



Headsup: The Retro Conundrum

Posted on 08.10.08 by Widge @ 8:02 pm

An ongoing attempt to make sense of the onslaught of new swag that people want you to buy. Should you? I'll try and help.



Okay, so this is a big re-release of numerous Paramount titles, with "I Love the 80's" smacked across the top and they each have a four-song CD, making each a two-disc set. And...really, I'm not sure who these are aimed at. Let's run them down. The **Ferris Bueller** is retro in that it's basically the original bare bones release, the only plus being that it contains the commentary by John Hughes that was stricken from [the Bueller Bueller edition](#). If you're really wanting a special edition, you're better off buying that special edition--but unfortunately you've got to snag them both to make one complete special edition with commentary. I say rent a version with the commentary and decide if it's worth multiple listens.

Footloose is completely bare bones. Which is sort of weird, because you can go get [the Special Collector's Edition](#) ([reviewed here](#)) for less on Amazon than you can get this new 80s version. So. You figure it out.

Pretty in Pink is another headscratcher. It's completely bare bones and also costs more than [the previously released "Everything's Duckie Edition."](#) You can get the latter for \$9, the former for \$11. Again, even the guy with the English degree can recognize what's what with that.



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Hey, there's special features on the **Some Kind of Wonderful!** Wait, no, that's just widescreen version enhanced, subtitles in English and three Dolby Digital audio tracks. Um. Right. I have a soft spot in the sub-cockle region of my heart for this film, just because it brought together two of my 80s crushes--Lea Thompson and Mary Stuart Masterson. Yeah, I said it. And not to sound like a broken record, but...yeah. [Previous collector's edition](#): \$9. This one? \$13.

Now, **Top Gun** comes with a commentary by Bruckheimer, director Tony Scott and a cadre of naval experts. It also has four music videos. And you might be thinking that it sounds a lot like the first disc of the two-disc collector's edition. But it's worse than that: it *is* the first disc. It says Special Collector's Edition and Disc 1 on it. Which means they're asking you to pay \$13 for the first disc of [a two-disc set that you can get for \\$9.](#)

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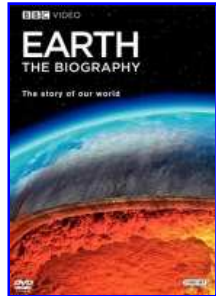
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This is just the tip of the iceberg of the "I Love the 80s" promotion. And don't get me wrong, as much as we complain about double and triple dipping, the fact is the studios are out to make money. And--in theory--they wouldn't release stuff like this if they didn't figure somebody would buy it. But why would you release these things with less features than a better version that I can get for less money? That is the part that simply does not compute. If you're going to do this, create "I Love the 80s" boxed sets, charge \$5 a disc, and at least that way you can justify buying them as gifts with which to horrify youngsters who wouldn't be able to pick a John Hughes film out of a lineup. But this? Total headscratcher.



What were we just saying about BBC docus? They pretty much already start at a rental level and can only work their way up from there, thanks to production values and gorgeous visuals. Here we've got a pair of two-disc sets to talk about. First up is **Wild China** strategically streeting this week because of this wacky thing called the Olympics. Perhaps you've heard of it. Exploring the country in six episodes, the show strives to put in perspective what there is to see besides smog, coughing athletes and algae blooms that needed clearing. Almost six hours of content are here, and Bernard Hill is on hand to narrate...and if you saw him in Jonathan Miler's documentary on atheism, then you know he's going to do a damn fine job. Comes with a making-of featurette. [Click here to buy it from Amazon.](#)

Now let's back up a bit for the next one, **Earth: The Biography**. I hear that the planet didn't exactly authorize this one and wanted to put out an autobiography before this one could hit but just couldn't manage it in time. So c'est la guerre. But the title speaks true: this is how the Earth got to where it is today and is sort of like a Planetology 101 course. Going around the world to view bits that illustrate how the force of nature work, Dr. Iain Stewart is on hand to guide you through it. This clocks in at just under four hours and would be a good one to have on hand just to blow the minds of kids and others who, like myself, might have received a science education that was somewhat lacking in the education part of it. [Click here to buy it from Amazon.](#)



So I'm coming late to the party on Buckethead. I admit this. I first heard of him through his work with Les Claypool. Then I ran across the Deli Creeps. How did I miss a masked guitar player who wears a KFC bucket on his head? I honestly don't know. But I do know that he's damn good and I dig his stuff. Avabella has a new release, **From the Coop**, that is nothing but demo material from 1988, making it the earliest official Buckethead material available. It has nineteen tracks on it and is a must for anybody who is a completist about such things or just wants to see what badass guitarists are like when they're much younger. [Click here to buy it from Amazon.](#)



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Sarah McLachlan is one of those artists, as I mentioned before, that I found the album at hand, then went back and snagged the previous albums. Anyway, it's interesting that this Legacy Edition of **Fumbling Towards Ecstasy** is out with both the DVD of the original home video release and *The Freedom Sessions*. This is actually a helluva deal for anyone who doesn't own the releases on their own, since they're all still in print and buying all three is a lot more than the \$18 you can get this for on Amazon as I type this. The only thing I don't know is whether or not the bonus bits on the DVD in here are the same as was on the original DVD release in 2005. There's a featurette, music videos and a photo gallery. Basically, I can't tell if it's remastered or not either--I'm not the best judge of such things being half-blind and half-deaf as I am. So I'm thinking if you already own this material, no need to repurchase. But if you don't and you enjoy the album, this is how to get all of it at once and for a decent price. [Click here to buy it from Amazon.](#)

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