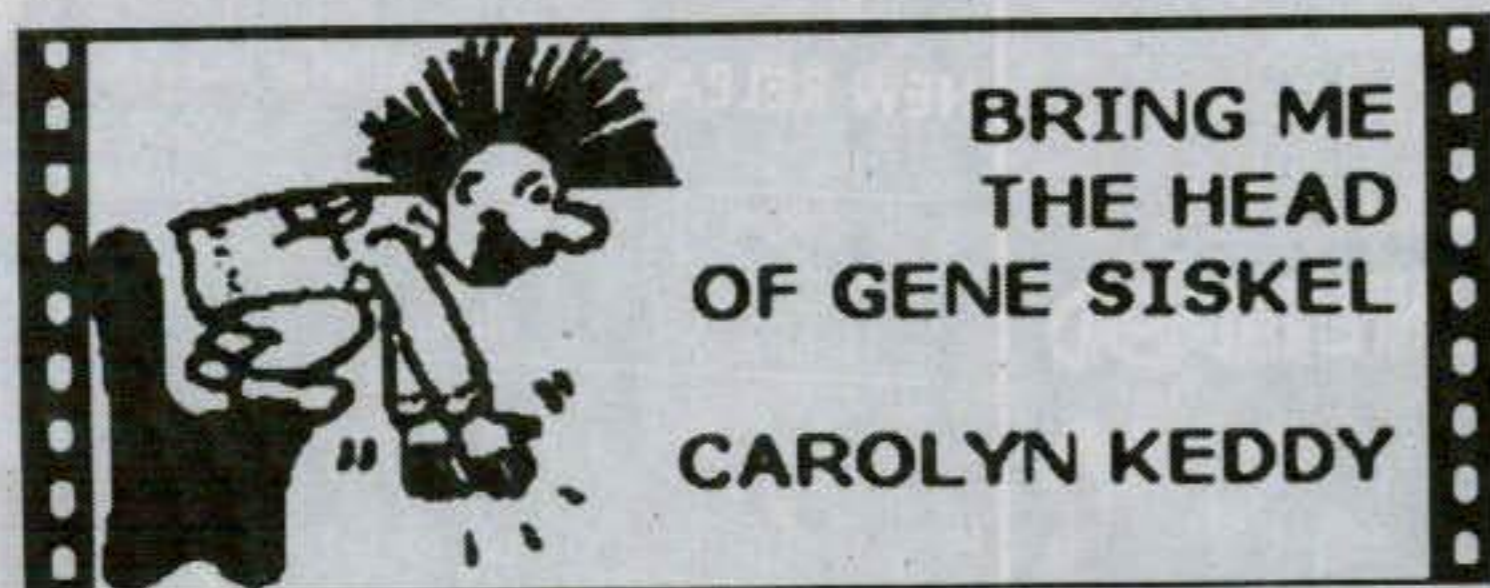


The special effects were from the US, though; San Francisco's Orphanage also brought us their wild visuals to "Planet Terror" section of **Grindhouse**. While some critics have faulted the effects, I found that they were considerably more realistic and inventive than well-received genre pieces like, say, **Anaconda** or **Snakes on a Plane**.

In short, go with an open mind and a willingness to have fun. If it makes you think, all the better.



IT'S ONLY UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE, RIK

I really don't need much convincing to see a movie. I went to see **Starter For 10** simply because I read that it was a British film about a guy whose dream was to go on the television quiz show *University Challenge*. All I know about *University Challenge*, aside from the mention in The Undertones "My Perfect Cousin," comes from the BBC TV series *The Young Ones*. When MTV was showing *The Young Ones* in the '80s my brother and I would record the show on Sunday night and watch the episode over and over during the week. We would learn the names of British personalities that had no meaning to us and we would use phrases from the show to freak my mother out. Punk and *The Young Ones* influenced my limited understanding of English culture during my high school years.

Starter For 10 is the story of Brian Jackson, a working class kid from an English beach town who is leaving his hometown and his friends to attend college with the rich kids at Bristol University. When he arrives at his on-campus house and meets his new roommates, they are dressed as women. They are going to a party and so is Brian. An obvious set-up for a quick introduction to college life.

Starter For 10 is set in '80s so it liberally uses music from the time: The Cure, The Smiths, Echo and the Bunnymen, and Psychedelic Furs. I strongly sense that director Tom Vaughn was going for a John Hughes-style teen comedy. Unfortunately, he misses most of the aspects of what made those films classics, though he does get the basic idea. He sets up a romantic triangle. Brian Jackson is instantly attracted to the blonde, beautiful, rich girl Alice who he accidentally gives his place on the *University Challenge* team. She is a girl who is out of his league, though she seems to like him. Then there is Rebecca, the girl who is obviously perfect for him. She is a campus activist, smart and interesting. However, Brian is stuck on Alice.

