

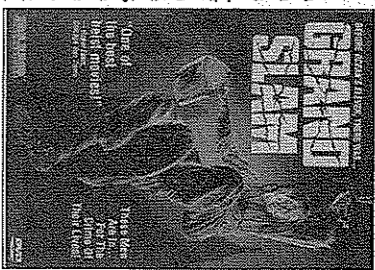


## GRAND SLAM

(Blue Underground) If there's one formula which has been ridden into the ground, it's the heist movie plot. You know: a bunch of dudes, each the best in his particular field (the security guy, the driver, the karate fella) assemble to knock off some bank/corporation/casino for a ridiculous sum, but somehow it all falls apart just before they make off with the goods.

Way back in the medieval 1660s, *Grand Slam* was amongst the best of the genre, but looking back it's interesting to see how expectations have changed. Firstly, the crack team assembled for this particular job are breaking into a bank in Rio to score \$10 million. I know, I know, I was like - no way! That wouldn't even cover the plane fares these days! But more importantly, the four-man team gathered here are either really old or just hard to believe as the best. The safecracker is an ageing English geezer working as someone's butler; the "babby" is introduced just as he's having his ear chewed off by his current main squeeze; there's this guy playing with toy trains whose specialty I couldn't even work out by movie's end; and the military guy first appears whizzing down a huge slide! Wheeee!

Of course, once I realised *GI Joe* was being played by Klaus Kinski, I knew all bets were off. This is the guy for whom we could coin the term "Krazy as a Kinski", and though you might protest that his daughter Natassja isn't Krazy, she did share an apartment with Demi Moore in the 80s which certifies her in my book. Klaus has plenty of opportunities to fly off the handle, push people around and generally act the psycho here, which always makes for good viewing. Unfortunately it's Mr. Belvedere Safecracker who does most of the hard yards during the actual heist, looking every one of his 90-something years as he wheezes his way over low walls and dangles limply whilst zooming down a flying fox. It's probably for the sake of his heart that they never crank up the suspense too much during the film, but by its end you do

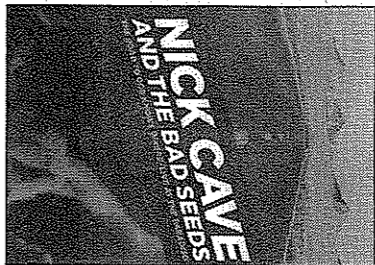


feel as if you've at least watched the granddaddy of all of the Ocean's Eleven-type flicks that are still floating around. A low-level but entirely passable crime caper enlivened by a swinging 60s score and some pleasant performances, *Grand Slam* might not be fresh but shows us that the elderly can still contribute much to society even if it is of a highly illegal nature. Zero points for DVD extras but there is a French soundtrack option.

JOHN BAILEY

## NICK CAVE AND THE BAD SEEDS

The Road To God Knows Where / Live at the Paradise (Mute)

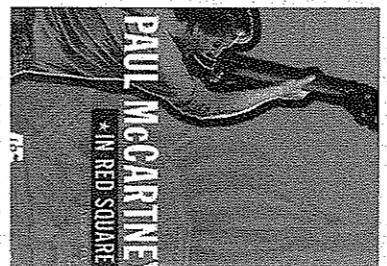


The Road to God Knows Where is a document of a band on the road, Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds, while they tour the United States in early 1989. Firstly I must warn that this film is probably only going to be appreciated by hard-core fans and those into avant-garde filmmaking. While it's not particularly crazy in its structure, the content of the film consists predominantly of the more mundane aspects of being in a band on the road. Director Uli M. Schueppel employs a minimalist approach documenting the band moving from one hotel room to the next, sitting on one bus trip that never seems to stop, and dealing with all the problems that, of course, arise when the band actually arrive at the venue. The film also looks very nice, filmed in grainy black and white film. Schueppel's "fly-on-the-wall" approach is quite interesting, though I probably enjoyed the film a lot more because it was on DVD, as opposed to another medium, because of the option to turn subtitles on. A lot of the dialogue is incomprehensible without them. My main quain with the film is that the director doesn't really flesh-out the relationships between the band members, regularly cutting

