

Sound & Vision



Box Shot

BRIAN ENO Another Green World

BBC4
Eno - one small word, three letters, huge connotations: ambient music; Roxy Music; the shape of analogue and digital electronic music; 40 years of pop music; 40 years of experimental music. He's been a pivotal figure in so much noise and pop, first appearing as the darkened figure in the back of Roxy Music's early videos, subtly ego-battling his frontman with subversive, futurist synth. He went on to abstractly explore the transcendent negative space between notes before becoming an omnipotent presence on early U2 albums and landmark releases by many other bands. Even the droning notes that accompany the opening credits of the long-standing BBC programme *Arena* are Eno's.

To make mark his achievements, *Arena* has explored the man's journey. *Brian Eno: Another Green World* is an insightful account of the many events that have shaped Eno's idiosyncratic musical brand. Rather than focus on staples such as his notoriously tempestuous relationship with Brian Ferry in the early 1970s, director Nicola Roberts leads Eno into a-typical and occasionally awkward territory as a means of revealing unexplored aspects of his persona.

The documentary delves deep into his early fascination with fashion and glamour ("I love the idea of selecting various clothing styles - references from moments in culture and time - and putting them together") and his self-confessed under-achievements with the fairer sex. More pertinently, Eno discusses how his music is ultimately rooted in industry ideals: if a record hasn't sold well, he says he avoids using similar methods twice.

For many veterans, Eno's commitment to commercial projects - most recently Coldplay's *Viva La Vida* - has sparked confusion and dismay, and the show explores this topic in detail. Eno fuses his innate interest in gospel music and its ability to reach people on a communal level with Chris Martin's wish to unite large masses of people at festivals and in arenas. It also sets in contrast his own understanding of music as an ideological *raison d'être* to the modern day fascination with music as a means of sharing: blogging communities, mp3s and music television.

Viewers are treated to archive footage of Eno at the mixing desk during the recording of *The Joshua Tree*. "I like the moment when your voice fades to an eerie whisper," you hear him tell Bono. Interviews with Bono and dusty industry hacks like Paul Morley offer insightful commentary tacked onto the side of the footage. "U2 didn't go to art college, we went to Eno. He is a mind-expanding drug," says the singer.

But Another Green World's real strength resides in the space it leaves for reflection. Philosophical conjecture is neatly broken up by long segments of Eno's music, cast against beautiful shots of sand canvases, sprawling deserts and caves. In totum, the hour-long documentary is a vital and deeply revealing update to a wonderfully attuned and unique story. Roberts's method of drawing the subject into unconventional territory provokes feedback equally worthy of the attention of casual Eno fans and aficionados. **Jack Mills**

DVD Choice



★★★★

SEAN DONNELLY (Dir.)

I Think We're Alone Now

Awesome • Modest

I Think We're Alone Now explores the one-way relationships between eighties pop star Tiffany and two of her most obsessive fans. By illuminating their back stories, director Sean Donnelly's disarming portrayal humanises the "stalkers" rather than exploiting them for ridicule.

Jeff suffers from Asperger's syndrome and is prone to delusions. Kelly is a hermaphrodite who believes she's destined to be with Tiffany after having a vision of her during a coma. Both claim to share an intimate bond with the washed-up singer, whether she realises it or not.

The film is structured so that whenever you find yourself softening to the characters, they lose you with a baffling jump in logic. Sometimes it seems harmless; sometimes it's chilling. It's a tactful balance, producing as many laughs as squirms, but the film's strength lies in its ability to intertwine these two tales of unrequited love.

Jeff has spent \$20,000 building a "radionic" headset which he uses for spiritual communication with Tiffany. He once made the news after trying to give her five white chrysanthemums and a Samurai sword - regarded as the highest honour in Japan, but a barrowing gesture everywhere else. Yet he's so resolutely upbeat that it's hard not to find him endearing.

Kelly, on the other hand, has never even seen Tiffany in concert. She exists as a social outcast, her home adorned with images of her idol, and becomes increasingly fraught at the prospect of finally meeting her. Tiffany, for her part, seems so accustomed to these encounters that she barely blinks when Jeff says, "We have an agreement, we don't hide anything from each other," and tells her what hotel room he's staying in.

The documentary doesn't speak to Tiffany directly, and there's no need to. Both fans' attachments have little to do with her. She is whatever they need her to be: a source of friendship, motivation and even self-belief. As Jeff observes at one point, "It's the cracked ones that let light into the world." This makes for a fascinating insight into the nature of obsession.

Also out now...

★★★

VERNON CHATMAN (dir.)

Final Flesh
Drag City

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged." Easy to say, but upon opening the DVD case adorned with a surreal collage of eagle-eyes, laser beams, rainbows and mushroom clouds, a sacket of antibacterial hand wash drops out, with a press release explaining how Vernon's *Wonder Showzen* Chatman's new faux fetish romp *Final Flesh* will challenge conceptions of religion, sex, philosophy, fashion and "reality".

Hmm. For all its chaotic misappropriations of sexual symbolism and ambiguity, the film, comprising four motif-driven, intertwined plots, dulls after the first half. Scenes that include an anemic, hysterical middle-ager filling a sock full of dice, breast-feeding a raw steak and 'Mr Pallard' attempting to climb into his wife's womb amount to an ultimately forgettable viewing experience.

★★★★

DOUGLAS HICKOX (dir.)

It's All Over Town
Optimum

Movies were bilious in the olden days. Musicals threw together camp exuberance and dance with fantastic ease, and standards were so often high. It's nice to see people enjoying the absurd simplicity of everyday life: singing and joking pranks and dates. 1963's *It's All Over Town* marries the energy of Golden Era Rogers & Hammerstein with the vivid colouring of swinging sixties London. The opening scene sees Frankie Vaughan miming terribly against an obviously painted skyline. But it's the inconsistencies, the oversights and the overacting that adds to its overall sense of theatre; you are the audience, and you're there to laugh. Musical contributions from some of the era's greats, like Dusty Springfield and The Hollies, document the period in all its glory.

★★★

ULLI LOMMEL (dir.)

Blank Generation
MVD

Scenes of Richard Hell & The Voidoids performing at CBGB's makes *Blank Generation* a valuable artefact of the late-seventies New York punk scene, but as a feature film it's more of a curiosity than a classic. Shot in film noir style with a score worthy of *Murder She Wrote*, the narrative follows Billy (Richard Hell), a rising punk star who becomes disillusioned with his career, and his fiery romance with temperamental French journalist Nada. With Hell preserved in his prime, exuding cool against the backdrop of a crumbling Manhattan, this could have fallen somewhere between Jim Jarmusch's *Permanent Vacation* and 1972 reggae flick *The Harder They Come*. But with woeful acting and a threadbare plot, it's no wonder this arthouse also-ran has been long forgotten.

★★★★

HAVANA MARKING (dir.)

Afghan Star
Dogwoof

Afghanistan's answer to Pop Idol shows how one culture's TV trash can become another's opportunity for social freedom. Seeing as music, television and dancing were outlawed in Afghanistan until 2001, Havana Marking's documentary looks into the implications of trying to express yourself on a new nationwide platform. As the contestants become symbols for their respective ethnic groups, voting via text message - the only democracy most young Afghans have ever experienced - becomes a matter of national pride. But where Pop Idol contestants merely risk humiliation, *Afghan Star* contestants risk their lives. The fact that both the host of the show and its two female participants have since been forced into hiding only underlines this film's significance as a portrait of a country still struggling with repression.

