

Descent Into The Maelstrom: The Radio Birdman Story

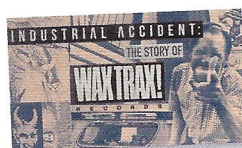
★★★★★

LIVING EYES/WRASSE. DVD

Rise, fall and troubled afterlife of the "Sydney Stooges".

Much like the unreleased MCS: A True Testimonial, this alarmingly frank documentary about Australia's hyper-energetic proto-punk heroes spurns TV airbrushing and hyperbolic waffle, instead allowing the band to reveal what made them tick so inspirationally. Early on, we spot guitarist/mainman Deniz Tek at an MCS gig in Detroit, where he grew up before moving to Sydney suitably invigorated. Early posters proclaimed "Radio Birdman Blitzkrieg: War on the Jive", their propulsion deriving from a near-cultish group ethos. Insular at home (of Nick Cave's Boys Next Door, Tek sniffs, "Junkies – not committed"), Birdman's chemistry destabilised once Sire plonked them in London, where Tek's megalomania escalated, and AC/DC took off, not them. Lucratively reuniting for Big Day Out '96, "the old horseshit started again", and successive members left in terrible depression. Packed with electrifying footage, Descent Into The Maelstrom presents a riveting fable of a band leader's vision prevailing over lifelong friendships.

Andrew Perry



Industrial Accident: The Story Of Wax Trax! Records

★★★★★

Dir: Julia Nash

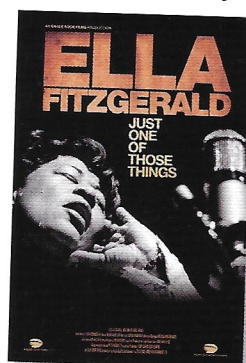
WAX TRAX!. DVD/BR

Illuminating portrait of the influential Chicago underground label.

Originating as a Denver, Colorado record shop owned by life partners Jim Nash and Dannie Flesher, Wax Trax! Records evolved into one of America's most significant independent labels after relocating to Chicago, with its first three vinyl releases – by hardcore punks Strike Under, drag queen Divine and synth-

pop collective Ministry – telegraphing its idiosyncratic aesthetic. Written/directed by Nash's daughter Julia, Industrial Accident lovingly captures the label's mischievous, non-conformist spirit, with the likes of Steve Albini, Ministry's Al Jourgensen and Front 242's Richard Jonckheere testifying to its founding fathers' gleeful disregard for convention. Julia Nash's unique insider perspective brings pathos and poignancy to the label's rise and fall, and her film serves as both a celebration of the liberating influence of outsider art and the unbreakable love of two maverick spirits.

Paul Brannigan



Ella Fitzgerald: Just One Of Those Things

★★★★★

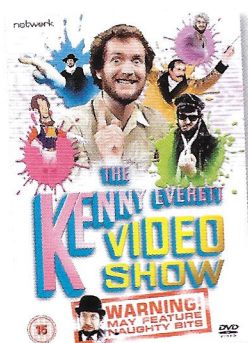
Dir: Leslie Woodhead

EAGLE ROCK FILM. DVD

From First Lady of Swing to Mama Jazz, her majesty's reign in jazz warmly celebrated.

Born in 1919, Ella was 13 when her mother died and for the next few years was on the run from abuse – at home, at reform school. Homeless, in 1934 she took her chances at Harlem Apollo's amateur night as a dancer, failed, so she sang instead, her wonderful voice silencing the rowdy, critical audience. "You could've heard a rat piss on cotton," says dancer and witness Norma Miller. Ella's extraordinary career had three big eras: in the later '30s with swing drummer Chick Webb's orchestra; in the bebop era in the '40s and '50s, when she developed scat singing to its peak; and with promoter/manager Norman Granz, who started her Great American Songbook series of albums that distinguished the third peak of her remarkable artistic odyssey. The jazz police often found fault, as if there was too much joy and freedom in her singing, but Leslie Woodhead, who has documented 9/11, JFK's death, Bin Laden, Milosevic and more, labours with love, pinpointing Ella's professional, personal and racial struggles in a life defined by the self-effacing star's exceptional voice. More of her opinions would've been nice – one outspoken (for her) radio interview offers an insight into her feelings about the prejudice she'd experienced and seen.

