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The Dead's Alive This Week



Jonathan Takiff, Daily News Columnist
Email Jonathan Takiff

What a week for Dead-heads! More than 38 hours of Grateful Dead concerts are newly gathered and available today on a DVD box set. There's a just opened GD exhibit at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. And this Thursday the tribes will be gathering at [theaters](#) here and [nationwide](#) for a "Meet Up at the Movies" concert special.

Out today from Shout! Factory, the 14 DVD, 38 hour+ Grateful Dead box set "All the Years Combine: The DVD Collection" gathers everything the band has ever officially issued on VHS, [Laserdisc](#) and DVD, packed into a compact box and (relatively) bargain priced at \$99. Special come-ons include the DVD premiere of the hour-long conceptual video "So Far," a program book with informative notes by Blair Jackson and a bonus video disc. The latter boasts five previously unreleased performances plus Justin Kreutzmann's 1992 documentary about dad's band "Backstage Pass" and a brand new interview with Grateful Dead archivist David Lemieux. The latter hints, as does Jackson, that there's still "thousands" of hours of performance audio and video footage hiding in the vaults.

Wanna try before you buy? Shout! Factory has kindly posted a bunch of videos from the box set. ["Uncle John's Band"](#) is a personal fave and leads to the others.

Thursday night's second annual ["Meet Up at the Movies"](#) will spotlight a previously unexposed video of the second night from the band's July, 1989 stand at Alpine Valley in East Troy, Wisconsin. Most of the first night and clips from the third comprise the box set entry "Down Hill from Here." Given how that disc plays, you can expect a good quality stereo house mix and the same basic video you'd have watched from the lawn on big screens at the amphitheater. Kinda grainy and old school, but at least well lit. The real bonus Thursday is you'll get to hang at the movie theater with kindred spirits - some sure to cheer and applaud the performances.

The band's Dedication to great concert sound always spoiled me and does again taking in the new box set. Especially those releases with surround sound mixes - "The Grateful Dead Movie," "The Closing of Winterland," "Dead Ahead" and "Truckin' Up to Buffalo." So I'm glad to hear that some of the band's audiophile-quality gear - built in Binghamton, New York by the esteemed McIntosh Laboratory brand - is part of the new ["Grateful Dead: The Long Strange Trip"](#) exhibit at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. May be reason to truck on down to Cleveland?

But wait, there's still more "new" Dead to dig. The compelling two hour+ DVD documentary ["Dawn of the Dead - The Grateful Dead & The Rise of San Francisco Underground"](#) (Sexy Intellectual Productions) focuses on the formative years and boasts a treasure trove of rare home movie grade clips, new reflections on them by band insiders like publicist Dennis McNally and rock critic "dean" Robert Christgau, plus sonic samplings of the band from their earliest jugband phase to "Workingman's Dead." Yeah, this project feels "authorized."

Also, current guardian of the vaults Mr. Lemieux is freshly represented with "[Dave's Picks, Volume 1](#)" (Deadnet.com/Rhino). It's a good sounding (except for the occasionally distant vocals) board recording from The Mosque in Richmond VA, 5/25/77, featuring an especially sweet (and rare) Jerry Garcia rendering of "Peggy-O." Copies of this "limited edition" are already hard to come by; Volume 2 is on the way.

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