



### **Glen O'Brien -- Glen O'Brien's TV PARTY (Brink DVD)**

OK, there is an admitted soft spot in my heart for Glenn O'Brien's no budget and ultra lo-fi cable access show *TV Party*. As it was only shown live in New York City, folks like me tuned-in and inevitably got turned-on via the barely-viewable VHS tapes. This initial batch of three DVDs respectively feature the complete "Time & Make-up Show" (August 19, 1979), "Halloween Show" (October 30, 1979) and "Crusades Show" (February 17, 1981).

The program itself is a synthesis of "Larry King Live," "Jerry Springer Show" and "Saturday Night Live". The constant flow of action on and off camera provide an unbridled surrealism, leaving the distinct impression that no matter how many times you watch and re-watch, you'll never catch it all.

Some of the most vivid images are of celebs -- such as the semi-retired musician Robert Fripp or visual artist Jean-Michel Basquiat -- taking calls from viewers. Equally memorable are the duo of Fifi & Claude who unleash a unique brand of accordion and guitar punk rock. There are extremely rare musical performances, ranging from a ragged-but-right rendition of "The Tide Is High" from Blondie, to Walter Steding's relatively obscure one-man band on "The Secret Spy". Another extra worth the price of admission in and of itself is the decidedly laid back conversation with George Clinton of P-Funk fame.

The sonic and visual quality are as good as it gets with a definite step-up from the old homemade copies of copies of copies of someone else's video tapes. That said, *TV Party* was never known for high-def production values. The show was shot and broadcast in a sort of sepia tone that isn't completely black-and-white but certainly not color either. The sound squeaks with feedback and sometimes guests are inaudible because they are not properly outfitted with working microphones.

Still, the years have treated these time capsules well and the seeming 'flaws' have become more like beauty marks or imperfections on fine leather. They are proof that there was honest-to-goodness 'reality television' back in the day when reality was not such a demoralizing or degrading prospect. Indeed, those *were* the days.

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