



## Cook with the Hook: Live in 1974

[John Lee Hooker](#)

*MVD Visual* - MVD5302D (DVD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange  
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Recent days have seen a veritable treasure trove of "lost" rock artifacts, from Dylan's new plethora of basement tapes to Doors performance box sets to the re-release of *Woodstock* in its so-far-final version and beyond. If you think, however, most of this stuff was really lost, you need to visit the local drugstore and buy something that remedies naïveté, 'cause, as we see so clearly with Hendrix's estate, it's almost always label a-holes who hoard and hide these gems. Don't ask me why, you'd think they'd be falling all over themselves to make big bucks off some of the great old material represented by this DVD. Maybe I have my own naïf factor going somewhere in there, 'cause I just don't get why it takes decades for the music of the past to get into our hands. Talk to Bob Lefstez, I doubt there's a single aspect of the biz he isn't fully intimate with. The guy can, through his newsletter, singe your eyes with some of the inside info he totes around in that gigantic memory of his, and I know he's pissed off the industry while fascinating it.....but that's not why we're here. Sorry about that, I'm just getting a fogbank of steam off my chest. Cool-ass releases like this one tend to evoke still simmering problems with the bizarre nature of what Frank Zappa called the filthiest business on Earth, the music biz.

*Cook with the Hook* is an MVD DVD of a great little John Lee Hooker gig interlude shot in Gardner, Massachusetts, at an allsorts festival held in a landfill and thus nomenclatured the Down In The Dumps Festival, Heh! Back then, you could have a sense of humor about these things. Very few people have ever seen this diamond, as the gig was broadcast only through local cable TV, nowhere else. The quality of the b&w content varies but, fortunately, three cameras were employed in documenting the affair, so it's not a static presentation by any means. The band is cooking from the git-go, but the moment Hooker sits down and starts in, you can readily see why cats like Jimi sat up and paid attention as they were working out their own chops.

Every cut is a classic and delivered in that stone-face Buster Keaton aspect the JLH was known for, even when he was getting boisterous, as he does amply in *Boogie*, perhaps his most classic tune, almost always an extended jam, as it most definitely is here, waaaaay extended. Don't know who the backing musicians are, no credits are given in the DVD liner, the interior one-page, or the promo lit, but one of those cats is a fireball, picking, chording, and fanning when John Lee steps back. The crowd's loving it 'cause this is the basic blues boogie so elemental to rock and roll. No one quite nailed that smoky, rolling, sexual pitch like The Hook, Bo, and a few others. *Cook with the Hook*, then, is not so much a page pulled back on history as it is a reminder of who and what got the ball rolling (hint: 'tweren't Paul Anka, Neil Sedaka, or Bobby Vinton) and why. If the past generation still can't figure out how such work replaced the Pat Boone / Perry Como / Frank Sinatra pop sound, well, it's all right here in this previously thought to be lost document which, rough edges and all, is an incisive text on the still fairly hidden wellsprings of a music form that now outsells every other mode on the planet...and has done so for a half century. Thus, our parents and their forebears can either stick that in their pipe and smoke it, or watch *Cook with the Hook* and get smokin'.

I recommend the latter.

### Track List:

- It Serves Me Right to Suffer
- Sweet Sweet Thing
- Boom Boom
- Whiskey & Women
- Boogie
- Encore/Medley

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