

DVD REVIEWS



Burn to Shine: Portland, Or. 06.15.05 (Trixie)

This 50-minute film, produced by Fugazi's Brendan Canty, curated by The Decemberists' Chris Funk and directed by filmmaker Christoph Green, documents a single day in which 12 Portland artists play one song live in a house scheduled for demolition. Highlights include performances by The Decemberists, The Shins, Quasi and The Thermals. Fans of the respective bands no doubt will appreciate the intimately shot clips of their favorites in crisp HD, but conceptually, *Portland, Or. 06.15.05* isn't especially engrossing from beginning to end. The Gossip benefit from appearing last at sundown, which adds visual ambience to their pulsating rendition of "Listen Up!," but there are no candid segments of the performers nor is there any interaction between them. Except for some still images, it's not apparent that any of the bands inhabited the house on the same day. *Portland, Or. 06.15.05* is the third installment in a series that originated with a D.C. film in '04, followed by Chicago later that year, and like its predecessors, it ends with spectacular images of the house being torched to the ground. But more poignant here is the recently disbanded Sleater-Kinney performing the reflective "Modern Girl," which suggests that this memento will gain significance through the years as these bands' histories play out. (www.trixiedvd.com)

6 Blips out of 10

By Chris Tinkham



Depeche Mode: Touring the Angel: Live in Milan DVD (Reprise)

Adding to the proliferation of DM releases in 2006 (including two sets of album reissues, a first-ever greatest hits album, and a headlining set at Coachella) is this 2-DVD set featuring an incredible, energetic two-hour plus concert filmed in Milan, Italy that includes songs that span the band's career. The show avoids the three-camera setup seen in so many concert films and is intriguingly photographed and cut, showing off the band and frequent collaborator Anton Corbijn's brilliant set design. A multi-disc version includes documentaries on the making of the show and a CD of live tracks from their acclaimed last album *Playing the Angel*. (www.depechemode.com)

7 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



Brian Eno: 77 Million Paintings DVD Software (All Saints/Ryko/Hannibal)

Supercool über-producer/artist Brian Eno returns with a software release. It was only a matter of time, right? Well, this release is a pretty nifty screen saver that combines Eno's digital light artwork and ambient drones in multiple combinations. You can now have an endless Brian Eno installation playing on your desktop whenever you aren't working. Imagine how hip you'll be when people ask, "What IS that on your computer screen?" "Well, it's Brian Eno's *77 Million Paintings*, it also includes a hardbound 52-page book with numbered packaging. "Is it cold in here? Throw some money on the fire, won't you?" (www.rykodisc.com)

5 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



Greg the Bunny: Best of the Film Parodies DVD (Shout! Factory)

Rising (and leering?) from the ashes of the cancelled FOX series, *Greg the Bunny* was resurrected on the Independent Film Channel and given carte blanche in terms of sex and violence for movie parodies for such classics as *The Godfather* (*The Godpappy*) and *Natural Born Killers* (*Naturally Sewn Killers*). Greg, Warren the Ape (without a doubt the best character), and Count Blah make the journey to basic cable. The culty show is hit or miss and borders on obnoxious, but when a TV show does an *Eraserhead* parody as dead-on as *Daddyhood*, you know you're in good hands. FOX series regular Seth Green returns to make an appearance, every episode has commentary, and there are deleted scenes and docs for the diehards. (www.shoutfactory.com)

7 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



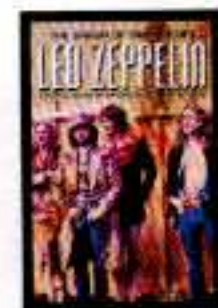
Neil Hamburger: Neil Hamburger: The World's Funnyman DVD (Drag City)

