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Publisher: [Eric Olsen](#)

REVIEW

Music Review: The Platters & The Coasters - *Rock 'n Roll Legends: The Platters & The Coasters*

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Published May 09, 2007

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This is the fifth of six reviews of DVD releases selected from the Quantum Leap "Rock 'n Roll Legends" series featuring stars of the late-Fifties and early-Sixties. This DVD series is quirky and uneven, yet manages to be both interesting and entertaining.

These nostalgic releases feature live performances by popular stars, often years after they were in their prime, mostly at Little Darlin's, a nostalgia club in Florida, but also at other locations. Some performances are taken from television or movies, including a documentary from Canada's National Film Board. A horde of other popular stars, and some not so well known, make guest appearances. The visuals, on clips often apparently dubbed from old film stock, range from disconcertingly blurry to quite good but never flawless. Usually, the music makes up for the lack of visual clarity.

There's a "Fanzone" that includes biography, discography and other background information. As well, the "Quantum Leap Propaganda" section features a variety of interesting, sometimes documentary plugs for events and products as well as web links.

While this "Rock 'n Roll Legends" series includes other DVD releases, in these six alone, you can see performances by some 25 vintage artists, singing not only their own hits but other popular songs of the era. Any one of these releases provides an interesting, if eccentric, window on this past time. Together they present a fascinating pastiche of popular music as it was a half-century ago.

This release included two powerful sets performed live at Little Darlin's, The Rock 'n Roll Palace in Orlando, Florida. On its own, either set would make this release worth owning. Together, the sets by The Platters and The Coasters provide priceless memories of a long-passed but important musical era.

The Platters perform nine songs in slightly different order than listed on the package. The performance is solid and brings to life the spirit if not the exact sound of the original hit recordings. There are some surprises here. Some of the songs are not The Platters hits but covers of hits by other artists and B-sides of The Platters hits. I was especially interested and pleased to hear the wonderful R & B song "He's Mine" in this set. A B-side with a female lead vocal and lively doo-wop backing vocals, this song is a real rocker that brings some variety and excitement to the set.

The partnership between songwriters Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller with The Coasters may have determined the success of Rock and Roll and was certainly a powerful influence on the direction the genre would take following The Coasters' first hits. Here, The Coasters perform six of their most popular releases penned by Lieber and Stoller, rocking out with their familiar blend of solid R & B rhythms, slightly off-colour lyrics, and comedy. This set is fun and may also make you want to jump out of your seat and dance.

The section for "Artist Profiles" includes a reasonably complete history of The Coasters over the past half century and a less complete history of The Platters that's primarily a listing of the group's regularly shifting personnel over the years. This makes interesting if not exciting reading.

The "Quantum Leap Propaganda" section is an eccentric mix of archival footage, rough edits and promotional material, including three quirky, clip-packed video presentations plus a brief commercial for the Quantum Leap website. Rather than finished productions, these short videos seem more like samplers pieced together from diverse sources. The viewer never knows what will come next. The purpose of "Quantum Leap Propaganda" appears to be to sell other Quantum Leap releases. At the left side of each title bar in these segments is what appears to be a release number indicating the release on which that clip may be found. Here again, the visual quality is often less than desirable and the editing is rough and amateurish, but the viewing experience is interesting and sometimes even educational.

A seven minute feature that appears on a number of Quantum Leap releases, the "W.P.M.A." video plugs the World Peace Music Awards, a large televised concert event that features hundreds of well-known musicians and is broadcast worldwide. This production appears to have been pieced together from two earlier pieces advertising the concerts in San Francisco, California (2002) and Nagasaki, Japan (2005) plus other, not always related, materials. Although now out of date, this short video is still interesting to watch.

others; a segment on Dusty Springfield featuring commentary from Petula Clark and others and a performance by Springfield of her signature song, "I Only Want To Be With You;" John Sebastian joking with his audience and then singing "What a Day for a Daydream;" very cool blues sung by Bonnie Koloc, a blues instrumental featuring the trumpet of Arturo Sandoval, and a long lost music video of "The Longest Time" by Billy Joel; and a dramatic segment from the movie "The Fabulous Dorseys." Again, the purpose appears to be to sell other Quantum Leap releases. At the left side of each title bar is what appears to be a release number. Although the visual quality is inconsistent and often leaves a lot to be desired, this piece is interesting and perhaps educational to watch.

"Beauty & The Beast" is the least music related of these bonus sections, featuring primarily documentary selections. At about seventeen minutes long, "Beauty & The Beast" includes segment on award-winning underwater explorers and marine conservationist Ron and Valerie Taylor, including dramatic footage of sharks in their natural habitat; sections of travelogues on northern Australia's wilderness, some of the more rugged areas of northern England, and the American desert, this last presented with only dramatic music and no narration; a singularly unfunny selection of bits by American comic Tom Green; a tour of the 2004 Chelsea Flower Show presented by a woman dour enough to invite parody from the likes of Monty Python; and black and white features, probably released during or very shortly following World War II, about the American submarine-hunting aircraft carrier USS Guadalcanal and about the British aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal, when it was launched the only first line fleet carrier in the world. The usual cautions apply about segments having poor visual quality and being incomplete, apparently intended as teasers to sell the complete releases.

If you want to hear two of the most influential groups to bring R & B to American mainstream audiences, and ultimately to the world, and change forever the sound of what would become Rock and Roll music, this is a DVD for you. Cranked up loud, the fifteen songs on this release will rock your house. These two sets are filled with energy that may make it impossible for you to not get up and dance.

You can find information on the newest configuration of The Platters at the [The Platters](#) website and the history of The Platters since they formed in 1953 at [Wikipedia](#). You can find a history of the coasters, information on the newest lineup, and other interesting facts at [The Coasters Official Website](#) and at [Wikipedia](#) and at various unofficial websites. Also check out the [Quantum Leap Online Catalogue](#).

Rock 'n Roll Legends: The Platters & The Coasters

The Platters & The Coasters

Quantum Leap Group Ltd.

2005

Running Time: 60 minutes



For four decades, Bob has written commentary and reviewed music, painting, film, theatre, and other arts for local, regional, and national Canadian media. Since 1996, he's written [Sound Bytes](#) music reviews online. A working artist in a variety of forms and media, Bob's latest album with [Poem de Terre](#) is [War & Love](#) (July 1, 2006). With broad knowledge of the arts, Bob often takes an off-centre, quirky view, offering new insights to an artist's work.

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