

DVD Feature: John Lee Hooker – Cook With The Hook (Live in 1974)

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On Sunday July 6th, 1974 six-thousand people attended a Gardner, Massachusetts festival called, 'Down In The Dumps.' The event, which was held in the city's landfill area saw six acts take to the stage, one of whom was legendary [Mississippi](#)-Delta blues-man [John Lee](#) Hooker. Thankfully, his performance was captured during a locally broadcasted three-camera shoot, and is now presented on this DVD release.

While this film gives music fans a rare chance to catch John Lee Hooker live on stage, it must be remembered that this was shot back in 1974, and live show filming techniques have leapt forward since then. Filmed in black and white, the editors at the time seemed intent on showing that they did indeed have three cameras at the festival. With frequent cuts between the cameras, and the use of 'special effects' like over-laying different shots and switching between angles in time to the music, the visual footage can be somewhat annoying. Of course, such techniques were symptomatic of the time, while the video quality has deteriorated in places over time too. However, to complain about the style and quality of the video footage is to miss the point of this broadcast. Devoid of stage effects, this show is clearly all about the music, and you don't need the visuals to be perfect to appreciate that.

Fortunately, the audio quality is good throughout as John Lee Hooker runs through a 45-minute set that includes both blues and more up-tempo funk styled music. With an impressively tight backing band behind him, John Lee Hooker plays like a man who is confident in his own ability. This DVD is a piece of musical history, never to be repeated, and as such is definitely worth looking at for fans of the blues. Hooker performs with no theatrics, and very little movement, as he lets his playing speak for itself. Certainly, the first tracks are the best as Hooker brings vintage blues with tracks including, 'It Serves You Right To Suffer,' and 'Whiskey And Women.' He also runs through a great rendition of 'Boom Boom.' The show closes with Hooker taking things up-tempo with an extended foray into 'Boogie,' showing a lighter side to his personality.

While the video age has left many music fans watching the pictures as the music plays, this DVD demonstrates the opposite, allowing you to see Hooker while you listen to the music. There is a subtle difference, and this live show shows that quality music can still carry the day.

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