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spotlight

Robin Trower
Living Out of Time LIVE

Robin Trower has always been sort of a sleeper guitar hero, virtually unknown in the mainstream through most of his long career, but always near the top of blues guitarists' best of lists. This latest CD/DVD release from Ruf Records shows why he's often mentioned in the same breath as Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughn, proving that he has earned the title of living legend over and over again.

The release focuses on a live set recorded in Germany during the Rockpalast Crossroads Festival, in September of 2005. It's not a terribly long concert, spanning 13 tracks and clocking it at around an hour and a half. Yet, this brevity and tightness keeps the music flowing quickly, never letting the show get stale. Trower rips immediately into the tunes and doesn't let up until it's done.

After a few decades in the music business, you'd think that Trower would be going through the motions by now, but thankfully that isn't the case. On the DVD, it is visually obvious that he enjoys what he's doing, and that he gets a lot out of playing his new material. He looks like a man having the time of his life. His playing sounds fresh, and he attacks each tune with the fervor of an artist half his age. If his chops are starting to rust, he doesn't show it at all. The songwriting is also better than expected, with Trower avoiding simple rehash of tired blues lines. The songs are tight and catchy with lots of creative guitar riffs from Trower, along with gutsy and soulful vocals from singer Davey Pattison.

Overall, the production quality is great both in sound and picture, with video techniques kept simple, wisely relying more on the musicianship to carry the show and not effects for effects sake. There are plenty of close-ups of Trower's guitar antics, sure to make any guitarist drool with envy.

Trower proves you can age gracefully without losing your fire, and that an old man can still teach the whippersnappers a few lessons on how to rock.

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