

Lost and found

The Plexifilm label has been responsible for a lot of avant-garde music documentaries, but one of their specialties has been profiles of forgotten or lost bands, of which **You Think You Really Know Me The Gary Wilson Story** (UPC#082354004422, \$25) is a definitive example. The two-disc set features both the DVD containing the documentary and a CD of Wilson's 1977 album, also entitled *You Think You Really Know Me*. Unless you are one of the handful of Wilson fanatics walking the Earth, it is best to listen to the CD a couple of times before watching the 2008 film, wherein you learn that after cutting the album, Wilson completely dropped off the radar and probably would have stayed there had not enthusiasts become so obsessed with his wonderful but totally geeky lyrics ("Six point four equals make out...") and oddball light jazz/pre-techno techno music that they scoured the country in search of him (it turns out he was living in San Diego). The 75-minute documentary, from 2006, describes this search and then profiles Wilson as he returns to his hometown in New York to bask in his newfound glory. It is a marvelous tale, essentially about the guys you didn't know in high school because they were kind of weird and kept to themselves, and the DVD itself is sort of the happy ending, because whether you get it for the film or for the CD, it is irresistibly eccentric and appealing.

The full screen picture is at the mercy of documentary lighting, but the transfer is okay. The sound is centered but clear. There is no captioning. Along with a trailer, there are 3 short films running a total of 27 minutes that were made during Wilson's heyday by one of the guys in his band, Frank Roma, along with an optional Roma commentary. Another band mate, Butch Bottino, also made films while they were all in high school, and a 9-minute selection of these is also included, with an optional musical score.

Mayall's blues

The warhorse of British blues guitarists performs with his band for a 49-minute set in the 1987 Iowa concert, **John Mayall's Bluesbreakers**, a Quantum Leap MVD Visual release (UPC#760137602392, \$13). Looking decidedly older than the photo used for the menu screen, Mayall delivers a solid collection of blues tunes while singing, working his harmonica, manipulating an electronic keyboard and playing the electric guitar with both a masterful confidence and an edgy aggression. The university tavern-style setting is very intimate, but the audience is enthusiastic. Mayall is depicted with extensive close-ups that allow the viewer to savor his technique at an effective level of detail. The full screen picture has reasonably accurate colors and is fairly sharp. The sound is centered but solidly delivered. There is no captioning. Also featured is a minute-long interview with Mayall, text profiles of Mayall and band members Coco Montoya and Walter Trout, and a jokey text essay about the blues. The jacket listing that claims there is 85 minutes of programming material, however, is apparently an error.

Mayall virtually explores the history of British blues guitar in his 2003 Liverpool concert extravaganza, **John Mayall & The Bluesbreakers and Friends 70th Birthday Concert**, an Eagle Vision release (UPC#801-213902293, \$20) in which he is joined by his former band mates, Chris Barber, Mick Taylor and Eric Clapton. The performance numbers reach back even farther, however, to the point where blues sort of coalesced out of jazz and swing, as evoked by Barber's trombone. The direction and editing are also smart. When Mayall sings a line about parents and children in *Kids Got the Blues*, there is a cut to a mother and her daughter in the audience, smiling together and bobbing to the music. The set runs a full 123 minutes and the musicians really have time to celebrate not just their artistry, but the journey it has traveled.

The picture is presented in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The image is reasonably sharp and accurately colored. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound is strong, but the DTS track is preferable, with crisp details and a solid delivery. There is no captioning. Also featured is a 12-minute interview with Mayall about the concert event and his career.

Winter rock

A 111-minute collection of performance clips from 1970, 1973, 1974 and 1979 are gathered on the MVD release, **Johnny Winter Live through the '70s** (UPC#022891475590, \$20). The program opens with *Frankenstein*, but before you can say, 'Whoa, they got the wrong Winter,' it turns out that he is indeed poaching a little of his brother's shtick. In any case, the program as a whole is highly satisfying. Shot in Europe and America, the different segments have different camera styles, some near amateur and some quite professional, but the 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound is consistently solid and clear. The earlier pieces are centered, but the later recordings are dimensional. The full screen image quality also varies from segment to segment, but is supportive of the show's atmosphere. Winter's high-energy blues performances are always lively and impressive, and the cameras are usually able to capture his unstoppable fingering and striking stage presence. There is no captioning.

