



Captain Beefheart / The Rolling Stones / The Smiths / The Velvet Underground

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Captain Beefheart [\[Buy It!\]](#)
Under Review
(Sexy Intellectual)

The Rolling Stones [\[Buy It!\]](#)
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The straight-to-DVD music-documentary series *Under Review* typically uses mere snippets of original recordings and live performances, partially obscured by additional images and the droning voices of rock scholars. But to its credit, *Under Review* often finds interview subjects who know what they're talking about, and its rare footage is usually worth whatever collage process it has to go through in order to qualify as "fair use." The best installment of the series to date covers The Smiths, and offers cogent analysis of the band's brief, blazing career, from producers and journalists who witnessed it firsthand—including gregarious Factory Records maven Tony Wilson. This particular *Under Review* draws a lot of strength from archival footage of The Smiths' British TV appearances, where they gave pithy interviews and dizzy lip-synced performances that stood brilliantly apart from their Britpop contemporaries Duran Duran and Wham.

Under Review also deserves kudos for two recent DVDs concerning American cult-rock heroes The Velvet Underground and Captain Beefheart. Both are packed with comments by musicians who played on those acts' records, and with rarely seen films of the legends in action. (The Captain Beefheart disc even has a mid-'60s TV performance of his garage-rock novelty hit "Diddy Wah Diddy.") Both also contain the bold analysis of critic Clinton Heylin, who explains why The Velvet Underground's "Venus In Furs" is "the most important rock song since 'Heartbreak Hotel,'" and calls Captain Beefheart so unique that "he's an influence on anyone who wants to be unique." By contrast, the new *Under Review* about The Rolling Stones' early years loads up on well-traveled old videotapes with muddy sound and fuzzy pictures, punctuated with fairly obvious observations by hyperbolic critics. It's an example of what the series does wrong, though at least it comes on the heels of several installments that are very right.