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REVIEW

Music Review: Martha Reeves - *Greatest Hits Live*

Written by [Bob MacKenzie](#)
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This is the fourth of six reviews of DVD releases selected from the Quantum Leap series of "Rock 'n Roll Legends" 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.

Although this release features only five of Martha Reeves' hit songs, it provides almost nineteen minutes of energetic live performance by Reeves and her original Vandellas. Performed live at Little Darlin's, The Rock 'n Roll Palace in Orlando, Florida, these songs capture the spirit of the original hit recordings combined with the energy that can only come from a live performance. It should be noted here that order of performance on the DVD is not the same as listed on the package. There are two different performances of "Dancing in the Street" included here, providing a sixth performance track. I would question inclusion of the first version, which seems to be performed with a lack of enthusiasm by all concerned. The second version is a powerful performance and perhaps the best in this set. This one could have stood on its own without inclusion of the weaker version earlier in the set.

Special guest star on this release is Sam Moore who, with his partner the late Dave Prater (1937-1988), had been very influential in soul and R&B music for more than a decade. Moore gives gutsy performances of four great Sam and Dave hits.

On this release, the "Fanzone" features an extensive biography of Martha Reeves and history of her career with The Vandellas along with a very limited discography of their album releases only. These sections make interesting reading but, the visual quality is far less than ideal.

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. 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. 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.

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 While now out of date, this short video is still interesting to watch.

"Cool Soul" is a bit of a misnomer. Over its running time of more than 12 minutes, this musical section contains nothing that could properly be called soul music. Rather, it's an eclectic sampler of a variety of musical genres, featuring clips of live performance and documentary footage. The clips include everything from solid funk through peaceful acoustic Spanish guitar, rousing big band swing, parts of three songs by Willie Nelson, and a segment from a documentary on the life of reggae master Jimmy Cliff. Misnamed or not, this segment is interesting and entertaining to watch.

Shotokan Karate, brief footage of several Ultimate Kickboxing matches, and an excerpt from the movie *Joe Louis Story* Interesting? Yes. Educational? Probably not. The clips are just too short and clearly meant as a tease so that those interested will be tempted to buy the DVD release.

Featuring ten live performances by two of America's most influential soul and R&B artists, this release combines pure nostalgia with the power of great performances. This release will be enjoyed by the generation who originally bought the records made the songs hits and by their children and grandchildren as well.

Find a treasure trove of information on the Martha Reeves and the Vandellas at the [Miss Martha Reeves](#) website or at [Wikipedia](#). Read more about Sam and Dave at [Wikipedia](#) and at various unofficial websites. Also check out the [Quantum Leap Online Catalogue](#).



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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