

Talmage Farlow

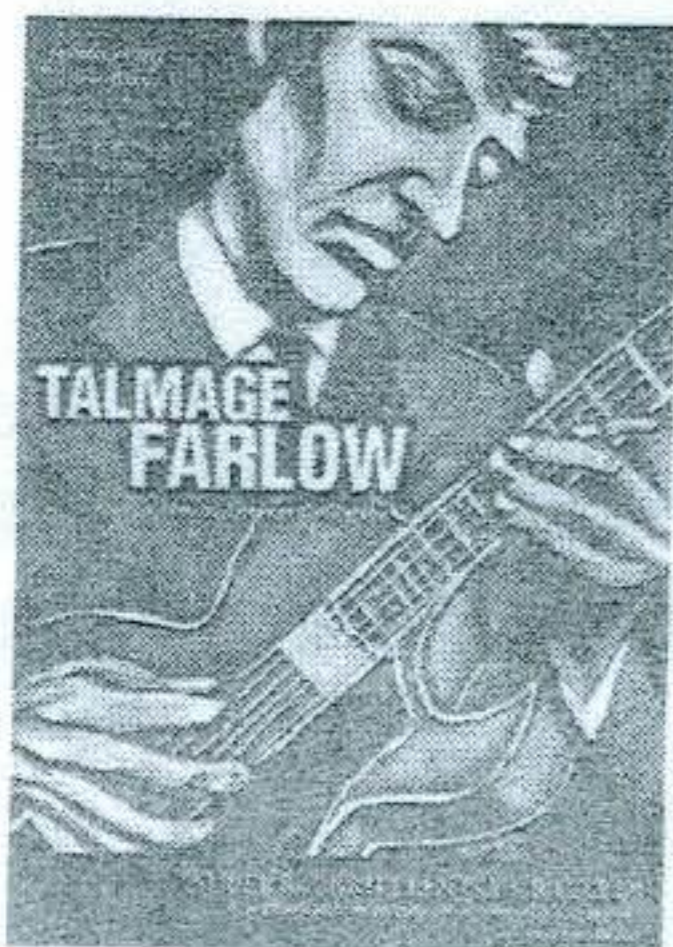
MVD

Captain Beefheart: Under Review

Sexy Intellectual

Here are a pair of excellent documentaries, each providing insight into the lives of two enigmatic musicians.

by David Bassin



Originally a sign painter, Tal Farlow took up the guitar as a hobby and after playing a gig with Jimmy Lyon, was convinced that he should pursue a career with his instrument. He toured with Red Norvo and Artie Shaw, before forming his own group, then abruptly "retired" to Sea Bright, New Jersey in 1958, returning to the painting trade once again. Originally released in 1980, this film shows Farlow to be a gentle and humble man, who didn't buy into the excesses of show business, was never much for touring and preferred a simpler life at his home on the river. He's seen talking and performing with Lenny Breau and rehearsing for, and playing at a sold-out gig with Tommy Flanagan and Red Mitchell. There's plenty of fine fretwork throughout and director Lorenzo DeStefano keeps the mood as mellow and understated as the man in front of the camera.



The *Under Review* series is a largely British affair that sticks to a basic formula: A collection of pundits, offer their opinions about a particular musician or band with commentary that often seems more like a platform for their personalities and droll commentary than the artists in question. With the exception of one critic ranting from behind a church pulpit, the folks discussing Beefheart's career are largely restrained and informative. What makes this doc so special however, is that it's the only collection of Beefheart clips available and for that alone, it's fantastic. They're fairly extensive and encompass his entire career, plus, we get commentary and anecdotes from virtually all the members of the Magic Band from the '60s, up to the point at which the Captain (Don Van Vliet) retired in the '80s. Word is, Virgin will be re-releasing seven albums this summer, which by my estimation, would comprise the bulk of his catalog. Yow!