to a disparate scene once an anecdote is told, or as Cave un-enthusiastically mumbles into a large mobile phone beginning an interview, or even for no reason at all. You just get the sense that the filmmaker is holding back on the content in favour of the bleak style of the film. In this sense the film is a little cold and you can never really overstep that threshold as a viewer and feel like you're there. Still, this film has a lot of artistic merit and I enjoyed a lot of the scenes, but with minimal live footage it is sure to divide fans. The back of live footage in the documentary is made up for with the inclusion of *Live at the Paradise* on a second disc, a recording of a live Bad Seeds show in Amsterdam in June 1992. This show alone is enough proof to back up my opinion that The Bad Seeds are simply one of the best live acts on the planet. The live-up is slightly different to the one in the documentary - some three years earlier - no Kid Congo Powers or Roland Wolf; instead we have multi-instrumentalist Mick Harvey on guitar instead of bass, Martyn P. Casey employed for bass duties instead, and Conway Savage on keys. The set has a huge list of highlights, containing some of my personal, though somewhat obscure these days, live favourites like *The Carry* from the 1986 *Your Funeral... My Trial* album, and Cave's sombre Elvis Presley cover *In the Ghetto*. Cave also screams a hell of a lot more than he does these days! Also the thing I noticed, comparing this performance to those of the last Australian tour, Blixa Bargeld's backing vocals were so good. They are a prominent omission from the sound of the current line-up of the band (as Bargeld left the group after the 2003 *Nocturna* album). Also contained in this package is a short film *The Song*, also by Schueppel, documenting the recording of the song *(I'll Love You) Till The End Of The World*, recorded for the 1991 Wim Wenders film *Until The End Of The World*. There is also a Schueppel video clip for the song *City of Refuge*, made up of footage of the Bad Seeds on the road.

ADAM CAMILLEN

## PAUL MCCARTNEY: IN RED SQUARE (Warner)



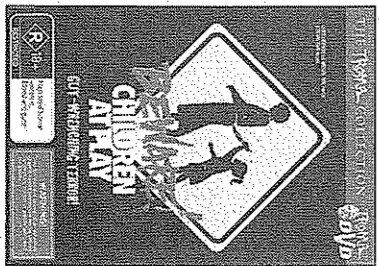
It would seem the Russian people either have very poor taste in music or are extremely accommodating when it comes to playing audience to old rock stars. Either way, it's hard for the jaded Australian viewer (and former McCartney Australian Tour ticket holder) to share the enthusiasm of the 100,000 plus who jammed Moscow's Red Square for Paul McCartney's 2003 concert. This concert film is probably the best argument imaginable for Sir Paul to call it quits. The Beatles had a profound effect on the Russians during the years of Soviet rule and this is covered in depth in between songs. Although officially banned from the Soviet airwaves, the Fab Four's music was nonetheless smuggled in and circulated widely for years. For the Red Square audience, there was a historic value in having McCartney visit a country where he was an underground icon for three decades.

Sadly, the Russians who attended the concert did not get the vibrant, inventive and energetic McCartney of the Beatles era (or even the Wings years, for that matter). McCartney on the Moscow stage was lethargic, often enervated, and conspicuously hoarse. Anyone who grew up hearing him sing *Yesterday* or *Fool on the Hill* or *Band on the Run* is in for a rude shock here. In this concert film, McCartney sounds like a geriatric karaoke version of those memorable recordings rather than the great singer who spun magic years ago. Director Mark Haefeli rarely allows his camera to linger on McCartney for more than a few seconds at a clip. Instead, the camera zooms all over Red Square to show young and old Russians (but with an emphasis on the young) bobbing and rocking to the music. In fact, McCartney could've sought inspiration from his audience. While Paul should be acknowledged for indulging in his love of music, I'll stick with remembering the McCartney who say about one day being 64 rather than the one who is now 64.

SHAUN TOPP

## BEWARE! CHILDREN AT PLAY (Troma DVD)

Don't you just love films that have warnings on the front cover? They kind of shake you up a bit. Like, "Hm, I might be pregnant" or "have a heart condition"? Unfortunately in this case, the warning could only apply to those at risk of chronic boredom.

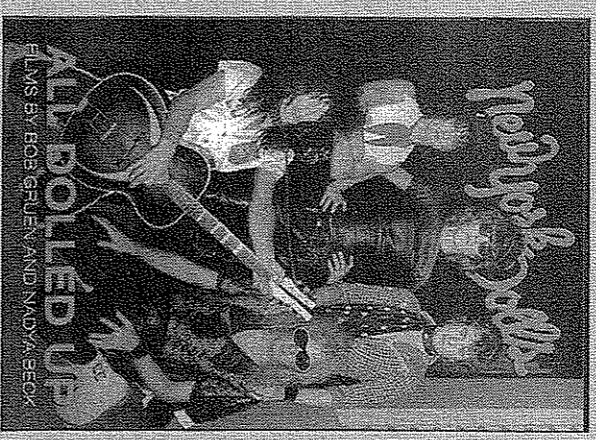


The producers have taken the classic film *Children of the Corn*, stripped it of anything even halfway decent and presented the rest with a hopeful smile. Basic story involves a boy who goes rabid in the woods, kidnaps children and raises them as savages. The parents are all very concerned but don't seem to do anything about it. And... that's pretty much it. Like all Troma films, *Beware! Children at Play* is filled with non-

actors reading through a horrible script and, seemingly, not directed at all. The camera goes out of focus every now and then (it seems DVD remastering doesn't solve everything), it has a soundtrack that would make Ed Wood blush and the special effects aren't special in any way. Nothing really happens for the first 80 minutes, and then, in the final two, we're presented with the outright slaughter of the feral kids, something you don't see every day, but the fact that the kids keep visibly breathing when they're supposed to be acting dead makes it difficult to be anything but amused. The special features listed on the back include a commentary with the director. When playing the disc, however, one will discover that the commentary is in fact a five minute interview separate from the film. Terrible movie, even by Troma's standards. Although watching it at double speed makes it a little better.

