

Velvet Underground - Under Review / 2006 MVD / 84 Minutes /
<http://www.mvdb2b.com> / Reviewed 29 May 2006

Where I did not know much of anything about Captain Beefheart for the first Under Review DVD, I am a little bit more familiar with the Velvet Underground. I even have their disc with Nico; would this DVD still have the same magic considering I know about the band? Just as in the other "Under Review" DVD, this DVD has a lot of first-hand footage of the band. This is not the "exposed" set of videos that has not licensed anything in the way of footage from the estates of artists or from the television stations that the bands were originally on. The only thing that is irritating about the beginning of this DVD is the fact that all the footage from the Andy Warhol museum (since Andy was such a friend with the Velvet Underground) is watermarked with a bright white line of text.

What is a victory for this disc is the fact that there is footage from the Exploding Plastic Inevitable, which was the light show that went along with the Velvet Underground. The resulting video footage made for some of the earliest music videos that one can find. What seems sad about the band itself in the current period is that members are so old; the original Velvet Underground album came out 40 years ago, but one expects that such musical masters would still hold onto some aspects of the rock lifestyle. For example, the drummer just looks like someone's mother; there is nothing magical about her that would clue individuals in to the musical history that she created. Some information that is shocking about the Velvet Underground's first album that may be common knowledge but is shocking to me that is present on the DVD is that the album was shelved for a year before seeing the light of the day.

Like most revolutionary albums, it was canned by one record label only to be released later on by another record label that heard the brilliance present on the album. Where the actual documentary is strong in the amount of current interviews with the band, what should be most interesting to viewers is the sheer amount of first-hand footage. This has been mentioned but cannot be underestimated. This is the equivalent of going to the Andy Warhol museum or digging through some collector's stacks of memorabilia, but coalesced into a svelte hour and a half of video. This is for fans of Warhol, Lou Reed, Nico, Velvet Underground, or even of popular music in general. The band has been taken down from their pedestal and given a proper dissection, to see everything that operated around and underneath the band's surface. This should be put alongside anything else that is released about the band. There is just so much raw information that individuals can take in that the replay value of this documentary is high. Masterfully done, "Under Review" is a series that should continue for all of the bands that may have went out of the public purview at time, so that no more information disappears about them.

Rating: 7.2/10

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