The cancerous, coughing, and crass comedian returns in his second DVD (the first was the little-seen 2003 release *Live at Phoenix Greyhound Park*) and here unloads a tasteless hodgepodge of celebrity-skewering humor for the indie set. The main attraction is a concert film, *That's Not Gold, That's Dung!*, that consists of an entire stand-up set filmed in Sydney, Australia. If you've never seen Neil, the film provides you with the same experience minus the crowd and without hav-

ing to leave your couch. Also included is the documentary *Neil Hamburger in Australia*, which covers Neil's unlikely success *Down Under*. One of Neil's most sought-after oddities, a short film based on his stand-up album *Left for Dead in Malaysia* is included and ultimately doesn't live up to the long wait. A music video for an oddly fun Neil tribute song called "Seven Elevens," with its hilariously bad VHS production, is the unlikely highlight of the set. Neil has been doing his shtick for over a decade now and has stretched his unique act into a cottage industry. Too bad the DVD's not better. (www.neilhamburger.tvheaven.com)

5 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



Led Zeppelin: The Origin of the Species DVD (MVD/Sexy Intellectual)

The Rolling Stones: Under Review 1962-1966 DVD (MVD/Sexy Intellectual)

Two of rock's biggest acts of all time didn't just establish their sound out of thin air. These two DVDs examine the rhythm & blues influences that helped create two of the most popular and enduring acts in rock 'n' roll history. Archival footage, songs from Chuck Berry, B.B. King, and Elvis Presley, and interviews from journalists and band acquaintances reveal what these bands learned to play and how they then forged their own identity. Unfortunately, no actual band members are interviewed (and you might think that Led Zeppelin's doc is actually about The Yardbirds), but the wealth of information here, though it's all probably able to be found piecemeal on the Web, is better seen and heard in these short documentary chunks. Overall, these are two entertaining and informative journeys into the history of rock music. (www.mvdb2b.com)

Both: 6 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



Pixies: loudQUIETloud: A Film About the Pixies DVD (MVD)

This remarkable film from Steven Cantor and Matthew Galkin somehow managed to avoid a substantial theatrical release (outside of some festival screenings) earlier this year, and it's a crime. Watching *loudQuietloud* is like uncovering the holy grail of rock and roll. Focusing on arguably the biggest music story yet of our new century, the Pixies reunion, this film tracks the band from first rehearsal (where Kim Deal has to hear a CD to remember an iconic bass part) to the unprecedented sold-out first leg of their tour that follows. In it, our heroes, Charles "Black Francis" Thompson, Kim Deal, Joey Santiago, and David Lovering come back from their post-Pixies lives and put aside personal differences to make thousands of music fans all over the world giddy.

Seeing the band perform is as wondrous as you might expect, but what sets the film apart is the startling intimacy achieved in chronicling each member's challenges and vulnerabilities, whether it's Kim's newfound sobriety, which she copes with supported by her bandmates as well as her twin and Breeders cohort Kelley (who travels with the band), or Charles battling with his brain, legacy, and David: When the drummer's father dies during the tour, he turns to substance abuse to cope, which affects both his performance and perhaps more distressingly, his personality. And in the midst of the drama is devoted family man Joey, who is also trying to finish his documentary score that he committed to before the band got back together. Essential viewing for any Pixies fan. (www.loudquietloud.com)

9 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



Playtime: The Criterion Collection DVD (Criterion)

Jigoku: The Criterion Collection DVD (Criterion)

Jacques Tati's ambitious and self-indulgent *Playtime* is at once a dated and simultaneously astute look at the modern age circa 1960s France. Originally filmed in 70mm with mostly dialogue-free sound to accompany his main character Monsieur Hulot's journey through a steel and glass metropolis, the film loses its full power in the translation to DVD. Even the mighty Criterion can't make up for the loss of a huge screen (there are scarce close-ups) and six tracks of modern white noise (cars in traffic, elevators, intercoms, etc.), but they do include a second disc full of impressive extras, illuminating Tati's singular and unique narrative, to make up for it.

