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## REVIEW

# Music DVD Review: *Fairport Convention: Maidstone 1970*

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Being the only known filmed footage of [Fairport Convention's](#) *Full House* lineup, this release is a bit more than a mere curiosity. However, its brevity and modest sound quality make it a must-have only for the most diehard of the band's fans.

With Sandy Denny out of the band, Fairport Convention in June 1970 consisted of Dave Swarbrick and a pre-facial hair Richard Thompson, with Dave Pegg on bass and mandolin, Dave Mattacks on drums, and Simon Nicol on rhythm guitar. The most famous, successful, and lasting band of the British folk-rock movement, the Convention was almost as well known for its shifting lineup as for its music.

The performances at this event are excellent, especially the multipart harmony vocals. But of the seven songs, only five are actually by Fairport; in the middle of the sequence are two songs by Matthews Southern Comfort, led by ex-Fairporter Iain Matthews. This band, one of many Matthews projects, would later record a hit version of Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock," but is otherwise mostly forgotten.

The total running time of the concert footage is only half an hour. From Fairport we get a jig and reel medley, followed by "Sir Patrick Spens" and "Now Be Thankful." Then Matthews Southern Comfort steps up with two disappointingly boring numbers. Fairport returns with "Flatback Caper" and "Jenny's Chickens & The Mason's Apron."

Besides the concert footage, there is one extra feature: a fifteen-minute interview with filmmaker Tony Palmer, who relates some background and trivia on how this film came to be made. Though the sound has been remastered, it's certainly not high fidelity. In fact, the shots of the crowd are probably more interesting than those of the band, although all of it is filmed and edited artfully.

The Maidstone Fiesta was truly, as Palmer describes it, a "family day out." Happy hippies dance to the faster tunes, but much of the audiences consists of families with children. Watching the kids play, the hippies wander in and out of the woods, and the "normal" folks squint at the band is entertaining. You really get a flavor for how people looked, dressed, and interacted on a hot summer day in Kent in 1970.

Interrupting the set is a little Army helicopter show. Shades of "Puppet Show and Spinal Tap"? Not quite - Fairport was highly popular at the time - but it's funny anyway. Overall, it's an interesting set, but necessary only for huge Fairport Convention fans and completists; a minor addition to the historical record of the British folk-pop movement.



Jon Sobel is Blogcritics' theater editor, reviews NYC theater frequently, and writes a regular round-up of independent music releases. He is also a computer professional, musician, and small-time concert promoter in New York City. (His original band, [Whisperado](#), can be blogcriticized at will.)

## Comments

#1 — February 22, 2008 @ 00:25AM — [Tan The Man](#) [[URL](#)]

That's very disappointing to hear...

