



## **CACTUS**

Live (DVD)

MVD Visual

The Cactus reunion of 2006 was one of those legendary moments not to be missed. Sadly, due to its brief blip in the Pollstar radar many did miss the opportunity to see one of the greatest blues boogie band's of the early '70s as they regrouped and perform several sold out shows including New York City's B.B.King's Blues Club in Times Square. Luckily someone at MVD Visual had the bright idea of pushing the record button on this cherished event and now we have the opportunity of basking in the 42" flat screen glow of this amazing rock show. Clearly the pride of Cactus was in the nimble fingers of ex-Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels guitarist Jim McCarty. Granted, there was the unearthly power of ex-Vanilla Fudge rhythm section Carmine Appice (drummer) and Tim Bogert (bassist)...and the voice of Jimmy Kunes replacing original ex-Amboy Dukes singer Rusty Day but McCarty ruled the night and the proof is in the pro-shot footage.

Cactus originally reformed in the spring of '06 where they did a handful of warm-up dates leading to the Sweden Rock festival. It was during those dates that this show was taped. A second round of gigs occurred a few months later surrounding the release of their superb comeback disc "V" on Escapi Music Inc. Breaking the silence after 30 years is primarily credited to benefactor and Lizard bassist Randy Pratt (also behind the comeback of Sir Lord Baltimore and Derringer). His insatiable appetite for '70s hard rock has been a blessing to us all. The disc gets going with a wide stage shot and intro by NYC's radio personality Leslie Gold "The Radio Chick" (Carmine's significant other). A whirlwind of feedback and bone-crushing rhythm launches the band into their old standard "Long Tall Sally" where McCarty rips the roof off the club with UK vocalist Jimmy Kunes (Savoy Brown, Love Train, Exciter) belting out his best blues-stained, vocal gruff.

Most of the set comes from the first two Cactus releases including the standouts "Let Me Swim," "One Way or Another," "Rock 'N' Roll Children," and "Parchment Farm." Three songs "Cactus Music," "Muscle and Soul" and "Part of the Game" stem from the current release V and fit right in as if it was 1975. Only the essential "Evil" finds its way off Restrictions but is absolutely mind-blowing with McCarty and Bogert dueling it out for stage dominance. Ot 'N' Sweaty is ignored all together – not sure that it matters however "Bad Mother Boogie" would have been cool. As a whole it proves to be a well-rounded and vital set with even the notoriously stiff Tim Bogert moving around to the beat. The combined energy is like a fountain of youth for the 40-year old band both invigorating and stimulating Appice in his attack on the drum kit while McCarty regains his status as a riff guitar god. The addition of Randy Pratt on harmonica adds texture through several tunes including "Brother Bill" and "Oleo" while allowing Kunes room to wail. The disc is plagued by some rather cheesy graphics yet the magnitude of the rock makes up for it.

- Todd K Smith

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