

# DVD REVIEWS

Ah, the documentary – while the word can conjure up painful memories of vapid educational films or hours stuck in an art-house theatre learning about the life and times of Bob Ross, we're here to prove that documentaries can indeed rock. For your viewing pleasure, we present three DVDs that will provide **both** knowledge and entertainment.

## Keith Richards – Under Review

The intro of this documentary doesn't bode well for things to come, with a Richards-esque – rather than genuine Keef – riff playing beneath the voice-over, giving the viewer the impression of a long two hours ahead. Luckily, it seems it's a case of a small budget rather than lack of vision.

Refreshingly, the focus here isn't so much interviews with Mick and the rest of the band, or ex-wives and girlfriends, or even with Keith himself, although they are present; it's about how Keith affected change, first within the band, then with the band's music, and ultimately within popular culture. Let's face it – even today, at the height of elegantly-wasted couture, if the Toronto-bust-era Keef walked by, heads would still turn.

Having sat through and read many bios of the man, as well as the Stones, I was surprised at the amount of knowledge I

had gleaned by the time the credits rolled. The interviews in *Under Review* rely on those who were within Keith's periphery during the Stones' heyday; among them critics Anthony DeCurtis and Robert Christgau of *Rolling Stone* magazine. Christgau, in particular, makes some of his trademark laser-like insights throughout, and DeCurtis is just plain funny.

Other standouts include interviews with rock critic Chris Welch and biographer Kris Needs, who both offer insights that only people close to Richards could offer: Keith as a family man and a junkie, a musician and a husband, a man willing to live with his choices and their outcomes. Interviews with legend Bernie Worrell – P-Funk founder and member of Richards' X-Pensive Winos – are alone worth the price of the DVD.

Oddly, some seemingly key points are conspicuously absent: a few major albums, *Black and Blue*, Ronnie Wood's first Stones foray, and the last commercially and artistically well-received Stones album, *Tattoo You*, aren't even mentioned. Additionally, *Some Girls* gets slagged pretty hard, whether deservedly so is debatable.

But despite its shortcomings, *Under Review* is thoroughly enjoyable, and easy to recommend to any Keith Richards aficionado, or anyone wanting to learn more about the man behind the legend. -JE

\$19.95

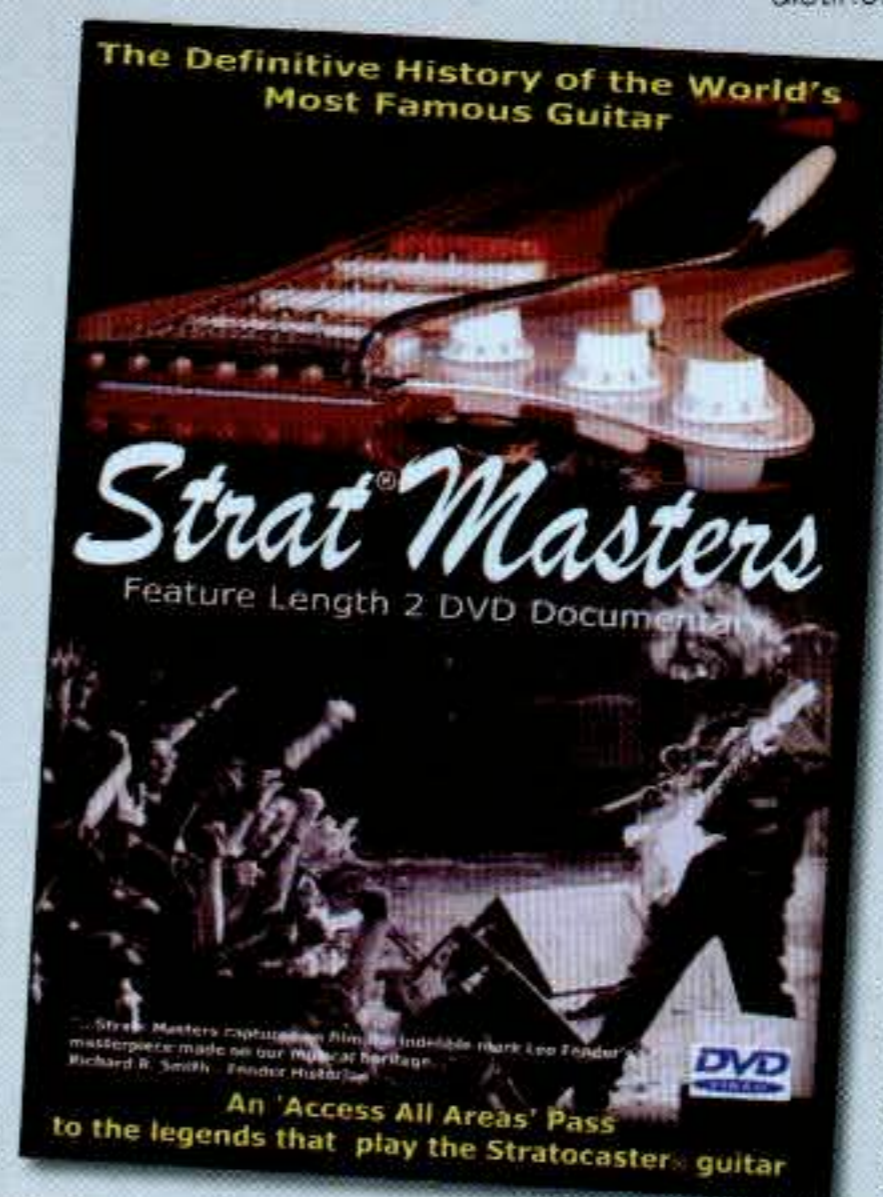
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## Strat Masters

This video opens upon the late Rory Gallagher playing some delicious slide on his workhorse Stratocaster. As the notes ring through your ears, there's a distinct feeling of *this is going*

*to be good*. And for the most part, *Strat Masters*, a two-disc epic of a documentary about the most famous instrument to emerge from Fullerton, California, doesn't disappoint.

The bulk of the film consists of interviews with famous Strat aficionados – heavyweights like Jeff Beck, Mark Knopfler and Robert Cray show up to pay their respects. While generally enlightening, this reliance on artist interviews is a real double-edged sword; moments spent with Ry



Cooder (When asked if the guitar changed the world: "The electric guitar made a huge difference to the world – Jesus!") and some great stories from Bruce Welch, but there are equally as many longwinded interviews that slow the film's pace and divert the focus. This film is at its best when it covers the guitar that ties all of these musicians together, not the other way around.

Commendably, the film spends a considerable amount of time exploring the technical side of the instrument. There are in-depth discussions, by the artists themselves, about the effects of string gauge on the instrument's sound, the use of the classic 3-way switch to achieve different sounds and the defining traits of single coil pickups – culminating in an oddly-placed trip through Seymour Duncan's factory. For the true gearheads among us who relish discussing scale length and winding techniques, this DVD will provide hours of amazement.

Inevitably, there were some production decisions made that might not vibe with viewers – while Jonah Sithole, an African guitarist with Blacks Unlimited, is featured and Richie Kotzen's first signature model (actually a Telecaster!) is discussed at length, Eric Clapton's Blackie is somehow lost in the mix and there's even less mention of a Strat-toting bluesman known as SRV. The narrow focus and considerable length of this video may leave some players fidgeting in their seats, but for the Fender faithful, *Strat Masters* is definitely a ride worth taking. -AM

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