat DVD. Fooks says the company continues to seek out "heritage groups" such as Heart to shoot new footage for eventual release.

"There's not much of a digital business for live concerts," Fooks maintains. "It has been a good category for us." **VB**  
—Wendy Wilson