

DVD REVIEWS

ROY BUCHANAN – Live at Rockpalast (MVD)

Speculation on the cause of Roy Buchanan's suicide in 1988 tends to put the blame on career woes and the predictable substance abuse, in his case alcohol. The Washington DC-area musician was arguably one of the greatest guitar players, but things weren't going his way. So he hanged himself with a noose made from his shirt in a Virginia jail where he had been locked up for public intoxication. Even by rock & roll standards, it was a horrific way to go out, especially for a man so talented, legend has it, that he refused invitations to take Brian Jones' place in the Rolling Stones and to join Derek & the Dominos.

Whatever the cause, Buchanan's death left a burden of sadness for family, friends and fans. But his albums still circulate, the best of them the first two on Polydor and the last three on Alligator. Now there is also a 72-minute DVD from a 1985 German television appearance. The ironically titled *Live at Rockpalast* captures the Telecaster master when his career was on a brief upswing. Having been badly used by the majors, he had signed with Bruce Iglaur's independent Alligator label and been allowed to record what and how he wished, the result being tracks which ranged from bluesy honky-tonkers to vintage R&B.

Buchanan's Rockpalast appearance catches him fronting a basic four-on-the-floor band working through a 13-song set list. Never much of a singer (Delbert McClinton handled vocals on Buchanan's second Alligator release), he opens with the instrumental "Thing in G (Short Fuse)," which showcases at warp speed his fret skills. He then goes into the Stax classic "Green Onions," ignoring the less-is-more ensemble playing by Steve Cropper on the original for maximum flash instead. Fortunately he slows down for the third song, "Roy's Blues," an 11-minute tour de force of lovely instrumental work.

Having refined his chops working as a studio musician on hundreds of sessions, Buchanan then gives the Ventures' "Walk Don't Run," Don Gibson's "Sweet Dreams" and Hank Mancini's "Peter Gunn" a roughing up. The last isn't quite as virile as Duane Eddy's Top 40 cover, but it's close. Buchanan then goes into a shuffle called "Blues in D" before taking on Jimi Hendrix by covering "Hey Joe" and "Foxy Lady." The German audience eats up the finger-burning pyrotechnics, but neither approaches the Experience versions, particularly as Buchanan's backing musicians will never be mistaken for Mitch Mitchell and Noel Redding.

The disc wraps with versions of the old bump 'n' grinder "Night Train" and "Linda Lou" ("They call my baby Patty...") and two of Buchanan's best, "Messiah" and "Wayfaring Pilgrim." Even the meandering backing band can't detract from the beauty of these two instrumentals. They seem to shimmer and glide, and both are worth the price of the DVD. (Bill Wasserzieher)



JOHN FAHEY – 1978 Live at Audimax Hamburg (Blast First Petite, UK)

KEVIN COYNE – 1979 Live at WDR-Studio L Cologne (Blast First Petite, UK)

Asked during a post-performance interview what influence Leo Kottke's success has had on his own career, John Fahey muses that he started playing faster and now needs to "slow down," which was dead right. By the late 1970s, Fahey had become the Dean of American Primitive Guitar (which is pretty reasonable considering he did most of the work to invent the genre), and was touring and drinking (see the 1978 *Live at Mr Brown's* bootleg for proof of that) and playing a little machine-like at times, all of which this DVD puts on full display. In some ways, the interview section on this disc may be the most interesting part, with Fahey's well observed comments on the difference between American and British guitarists, and his desire to emphasize the rhythm above all else in his playing.

Taking the stage like the sloppy academic he pretended not to be, Fahey's hour-long set starts with freight-train versions of "On the Sunny Side of the Ocean," "Hawaiian Two Step," and "Lion," and it isn't until he brings the engine down a notch for "Wine and Roses" and "Poor Boy Long Ways from Home" that the set really kicks into gear. But once it does, there's some serious magic, despite the feeling that he would have been just as happy backstage with a clutch of beers and a scholarly argument or two.

Also originally broadcast on Cologne's WDR-TV *Rockpalast* series, Kevin Coyne's 1979 set finds him at a fever pitch as well (something in the German "wasser" no doubt)—solo for part and accompanied by Zoot Money on keyboards and backing vox for the rest. If Fahey's set suffered at times from the intensity of his playing, Coyne's is made all the better by his.

