

DVD REVIEWS



Janis Joplin

Final 24: Her Final Hours

MVD Visual (MVD 4977D)

Grade: ★★☆☆

There's just something about celebrity deaths — especially the stars who die young and tragically — that fascinates the public. In recent years, Cinefix UK, a London-based production company, has done its part to service those folks interested in late icons with its "Final 24" series of hour-long TV documentaries.

Cinefix's Janis Joplin episode, now on DVD, follows the same format as its other "Final 24" titles, combining re-enactments, archival footage and recent interviews with key figures in her life. This storytelling style has its benefits and drawbacks. On one hand, the documentary really wants to emphasize Joplin's last 24 hours alive and amp up the circumstances leading to the singer's death (from a heroin overdose at age 27 in 1970). But some longer sections that focus on a previous point in her career slow down the momentum and negatively impact the main objective.

Nevertheless, there's some good stuff here, particularly the interviews with Joplin manager John Byrne Cooke, her high school friend Jim Langdon and several of her former band mates, as well as clips of Joplin performing at 1967's Monterey International Pop Music Festival and being interviewed by Dick Cavett.

— Chris M. Junior



Keith Moon

Final 24: His Final Hours

MVD Visual (MVD4980D) DVD

Grade: ★★☆☆

Through interviews with friends, family, and associates, vintage video clips and photos, and dramatic re-enactments, the tale of the death of one of rock's liveliest personalities, The Who's Keith Moon, gets a thorough examination. Moon died on Sept. 7, 1978, at age 32 in a London flat owned by the singer Harry Nilsson.

The tale of Moon's demise is a sad one, indeed. Clips showing a young and fit Moon blasting his way through The Who's "My Generation" in 1967 are juxtaposed with images of him collapsing onstage in San Francisco in 1973 and his final TV appearance, in August 1978 on ABC-TV's Good Morning America. Moon looked terrible on Good Morning America, appearing to be about two decades older than he actually was.

Among those interviewed are Moon's girlfriend Annette Walter-Lax, Alice Cooper, drummer Kenney Jones (who would go on to replace Moon in The Who), Moon's biographer Tony Fletcher, and Moon's daughter Amanda De Wolf. The comments of De Wolf and Walter-Lax are particularly poignant. De Wolf, Moon's only child, said she wished that she had gotten to know him better and spoke about Moon's violence toward her mother. Walter-Lax stated that it was her understanding that Moon had planned to ask her to marry him on the day that he died.

Despite its somewhat tabloid TV feel, this documentary is worth a look, especially for fans of The Who.

— John Curley