



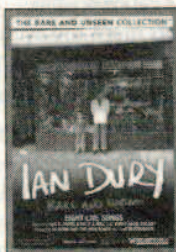
The Sunrise
Spread The Word

Grade: ★★★

You don't have to be a Christian to listen to the newest release from the Cleveland-based band The Sunrise. That being said, the lyrics do spread the Gospel in a heavy-handed fashion. And the album art can be seen as a bit creepy ("Jesus Freak" is not a pejorative label for any of the musicians here). However, the lyrics are easy to disregard if the listener is a non-Christian, or even a card-carrying atheist, as the music will shine in spots for secular ears.

The best song on the album is not the band's favorite (and opener), "Old & Faded," but the more pleasant "Random Acts." And songs like "The Way To Live," "Seashell World" and "I Love My Wife" appear to be heavily influenced by the '70s songwriting of Paul McCartney, Seals & Crofts, Don McLean and Todd Rundgren. However, the band claims to be mostly inspired by more obscure artists within the Jesus Movement, a major Christian element within the hippie counterculture back in the '60s and '70s. For anyone who loves the music of '70s radio pop, this can be a true find. (<http://www.thesunrisemusic.com/>)

— Stephen Devillon



Ian Dury
Ian Dury: Rare And Unseen
Wienerworld WNRD 2488)

Grade: ★★★

The late Ian Dury may not have been the all-conquering godhead in America that he was at home in England, but if you've ever wondered what Brit critics meant when they called him a "diamond geezer," this is

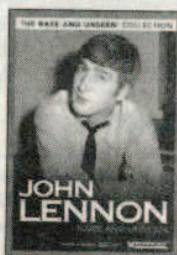
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the disc to visit.

Quite simply, it's a joy. Dury was one of the most personable and articulate entertainers the U.K. ever produced, and whether laboring in the obscurity of Kilburn and the High Roads, or struggling to survive in the years after The Blockheads brought him a string of hits, every word from his mouth and every song he sings is a priceless jewel of some sort. And there's a lot of both here.

Over 75 minutes, the DVD unearths such treasures as his earliest known TV performance from 1976 and his last before his death in 2000. Interviews from throughout the intervening span catch him discussing everything from Cockney rhyming slang, to life as rock's most visible raspberry (raspberry ripple = cripple; his choice of words, Mr. P.C. Policeman). Live footage includes some of his best-loved music; and you come out of the disc feeling sad that it's over... both the show and Dury's life. He had so much more to offer, and no matter how many demons stalked his private life (and there were many, as the recent "Sex & Drugs & Rock 'n' Roll" biopic informs us), in public, Dury was peerless. So is this DVD.

— Dave Thompson



John Lennon
John Lennon: Rare and Unseen
MVD Visual (MVD4994D)

Grade: ★★

"John Lennon: Rare and Unseen" is a compendium of rare TV segments, film, newsreels and photos from private collections that spotlight "The Smart Beatle" — but alas, no Beatles or Lennon music is included. The rarest and perhaps most interesting pieces of footage are portions of the "Man of the Decade" television program, which aired once in December 1969 in the U.K. and not seen since. Sociologist/anthropologist Dr. Desmond Morris interviewed Lennon and Yoko Ono on the grounds of Lennon's Tittenhurst

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Park estate, with Lennon discussing drugs, violence and his general optimism about the future as his thoughts were captured with a roaming hand-held camera.

Also included on the 75-minute DVD are segments from the David Frost television program (never before released on DVD), where John and Yoko attempt to explain their avant-garde art to a rather confused studio audience, as well as a section devoted to Lennon's controversial "the Beatles are bigger than Jesus" comments in 1966, which include Lennon's press conference and other comments about the flap.

The main problem with "John Lennon: Rare and Unseen" is its random sequencing. One minute, there's a clip of John and Yoko from the David Frost show in 1968, then it jumps to footage of the Beatles receiving their MBEs in 1965, then inexplicably back to the Frost program. While there are interesting comments from folks such as Tony Barrow, The Beatles former press officer ("Words in John's brain never did come out right by the time they reached his mouth"), left-field appearances by folks such as Phil Collins seem out of place. The package seems jumbled, although there are certainly gems to be found (the Beatles' comments about their visit to the Philippines are priceless).

Though one could nitpick that the compilers confused Malcolm X with Michael X (Michael X was a black revolutionary and civil rights activist whom the Lennons championed), simply seeing and hearing the magnetic personality of John Lennon in action is still pretty damned interesting. Listening to him utter the words "Peace on earth ... no violence ... no starving children ... no fear" is sad, hopeful, ironic and beautiful, all at the same time. (www.mvdvisual.com)

— John Borack



James Bennighof
The Words and Music of Joni Mitchell
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