Anything but a technician but in all ways a true stylist, Coyne jokes that he borrowed his guitar technique from Hendrix (and as far as his use of his left thumb as a barring device, this is basically true), but there's no mistaking his slam-it-out approach for anything other than a device to hammer his songs home. Maybe a closer comparison would be to Johnny Rotten, another Anglo-Irish eccentric with a divining rod for the psychically painful. It's great stuff, and all the more confirmation that Coyne may be the one remaining British nutcase in need of a major reissue reexamination. (Zac Boerger)



NEW YORK DOLLS – Lookin' Fine on Television (MVD)

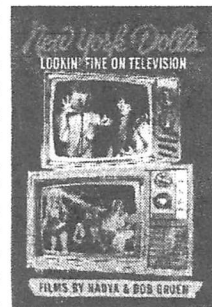
Lately I have been paying for satellite radio, mostly to hear Sri Rama-Lama-Ding-Dong Johansen, who is to swamis and gurus as Mr Ed was to Seabiscuit. The Sri hosts a weekly Sirius/XM show with mixmaster sets featuring Blues Magoos, Paul Robson, Nino Rota, Moby Grape, John Coltrane, the occasional opera belter and whoever else he feels like playing. It's exactly the kind of the weird and audacious music you'd expect from a guy who wore a feather boa for the New York Dolls, a white suit as lounge lizard Buster Poindexter, and still doubles as a vampire

blues man with a band called the Harry Smiths.

The Sri is of course David Johansen, one hydra-headed, downright *protean* (to get fancy-worded) wiseacre who puts me in mind of a burglar who gets shot breaking into a house and then sues the homeowner. Johansen's early performing days are on display in a *Lookin' Fine on Television*, which dates from when he, Johnny Thunders, Sylvain Sylvain, Killer Kane and Jerry Nolan were upping the sleaze factor for New Yawkers. The Dolls may not have been a great band, but in stage presence they were a camper version of the Stones with a dose of the Marx Bros.

This 70-minute production is black & white, shot on what looks like the grainiest stock available, with a sound capture guaranteed to cause an audiophile to bleed tears. Producers Nadya and Bob Gruen, who also did the earlier *All Dolled Up* (which shares footage), use the old trick of filming multiple performances and then editing each of the 15 songs so that Johansen & Co wear multiple costumes for each tune (Johansen rotates through halter-top, vest, t-shirt, formal tux & tails, etc). It's a amusing technique for one or two songs, but 50-plus minutes of quick cutting is goosing the pony a bit much for most viewers.

The Gruens do break things up by inter-cutting segments from two early '70s interviews, the first with Thunders and Kane doing most of the talking/mumbling, and the second with Johansen rambling solo to rock journalist and scenemaker Lisa Robinson. Even then, going on 40 years ago, the Sri had his monologist rap down pat. Then and now he gives great entertainment value. Catch him on satellite if you have the lucre or watch him front the Dolls back in the day on this video or catch him and Sylvain the next time they put on their finery and come back out still "Lookin' for a Kiss." (Bill Wasserzieher)



FRANK ZAPPA – From Straight To Bizarre: Zappa, Beefheart, Alice Cooper and LA's Lunatic Fringe (MVD)

Yet another formerly unthinkable concept brought to life in full color: An in-depth study of a record label that demonstrated with frequency and rigorous specificity just what is meant by the phrase "no commercial potential." Founded by Frank Zappa and manager Herb Cohen in 1968, Bizarre Records (and its subsequent incarnation as Straight Records) never got fat and sassy off the product it issued. But that wasn't the point.

A verb that gets used a lot in this feature is "document." And regardless of what you may think of the acts Zappa signed to Bizarre/Straight or the music they made, it does seem that his intent was largely to preserve for posterity the work of the people he found so interesting in late-'60s SoCal. They're pretty much all here and fairly well served by interviews, a smattering of archival footage and generally insightful critical analysis, though members of the Tim Dawe *Penrod* cult may come away unsatisfied.

