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Interview: The Odd Gentleman Interview

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Mike Relm's Clown Alley

Score: **95%**
Rating: **Not Rated**
Publisher: **Radio Fried Recordings**
Region: **A**
Media: **DVD/2**
Running Time: **60 Mins.**
Genre: **Live Performance/Independent/Musical**
Audio: **Stereo Sound**

Features:

Packaging:

Cover Art Poster
Two DVD copies of **Clown Alley** (self-rated PG and R)
Two Sets of 3D Glasses Packed In

Bonus Features

Clown Alley Trailer
Pancake Mountain Feature
Pan Am Games '07

Mike Relm's Clown Alley brings to mind one of my favorite phenomenon: The Surprising Sandwich. You know the feeling when you go into a new place, order something that looks good on the menu, and then have this massive hunk of sandwich love come out to meet you, dripping with all your favorite toppings? If you don't, you're going to the wrong places, and you really just need to get out more. In a similar vein, we liked the looks of this DVD package from go, with its awesome cover design and its suspicious heft. Turns out that weight is due to two DVDs packed in (more on this later), plus a nice poster copy of the cover art, and two pairs of 3D glasses. My first thought when I saw the 3D glasses was, "Now my son can watch that used copy of *The Adventures of Sharkboy and Lavagirl* in 3D!" My second thought was, "Who is this Mike Relm guy, with his fancy 3D flicks?" Now we get to that sandwich analogy, because if you think the DVD packaging is audacious, wait until you actually check out Mike Relm. **Clown Alley** is largely a way for home audiences to appreciate the awesomeness of Relm's live show, with Relm working his turntables, queuing up film and music clips, and generally dumping his musical subconscious on unsuspecting fans. If there were really fans in the audience... You begin to believe that Relm can twist reality any way he likes, so perhaps he was actually playing to empty rooms, and spliced his audiences in later.



Those 3D glasses are packed in for several segments that Relm filmed around a kooky storyline where he is chased by evil clowns while trying to protect a mysterious briefcase. If it sounds a bit like the plot to *Pulp Fiction*, it comes as no surprise: Relm wears his love for Quentin Tarantino on his sleeve, including several clips in **Clown Alley** from films like *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs*. He weaves himself into that clip for the latter, and is a natural fit due to his signature dark suit and skinny tie. We could take or leave the 3D bits, but it's neat to see such ambition in an artist that could have rested on his turntablist laurels. The clown theme carries through in a way to several other non-3D segments that are titled "Dirty Self-Defense Tricks." These aren't really special features, but pieces of film that are woven into the flow of **Clown Alley**. Watching a muscular dude kitted out in lucha libre (Mexican wrestling, for the uninitiated) gear, taking down an evil clown dressed suspiciously like Mike Relm ends up being lots of fun, the kind of fun you may end up using in a dark parking-lot some night. Why Relm feels his audience needs to know a variety of sneaky wrestling take-downs and street-fighting techniques remains a mystery at the end of the film, but we do learn that these are handy when attacked by evil clowns. Extras include a trailer, a feature on the kiddie show *Pancake Mountain*, and coverage from Relm's performance at the 2007 Pan Am Games.

Relm's performances on **Clown Alley** are really amazing, live mash-ups of video and sound clips. At times, Relm is controlling both, or just tweaking one while the other plays freely.

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How he manages to tweak the video, we aren't quite sure, but he shows one segment using the dance scene from *Napoleon Dynamite*, where he is controlling Jon Heder as if Heder were a marionette on a stage. The approach Relm takes with this is like the visual equivalent of scratching on a turntable, and he pulls apart numerous other video and audio clips throughout the film. The most interesting thing about Relm is that he doesn't really deconstruct his source material as much as innovate through an additive style; he is a master of merging two seemingly incongruous items, making something that only he sees, but which feels obvious the moment it hits your eyes and ears. Relm has a really unique vision, and picks up on possibilities where others are too accustomed to coloring inside the lines. He's a thoughtful dude, to the point that he printed an extra DVD with a PG rating, probably so the R version wouldn't end up gathering dust in places where harsher material may be off limits. The "R" material isn't just about the violence or R-rated film images shown, it also contains a section of hilarious clips showing nightly news anchors pulling some awful verbal gaffs where they drop f-bombs and other raw stuff. We love this collection so much, and want to see more of Relm's self-produced material. On one level, this is mostly music and video you've seen or heard before, but **Mike Relm's Clown Alley** will still manage to surprise you and put a smile on your face. Just like that sandwich...

-Fridtjof, GameVortex Communications AKA Matt Paddock

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