

# REWIND

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

*TV Party: the Documentary* DVD  
(Brinkfilm)

★★★

During the 1978-1982 height of New York punk/new wave, there once lived a NYC public-access cable show called *TV Party*, which was masterminded by Glenn O'Brien, a columnist for Warhol's *Interview* magazine. With co-host Chris Stein from Blondie, O'Brien congregated a who's who of the era's local underground bohemians. Regulars on the anarchic, punkishly obnoxious program included Deborah Harry, Jean-Michel Basquiat,

Robert Fripp, David Byrne and B-52 Fred Schneider. Broadcast live with crude black-and-white cameras and problematic sound, it embodied the raw, irreverent spirit of the late-'70s, DIY punk age.

*TV Party* was grounded in a Warhol sensibility of throwing a bunch of interesting people in front of cameras and capturing whatever naturally happened. Even within this documentary's judicious selection of the best surviving footage, it's obvious that the technique generated both awe-inspiring cultural history as well as a lot of unwatchable crap. In both



the vintage clips and newer interviews, O'Brien's deadpan, detached, new-wave-cool persona is generally engaging and funny, but sometimes can slip into a grating, hipper-than-thou arrogance. However, certain members of the TV Party clique (most notably Stein and Harry) are so delightful that one can forgive any such smug pretension. And, in fairness, O'Brien's subversive use of the TV medium and his coverage of cutting-edge artists *did* amount to a historic achievement in modern art and countercultural media.

— Michael David Toth

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