



## The Great Rock 'N' Roll Swindle Directed by Julien Temple

As a straight narrative, *The Great Rock 'N' Roll Swindle* sucks. As a document of Malcolm McLaren's peculiar panache for marketing, it's genius. That is, if you can get through the whole thing. Director Julien Temple's film is a mess. (No doubt, the result of the band's break-up two years prior and McLaren's insane and egomaniacal meddling.) What redeems this film—if anything—is that where it fails as a film, it succeeds as propaganda. Sure, it's dated and campy, but it's like watching home movies of punk rock when it was a geeky teenager. If the original impulse of punk is the black to everyone else's white, then this is where that idea has its genesis. Over and over we hear how boring rock 'n roll is, but a shitty cover of "Johnny B. Goode" is a far more "rock 'n roll" choice than anything, say, Bloc Party has done. Still, watching what amounts to archival footage of journalists and politicians reacting to the first six minutes of the Sex Pistols' 15 minutes of fame is interesting from an academic point of view. Will it improve your life? Probably not. Will it make you a better, more well rounded person? Perhaps. —Allan Martin Kemler

ShoutFactory.com

## Low in Europe Directed by Sebastian Schrade

The most common complaint about Low is that they're too slow, though you might as well criticize a shark for being too bitey or a bird for being too singy. It's just they're nature, and, with the exception of its latest album, *The Great Destroyer* (a bit of a shake-up in the group's usual sound), they've left us a thick portfolio of what they do best. If you like it, you like it, and if you don't, they're not likely to switch things up for you (unless, maybe you had something to do with *Great Destroyer*). *Low in Europe*, directed by Sebastian Schrade, compiles concert footage from the group's 2002-2003 trek through Germany and the United Kingdom. Clocking in at 49-minutes, this DVD is likely to elicit the same responses people already have towards the band. Depending on your tastes, it's either brilliantly nuanced and beautiful or mind-numbingly dull. Separated by 13 chapters, *Low in Europe* packs in footage mostly of songs from *Things We Lost in the Fire*, *Trust*, *Curtain Hits the Cast* and *Secret Name*. Then there's some interviews, mostly not too elucidative. Filmed mostly in black and white Super 8mm, *Low in Europe* is mostly a fan's pick, packed with information, live footage, backstage chats and extras. —Chris Ricci

Plexifilm.com

## Devo Live 1980

If you've ever rollerskated to "Whip It," you know the power of Devo's geeky synth-rock. While you could be forgiven for thinking that Devo would be hard-pressed to deliver under the bright lights, *Live 1980* is here to dispel you of that notion. Documenting a performance taped at the Phoenix Theatre in Petaluma, Calif., near the dawn of the Reagan Years, this multi-camera film shows a surprisingly tight, energetic and theatrical stage show packed with the band's hits. It also reminds you of how fun Devo was. Sure, the flowerpot hats were silly, but Devo had some great songs. And *Live 1980* captures the band at the height of its powers, so it's ok to be impressed. The material is stronger than you remember. Where Devo used to be regarded as a joke, mere one-hit wonders, *Live 1980* shows that the band was simply ahead of its time. But for the hats, Devo may well have been as esteemed as some of its English classmates. —Allan Martin Kemler

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## Freestyle The Art of Rhyme

If you're the kind of person who finds it hard to get caught up in the thrill of contemporary hip hop's boring odes to misogyny and conspicuous consumption, yet you still have a place in your heart for Grandmaster Flash, KRS-One and Public Enemy, then you might want to check out this film. In fact, anyone who loves poetry or clever wordplay of any sort would do well to seek out *Freestyle*. Documenting that little-known facet of hip hop known as freestyle, a style based on improvised free verse, and its cousin the cipher, a circle of freestylers surrendering to the gestalt of the hive-mind, *Freestyle* reminds viewers that not everyone in the hip hop community is bling-obsessed. It also clearly demonstrates that the mantle of pop culture's leading lyrical stylist has been passed from Bob "The Bard" Dylan to practitioners of freestyle such as the Living Legends and Freestyle Fellowship crews. Other highlights of director Kevin Fitzgerald's film are segments with Mos Def, Black Thought, Jurassic 5, MC Supernatural, The Last Poets and Bahamadia, among others. Extras include a cipher with Aesop Rock, Slug and EL-P. —Allan Martin Kemler

PalmPictures.com