

Under Review: Kate Bush / Under Review: The Velvet Underground

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Along with concert documentaries, there's a burgeoning sub-genre of musical biographies making their way to DVD, and while these often serve chiefly as sermons for a converted choir, they're also handy primers for abiding music fans who perhaps want to fill in a few gaps in their own musical history. Cases in point: *Under Review: Kate Bush* and *Under Review: The Velvet Underground*, two superlative looks at influential acts.

Kate Bush, one of Great Britain's most enduring solo acts of the past two decades, is always a singer for whom I'll hold a special place, as the favorite literate chanteuse of an old college flame, who first introduced me to her. Similarly, mixing interviews, rare

performance footage and commentary and contextualization from peers and critics, this finely culled *Under Review* title (a branding to which Captain Beefheart and Small Faces have also submitted, with a disc on The Smiths due later in June) is the perfect introduction for those who have perhaps heard of Bush's music but never given her a spin. From her striking debut, *The Kick Inside*, to latter-era work like 1993's stirring *The Red Shoes* and last year's double disc *Aerial*, a comprehensive chronological overview is given. DeeJay Paul Gambaccini, producer Morris Pert, music journalists Lucy O'Brien and Phil Sutcliffe and many others lend their insight into Bush's lilting melodies, and live and studio recordings include such numbers as "Wuthering Heights," "Army Dreamers," "Running Up That Hill," "This Woman's Work," "Wow" and "Cloudbusting." Also featured on this 90-minute doc – which lacks only a firmer imprint of Bush's own personality – are an interactive quiz, complete discography and extended classic television interviews.

Clocking in at a lean 80-some minutes, *Under Review: The Velvet Underground* tackles the music and career of a band which esteemed rock 'n' roll journalist Lester Bangs – portrayed by Philip Seymour Hoffman in the movie *Almost Famous* – claims kick-started "modern music." *Village Voice* music editor Robert Christgau and author Clinton Heylin provide some clear-eyed analysis, but some of the other talking heads here grate and waste time more than anything else. That said, there's a heady mix of rare performance footage ("Pale Blue Eyes," "All Tomorrow's Parties," "Heroin," "Venus in Furs," "Sweet Jane," "White Light/White Heat" and "Sunday Morning") and new interview material exclusive to this release. The best probably comes courtesy of drummer Moe Tucker. Even without any words from Lou Reed himself, *Under Review: The Velvet Underground* illuminates the uncommon and extraordinary blend of gritty social realism and sexual kink that made the band's music so intoxicatingly original.

Each *Under Review* title comes in a regular Amray case that is in turn housed in an extremely thin cardboard slipcase. Supplemental extras are a bit dashed off, limited to the aforementioned interactive quizzes (nice evaporations of time for hardcore fans, but ill-suited for neophytes or casual viewers), discographies and amorphous extended footage. That said, *Under Review: Kate Bush* and *Under Review: The Velvet Underground* are both appealing introductory-level documents of two legendary musical acts. B- (Movies) C (Discs)

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