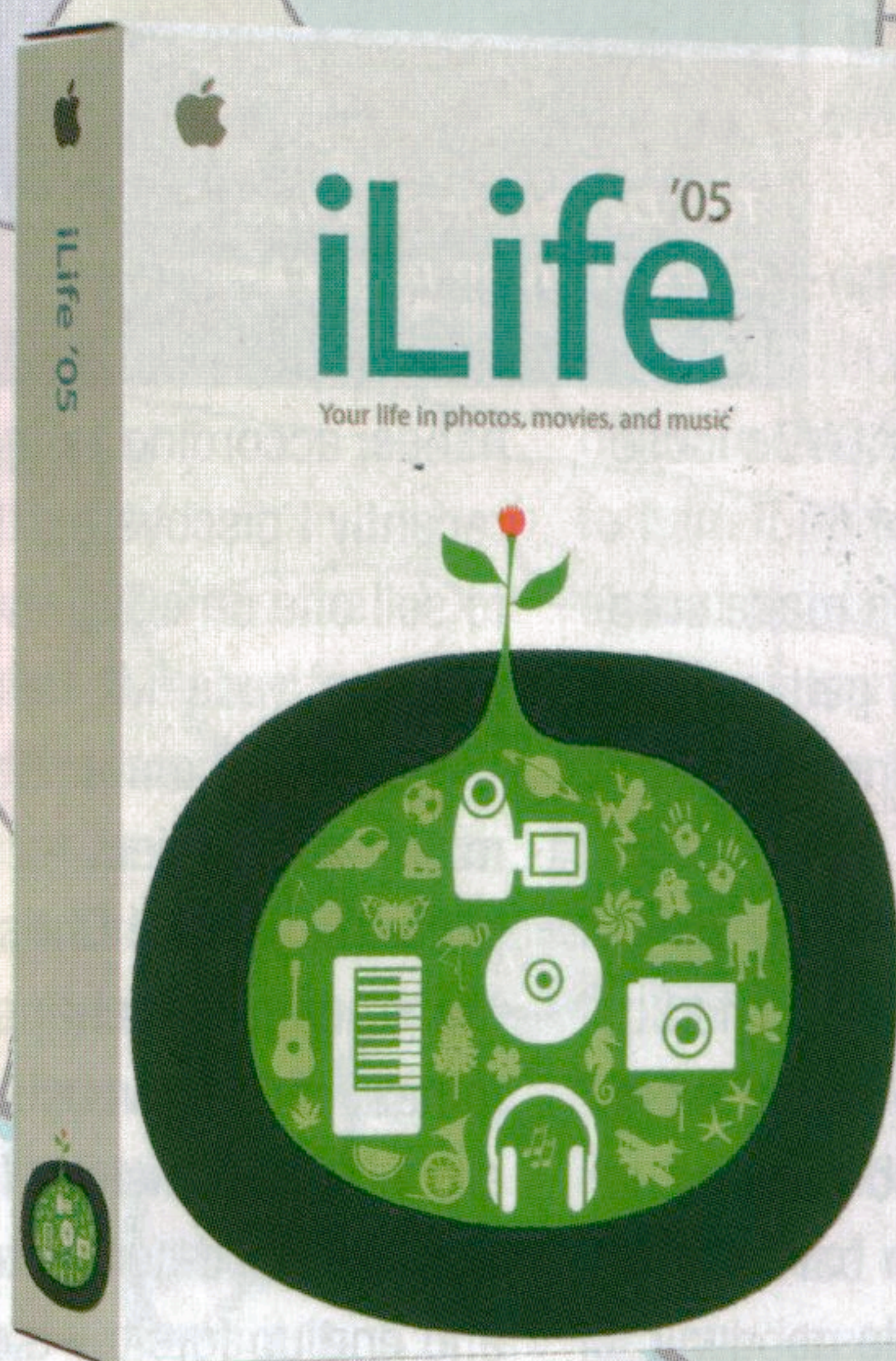


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stereo condensers that are built-in to the camera. I shoot handheld, from the floor, for a couple of good, practical reasons. One, it's hard enough to get a camera in a club, let alone a tripod, and, two, it preserves a nice cinema vérité, you-are-there vibe. At least that's how I rationalise sharing my personal video souvenirs with the world. Plus, a singing, dancing, standing-room-only crowd wouldn't be a good place to plunk down a big old Bogen.

There are now four videos in my Decemberists series, each entitled The Royal Ubiquitous Handycam, (vol. 1-4) after a line in one of lead singer Colin Meloy's lyrics. They are proper DVDs, with animated menus, bonus features (what's a DVD without useless extra bits?) and craftily-designed inserts for the also ubiquitous plastic cases. I am not



at all sure how much longer I am going to continue this project of making archives of concerts – my arms are getting tired – but it is satisfying, after all these years of being a serious video geek, to make movies that other people watch, even if it's mostly other rabid fans of an up-and-coming band.

The last video in my obsessive little series was made with my new camera (the Sony TRV-480). I know that even my current gear collection isn't the greatest stuff known to humankind, but it's plenty fine for me. Because it's a nifty little camera and can do these sorts of things, I shot in 16:9 anamorphic widescreen digital video, with 16bit audio. The venue left the lights on, as well (I'd like to think for me), so it all added up to one high-quality result. Except for the fact that the two young guys in front of me were skinnier, taller, and in both cases, had better haircuts than I, I got some pretty good shots, if I must say so myself. I had to shoot between their heads a lot or move to one side of them or the other, but in the end I'm still

pleased with what I was able to do. Jockeying for position, inhaling other people's second-hand smoke, spilling beer on your shoes, it's all part of the concert-going experience I was trying to capture.

I don't fancy myself a filmmaker by any stretch of my often active imagination. I reserve that term for people like my childhood idol François Truffaut or some genius of suspense like Alfred Hitchcock. But I have been able to use the wonderful consumer technology available in the free world to capture and archive everything from the mundane moments of everyday family life to the rib-rattling bass notes of my favourite live band.

I can only imagine that camcorder enthusiasts on either side of the Atlantic (or on any other shore, for that matter) share the same simple, somewhat nerdy, joy of being able to relive our favourite experiences whenever we want, in the comfort of our own homes. The miles of tape and stacks of DVDs we amass attest to our desire to electronically capture and preserve everything we hold dear – the values of a video age. The important thing to remember is not to spend so much time trying to capture our lives that we forget to live them. ■