Since the overall story of the label is fairly well known—how Zappa, angered by Verve Records' censoring of the Mothers' albums, founded his own shop



(with manufacturing and distribution handled by a fairly unobtrusive Warner Bros)—the details and stories behind the music are the real draw here. Singer-songwriter Sandy Hurwitz (Essra Mohawk) tells how Zappa recruited her as a Mother and signed her to make an album, then lost interest and handed the project off to Ian Underwood, who evinced even less interest. Pamela Des Barres fleshes out the GTOs' story. Jerry Lawson runs down the Persuasions' tale (some of his best comments are on the DVD Extras portion), and Dennis Dunaway is especially good recounting Alice Cooper's surprise 9am live audition at Zappa's Laurel Canyon log cabin. And there's plenty on Larry Fischer's wildness and Jeff Simmons' graduation from Easy Chair to would-be solo star, and a bit less on Tim Buckley.

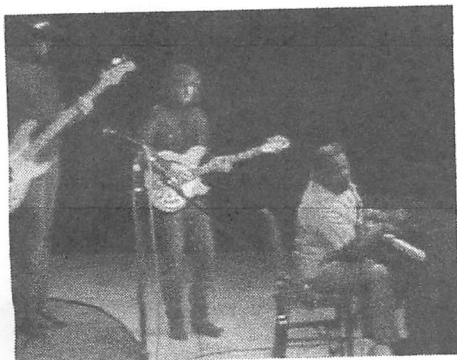
Perhaps because he's the most interesting Bizarre/Straight artist and his one LP for the label remains among pop's most original recordings, Captain Beefheart gets the most engaging coverage. Magic Band members John French (Drumbo) and Bill Harkleroad (Zoot Horn Rollo) tell all, from the Captain's 1968 prediction that "Years from now, people will be wanting to talk to you about this record" to recollections of the early, Zappa-produced sessions and the cult-like goings-on inside the band's Woodland Hills rehearsal pad that yielded *Trout Mask Replica*. (The house was on the market last year; real-estate ads touted its "rock heritage.")

From *Straight to Bizarre* is one of the better of many historical pop overviews released recently. Part of that owes to the solid job it does of explaining (and especially establishing a wide aesthetic and cultural context for) its subject. Another part is the sheer magic of the subject itself: The crazy and creative participants of a time-specific scene the world is still trying to figure out. (Gene Sculatti)

V.A. - BARRY RICHARDS TV COLLECTION, VOL 1 (Resurrection Productions) DVD/CD

It's happened to every record collector. You doze off and dream of meeting your favorite dead rockers, of being transported back in time to a cutout bin to buy rarities for \$1 each, or maybe even of seeing legends in their prime.

The *Barry Richards TV Collection, Vol 1*, is where one of those dreams becomes reality. Where San Diego obscuro Jamul do their grit-and-brimstone cover of "Tobacco Road" live and raw in the Maryland woods, then back Little Richard in 1970. Where there's 1971 footage of Bob Seger slamming out power chords on an American flag guitar on three songs—"Lucifer," "Song for Rufus" and "Ramblin' Gamblin' Man"—from his most fertile period, the Byrds backing Fats



The Byrds back up Fats Domino.

THE ROLLING STONES — All 6 Ed Sullivan Shows (SOFA Entertainment)

"I promise you they will never be back on our show," so said Ed Sullivan about those crazy Rolling Stones in the days following their first appearance. The title of this DVD lets you know how firmly that stood. Thankfully, Ed could hold a grudge about as well as Mick could hold still, because the six times the band appeared on the "really big shoe" constituted some of the most exciting live rock and roll television of the decade and still make for fascinating viewing more than 40 years later. It's the practically perfect-in-every-way '60s Rolling Stones throwing their magic at millions of all ages at once.

Underground videotapes and DVD-Rs of these appearances have been hits with collectors for years, but Sofa, similar to its 2003 set of the Beatles' Sullivan appearances, presents six complete hour-long episodes, including the other acts and the original commercials, so viewers can experience the shows exactly as they aired way back when.

