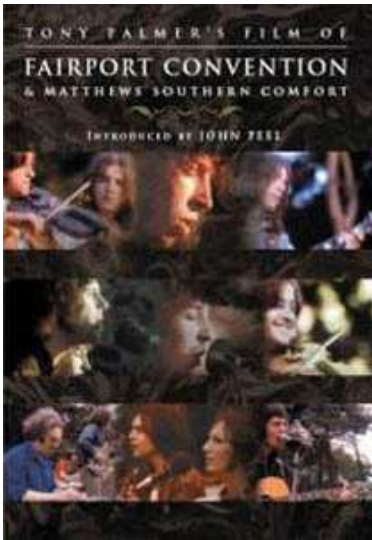




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REVIEWS: FAIRPORT CONVENTION: MAIDSTONE 1970 - [DVD]**TITLE:** Fairport Convention: Maidstone 1970 - [DVD]**LABEL:** Neptune / MVD**DATE:** 04-19-08**REVIEW BY:** Jon Pruett

In their prime (1967–1970), Fairport Convention helped give folk-rock in the U.K. its own identity. Along with the works of Bert Jansch and Pentangle, Shirley Collins and Davy Graham, Fairport Convention created an individualistic strain of music that drew from traditional folk but had a modern quality that drew accolades not just from the folk purists, but from the hippies in the underground. Their mixture of harmonies and instrumentation on albums like *What We Did On Our Holidays*, *Unhalfbricking*, and *Liege & Lief* showcased an incredible grasp of feeling that felt otherworldly and yet tied firmly to the earth. This magic was partly due to the mercurial vocal talents of Sandy Denny, whose voice sounds like it's ringing out from anywhere within the last 500 years and guitarist Richard Thompson—who plays solos the way Lou Reed or Tom Verlaine play solos—out of a desire to explore guitar sound in a melodic and inventive way. He's a voyager of sorts. But not in a lame-ass way.

This DVD captures the group in 1970 at the Maidstone fair after key member Ashley Hutchings had left the band (to form Steeleye Span) as well as Sandy Denny (to form Fotheringay), but while still burning hot thanks to the sessions they had just recorded for their last great album, *Full House*. Award-winning director Tony Palmer catches the group in a lively mood during this mid-day set—playing up the rigs and reels that were becoming an even larger part of their sound. The incredibly young Richard Thompson sounds fantastic here, his guitar crackling over the traditional sounds. The inventiveness of his playing is hard to deny and it's not terribly surprising that he would leave the group shortly thereafter this to forge his own solo sound. The film beautifully fades between the stage as the sun begins to set and the moody—at times totally square, at times amazingly cool—crowd. Apparently the band came on directly after some performing monkeys—so this is no Woodstock vibe. In one strange sequence, the show is interrupted by army helicopters and the group is forced to crack wise for a few minutes.

The middle section of the DVD features a short set from Matthews Southern Comfort. Ian Matthews had previously been a member of the Fairports but left to form his own folk-rock group that drew more from the layered harmonies of the Byrds and had a sound that was more that of an embryonic soft-rocker with a lap steel than a hard-core Britfolkie. Although only two tracks are on here, their fluidity and magisterial harmonies might be the true gems on this disc, although the final track from the Fairports, "Jenny's Chickens & the Mason's Apron," features an incredible, frenetic finale jam coupled with amazing crowd shots that rivals Ian Matthews' overall sublimeness. Director Tony Palmer rounds out the disc in the extras section with an interview that reveals his connections to Sandy Denny and how he came to be the man to film this awesome snapshot into the early-70s U.K. folk scene.

[Fairport Convention: Maidstone 1970 is out now on MVD.](#)

Fairport Convention: Maidstone 1970 - Part 1**LIVE ALBUMS DVDS/FILMS**[Muse - H.A.A.R.P. - \[DVD\]](#)[Fairport Convention: Maidstone 1970 -...](#)[Rolling Stones - Shine A Light - \[Film\]](#)[U23D - \[Film\]](#)[Daniel Lanois - Here Is What Is - \[DVD\]](#)[Roxy Music - Thrill Of It All \[DVD\]](#)[Composing The Beatles Songbook:...](#)

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