

John Lee Hooker – Cook With The Hook: Live In 1974 7.20.12

Chip Eagle | Jul 19, 2012 | Comments 1

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John Lee Hooker

Cook With the Hook: Live In 1974 DVD

MVD Visual

BluesWax Rating: 4

Poor Audio, Video, and a Mediocre Performance

This DVD was recorded in the summer of 1974 in the town of Gardner, Massachusetts, supposedly there were six-thousand people there, which is hard to tell from the audience shots provided. In fact it's hard to tell a lot of things considering the poor overall camera work which, by the way is in black and white. Remember this is 1974, not 1954! The festival name provides the first clue as to what to expect "Down In the Dumps." And I cannot make that up and I am not lying.

It's hard for me to pick on John Lee, but this DVD serves him very little justice, as it's difficult to get past the ragged audio plus the video quality is also poor. The audio volume changes from time to time and the video looks like it was recorded from someone's black and white television set using a super eight movie camera. (Hint: this performance was actually broadcasted on local TV, hmmm?) The video and editing team also seems clueless, as their subject matter mindlessly meander around, giving me the feeling like I was watching a very early Ernie Kovacs show from the mid fifties. What were these guys thinking? Despite all of this I was able to notice that the John Lee's Coast to Coast Blues Band weren't having a great day supporting Hooker, and that at times Hooker glanced towards them with wicked eyes. Oh, I should report that the video runs for forty-five minutes, with six tunes. The short length of this DVD is the best observation that I can report about Cook With the Hook.

Long story short: There are dozens of commercially available John Lee Hooker DVDs for sale that offer a better presentation of John Lee. Heck, a lot of the Youtube selections come across better than this video. John Lee Hooker was and still is a legend, yet reading the fine print on the (one sheet) liner notes, there are all kinds of thank you's to those involved in this video project, including the John Lee Hooker Estate. That's all I'm saying. But I'll let you be the judge by clicking the link MVD emailed me that I guess serves as their trailer. Check it out as I think you will agree with my observations. Caveat emptor.