DAVE CRYNES

## DVD OF THE WEEK



### ALL DOLLED UP

(MVD)

Before Kiss started wearing makeup or our own Strynooks started taking the ball and running with it, but sort of concurring with the Bowie alter-ego Ziggy Stardust came the New York Dolls. The most debauched bunch of effeminate gutter trash who had no bounds nor any limits. *All Dolled Up* is the essential documentary of these reprobrates, who, as the backstage footage capturing them in their element reveals, were always bordering on terminal meltdown. You know they were onto something when even Lou Reed, at the height of his ingesting nads, booted them off tour for being unsavory. These guys set the template for what it means to be an outsider, or maybe they were just too cool for the rest. The look on the faces of passengers as David Johansen, Johnny Thunders and company walk through an airport lounge is priceless.

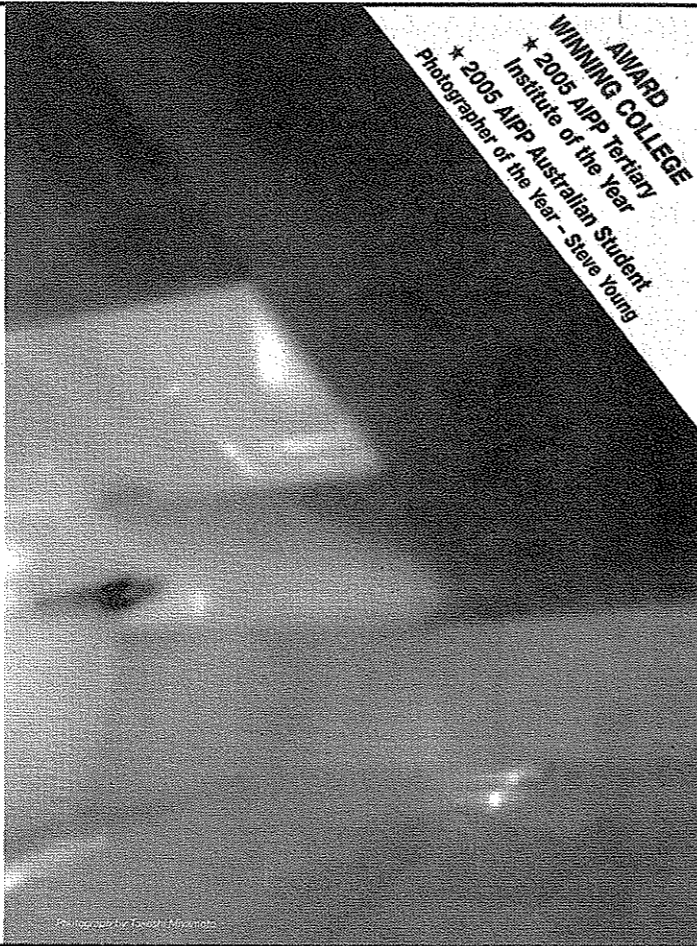
Despite large chunks of their saga being overlooked by this doco, the essence of the Dolls is encapsulated splendidly. A magical bunch of misfits who were more liberating, loud and real than Slade, T. Rex and even Bowie himself, they lived on the edge with their glitter and campiness and this proved to be influential beyond the zephyr-like career they had. Their indulgences, glosy pailour, substance abuse and general screw-you attitude ensured they would be remembered as leaders of the punk pack and would remain to be held in higher regard than even their most outrageous platform heels would seem to suggest.

In Johansen they had the perfect lead singer. Blessed with pretty boy looks and exhibiting all the trappings of stardom, he was the face of a group of rockers so morally bankrupt, even their photographs smelt stinky. What this doco, by husband and wife team Bob Gruen and Nadya Beck, does is capture the passion of a band in a much more vulnerable, honest and shambolic way than either of their two records could. The footage from Max's Karass, City and Whisky/A Go Go sees them run through favourites, including *Personality*, *Grass*, *Trash*, *Subway Train*, *Jet Boy*, and other key material, reeters and wobbles along the precipice but never fully plummets from those heights.

There is also the matchre thrill of watching band members, hangers on and others descended into the meastroom of excess. After the doco, there is a comprehensive list of extras which includes a photo gallery interview with Gruen by Dictator heavyweight Handsome Dick Mantooth and over-dub commentary by surviving members, Johansen and Sylvain Sylvain. *All Dolled Up* is a must-see for everyone who wants a peak into the antics of a band whose legacy could not be eradicated by moral guardians or even those eager to see what the true essence of rock 'n' roll is. Oh, the music is quite good and Johansen and Thunders are in rare form throughout, even in their more effete moments.

BRONNIUS ZUMERIS

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