Rock legends

Combining terrific music clips with excellent retrospective interviews, a 1992 profile of the highly influential Sixties British rock band, **The Story of the Yardbirds**, has been released by ABC Entertainment (UPC#604388712106, \$19). All of the former band members sit for the

camera, including Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck (who, unfortunately, did not understand the satire of **Blow-Up**, which featured the group), and Jimmy Page. The 53-minute program chronicles the band's rise to fame, its turnover in superstar guitarists (each ultimately balking at the pressure to continue to produce Top 40 hits when what he really wanted to do was to explore the blues), and the dynamic pop classics that were produced as the band became a legendary stepping stone to greater things. There are many terrific performance clips in the program, but the DVD has an additional uninterrupted 14-minute set from a 1967 German TV broadcast.

Contrary to a notation on the jacket, the picture is in full screen format only. The interviews look sharp, and many of the clips are in surprisingly good shape. The monophonic sound is clear, and there is no captioning.

DVD News

NEW ROBE: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment's release of **The Robe** will have a commentary, a number of featurettes, and will be letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.55:1. The BD will have additional featurettes and a comparison between the letterboxed version and the non-letterboxed version. **The Pink Panther Collector's Edition** will have a Blake Edwards commentary and several documentaries. **Yentl Extended Director's Edition** will have a Barbra Streisand commentary, deleted scenes, a concept reel, and a number of featurettes and other developmental materials.

RITCHIE TALK: Warner Home Video's **RocknRolla** will have a commentary from director Guy Ritchie.

POLL REMINDER: There is still time to submit suggestions and praises for our Consumer Poll. Please write up a list and mail it to Annual Poll, DVD-Laser Disc Newsletter, PO Box 420, East Rockaway NY 11518 or email us at dpratt@DVDLaser.com

LOANER REQUEST: If anyone has picked up the recent 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment release of F.W. Murnau and Frank Borzage films, we would love to be able to borrow it in order to review the set. We'd be happy to cover the postage, and would only have to hold onto it for three or four days before sending it back. Please call (516)594-9304, thank you.

LATEST BLU: The following titles have recently been issued on Blu-ray—California Redwoods, Costa Rica, Fall in New England, Pacific Coast, Rocky Mountains, Sacred Canyons of the Southwest (Allegro); Traitor (Anchor Bay); The Cheetah Girls One World, Lost The Complete Fourth Season, The Chronicles of Narnia Prince Caspian (Buena Vista); The F Word, Holiday Favorites with the Wonderland Carolers (Cinevolve); Bottle Rocket, Chungking Express, The Man Who Fell to Earth, The Third Man [reviewed last month] (Criterion); Ray Charles Live at Montreux 1997, The Strat Pack Live in Concert, Tori Amos Live at Montreux 1991 & 1992 [reviewed last month] (Eagle); Diebuster The Movie, The Gattai Movie Gunbuster vs. Diebuster, Gunbuster The Movie (Geneon); Becket, George Carlin It's Bad for Ya (MPI); Coach Carter, Drillbit Taylor, The Duchess, Eagle Eye, Ghost Town, The Heartbreak Kid, Hot Rod, Into the Wild, Old School, Tommy Boy (Paramount); Hall & Oates Live at the Troubadour, Hancock, The House Bunny, La Femme Nikita, The Messenger The Story of Joan of Arc, Resident Evil Degeneration, Ricky Martin Live Black and White Tour, Step Brothers, Stranger Than Fiction, Three Days Grace Live at the Palace (Sony); Barenaked Ladies Talk to the Hand Live in Michigan, Heart Dreamboat Annie Live, O.A.R. Live from Madison Square Garden (Summit); Living Temples (Third Planet); The Day the Earth Stood Still, Dodgeball, Home Alone, Horton Hears a Who, In the Name of the King A Dungeon Siege Tale, Jingle All the Way, Meet Dave, Space Chimps, Super Troopers, Wanted, The X-Files Fight the Future, The X-Files I Want to Believe (Fox); Burn after Reading, Death Race, Jarhead, Jet Li's Fearless, The Kingdom, Mama Mia!, The Mummy The Tomb of the Dragon Emperor, Rush Snakes & Arrows Live (Universal); Austin Powers Collection, Bam Margera Presents Where the #\$&% Is Santa, Casablanca, The Dark Knight [reviewed last month], Dumb and Dumber, Fred Claus, I Am Legend, The Mask, The Shawshank Redemption, Superman Doomsday, The Women (Warner); The Contract, Day of the Dead, Immortal (WEA); Death Proof, The Longshots, Planet Terror (Weinstein).

DVD and LD Ads

(All DVD and LD Ads are 50 cents a word. Deadline is 5 business days before the end of the month. Address all ads: DVD & LD Ads, The DVD-Laser Disc Newsletter, PO Box 420, East Rockaway NY 11518-0420.)

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