Geoff Brown



The Kenny Everett Video Show

★★★★★

NETWORK DISTRIBUTING. DVD

Radio comic on-screen, with music.



What is a six-disc, 1978-81, 35-episode box of the late Kenny Everett's exuberant, hyper-prurient TV show doing here? Because apart from the old school, periodically obnoxious gagging and cartoons – some of it in retrospect proof of the era's high boredom thresholds – top-flight musical talent appeared. Guests including Kate Bush, Bryan Ferry, Wings, Dusty Springfield, Thin Lizzy, Elvis Costello and The Pretenders performed, some repeatedly, and frequently joined in with the show's nuttoid bonhomie, as when David Bowie follows Boys Keep Swinging by chasing the host (wearing a city gent/lingerie combo) around with his violin bow, Freddie Mercury drops by for a wrestling bout and Cliff Richard gets hung from the ceiling. Be aware that the set only covers Everett's years on ITV, so his immortal Rod Stewart-with-inflating-

buttocks sketch is sadly absent, but you do get to see Bernard Manning being shot.
Ian Harrison

Lords Of Chaos

★★★

Dir: Jonas Åkerlund

ARROW FILMS. C

The gruesome saga of Norwegian Black Metal, rehashed as a 21st century video nasty.



Norway's early-1990s Black Metal scene forgettably hit the world's front pages, as core bands Mayhem and Burzum crossed the line from thrash-metal extremism into fascism, suicide, church-burning and murder. Director Åkerlund has always revelled in dressing edgy lifestyles in Hollywood finery, and his casting of cutesy-pie Rory Culklin as Mayhem's guitarist Øystein Aarseth, AKA Euronymous is simply implausible, while Aarseth's romantic involvement with a glamorous photographer (Sky Ferreira) feels hijacked from a different movie because the central thrust of the narrative is so overwhelmingly brutal. The first shocker arrives when Mayhem's singer, Per Olin, AKA Dead (Jack Kilmer, hunky son of Val!), gashes himself repeatedly on-stage with a large knife, each wound almost adoringly enacted in close-up. Dead soon hideously self-harms again in private, then blows his own head off. Too 'imaginative' to be an historical document for metal-heads, too superficial to nail Lord Of The Flies-style bitter truths, it exists solely for gross-out/titillation purposes.

Andrew Perry

Teddy Pendergrass: If You Don't Know Me

★★★★★

Dir: Olivia Lichtenstein

MOVIEHOUSE/CADIZ. DVD/C/ST

"Vulnerable", "arrogant", a vivid portrait of Philly Int's greatest soul man.



Throughout the 1970s Teddy Pendergrass's simmering 'love man' ballads and socially engaged stomps with Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes and as a solo superstar were the rocks on which Gamble & Huff's Philadelphia International stood. Then, in the early hours of March 18, 1982, his Rolls-Royce crashed at a Philly accident black spot. His neck was broken and he never walked again. He could sing, but his ferocious vocal power and range of expression was compromised. After the accident – car tampering is alleged – Gamble & Huff dropped him, but he recorded six more albums. If You Don't Know Me covers Pendergrass's eventful life in full: tough Philly ghetto upbringing, church singing, then on street corners with friends who became the Blue Notes. When he took the spotlight they flourished. The film explores the City of Brotherly Love's meaner side – Harold Melvin's duplicity, murder, death threats, police harassment, it's a life story out of pulp fiction. Pendergrass's performance at Live Aid '85, singing Reach Out And Touch (Somebody's Hand) with its composers, Ashford & Simpson, from a wheelchair on-stage in Philly that July afternoon, was for soul fans a truly moving spectacle.

Geoff Brown

Hold tight: Teddy Pendergrass on the Blue Notes' tour bus in the mid-'70s.

