

Queen DVD Collector's Box

Queen

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Queen is the best band ever. No, that's not debatable. Yet that inimitable awesomeness lead singer Freddie Mercury, drummer Roger Taylor, guitarist Brian May and bassist John Deacon cultivated over their extensive career doesn't often extend to documentaries of the band.

Assuming these DVDs are primarily marketed towards fans who have already delved beyond Queen's greatest hits and are hungering for more information, it's particularly dismaying that I can't even count the number of times I've been told a heartwrenching story about Mercury's death in 1990 (first of all, Freddie despised being mistaken for Freddy. Second, he died in 1991.)

With all that misinformation masking as the definitive truth about the band, it's all too easy to be suckered into wasting two hours of your life on a less than stellar video – which is where, hopefully, my crazy-obscure knowledge of all things Queen can finally be put to use (let it stand that I can't conjugate French verb tenses or play the guitar to save my life, but I *can* tell you the names of Freddie Mercury's bevy of cats. A handy skill, if only it would come up in a Jeopardy category once in awhile!).

Unauthorized DVDs can be, unsurprisingly, pretty hit or miss, primarily leaning towards the miss. *Under Review 1973-1980*, however, is one of the better releases I've seen; though interviews with the members of Queen are of course absent, this disc provides a clear, fastidious view of the band's most prolific years, courtesy of critics like former Melody Maker writer Chris Welch, journalist and friend of Mercury's Paul Gambacinni, guitarist Simon Bradley and contributing editor of Uncut magazine Nigel Williamson, among others.

Refreshingly, *Under Review*

takes its subject matter seriously and refuses to lapse into gossip about Queen's personal lives; instead, the disc provides new insight into the albums we all know and love, though it does resoundingly appraise the band with nothing short of adoration. Though some fans have taken issue with the DVD's limited coverage of the band's discography, I find it to be a welcome change from numerous other documentaries that tend to speed through 30-some odd years of the band's rich history in barely two hours. This way, often underloved discs such as *Jazz* or Queen's eponymous debut are given their deserved attention, whether it be a step-by-step tutorial on how to play the riff to "Keep Yourself Alive" or footage from the band's first chart-topper "Killer Queen."

Overall, *Under Review*

is an excellent overview of some of Queen's greatest studio albums, paying just as much care to the band's burgeoning years in the business as to their major breakthrough with "Bohemian Rhapsody."

Unfortunately, I can't extend the same compliments to the other disc in this box set, *Magic Moments*. Unlike *Under Review*, this release calls glaring attention to the fact that it is unauthorized by inexplicably choosing to play random music in the background so that every interview is barely intelligible. Featuring interviews with many of Mercury's friends (Wayne Sleep, Peter Freestone, Peter Straker, etc.) as well as numerous producers and journalists, *Magic Moments* has the potential to be quite interesting but ultimately falls flat. Even promises of rare footage are delivered without accompanying sound as a result of copyright issues. Overwhelmingly, this disc chooses to shine the spotlight almost solely on Mercury, something that unnecessarily undercuts the contributions of the rest of the band.

While *Under Review 1973-1980* would be a welcome addition to any Queen fans' collection, I hesitate to recommend *Magic Moments* unless you happen to be a completist, but even then be warned it's most likely going to be one of those purchases that collects dust after the first viewing. *Under Review* gets an A-; *Magic Moments*, a D.

Rating: B-

User Rating: Not Yet Rated

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