

## NEW ORLEANS MUSIC IN EXILE

(STARZ, 113 MINUTES)

[www.robertmugge.com](http://www.robertmugge.com)

**Katrina didn't merely breach the levees**



**T**oward the end of *New Orleans Music in Exile*, Dr. John boldly proclaims,

"We plan on coming back stronger than ever." Optimism reigns throughout Robert Mugge's two-hour documentary on musicians displaced by Hurricane Katrina, and if sheer willpower alone was enough to rebuild a city, New Orleans would already be back to its old self. The scenes of devastation—cars tossed into swimming pools, houses moved 100 feet from their foundations, pianos splintered—tell another story, of a community of artists torn apart and scattered to Memphis, Austin and points beyond. David Freedman, manager of NOLA's beloved WWOZ radio, estimates that some 3,000 to 5,000 musicians were forced to leave, some losing their instruments, homes and livelihoods. But there's an overpowering sense of pride and determination in everyone profiled here—Big Easy fixtures like Cyril Neville, Marcia Ball and Irma Thomas—and the film, which includes generous servings of live music in and outside of New Orleans, leaves an indelible feeling that a little stormy weather won't stop the music.

**Special features:** Post-hurricane performance footage. JEFF TAMARKIN

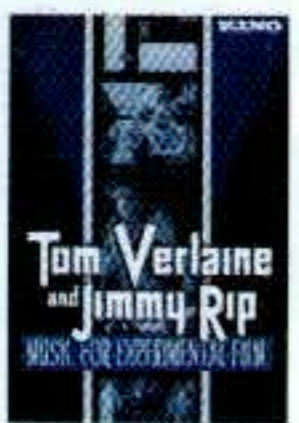
## TOM VERLAINE AND JIMMY RIP

**MUSIC FOR EXPERIMENTAL FILM**

(KINO INTERNATIONAL, 78 MINUTES)

[www.kino.com](http://www.kino.com)

**Experimental = inaccessible**



**T**om Verlaine, singer, guitarist and driving force of Television, links up with old friend, producer and guitarist Jimmy Rip to perform a series of newly composed musical scores to old



Director Robert Mugge with Big Chief Monk Boudreaux

experimental films. The seven black-and-white selections are all from the 1920s, featuring the likes of France's (by way of Philadelphia) Man Ray and Germany's Hans Richter, among others. Some of the films include subtitles, but the silent works are very avant-garde and generally rely solely on the instrumental music to convey mood, emotions and create tension. Only two scores, "Emak-Bakia" and "Ballet Mécanique," have enough rhythmic propulsion to actually enjoy outside of this context; the others are just as eccentric as the films. For the most part, this is the type of thing you could imagine being projected on a giant white wall and playing softly in the background at some high-brow art party hosted by a Warhol worshiper.

**Special features:** Verlaine and Rip bios. AARON KAYCE

## FUZZ: THE SOUND THAT REVOLUTIONIZED THE WORLD

(MVD/BRINK, 91 MINUTES)

[www.musicvideodistributors.com](http://www.musicvideodistributors.com)

**Guitar geeks: worse than Trekkies?**



**S**ince the advent of the electric guitar and subsequently the distorted electric guitar, players have embraced electronics as a means to amazing tone or far-out special effects: Cliff Taylor's *Fuzz* is to these guys as *Trekkies* was to fans of *Star Trek*—a love letter to the devout and a document of a phenomenon. Where did these stompboxes originate and how did they come to be highly-prized artifacts and tools for amateur and professional guitarists? Where did the Big Muff come from and what laconic indie rock guitar hero bought them all up because of their scarcity? (A: noted gearhound J. Mascis.) How does a Dunlop

Crybaby wah pedal differ from a Vox? Why do they call them stompboxes and how do they withstand the nightly abuse? These questions and more are answered as Taylor interviews players like Billy F. Gibbons, Peter Frampton and Wolfmother's Chris Ross and the mad scientists behind the devices, often demoing the gadgets to show how they fit into the rock lexicon. Sadly the storytelling is exclusive: if you don't have a guitar, amp and stompbox yourself, it's hard to follow the casual, conversational exposition. And even if you do, it's not enough to stay interested.

**Special features:**

Technical, collectible featurettes. RANDY HARWARD

## LA VIE EN ROSE

(HBO, 141 MINUTES)

[www.hbo.com](http://www.hbo.com)

**La vie, out of order**



**E**dith Piaf had one of the dramatic, and tragic, lives of any popular music performer of the 20th century, literally rising from the gutter to become, as Marlene Dietrich put it, "the soul of Paris," while encompassing the kind of sex-drugs scandal that would thrill today's paparazzi. So it's a shame that writer/director Olivier Dahan tells the story in a non-linear fashion. Yes, there are captions to let you know what year you're in, but the lack of dramatic flow severely lessens the overall impact; before you can digest a scene, let alone fully grasp how it relates to other periods in Piaf's life, you're shoved into another decade. The film's saving grace is Marion Cotillard's performance as Piaf, which lives up to all the critical hyperbole. Astonishing, remarkable, extraordinary—Cotillard is never less than riveting (wisely, she's allowed to mime to Piaf's recordings; who'd want to try and imitate those?). Still, one wishes for more insight into Piaf's character, which might have come were her story told simply.

**Special features:** Extended version; featurette on how Marion Cotillard prepared for her role. GILLIAN G. GAAR

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