

THE BOONDOCK SAINTS

Release the Hounds
(Atlantic Records)

The Boondock Saints' first album isn't exactly a movie soundtrack, but it's something like that.

The Los Angeles foursome, led by filmmaker Troy Duffy, took shape on the set of his new movie, also called "The Boondock Saints." They began to take themselves seriously as a band after a series of impromptu sets on the set went over well with cast and crew.

Great story. Mediocre result.

The Boondock Saints crank out credible modern heavy metal, but they are plowing ground already thoroughly tilled by Metallica. The Saints' sound is slightly more upbeat, but it still sounds like a mildly diverting Metallica outtake album. — Sean Scully

"Now Hear This"

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VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Best of Hard Rock Live, (Sire Records/Video airing on VH1 tonight)

Crass commercialism aside, the new compilation of Hard Rock Live highlights is a pretty fair piece of record making.

The 13 tracks are drawn from the VH1 Saturday night concert show, which seems mostly to be a way to fill spaces between commercials and promotional announcements.

But the editors of the album have chosen wisely, picking artists who span many years and many different rock audiences, from alt-rock grandfather Lou Reed to pop pranksters Barenaked Ladies.

The older acts fare the best. The Pretenders lead off by breathing new life into the classic rock war horse "Middle of the Road," while Mr. Reed shows he has aged with grace by rousing the audience with a little-know and overlong track.

The new bands are generally good — righteous babe Ani DiFranco and revivalists Blues Traveler ably show the flag for Gen X — with one major exception. Hootie and the Blowfish show why their mild, earnest rock fizzled after one album with a mirthless and disjointed version of "Hold my Hand".

But with only one clinker out of 13 tracks, "Best Of..." is a worthy live sampler. — S.S.