

THE 70s RETURN! Bill Nelson and the Gentlemen : Recorded Live In Concert At Metropolis Studios, London, Van Der Graaf Generator: Recorded Live In Concert At Metropolis Studios, London, The Zombies featuring Colin Blunstone & Rod Argent: Recorded Live In Concert At Metropolis Studios, London

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So, did the 70s sound as good or as bad as you remember? Here are three sets of cd/dvd compilations of artists from that era who gave some intimate concerts to appreciative audiences. Some of those there grew up to these tunes, others may have never heard of this music before. Music that ranges from am pop to wild eyed progressive.

At one time, Bill Nelson was the heir to the guitar throne as king of the 6 stringer. Leading the group Bebop Deluxe, he had some HOT albums that invented the air guitar for rock fans, such as Sunburst Finish. Here, he leads a 7 piece band loaded with guitars, keyboards, a sax player and rhythm team. BBD hits like "Sister Seagull" and "Ships in the Night" are combined with more recent pieces like "Wonder of the Moment." The music has him with a "solo" context as well, with just his electronic rhythm toy and occasional reed support. The music holds up extremely well, and the dvd includes some interview work with Nelson that helps fill in the musical and biographic gaps.

There were progressive rock groups back like Yes and ELP, but if you were REALLY cool, you were also into the esoteric sounds of Van Der Graaf Generator. Pared down to a trio (can a trio be "pared"? Different spelling) of Peter Hammill, drummer Guy Evans and bassist Hugh Banton, the VDGG not only goes deep into their "oldies" songbook with material like "Nutter Alert" and "Lemmings," but they show great wisdom in moving forward with some vibrant and fresh new material as well. Their keyboard smarts of Hammill is still a thrill, and the dvd has some great observations by the artists on the reunion, as well as their attitude towards their art. Wonderful get together.

The Zombies?!?! YES! THE ZOMBIES, MCFLY!!! These gents actually seem to come out the best of the three. Think about it; their hits, "She's Not There," "Tell Her No" and "Time of the Season," had a very hip and cool jazz lounge feel to them, and they've aged incredibly well. So has the voice of Colin Blunstone, who at first made me think his voice was going through one of those equalizers that make Glenn Frey and Joe Walsh sound like they can still be on key. No. In the interview, Blunstone goes into detail about his vocal exercises, while keyboardist Rod Argent gives some background on this band as well as the later incarnation of the rock group Argent, who had a big hit (and still played on commercials) with "Hold Your Head Up." One of the best parts of this disc, as well as the former, is just how these guys turned out to be nice blokes, someone you'd want to share a Guinness with. And the music ain't bad either!



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