

DVD REVIEWS



9 Songs DVD (Tartan Video)

Have you ever wanted to follow a couple home from a great rock show and watch them hook up? *24 Hour Party People* director Michael Winterbottom does just that in his new film *9 Songs*, a slice of life flick like no other. The couple, Matt (Kieran O'Brien) and Margo (Margo Stilley), meet at a Black Rebel Motorcycle Club show in London, and we follow the next year in their lives together as remembered by Matt. She's the manic-depressive type, and he's a glaciologist who, while in Antarctica, recalls the couple's year-long relationship (filled with sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll) via the course of the titular nine songs performed live at shows by the likes of Elbow, The Von Bondies, Franz Ferdinand, The Dandy Warhols, Super Furry Animals, and Primal Scream.

If you're reading this magazine, music probably informs many facets of you, and this film might resemble a documentary of your own life. Winterbottom scores again by charting the course of a very real relationship (shot with realistic DV) with captivating and unrestrained flair. I'm an unabashed admirer of Winterbottom's and the premise of this one scared me, but I was won over by scenes of simplistic beauty such as the morning-after conversation about the South Pole set to the lovely piano sounds of Michael Nyman. The DVD features interviews with Winterbottom and the brave leads in addition to videos from Elbow, The Dandy Warhols, and The Von Bondies. If you like sex, great music, a little bit of science, and loads of passion and longing, look no further. (www.tartanvideousa.com)

8 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



Bauhaus: *Shadow of Light/Archive* (Beggars Banquet)

Two long out of print Bauhaus VHS videos, *Shadow of Light* and *Archive*, have finally come together onto one disc for widespread release in the DVD age. Neither disappoint, offering an intriguing look at the band's first incarnation and capturing the quartet at their most raw and irreverent.

Shadow of Light, a collection of music videos, showcases the band at both their most sinister and most amusing. Of the nine "promotional films," only five are actually music videos, the other four were taken from the same concert footage found in *Archive*. All the videos manage to rise above their low budget constraints to be genuinely exciting and visually creative. Perhaps the most outstanding video of the collection is "Mask," a disturbing piece that perfectly complements what is perhaps Bauhaus' most abstract and experimental song. Other video highlights are a prancing, mime-makeup Peter Murphy in "Telegram Sam" and the vintage death rockers in "Ziggy Stardust."

The *Archive* film consists of concert footage of the band at London's Old Vic Theatre in 1982, framed within an episode of a mysterious old man pursued by three youths. Like most concert films shot at a single location, the lack of visual variety soon begins to take its toll on the viewer's interest. Still, the performance is made lively by the music, Murphy's stage antics, and the occasional shot of some teenaged first-generation goth in the crowd.

If you saw and appreciated either of Bauhaus' reunion tours, you'll get even more kicks from watching a younger and feistier incarnation of the band on this disc, as they set the standard for all the doom 'n' gloom imitators that followed. (www.bauhausmusik.com)

7 Blips out of 10

By Joseph Ragusa



The Beta Band: *The Best of the Beta Band Film* (Astralwerks)

This collection of videos is a difficult thing to sit through, which is a disappointing thing to say about a product representing the history of one of the last decade's most creative and influential bands. As a companion piece to *The Best of the Beta Band Music*, this 2-disc DVD collects all the videos, as well as four mock trailers, three documentaries, and four live tracks.

The majority of these videos reach a quality no higher than a high school video class. Watch as the band, dressed in ugly costumes, fall up a hill by playing the film backwards! Amaze at the perfectly flat carpets that fly over oceans with the help of a green screen! See what driving down a dirt road in the middle of nowhere looks like! The documentaries are just a hodgepodge of moments that were lucky enough not to be taped over, thrown together in no discernable fashion. Seriously, we get to watch them buy lunch at a deli. To know

what this band really did best, stick with the *Music*. (www.betaband.com)

4 Blips out of 10

By Bob Canning



Dumbland DVD (davidlynch.com)

The latest self-released item from David Lynch's website is an eight-episode, crudely animated-short series about the insanity derived from domestic living. Show star Randy is a violent, f-bomb shouting representation of white trash suburban angst who smacks his quivering wife and looks in disbelief as his son's teeth start bleeding uncontrollably. Random/extreme violence, coarse language, flatulence, and ant-filled musical dream sequences abound and themes going as far back as *Eraserhead* (fear of family), *The Angriest Dog in the World* (simple black and white drawings), and *Wild at Heart* (hyper-stylized violence) are contained on one DVD in an oversized box. A perfect rental, but the effort involved in packaging would be better suited to a more substantial work. (www.wrappedinplastic.com)

5 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



Eels with Strings: *Live at Town Hall* DVD/CD (Vagrant)

The first DVD from Eels is worth the wait. Mark Oliver Everett (aka E) mounted his most ambitious tour yet on the heels of his 2005 epic double-disc extravaganza, *Blinking Lights and Other Revelations*. Touring as Eels with Strings, E reveals that it was the most demanding traveling show yet for the band, which included the addition of a string quartet and other nontraditional rock show instruments. Departing from the raucous and multi-encored shows of the past, this show put the spotlight not on theatrics, but on the enigmatic E, and his tremendous songwriting talent, and his warped and humorous outlook on life.

