



Captain Beefheart -- Under Review (Sexy Intellectual)
Velvet Underground-- Under Review (Sexy Intellectual)

Although unauthorized by the artists themselves, the *Under Review* DVD series brings to light the stories behind a diverse range of musicians. Two of the most recent installments provide what are essentially the first respective multi-media biographies of Captain Beefheart and The Velvet Underground.

Captain Beefheart -- the nom de plume of Don Van Vliet -- is practically the only member of the extensive Magic Band personnel that doesn't contribute to this nearly two-hour career overview. Yet, thanks to invaluable insight and commentary by John French, Mark Boston, Jeff Moris Tepper, Elliot Ingber, Ira Ingber, Jerry Handley, Doug Moon, Gary Marker, Eric Drew Feldman and Gary Lucas, viewers are guided through the criminally misunderstood genius of Captain Beefheart.

The Magic Band blended unrefined blues and blue-eyed soul with complex and often Dada-esque lyrics. The atonal chord changes and highly advanced arrangements allowed Beefheart and company to push the boundaries of rock into a malleable form of sonic art that truly defies categorization. There are a host of never-before compiled video clips that are excerpted, but sadly not presented in their entirety. That, and of course the absence of the man himself, are the only drawbacks in this fascinating rockumentary.

Even while the Velvet Underground (VU) were critics darlings, producing the likes of Lou Reed, John Cale and Nico, they never garnered more than a devout cult following Stateside. However, there would have been no punk, underground or alternative scenes without them. VU members Moe Tucker, Doug Yule and Billy Name are joined by music journalists Robert Christgau, Clinton Heylin and Malcolm Dome to try and unravel the palpable mystique that surrounded the band.

While on the subject of tunes, again don't look for complete performances. But, viewers will find rarely seen live and studio footage of "Sunday Morning," "All Tomorrow's Parties," "Heroin," "White Light/White Heat," "Pale Blue Eyes," "Sweet Jane," and a few other key entries in the VU's commanding legacy. The extracts of unissued promotional films and clips from Andy Warhol's private archives likewise weave a visual tapestry capturing the mood of the era.

Whether you are a true student of pop, a classic rock aficionado or simply a curious fan, *Under Review* offers a touchstone into a much greater appreciation of Beefheart and the VU.

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