Nobuo Nakagawa's *Jigoku* (*Hell*, a.k.a. *The Sinners of Hell*) was light years ahead of its time in 1960 when the guilt-laden trip into hell was released. Beautiful widescreen photography illuminates the story of a young man who flees a hit and run accident and whose guilt eventually guides his journey to death (after a stay at the most twisted old-folks home of all time) and then eventually into pus-and-blood-filled hell in the final gory and marvelously grotesque third of the movie. A 45-minute documentary on the alcohol-consuming Nakagawa and his legacy of 97 (!) films is illuminating and extensively covers his acclaimed *Ghost Story of Yotsuya*. You can

see Nakagawa's fingerprints over today's cult directors Takashi Miike and Kiyoshi Kurosawa. (www.criterionco.com)

Both: 8 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



The Prisoner: 40th Anniversary Collector's Edition DVD (A&E)

1967 U.K. sci-fi classic *The Prisoner* returns in the smashing and impressive *40th Anniversary Collector's Edition*. One of television's great accomplishments, this surreal show was co-created by and starred Patrick McGouhan. McGouhan played Number Six, a former secret agent of the British government who, after resigning, is abducted and is taken to a mysterious island he cannot leave. With its paranoia, complexity, and political allegory, *The Prisoner* seems to be continually name-checked these days, and has influenced countless other shows, including the recent *Battlestar Galactica* and *Lost*. The new 10-disc set has every episode in the proper order and also includes a 60-page book, a foldout map of the island, and several extras to keep fans pining over the series' lasting mysteries. (www.newvideo.com)

9 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



Radiohead: OK Computer: A Classic Album Under Review (MVD/Sexy Intellectual)

Radiohead is fêted yet again in this documentary review. What can be said about the nearly ten-year-old album that hasn't already been touched on? Well, we've got pompous talking heads (including 33 1/3 *OK Computer* author Dai Griffiths), some video footage, and hyperbole galore. It seems a little early for this kind of track-by-track retrospective, but considering the band's rabid fan base, perhaps this release was greenlit to capitalize on Thom Yorke's solo album and the period before a fresh Radiohead release. The doc's only an hour; you could do worse things with your time, like watching *My Name Is Earl*—twice. (www.mvdb2b.com)

4 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman



Tegan and Sara: "It's Not Fun. Don't Do It!" (Vapor/Sanctuary)

It would be easy enough, at first, to mistake this Canadian duo of twin sisters for yet another early-'80s retread. Their melodic fusion of synth and electric guitar, the Benatar hair, and the channeling of Dale Bozzio's vocals all seem like dead giveaways. But Tegan and Sara were singer/songwriters entrenched in the DIY tradition years before "Walking With a Ghost" hit alternative radio, and this DVD, loaded with two-and-a-half hours of content, flourishes not because it arrives on the heels of their 2004 breakthrough album *So Jealous*, but because Tegan and Sara share stories about their music and where it has taken them since the days of distributing their own cassette demos.

The DVD's centerpiece is a warmly shot live performance from February 2005, re-sequenced and edited down to 45 minutes, eliminating the between-song repartee that's a hallmark of Tegan and Sara's shows. On the audio commentary, it's explained that this was done "just to irritate people." Happily, the other material—a photo album with commentary, a "Making of *So Jealous*" documentary, a tour doc, marionette shows, and music videos from when the sisters had better haircuts—make up for the slight. In all, it's a generously personalized package from a pair of artists with seemingly irrepressible creative energy. (www.teganandsara.com)

7 Blips out of 10

By Chris Tinkham



U2: Zoo TV: Live From Sydney DVD (Island/UME)

Oh, the early-'90s: Video screens with countless buzzwords and phrases (AIDS., Everything You Know Is Wrong, ABBA, etc.) fill the stage, and leather-clad Bono's got his Fly glasses on and a satellite phone—it must be U2's Zoo TV tour, which celebrated the band's excellent *Achtung Baby* and *Zooropa* albums along with satirizing the proliferation of the media and consumer culture. Having never gone to this tour myself—I remember it for the ignominious fact that these were opening band Pixies' last live dates, as well as the interesting fact that Public Enemy opened in some venues—this 2-DVD set more than makes up for what I missed out on from the headliners. The first disc has a whole set from Sydney, Australia, and the second disc is full of extra songs and mini-documentaries on how complicated the show was to put on. This set is great for U2 fans and for those looking for some instant nostalgia for an era that seems so long ago, even though it really wasn't. (www.u2.com)

7 Blips out of 10

By Nick Hyman