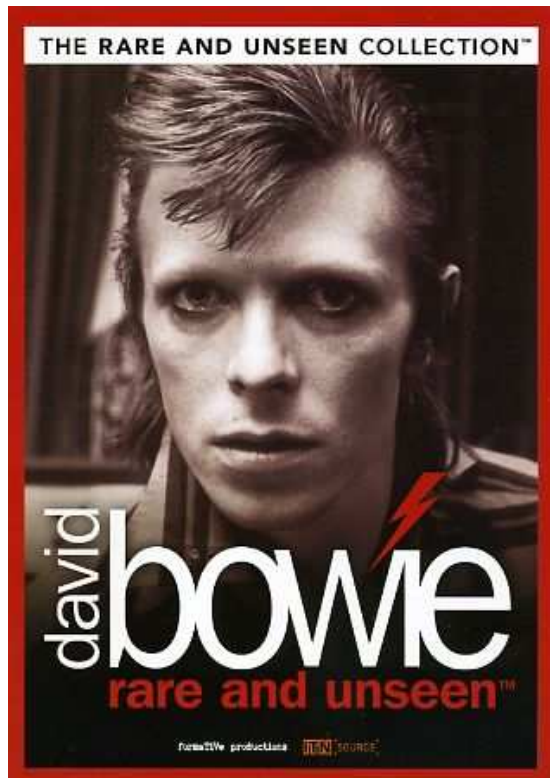


## FAME Review: David Bowie - Rare and Unseen (DVD)



## Rare and Unseen

### David Bowie

[MVD Visual](#) - MVD5086D (DVD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange  
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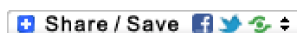
MVD has taken up the documentary torch both in the usual fashion of historical critique—a film mode that, frankly, nowadays bests the written page, especially in view of the yawn-provoking bland interrogatives and cellophane producing that passes for aesthetic overview and criticism in venues like Rolling Stone (is that rag relevant to anything any more?)—as well as in a fairly unique pastiche presentation wherein the viewer is given the straight footage, often rare, frequently unseen, and left to judge for oneself. Not long ago, MVD hit the Stones in both areas with the *Rolling Stones: 1969-1975, the Mick Taylor Years* disc ([here](#)) and their own *Rare and Unseen* DVD ([here](#)) to excellent effect. This Bowie chronicle follows in the footsteps of the latter.

I think it can be safely said that David Bowie has shown himself to be a vastly more chameleonic character than Mick Jagger, but what's vital to this unadorned reel-age is the revelation of how intelligent some rock bad boys really are. True, being British, that sort of thing is expected, but the insights provided by these collages drives home just how deeply some stars carry their thought processes. Here, the stage is set in grinning fashion as the bitchily obnoxious TV oik Russell Harty tries his damndest to nettle a lounge-lizarding Bowie who parries and checkmates the BBC mouthpiece time after time after time, leaving the gent to look the pettish idiot. More fascinating is a succession of interleaving of David in later years, looking back upon himself and chuckling, sometimes amusedly, sometimes ruefully, often in a confessional on drugs and waylaid youth.

A number of clips from videos and performances, including rehearsal footage, pepper the hour-long tapestry, reminding the viewer just what was what back in halcyon days, but it's the running self-analysis that keeps the audience fascinated. Unlike Marilyn Manson, perhaps the most absorbing of the modern rock social commentators, Bowie isn't examining the world before him but mostly the one within. However, he also reveals some rather extraordinary musicological affinities, such as an endearment for Harry Partch, still one of the most exotic and neglected composers in modern music. And among Bowie's panoply of artistic works of course was his involvement in a number of films, with directors John Landis and Julien Temple here rendering their appraisals of the thin white duke.

Productions of this type aren't meant to be spectacular or glitzy, such would defeat the entire purpose, nor are they as scholastic as the stream of critiques issuing from various founts; instead, one gets the opportunity to be a fly on the wall and obtain the straight dope unfiltered. Invariably, this shifts the onlooker's conception of what would otherwise be the result of carefully entablatured models from business concerns, propaganda if you will, to psychological revelation. *Rare and Unseen* peeks behind the curtain, to the dressing room, upon the unscripted moments, behind the make-up and klieg lights, casting a more human, quite enjoyable, and often intriguing illumination. In America, such exposure would too often revolve around the purveyance of harsh and unrelenting barbs and foibles; MVD, however, approaches the task with a respectful but discerning eye and ear, catching a continual flow of absorbing pensees and, in Bowie's case, absolutely delightful Wildean moments as he gently but pointedly skewers the aforementioned Mr. Harty and a few others. If you harbor the notion that the Diamond Dog was just another media creation who existed solely in one outrageous incident after another, *Rare and Unseen* will rapidly cure that misconception.

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