

DVD★Reviews

Bad Company

The Band. The Music. The Story. The 40th Anniversary Documentary

★★★★

Universal, cat no tbc

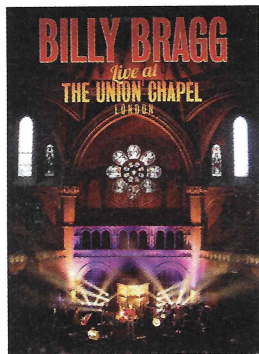
From Free agents to Company men

This excellent documentary is the work of Jon Brewer, director of the recent BB King film *The Life Of Riley*. While lacking the broad sociological sweep of that work, it's an exemplary if straightforward biography of Bad Company. At its heart is an extended interview with the three founding members, Paul Rodgers, Mick Ralphs and Simon Kirke (viewable in its entirety as an extra).

In an hour and 20 minutes the film takes in the whole of the band's career, including background on Mick Ralphs' years with Mott The Hoople and, of, course Rodgers and Kirke's time with Free, on through their split in the 80s and reformation in the wake of Rodgers' work with Queen. The musicians talk frankly about the ups and downs of the album/tour/album treadmill and, for all that it's geared towards the band's 40th anniversary and possible future, it remains a very 70s story of rock-star success and excess.

Along with the aforementioned interview, bonuses include an extra Q&A session and a somewhat

pointless – but not unenjoyable – day out visiting the Woodstock site with the suitably awed band... who are surprisingly good company. *Will Pinfold*



Billy Bragg

Live At The Union Chapel

★★★★

Cooking Vinyl COOKCD601 (DVD+CD)

The Bard Of Barking rocks the pews

The Union Chapel's sympathetic acoustics make the North London venue a favourite among artists intent on a little unplugged action, but Bragg took to its stage last summer with all amps blazing. Backed by many of the musicians who'd played on his then recent album *Tooth & Nail*, it was also an opportunity to revisit former glories reupholstered in an Americana-hued musical setting.

New arrangements of the

chilling Valentine's Day Is Over (a study of domestic abuse sung from the point of a view of a battered woman) and the wordy ripped-from-today's-headlines protest *Waiting For The Great Leap Forward* serve only to increase the potency of the songs, the now mid-50s Bragg as engaged as the young firebrand of 30 years earlier. It's further illustrated by the solo encore of all seven songs from his debut album *Life's A Riot*.

The raconteur and wit has his say during the on-stage introductions and in interview segments peppered throughout the concert footage, offering further evidence as to why Bragg is still celebrated as one of Britain's (if not the world's) most principled, passionate and articulate singer-songwriters. *Terry Staunton*

Alice Cooper

Brutally Live

★★★

Salvo SALVOSVX0 22 (DVD+CD)

School's in: Grand Guignol 101

One of the great things about Alice Cooper: the older he gets, the more effective his pantomime creepiness. That said, the warmth and affection emanating from the crowd at the Hammersmith Apollo back in 2000 suggests that fear isn't uppermost in the audience's mind while

watching the Grand Guignol spectacle of a Cooper show.

And it is a show, complete with props, special effects and plenty of tongue-in-cheek humour. When released at the turn of the millennium, this DVD showcased Alice's then-new album *Brutal Planet*, a relatively modern, heavy collection by his standards. But though very well performed, those songs are, on the whole, less good than the greatest hits, from 1971 classic *I'm Eighteen* through to 80s mainstays such as *Poison*.

Above all, it's so much fun that it's easy to overlook the quality of the musicianship involved. Alice is clearly having a ball, and he ensures his audience does too. It's a testament to his skill as a performer that all of the silliness – werewolves, beheadings, er, nurses – doesn't detract from the songs, which, for all their light-hearted macabre qualities, are in many cases rock classics. *William Pinfold*

Devo

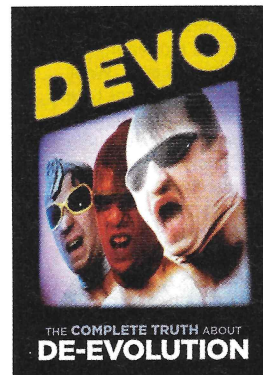
The Complete Truth About De-Evolution

★★★

MVD Visual MVD 6054 D

In which Devo prove their own theory

Having broken through with such a strong concept in the late 70s, Devo found themselves unable to move



beyond it; those yellow jumpsuits quickly became straitjackets. 1977-1980 were golden years: a deconstruction of the Stones' *Satisfaction*, Jocko Homo, *Whip It*: they defined the new decade's jerky, rigid whiteboy funk before anyone else saw it coming; the late Bob Casale's guitar solo on *Secret Agent Man* is as much rock piss-take as it is Neil Young. No wonder old Shakey embraced them.

The opening clip on this collection of promo videos, *Devo Corporate Anthem*, acknowledges their aesthetic debt to Kraftwerk, even as the group looked ahead to the era of the "corporate world"; Jocko Homo introduces *Booji Boy* in that famous jumpsuit with "OD" on the front. That's right, Devo were so wonky they couldn't even spell "odd" right. Come *Worried Man's* intro send-up and the all-round brilliance of *Whip It*, it's as if they'd foreseen *Twin Peaks* and decided it would be too much of a realist drama in need of weirding-up.

But when the world caught up with them, Devo seemed ironically out of step. The music starts to plod and the videos rely on celebrity cameos (Paul Reiser pops up on *Through Being Cool*) and recycling ideas past (*Peek-A-Boo*) and new (*That's Good: Peek-A-Boo* with different graphics). Pioneers who got scalped, indeed. *Jason Draper*



Goodtime Charlies: Bad Company

Billy Joel

A Matter Of Trust: The Bridge To Russia

★★★★

Columbia/Legacy, cat no tbc (2DVD+2CD)

The Piano Man meets Perestroika

Joel was personally invited by Mikhail Gorbachev to visit the Soviet Union in 1987, and played a total of six sold-