

## Big Star: Nothing Can Hurt Me

★★★★

Universal 5354140

**Fitting tribute to power-pop shiners**

Add this documentary to the endless repackaging, tributes and namechecks that Big Star receive and it's fair to say that their status as the world's "great lost cult band" is itself long lost. What's not at stake, however, is the reverence afforded their timeless music. A changeable beast over their all-too-brief existence, Big Star always cut straight to the core, whether on the youthful exuberance of power-pop classics such as September Gurls, the frail beauty of Thirteen, or the downbeat, abstract majesty of Kangaroo.

Ironic name aside, they seemed doomed from the off. Signed to Stax subsidiary Argent – the iconic soul label's foray into white rock – the group's 1972 debut, *#1 Record*, drowned in the flood of promotion that Stax itself unleashed for Isaac Hayes' *Hot Buttered Soul*. Its follow-up, *Radio City*, failed even to leave the warehouse after Stax, having been bought by Columbia, closed its doors.

External damages were quickly abetted by self-destruction. Dejected by *#1 Record*'s commercial failure, Chris Bell left the group he'd founded, turned to drink, drugs and religious salvation, yet managed to create a solo masterpiece in *I Am The Cosmos*, before dying in a car crash, aged 27. Alex Chilton, who'd already tasted megafame as The Box Tops' teenage frontman in the late 60s, rebelled against Big Star's pop perfection, dismantling their sound while simultaneously reaching artistic heights on their messy third album.

*Nothing Can Hurt Me* fits an impressive amount into its 105 minutes. Probably the best telling of Big Star's story, it also sends you right back to those three records. Jason Draper

## Feats First

### The Life & Music Of Lowell George

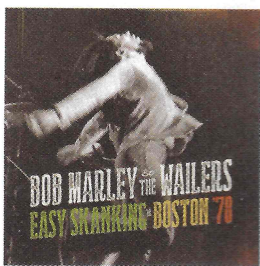
★

Pride DVD PGDVD 179

**Feats failed fiasco is cheap and cheerless**

When one learns from the jacket that this film is not sanctioned by the artist or by his estate, and when the introductory blurb tails off mid-sentence, it's no spoiler alert to discover we're in unofficial bio territory – taking a whistle-stop tour of the great Lowell George's life without learning anything new about him at all. Game talking heads proffer opinions but there's zero word from Little Feat band members. Instead, this peculiar documentary features endless shots of Frank Zappa (still silent), pointless aerial views of Los Angeles freeways and bugger all in the way of music to alleviate the tedium.

A couple of pals pop up to mention that Lowell went to Hollywood High and that he liked to read philosophy – this passed off as proof of his genius. The odd reference to Howlin' Wolf aside, there's little attempt to explain George's style. A cursory examination of the Feat's albums concludes with the usual kicking for *Down On The Farm*, but Lowell's magnificent solo disc, *Thanks, I'll Eat It Here*, is also given short shrift. His death in June 1979, in Arlington, Virginia, is glossed over in an embarrassing dash for the exit. Obviously there's scope for a compelling movie about the fat man in the bathtub. This isn't it. Max Bell



## Bob Marley & The Wailers

### Easy Skanking In Boston '78

★★★★

Island 00602547165756 (DVD+CD)

**Fan-shot concert film, better as live album**

This, the first of a whole year of 70th-birthday celebrations, comes direct from the Marley family archive. This DVD+CD set (standalone CD versions are



**Style of demons: Pentagram**

also available) captures Bob Marley at the height of his fame during his 1978 world tour, hot on the heels of his legendary One Love Peace Concert in Jamaica.

*Easy Skanking In Boston* offers a rare, intimate view, up close and personal. Shot from the front of the stage by a single fan on a hand-held camera (with Marley's blessing), the film isn't complete, but uses new animation to plug the gaps while the camera was being reloaded. This has the unfortunate effect of breaking the viewing experience and snapping the viewer out of the moment, just as they become truly lost in it.

Such unavoidable gripes aside, these 46 minutes are about as close as you're going to get to being on stage with Bob Marley in his prime, which in itself is worth the entrance fee. The accompanying CD, conversely, is a brand new, full-length, high-quality set from a master at work. As a DVD with a bonus disc, this leaves more than a little to be desired; think of it as a live album with bonus video footage, however, and you're laughing. Paul McGuinness

## Pentagram

### All Your Sins

★★★★

Peaceville DVDVILE 19 (2DVD)

**Double-disc live library for veteran doomsters**

Pentagram's career may have had more peaks and troughs than a theme park ride – and more breakdowns than a Sinclair C5 – but the

band are today considered doom metal legends; rightly so, given that they not only crafted some genius albums, but also helped to cement the genre in its formative years.

Featuring nine shows over two DVDs, there are more hours of live Pentagram here than you can count on one hand, starting right back in 1983 with a show from the brief period when the band was known as Death Row, and then heading through '85, '87, '93 and '96, before fast-forwarding to performances from this decade.

Watching the first grainy shows, one might imagine that higher production values await, but the difference actually isn't as great as expected – and there lies the crux, really: none of the videos here ever rise above home video quality in terms of picture or sound; there's no multiple camera work whatsoever, barring two songs filmed last year. There are no interviews or extras either, so while hardcore fans can add another mark to the three stars given here, this probably isn't for casual buyers, despite the stellar material. Dayal Patterson

## I Need A Dodge! Joe Strummer On The Run

★★★★

Cadiz Music/Custom House, cat no tbc

**Goodbye Joe, me gotta go**

By the autumn of 1985, Joe Strummer knew he'd blown it. He'd already been derided

for sacking former musical soulmate Mick Jones and touring with the reconfigured five-man Clash Mk II, but he couldn't handle the critical thrashing meted out to the band's woeful final LP, *Cut The Crap*. Understandably, Strummer had no intention of hanging around to be crucified. As director Nick Hall's *I Need A Dodge!* reveals, he instead took off for the Spanish province of Andalusia, leaving the critics to tear the unfortunate *Cut The Crap* to shreds in his absence.

This concise and easily digestible documentary delves deep into Strummer's self-imposed five-month exile under Spanish skies. Recalling a freewheeling, Kerouac-ian adventure rather than miserably, wound-licking isolation, it chiefly involves Joe's haphazard production of Granada punks 091's debut LP and the erratic journeys he undertakes (without licence or insurance) in the Spanish-built, US-style vintage car referred to in the film's title.

Also calling upon frank testimonies from Clash Mk II members Pete Howard and Nick Sheppard, and Strummer's then partner Gaby Salter (whose advanced pregnancy eventually recalled Joe to Blighty), *I Need A Dodge!* is a fascinating insight into Strummer's troubled psyche as he searches for a new direction after his once-iconic band's ignominious collapse. Tim Peacock