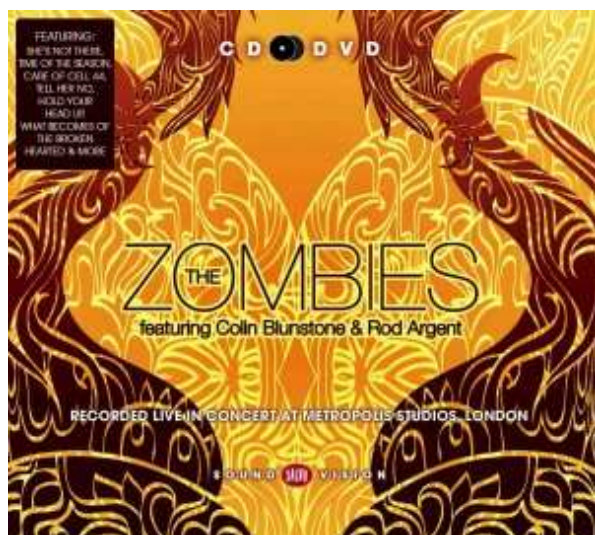


Music Roundup: The Zombies Featuring Colin Blunstone and Rod Argent/Bill Nelson and the Gentlemen Rocketeers/Van Der Graaf Generator—Recorded Live in Concert at Metropolis Studios, London (Convexe/Union Square, CD/DVD sets)

by [Howard Whitman](#) on August 9, 2012 at 2:34 pm

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While many concert albums are done before big, loud crowds, there's something to be said for intimate settings. These three CD/DVD sets were all feature classic British artists recorded recently in a small recording studio in London, and the close-up nature of the shows is a part of these sets' appeal.

The best-known of the three artists featured is The Zombies, a regrouping of one of the better British Invasion groups to follow The Beatles to worldwide fame in the 1960s. The only original members present are singer Colin Blunstone and keyboardist Rod Argent, but the group (which also features latter-day Kinks bassist Jim Rodford) effectively captures the classic Zombies sound on such hits as “Time of the Season” and “She’s Not There”. This set—which includes the full concert on one CD and one DVD—also features covers of songs like “What Becomes of the Broken Hearted” and

more obscure, but still worthy, tracks from the Zombies catalog. The band even does a spirited version of Argent’s 1970s hit with his own band, “Hold Your Head Up.” Blunstone (who also sang on records from The Alan Parsons Project) is still an excellent Good stuff!

Bill Nelson may not be a household name, but fans of his 1970s band Be-Bop Deluxe will certainly herald his return here. Nelson was the vocalist and songwriter for that band, but it was his guitar playing that got the most attention back in the day. Be-Bop Deluxe played a spacy rock—think Pink Floyd meets David Bowie, with touches of jazz and prog—and since the band’s breakup, Nelson has put out plenty of experimental solo albums and played the occasional gig. This generous live set—represented by two CDs and one DVD here—shows Nelson still in good form, playing Be-Bop material along with more intimate tracks from his solo work. He’s backed by a tight, sympathetic band, The Gentlemen Rocketeers, for the more elaborate pieces (some tracks he just did solo with backing tracks), and it’s great to see him playing with other musicians onstage, even if the stage is small and cramped with such a big band! Nelson plays shimmering guitar leads with the fluidity and precision of his young days, and his voice has held up well over the years. If you’re a Be-Bop fan, this is an essential purchase—the first time he’s recorded material like “Maid in Heaven” and “Sister Seagull” in years—and if not, there’s plenty to admire and discover here in this still-criminally-overlooked, mega-talented artist.

The final entry in this trilogy, from British progressive band Van Der Graaf Generator (named for an electrostatic generator invented by an American physicist in 1929) is the least accessible offering of the three. Singer Peter Hammill is certainly unique, but his unusual vocal stylings, and most of the material, are rather distancing and left me cold. While Van Der Graaf may not be easy on the ears—especially if you’re unfamiliar with the band, as I was—there is plenty to admire on this two-CD/one-DVD set—Hammill (on vocals, keys and guitar), along with keyboardist Hugh Banton and drummer Guy Evans—create a big sound for three guys, and there is some impressive, skilled playing to be heard in this package.

All three sets are nicely packaged, with detailed liner notes and credits that review the history of each artist. Sound quality is very basic—pretty much enhanced soundboard recordings with unsophisticated production—but that suits the intimate nature of these shows just fine. And the video DVDs are welcome inclusions in these sets; it’s really special to see such talented, worthy artists still in fighting trim after all these years, doing what they do best before small but appreciative audiences.

[Buy The Zombies Live In Concert At Metropolis Studios on Amazon](#)

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