Vaughn's biggest problem in setting up this triangle is that he doesn't manage to make Alice that much of an opposite of Brian. They both end up on the *University Challenge* so they are intellectual equals. She doesn't seem obsessed with being popular nor have any other superficial personality traits. She doesn't have a boyfriend and is not attracted to an obvious type of the opposite sex. The only scene where the film seems to get the subtle class difference issues John Hughes films were so good at is during the party scene on the night before Bristol's appearance on *University Challenge*. Here it is revealed that Alice is attracted to the bad boy type exemplified by Brian's best friend Spencer and *University Challenge* team leader Patrick sees the lower class as lazy.

So by the time **Starter For 10** actually gets to the *University Challenge* section, I have almost stopped paying attention. Yet, the similarities to the "Bambi" episode of *The Young Ones* are kind of silly. The director had to use it as inspiration. There is the trip to the studio with everyone being edgy and some attempting to study and then the attempted cheating. Of course, *The Young Ones*' version is more hilarious with Vyvyan getting beheaded on the train and Rik admitting to cheating while on air, only to have the whole thing ended with a giant éclair crushing the set. **Starter For**

10 ends more realistically. (www.starterfor10.com)

I guess it is well-known by now that I love these cheesy "Under Review" DVDs. During one recent double feature, I came to realize that while I revel in the stupidity of the critics, it usually the background items, the influences on the band under review, that seem more interesting. The two recent DVDs **David Bowie: Under Review 1976-1979: The Berlin Trilogy** and **U2 Achtung Baby: A Classic Album Under Review** both revolve around the city Berlin and Brian Eno. Although Brian Eno's music outside of Roxy Music doesn't really excite me, the odd shots of Eno performing, decked out in a metallic fringe sweater or large feather blouse while twiddling knobs on his oversized synthesizer look too cool. Note to the Under Review staff, let's see a Brian Eno DVD next.

David Bowie: Under Review 1976-1979: The Berlin Trilogy focuses on the years when David Bowie and Iggy Pop moved to Berlin to get away from America and their drug habits. While there Bowie helped Iggy make two albums and then recorded three albums himself with the help of Brian Eno and Bowie's co-producer Tony Visconti. Bowie was already influenced by some of the German musicians Neu, Kraftwerk, Can, and Cluster. Bowie wanted to work with some of these musicians but either overprotective management or Bowie himself stopped that from happening.

The result was three records recorded in Germany: *Low*, *Heroes* and *Lodger*. Of the three, **Under Review 1976-1979: The Berlin Trilogy** makes *Lodger* seem like the one you really need to hear. The critics reviewed can't find anything good to say about it. Critic Paolo Hewitt simply dismisses it, "You wrote *Heroes*. That's enough for me." Of course, the whole story told personally by Bowie, Eno and even Iggy Pop would be much more incredibly interesting, but for now we have to settle for a bunch of "experts" giving their two cents. Though the inclusion of German musicians Dieter Moebius (Cluster, Harmonia) and Michael Rother (Neu, Harmonia) is pretty cool.

U2 takes a similar approach in their German recording experience. Instead of running from drug problems, U2 was trying to get away from their giant egos, pretentiousness and holier-than-thou attitude. So they went to Berlin to reinvent the band. What a better way than to record an album influenced by the Manchester ecstasy scene? Of course, this was the '90s not the '70s. Brian Eno was now present as producer introducing some of the different elements David Bowie used on his Berlin records.

Though all the experts on **U2 Achtung Baby** will tell you this is U2's most influential album, I'm still not buying it. Especially when the least believable critic in this series, Nigel Williamson, comes on screen. Every time that Williamson has been on one of these DVDs he seems like he has just read an article on the band is regurgitating some type of generic assumptions about the band. Why do they keep using him? (www.chromedreams.co.uk)

The third DVD in my own Berlin trilogy is **Einstuerzende Neubauten Palast Der Republik**. It is an interesting live document on many levels. I saw a screening of the film at the Berlin & Beyond film festival in San Francisco a few months back. Einstuerzende Neubauten are not a band I would listen to at home, so watching a full concert performance of them hardly seemed like the way I would pass my time. But I went along with some friends and found the performance pretty riveting. This is not the type of band you want to be watching from the back of a giant concert hall. You really need to be close up, seeing all of what is going on. The film manages to show a bit of everything. There is an amazing array of instrumentation and performances.

Einstuerzende Neubauten singer Blixa Bargeld was at the screening. He told of how the band ordered the cameras on-line and arranged the shoot. The performance takes place in the Palast Der Republik in Berlin that was formerly the Parliament building and has since been torn down. Individual donors who were then invited to the performance and participated in the 100-member choir that accompanied the band financed the film. Amateurs shot the film, but sometimes you need the inexperienced to do what the professionals would probably fuck up. (www.neubauten.org)

I am always looking for films to review. If you made one, send a copy to Carolyn Keddy, PO Box 460402, San Francisco, CA 94146-0402. If your film is playing in the San Francisco Bay Area, let me know at carolyn@maximrocknroll.com. I will go see it.