



DECEMBERISTS: A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK



(Kill Rock Stars)

The Decemberists' first DVD, *A Practical Handbook*, features the trifecta of documentary footage, music videos and a live performance. The latter captures the band playing for a hometown crowd at Portland, Oregon's Roseland Theatre. It's mainly all rock and little talk, with the members rarely pausing between songs, except for Colin Meloy's spiel about how "there's no place like home." The first half of the set drags, but midway through, the pace begins to pick up thanks to interactive song choices and band theatrics. "Mariner's Revenge Song" requires the crowd to scream as if being swallowed by a whale (played by guitarist Chris Funk). Beside the slow start, the other negative aspect of the concert is violinist Petra Haden, who's continuously chewing on her gum. The documentary portion, titled *Paris Before The War*, is unfortunately even less engaging, if fundamentally informational, as the band describes the creation and process of recording *Picaresque*. The film suffers chiefly from sub-par editing, and when viewing the videos, skip the first couple, but don't miss "Sixteen Military Wives," because you sure won't see a band impersonate a model United Nations on MTV. >>>**JESSEKA KADYLA**