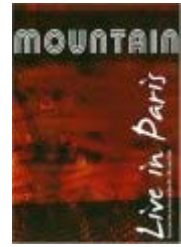


REVIEW

Music DVD Review: *Mountain - Live In Paris*

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Formed in the image of what many regard as the first supergroup, Cream, Mountain began life as a solo album called *Mountain* created by Long Island guitarist Leslie West. It included former Cream producer Felix Pappalardi on bass as well as producing, and featured N.D. Smart on drums and Steve Knight on keyboards. But it was West's raw guitar and Pappalardi's heavy bass lines that gave Mountain its unique style.

Although they were never featured in the film or on the first Woodstock album, Mountain's fourth live concert was at the famed Woodstock Festival in 1969. Shortly after that, Smart was replaced by Corky Laing and the group's first album, *Climbing*, was released in 1970. It featured the band's best known song, "Mississippi Queen," which reached the top 40; the album hit the top 20 in the US.

The band broke up in 1972 and West and Laing teamed up with Jack Bruce of Cream to form West, Bruce and Laing. Mountain reformed briefly, but then was silent until the mid 80's. Unfortunately, Pappalardi was shot and killed by his wife in 1983 in a case that was judged to be negligent homicide.

Mountain - Live In Paris is a film of the band's mid-80's recreation and features Leslie West on guitar, Corky Laing on drums and Mark Clarke on bass and keyboards. All members contributed vocals to the set. The band had also just released the album *Go for Your Life*. The performances were recorded on July 8th and 9th 1985.

Mountain - Live In Paris starts off with "Why Dontcha," which is actually the West, Bruce, and Lang title track from their 1973 debut album. While the music is great, the vocals suffer because West seems distracted at the beginning. Things are not quite right, and he goes over to the amps and messes with them. Laing on the other hand seems to be into his groove from the get-go. Clarke seems to want to be in a hair band as his head is bobbing up and down almost to the point of distraction. The trademark drumstick bounce begins and continues throughout the show: Laing bounces a drumstick off of his drum set, and West catches it in the air while still playing and then throws it into the audience.

They begin "Never In My Life," from the *Climbing* album, which starts off much better, but things get weird very quickly when Laing says something to West and West turns and pushes a cymbal stand, knocking the cymbal back into Laing and almost hitting him in the face. One of the roadies rushes in to help Laing set it back up, and West keeps on playing.

"Theme for an Imaginary Western," also from *Climbing*, appears to be recorded on a different night, as all are in different clothing. West comes onstage and dedicates the song to Felix Pappalardi. It features Clarke on lead vocals and keyboards, doing a good job on both. From here on, the show is a much better performance.

"Spark," from their new (at the time) album *Go for Your Life*, is a real powerhouse tune with a "Tobacco Road" backbeat. It's distinctly different from the earlier Mountain songs in that it has much more keyboard in the mix. (Unfortunately the album is not available any more.) At the end, Laing does about four drumstick bounces in a row.

"Nantucket Sleighride," the title track of Mountain's second album, begins in a hauntingly slow manner and builds on itself. Again, at this night's session, the group is "on" and this is truly a classic rendition of the song. This time it appears that Laing once again says something to West. West smirks, sings another line, picks up the cymbal stand and throws it at Laing, this time chuckling. It seems to be an almost playful reenactment of the incident from the prior night, as they play into their big finish.

"Mississippi Queen" begins with Laing coming out and standing next to a five foot cowbell placed next to West. On the back is a little cowbell which Laing hits with a large drumstick. They then break into a great version of the classic song to finish up the DVD.

Mountain - Live In Paris provides a good representation of Mountain live. Mark Clarke is good in his role, but he is not Felix Pappalardi. His facial expressions and head bopping are quite distracting, almost annoying. The true salvation of this film is watching the guitar wizardry of Leslie West and the thunderous drumming of Corky Laing. They are truly legends in the music world, and their ability on their respective instruments is worth the price of admission.

The film quality is good, as is the sound. The saving grace here is that there are not a lot of stage effects to interfere with the lighting and wash out the visuals. The runtime is about 50 minutes and the DVD contains no extras other than chapter selection. That said, this is a good representation of Mountain in its post-Pappalardi revival. It is well worth it for fans of the band and lovers of musical history and the origins of hard rock.

Track Listing (Paris 1985):

1. Why Dontcha
2. Never In My Life
3. Theme for an Imaginary Western
4. Spark
5. Nantucket Sleighride
6. Mississippi Queen

T. Michael Testi is a photographer, writer, software developer and ardent fantasy football fan and of horse race handicapping. He also blogs at [PhotographyTodayNet](#) and at [All This and Everything Else](#)

Comments

#1 – September 6, 2007 @ 15:36PM – john [[URL](#)]

great article. one of the most surreal shows i ever saw was West,Bruce,and Laing opening for Iggy Pop at the Aragon Ballroom in Chicago back in the early seventies

