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War

Loose Grooves: Funkin' Live in England 1980
(RPM Films)

When I stop to think about great concert films, I usually think of *Urgh! A Music War*, which was low budget, riotously paced and full of jaw-dropping performances, all of which conveyed the danger and excitement of the punk and nascent new-wave movements. Maddeningly, it's also unavailable. Shit! I also think of *The Last Waltz*, directed by Martin Scorsese, and *Stop Making Sense*, directed by Jonathan Demme. Scorsese's deft cinematic hand imbued the Band's farewell show with sadness and dignity, and Demme's bright ideas made the increasingly fractious Talking Heads look edgy, eccentric and irresistibly engaging. And while this concert of War performing a slew of hits is spirited and sweaty, it's merely a concert, nothing more, nothing less, and the presence of multiple cameras does not bring the viewer any closer to the band than merely observing its marvelous interplay from an assortment of angles. Still, it's hard to beef when the group delivers spot-on performances of "Cisco Kid," "Me and Baby Brother" and, of course, "Low Rider." On the other hand, "Slipping Into Darkness" would have been nice. Gripe, gripe, gripe!

- John Chandler