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Lawrence Welk: Classic Episodes V. 1 – 4 (1960 – 1969/Synergy DVD)/Queen: Days Of Our Lives (Eagle Blu-ray set)/Talking Heads: Chronology (1976 – 2002/Eagle DVD)/X: The Unheard Music (1985/MVD Visual Blu-ray)

Picture: C/B-/C+/B Sound: C+/B-/C+/B- Extras: D/B-/B-/C+ Main Programs: C+/B+/B-/B

Among the most interesting music titles are documentaries and compilations. Here is an interesting and unusual mix of recent titles you might be amused by or seriously consider catching.

The oddest of the four is **Lawrence Welk: Classic Episodes V. 1 – 4** (1960 – 1969) which simply has four DVDs with three episodes each, really pushing the meaning of volumes, especially since there are no extras. If you actually know the show, it was a series aimed at an older audience (Geritol was one of their longest sponsors) and he was know for the blandest performances of old and new songs along with his heavily dressed singers and dancers, plus that bubble machine (think champagne music?). The show has its share of unintentionally funny moments and a few howlers, but I was never a fan of the show. Still, he was on TV for decades and reruns still play to this day.

The 1.33 X 1 image comes from kinescopes that were likely circulated to older TV stations still broadcasting in black and white. There shows run from 1960 to 1969, so earlier shows are obviously black and white, but we suspect the Welk estate at least has videotape versions of the latter shows in color min their archive. The result is that these are not looking so good, so those expecting the "nice" colors of the color videotape broadcasts will be a bit disappointed, though fans may not have seen some of these shows. The Dolby Digital 2.0 Mono is better, but also shows its age, especially since taped TV's audio standards were only so good at the time.

Much better is **Queen: Days Of Our Lives**, a two-part documentary on the band that is not the first to attempt to tell their story (you can look them up on our site and see how often we have reviewed various releases), but this is the most expansive (which says something because some fine DVDs and Blu-rays have already hit the market over the years) and we get some great and even rare footage throughout. Best of all, the makers only deal with Freddie Mercury's health issues only later in the program.



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 > Doctor Who: The Caves of Androzani + Doctor Who: The Sensorites (BBC DVDs)

In addition, you get as much licensed music here as anywhere and the title might seem odd, but this is one of the best documentary Blu-ray releases we have seen to date on music of any kind. There is even a compilation of bonus footage so good, it could have been a third episode of the show. We also get a paper pullout, music videos and this is a must for all serious music fans and especially Queen fans.

Also considerably popular for the quality of their music, the **Talking Heads: Chronology** (1976 – 2002) is only a single DVD of performances by the band from their earliest days to their peak and reunion. However, it is an interesting disc just the same and though it does not have any Music Videos, seeing them in live shows demonstrates what a consistent and talented band they were, reminding us of how great bands used to be. Some clips are black and white videotape from CBGBs, there is an **SNL** clip, a **Late Night with David Letterman** clip and a piece from their induction into the **Rock N Roll Hall Of Fame**. If you are a fan, you'll really enjoy this, but even if you are not, it makes for an argument that maybe they were a bit underappreciated in their time. A 1978 David Byrne interview (over 9 minutes) and 1979 South Bank Show (35 minutes!) are on the disc, while a nice illustrated color booklet with informative text can be found inside the DVD case.


Last but absolutely not least is W.T. Morgan's **X: The Unheard Music** (1985), one of the last important films about the original Punk Music movement focusing on the establishment, rise and obstacles the Los Angeles band X encountered as they found themselves going from local popularity to potential (and maybe contradictory) commercial success with a major record label. As they get better, former Doors member Ray Manzarek meets them and lands up producing an album that gets them airplay and distribution with Sire records, though we get an amusing moment where an executive at a rival record label (the one-time MCA Records, now Universal Music) makes the mistake of not signing them. What he has to say reminds us of how the majors started to lose their grip on their audience by the late 1980s and never regained it.

That is the subject for another documentary, but this is a remarkable film and we get to know the band very well. I liked the style, the editing, the animation and ability of the film to capture the moment and the music. This has been out of circulation for a while, but this new Blu-ray has a restored version of the film that is more than overdue for rediscovery. Extras on the disc include the Theatrical Trailer, Unheard Music Songbook, John & Exene Dialogue, Some Other Time (live outtake) and Interview with Angle City, while a nice illustrated color booklet with informative text can be found inside the Blu-ray case.


As for performance on the last three releases, the 1080i 1.78 X 1 digital High Definition image transfer on **Queen** is a fine mix of film and video material usually in good shape, plus new HD-shot interviews. I was pleased with the overall editing and picture quality, though like all documentaries, it varies as expected due to everything from formats used to the age of older vs. newer footage. It also looks like they did their research and some older footage is in exceptionally good shape. The 1.33 X 1 image on **Heads** also varies from older analog tape to later color tape, but is fine for a compilation DVD. The 1080p 1.78 X 1 digital High Definition image transfer on **X** is very impressive for its age, even looking better than MGM's recent release of **Sid & Nancy** (reviewed elsewhere on this site) and taken care of nicely. Someone did their work here and I wish more films got this kind of treatment, especially orphan films and films from this time period.

The PCM 2.0 Stereo on **Queen** is just fine and the use of album tracks benefits from the fact that the band has taken care of their music masters. New interviews are well recorded as well as new music performances. The lossy Dolby Digital 2.0 sound on **Heads** varies from source to source, but sounds as good as it is going to here and the older clips are sadly monophonic. **X** has a lossy Dolby Digital 5.1 mix that I wish were a lossless mix instead, but this still sounds pretty good (especially the music) despite the age of the film and its low budget.

- Nicholas Sheffo



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