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REVIEW

Music Review: Johnny Tillotson - *Rock 'n Roll Legends: Johnny Tillotson*

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This is the second 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 features two live sets by Johnny Tillotson, a total of ten vintage performances at two separate clubs in Orlando, Florida. The first set of four Tillotson hits was recorded at Little Darlin's, The Rock 'n Roll Palace. The second set, including five Tillotson hits plus a lively interpretation of Arthur Crudup's "That's All Right, Mama" was recorded at the Church Street Station Theatre. While "It Keeps Right On A Hurting" is included in this second set, it's not listed in the set listing on the case. These two sets are quite different from one another. The Little Darlin's concert is pretty standard golden oldies revival material, with the performances pretty much replicating the sound and style of the original recordings. At Church Street Station, Tillotson seems more relaxed, less the pop music performer and more a guy enjoying playing his music and interacting with the audience. This is a country music concert complete with steel guitar and all the musical frills that entered country music in the Sixties. The performances here are Tillotson at the top of his form, performing some of his top country music hits.

The bonus tracks on this release feature two classic sets. In a blast from the past, The Dovells perform their rocking hits "The Bristol Stomp" and "You Can't Sit Down" at Little Darlin's. New Seekers' vocalist Lyn Paul sings a slightly rocked-up version of Johnny Ray's "Cry" then takes a softer approach on a pure country interpretation of Tammy Wynette's "Stand By Your Man" to an appreciative country music audience at Church Street Station. Here again, the bonus sets are quite different from one another and make an interesting contrast.

The "Fanzone" on this release features an extensive biography of Tillotson along with a very limited discography of his album releases only. These sections make interesting reading but, once again the visual quality is far less than ideal.

"Quantum Leap Propaganda" is more than just propaganda. It includes three interesting, if quirky and a bit rough in many aspects, clip-packed video presentations plus a brief commercial for the Quantum Leap website. Rather than complete finished productions, these short videos have the look and feel of samplers pieced together from diverse sources. The viewer never knows what will come next.

Showing up on several of these Quantum Leap releases, "W.P.M.A." is a seven minute plug for the World Peace Music Awards concerts, a large event featuring hundreds of well-known musicians and broadcast worldwide. This promo appears to have been pieced together from two separate pieces advertising the concerts in San Francisco, California (2002) and in Nagasaki, Japan (2005) plus other materials. While now out of date, this short video is still interesting to watch.

Like the "W.P.M.A." promo, "Pure Pop" seems to be standard fare on releases in this series. At almost seventeen minutes long, "Pure Pop" is a pastiche of interesting clips that comes across as a chaotic attempt at a documentary film. It features a half-dozen or more popular stars performing and in interviews and commentary and in performance. The purpose appears to be to sell other Quantum

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." Although the visual quality is inconsistent and often leaves a lot to be desired, this piece is still interesting to watch.

Perhaps the weirdest addition to the "Propaganda" section is the seventeen minute "How To" featuring a Holiday Spanish lesson, various artists in segments on painting with watercolours, a tutorial on Beginners Modern Jive, demonstrations of a boxing martial art called Muay Thai, a brief documentary on professional golfer Donna White meant to introduce a series of golf lessons, sailing lessons, lessons on playing acoustic guitar, and a video called "Women Fight Back" featuring martial arts training. Each of these segments is incomplete starting mid-stream and is clipped before the end. This video quality ranges from not very good to just plain awful. Again, there's what appears to be a release number at the left side of each title bar So the purpose of this "How To" section may be to market other Quantum Leap releases featuring these various lessons.

Featuring thirteen live concert recordings, this release is worth owning for the music alone. As for the rest of it: well, those bonus segments do make for fun viewing. They're silly and quirky enough to probably make good party-time viewing. I'd recommend this release for anyone who enjoys the old music and the stars who recorded it, or for any Johnny Tillotson fan who'd like to see him in a live performance.

Find out more about Johnny Tillotson at the [Johnny Tillotson Official Website](#) or at [Wikipedia](#). You can look up The Dovells at [The Dovells Home Page](#) or at [Wikipedia](#). You'll find information on Lyn Paul at [The Lyn Paul Website](#) or, again, at [Wikipedia](#). Also check out the [Quantum Leap Online Catalogue](#).

Rock 'n Roll Legends: Johnny Tillotson

Johnny Tillotson

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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