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War

Loose Grooves: Funkin' Live In England 1980

RPM Records

War what is it good for? Havin' a funkini' good time judging by this lot

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'Our mission was to spread a message of brotherhood and harmony' stated War's founding member and singer and keyboardist Lonnie Jordan, of the intentions of the band, why they formed and why they chose the bands name, 'Our instruments and voices became our weapon of choice and the songs are ammunition.' So it seems apt the War was the name that they chose to call themselves, and their weapons of choice and ammunition are more than brilliantly used on this DVD 'Loose Grooves: Funkin' Live In England 1980' DVD, which was filmed on their 1980 tour of the UK in Halifax, but even judging by the slightly grainy picture of the camera it seems that War could make the middle of nowhere look glamorous and look like some colourful and slightly futuristic version of Las Vegas.

War originally came to the attention of veteran producer Jerry Goldstein and ex-Animals member Eric Burden, and from 1969 to 1971 were Burden's backing band going under the name of Eric Buren and War. But War's musical ambition stretched further than being a mere albeit pretty successful backing band and at the end of 1971 recorded and released their own self-titled debut album, which was then followed by a succession of highly successful funk driven, and reggae, blues, jazz, and rock infused records over the next decade or so. Then their was 'The World Is A Ghetto' which was arguably most successful album as it topped the 'Billboard' charts in America and was named the 'Billboard' album of the year, but 1973's 'Deliver The Word' (which contained the hit 'Gypsy Man') and 1975's 'Why Can't We Be Friends' (which contains possibly their best known number 'Low Rider' were equally successful. Then after a couple of compilation album in 1976 and '77, there were 1978's 'Galaxy', 'The Music Band', 'The Music Band 2', and 'Outlaw' in 1979, 1980, and 1982 respectively. Then throughout the 1980's they concentrated on touring and playing live, which is what they do best and is evidenced and caught brilliantly on this DVD.

'Loose Grooves - Funkin' Live In England 1980' happened in-between the 2 'The Music Band' albums. The 8 tracks that are played on the DVD are in chronological order of release. The first song 'Spill The Wine/ All Day Music' went back to their time when they were Eric Burden's band.

On the DVD although the camera shots are limited and the picture is grainy, it does capture the spirit of the late 1970s/early 1980's, particularly with the bands sparkly shirts and spangly flares and Afro's galore, also the fluorescent red, pink, orange, blue and purple lights that are splashed on to the band give the grainy some colour and life.

However although the vision of might not be the best thing about the DVD, the sound and energy that the band give out more than makes up for that. Particularly the amount of people onstage there's 7 or 8 people onstage (which the camera doesn't quite capture as well as it could have) making a tuneful noise. There are 2 drummers and a percussionist, saxophonist, 3 guitars, all bringing War's funk sound alive.

But it's the trio of 'Low Rider', 'Cisco Kid', and 'Gipsy King' in the centre of the set that really shows off what War are all about, as the tight and nagging tunes that they start with, ends up into loose and funky grooves as the band members really lock into each other and go into some extended and excitable jams. On 'Gipsy King' in particular their reggae tendencies really come to the fore, conjuring up a loose and funky Bob Marley in the process. Also as there's a lack of vocalist as the jams take off the guy with the mouth organ goes absolutely mental and become the focal point for a lot of the songs/jams.

There's a heartfelt sing a long of 'Me And My Brother' at the end of the main performance, before they come back on with an encore of 'Why Can't We Be Along' before the band descend in to the crowd.

Its not quite the same as actually being their and down the front, but for a nostalgic down memory lane for any War fans out there it's a heartfelt, almost home made DVD, and their choice of weapons may well obliterate you, not to mention make you feel funk'd out once more.

For more information on War and for up coming tour dates go to www.wartheband.com

By **Ben Bradford**

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