Or approximately. But I'll get to that. First, here's a rundown of what the Stones did on those six Sundays:

October 25, 1964: An energetic "Around and Around" and a solid "Time Is on My Side," marred marginally by some flat harmonies from Bill. Mick's dancing and jumping leaves the young audience frantic, so much so that after the curtain drop, Ed nearly loses his patience trying to quiet the screamers so he can introduce next guest Charlie Drake (who doesn't appear on this set, necessitating trimming of Ed's efforts). Our boys are dressed in non-matching suits, save for Mick in a casual polo neck, looking quite tame in hindsight, but rather scruffy for 1964.

May 2, 1965: A very enjoyable "The Last Time," until the end of Keith's guitar solo, when his guitar suddenly cuts out for the rest of the song. Later, Brian does stinging slide on a fine "Little Red Rooster," followed by "Everybody Needs Somebody to Love," with Mick pointing in different directions of the audience for the "I need you, you, you" bits. And over the closing credits, we see the band jamming on "2120 South Michigan Avenue," absent from all bootleg comps of Sullivan appearances, so its inclusion here alone warrants the price of the whole set.

February 13, 1966: In my opinion, their most enjoyable Sullivan stint, and their first in color. It has an excellent version of "Satisfaction" (followed on the original show by Mick and Ed briefly chatting, strangely missing here), Mick and Keith alone performing "As Tears Go By" and the whole band again for a killer "19th Nervous Breakdown." Unfortunately, this appearance would be their last to feature the band playing live. All future appearances merely featured live vocals over the backing tracks heard on the records.

September 11, 1966: They begin with "Paint It Black," with Brian dressed in solid white to camouflage his arm cast, sitting with a sitar, switching to lute later for "Lady Jane," and finally to guitar for "Have You Seen Your Mother Baby Standing in the Shadow," with Keith miming piano. The Stones are still great to watch, but since they're not playing live, it's less exciting



than previous appearances. However, Mick immediately turning his back to the audience when Ed mentions Herman's Hermits is priceless.

January 15, 1967: If not their finest time on Ed, certainly the most talked about. First comes "Ruby Tuesday," for some reason changing "Still I'm gonna miss you" to "Girl I'm gonna miss you," but that wouldn't be the more remembered alteration of the night. That, of course, would be "Let's Spend (Some Time) Together," but you know that story, and you're no doubt picturing Mick's eye-rolls this very second.

November 23, 1969: Two complete seasons passed without a visit from Mick and crew, during which time Brian had passed and Mick Taylor joined. When they did return to Ed's stage, it turned out to be for their last time. In a pre-taped segment, the Stones mime three songs: "Gimme Shelter," "Love In Vain" and "Honky Tonk Women." On the original broadcast, Mick's microphone was extremely low, to the point that the songs were almost instrumentals. Some redubbing of the records rectifies this on the DVD.

Along the way we see many other acts, comedians, acrobats, Broadway performers, non-rock singers, singing nuns, etc, who shared billing with the Stones on one show or another, including notable names such as Tom Jones, Louie Armstrong and Petula Clark. As a result, no matter how many times you may have already seen these Stones clips, seeing them in their original context gives them a new glow: "19th Nervous Breakdown," for instance, mere minutes after the Romanian Folk Ballet demonstrates the wide scope of entertainment housed weekly on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Grandparents waiting for Louie Armstrong had to sit through the Stones!

That said, quite a bit of tampering has been done on this set. Presumably because of trouble obtaining clearances, many acts from the original episodes have either been removed or had songs cut, with their time filled by the use of segments from other episodes. Using the October 1964 show as an example, the original episode featured Charlie Drake and Jack Jones. Neither appears here. We instead see Itzak Perlman and Phyllis Diller (who talks about it being Mother's Day, providing an obvious clue that we're not seeing an October performance, although in some episodes the clue comes from Ed suddenly wearing a different suit). All six episodes have some surgery of this kind. No, the beloved "Rock It To Me" Muppets skit did not really air on a night the Stones were on. And beware of some stock audience shots most obviously NOT from the 1960s inserted here and there to mask edits. Even if what we see aren't the exact same shows, they still demonstrate the something-for-everybody aspect of Sullivan's show.

The package contains some neat photos, a duplicate ticket for one of the shows, and some over-the-top and error-laden notes from Greil Marcus. Do buy this set, not only for a refresher of what the '60s Stones could do, but also of the American culture they did it to. (Michael Lynch)

