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Band suits up on concert DVD

My Morning Jacket's 'Okonokos' a noble effort

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Concert films are, by their nature, a tough sell for the mainstream. For a band to produce one, it must have the mass appeal a concert film demands. Otherwise, it'll end up on the discount shelf at Best Buy next to the \$5.99 Kiss retrospect.

And above all, it has to be interesting. A gimmick, a theme or a concept all work as long as the film doesn't play like a greatest hits album. Witness the Goo Goo Dolls, who turned lemons into lemonade when a torrential downpour threatened their July 2004 live taping. The band wisely adopted raindrops as the release's motif. It worked because it fit the band's catalog.

In 2003, a columnist at this Eagle reporter's hometown newspaper said hip and with-it folks know "My Morning Jacket doesn't hang in a closet." Three years later everyone knows that. Hence the curiously named "Okonokos" (ATO/RCA Records).

Released on Halloween as a complement to their double-disc live album, which has been out since late September, "Okonokos" is as much a display of the band's expansive sound as an attempt to visually capture the veracity of being there. "Okonokos" is just enough of a creative concept to enhance but not distract from the music, which is more than most concert films can attest to.

The beginning of the film hearkens back to a 19th century soiree of gentry and follows the departure of one aristocrat who is led to a mystical land of enormous riffs and soaring, reverb-drenched vocals. Population: My Morning Jacket and a full house at the esteemed Fillmore West in San Francisco. Our intermediary becomes increasingly enrapt by what's taking place around him.

On Mischief Night, the day before its release, D&E Entertainment in Hollywood coordinated a 13-city theatrical premiere of "Okonokos" so MMJ fans could wallow in the 5.1 stereo surround sound mix and top-notch editing and production value.

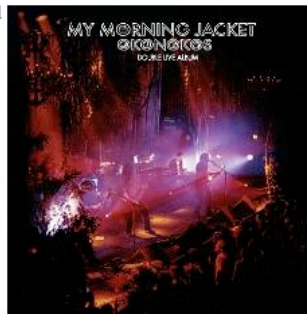
The piercing riffs on "Run Thru" and the coordinated "ahhs" on "Mahgeeta" sound crisp, clear and full of power. "One Big Holiday," the film's fourth tune, scoops the viewer up for an intense five-minute gallop.

Some partygoers in the film's audience join in the fun by producing an occasional glow stick or pair of butterfly wings. Their applause and cheers notwithstanding, one gets the impression they could have added to the atmosphere more in this respect.

And MMJ could have added to it by interacting with the audience. The band never once acknowledges the crowd in the film's 90-minute runtime, which is unusual given their otherwise genteel demeanor. Also, some of its older material isn't given quite the revamping one would expect, leading to thoughts of predictability.

"Okonokos" is a commendable stab at creativity and originality crafted with care and thought, putting it ahead of a host of "film it and print it" subordinates.

My Morning Jacket swings through D.C. on its latest East Coast tour with a two-night stand at the 9:30 club on Nov. 27 and 28. Tickets are \$25.



Media Credit: Courtesy of ATO RECORDS
My Morning Jacket's 'Okonokos' is a noble effort, but lacks interaction.



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