The show at New York's Town Hall is shot in colorful DV and is broken up by stark black and white behind-the-scenes segments. Several mini-documentaries are included on the DVD as a bonus, the best of which is E's version of MTV's *Cribs* on the band's tour bus. Two videos, including E's self-shot lip-synched version of "Hey Man (Now You're Really Living)" are the proverbial cherries on top. Also, look out for the CD version of the live show, which includes four songs not on the DVD. (www.eelstheband.com)

8 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



God Save the Queen: *A Punk Rock Anthology* DVD (MVD)

Just in time for the new year comes this release, featuring tons of unwashed, scraggy-haired, eyeliner-wearing punk rock bands from the U.S. (Iggy & The Stooges, The Dead Boys) and the U.K. (Buzzcocks, Generation X) playing the songs that made them famous and giving mallrats style tips for years to come. Most of the crappy but marginally entertaining video footage is from the late '70s to early '80s, and consists of loads of angry white males slam-dancing to equally angry yelps from the bands on stage. Most of the footage is period-specific, though Iggy Pop is shown in a more recent clip. One of the best parts of *God Save the Queen* is the hilarious video for Toy Dolls' "Nellie the Elephant." It features a rail-thin lead singer doing his best Devo impression alongside some killer video effects. It's the one moment of this anthology that has a sense of humor. (www.mvdb2b.com)

4 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



Guided By Voices: *The Electrifying Conclusion* DVD (Plexifilm)

One of the highlights of this massive (63 songs over four hours) final Guided By Voices show that took place in Chicago on New Year's Eve, 2004, is to hear a drunken Robert Pollard give an abbreviated oral history of the band, in which he insinuates—jokingly—that after *Bee Thousand* came out, bands like Sebadoh and Pavement were jealous. Even Bright Eyes are jealous today, he insists. The biggest regret of this fairly straightforward concert film is the crappy sound quality, but then again, as Pollard once suggested, there are some fans who wish the group never stopped recording on a boom box.

The one great extra provided is actually more of a tease. Footage of Pollard recording demos for the band's final album—*Half Smiles of the Decomposed*—is wonderfully engaging, but sadly, only two songs get the treatment. Still, the selections empha-

size his preternatural gifts for summoning beautiful melodies and stand in stark contrast to the live performance. Also included is part of a 1994 gig, but the picture and sound quality are so abhorrent that it makes the whole thing seem tacked-on and irrelevant. (www.robertpollard.net, www.gbv.com, www.plexifilm.com)

6 Blips out of 10

By Gary Knight

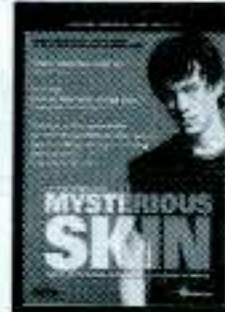


Kraftwerk: *Minimum-Maximum* DVD (Astralwerks)

Man and machine. Man versus machine. Man *is* machine. Kraftwerk were largely responsible for introducing the possibilities of electronic music to the world and especially to early rap music. The German band triumphantly embarked on a world tour in 2003-2004, and it's lovingly captured here. The two DVDs bring you as close as you can get to the show without actually standing in the crowd. The images of the four members on stage are edited with the graphics behind them, producing a seamless concert film. Kraftwerk's spare stage presence and clean presentation only enhances how much of an event their shows were. If you weren't fortunate enough to be there, the DVD puts you in the front row. (www.kraftwerk.com)

9 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



Mysterious Skin DVD (Tartan Video)

Gregg Araki's best film to date is still my favorite movie of 2005. Unfortunately, some of the subject matter (child sexual abuse? homosexuality? both?) probably scared most viewers away from one of the most powerful, heartbreaking, and hopeful movies in years. Here's your chance to be moved by Araki's stylish, oddly humorous and brilliant adaptation of Scott Heim's acclaimed novel about a young hustler and his mysterious connection to another young man. The DVD contains a great transfer of the visually gorgeous film, and the sound pops, with Slowdive and Ride songs sharing the screen with a haunting ambient score by Harold Budd and the Cocteau Twins' Robin Guthrie.

A commentary with Araki and costars Joseph Gordon-Levitt (light years removed from his role on *3rd Rock From the Sun*) and Brady Corbet is refreshingly lighthearted, and footage from a reading of the novel with the actors is an interesting aside and reveals just how passionate everyone involved was about this story. Araki is the last of a rapidly dying breed of true independent filmmakers left in this country, and *Mysterious Skin* is good enough to stand with the best films of this decade. (www.tartanfilmsusa.com)

9 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



New York Dolls: *All Dolled Up* DVD (MVD)

The documentary of the New York Dolls by rock photographer Bob Gruen and Nadya Beck hits DVD with an extras-packed disc that shouldn't disappoint fans of the "Rolling Stones-meet-Alice Cooper" band, as a news reporter describes them early in the film. Led by David Johansen, the band bridged punk and New Wave with swagger and attitude. *All Dolled Up* is culled from over 40 hours of performance and other footage shot over three years in the early '70s. The bonus material includes a 16-page booklet, interviews with the filmmakers, and best of all, a no-holds-barred, warts-and-all commentary that reveals what happened when the band wasn't on stage. (www.newyorkdollsdvd.com)

8 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



The Tomorrow Show: *Punk & New Wave* DVD (Shout! Factory)

Ex-talk show/*Late Late Show* host Tom Snyder once hosted a program called *The Tomorrow Show*. Now, Shout! Factory is issuing a two-disc collection of punk and New Wave highlights from the show. The best of these is a roundtable discussion with Paul Weller of The Jam wearing a yellow suit, Joan Jett, concert promoter Bill Graham, and Los Angeles Times music critic Robert Hilburn discussing the current state of punk rock (don't call them punk rockers!). Performances by The Ramones, Elvis Costello & The Attractions, Iggy Pop, The Plasmatics, and The Jam are included. Don't miss the showdown between John Lydon and Tom Snyder when Lydon was promoting Public Image Limited. Have a cigarette, sit back, and enjoy an era where hair care products were finding their way. (www.shoutfactory.com)

7 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman