



FEATURES

- ↳ The Hardest Queen Quiz Ever
- ↳ Discography

Queen: Under Review '73 - '80


By Larry Phillips

Disc Details:

Video:	16:9
Anamorphic:	N/A
Audio:	• English (Stereo)
Subtitles:	N/A
Runtime:	103 minutes
Rating:	N/R
Release Date:	November 15, 2005
Production Year:	2005
Director:	N/A
Released by :	Chrome Dreams/Music Video Distributors
Region:	0 NTSC

RATING





[Queen](#)
Queen

Best Price \$13.05
or Buy New \$17.99

Buy [amazon.com](#) from

Privacy Information

QUOTES

"Queen never spawned a host of imitators like some of the other great bands of the time, but that is because Queen carved out a unique niche for themselves with their style and a talent that none dare approach."

"[Queen Under Review] is just about their music. I liken it to some of the conversations you would have with a record store owner, a radio music professional, or a critic... and"

It is very easy to underestimate Queen. With their gigantic stage shows, easily recognizable stable of hit singles, and the undeniably magnetic and flamboyant lead vocals of Freddie Mercury, most can't see the whole picture and the huge contributions that they made to popular music. The first question on your lips seems to be, "why?"



There are many reasons, but generally their massive, worldwide success seems to be the main one. Popular

tastes of the masses never seem to get critical respect until after the dust has settled, and that is when the real story begins to emerge.

Queen has always been a band that defies classification. Were they a balls-out rock band, a pop group, a glam band, prog rockers, a cabaret show? In many cases, they were all of the above and more; but in being that, they were wholly and uniquely original in their time. While they may have toyed with the various trends that emerged during their reign (Zeppelin-esque rock, Floyd and Yes-styled progressive, white boy English disco, etc.) they survived the waves that destroyed other bands, and Queen soldiered on. When punk on one end and disco on the other smashed "corporate rock" to little pieces, Queen saw the peak of their fame. Queen never spawned a host of imitators like some of the other great bands of the time, but that is because they carved such a unique niche for themselves with a style and a talent that none dare approach.



The bulk of Queen's success is due to the fact that they were made up of four talented and diverse songwriters. Unlike other bands who weren't balanced when it come to songwriting duties, singer Freddie Mercury, lead guitarist Brian May, drummer Roger Taylor, and bassist John Deacon all brought their own individual style to the group and Queen was able to successfully provide the alchemy needed to forge that into the "Queen sound"... unmistakable yet still fluid.

Needless to say, I am a Queen fan. I have been since I first discovered the rock of the 1970s, and I will probably remain so. The music of Queen is very rewarding, and like the way each hour of sunlight shines differently in the Grand Canyon, each stage of life and



taste will bring new facets to light in their music.

that is pretty n
what you are
getting."

"As the filmma
were very spec
about the year
covered, we ge
very little
information ab
the formation o
the band or the
rise. Essentiall
was "they get
together, and t
release their fi
album."

Disappointing,
consistent with
their perspecti
of the record
buying public."

As good as Queen was in the studio, they were arguably even better on the stage. They were one of the first bands to meticulously film their live concerts and were on the leading edge of music video production (long before there was ever an outlet for it in the US.) They were a band who knew the power of the "image" far in advance of the curve. DVD has been very good to Queen, with a variety of video collections and live shows available. The stacks of authorized material are enough to satisfy every fan of the band.

I was excited at the prospect of **Queen: Under Review** until it hit my doorstep. My eyes caught the bold print on the back and one phrase stood out like the arc from a welder's torch: "not authorized by Queen." Ugh. All that my mind could conjure was a series of barely affiliated talking heads and no Queen music.

I am happy to report that I was a bit wrong. I was shocked to hear all sorts of Queen music on the disc, as well as interview and performance footage that I had never seen on DVD before. Know this going into the film: This is *not* a look behind the curtain at Queen. This is *not* an exploration of their process. This is *not* a story of how the band related on a personal and professional level. Knowing what this is not can seem disappointing, but it is valuable in enjoying **Queen: Under Review** for what it *is*.

Queen: Under Review is the ultimate fan's look at Queen from 1973 to 1980, strictly by the albums they released to the public. This is a walk through their career by people who have an

opinion about the band from the point of view of an average person who walks into a shop and buys a record. This is just about their music. I liken it to some of the conversations you would have with a record store owner, a radio DJ, a music professor, or a critic... and that is pretty much what you are getting. The key talking heads are: Paul Gambaccini, broadcaster, journalist and Mercury friend; Malcolm Dome, journalist, author and "Queen expert;" Simon Bradley, guitarist and journalist; Nigel Williamson, contributing editor of



Uncut Magazine; and Chris Welch, former Melody Maker writer; among others.

Now, even though the film is not authorized by Queen, the band is mostly given a pass. No dirt is dished and very little criticism is leveled against the band in any way. Only passing mention is made regarding Mercury's homosexuality and no discussion is given to whether that fact had any impact on the band or their career. In fact, the overtly respectful tone disappointed me a little bit and certainly made me wonder why Queen didn't give this English production their blessing. But, as I stated, this is a fan's view. Most fans passionate enough and knowledgeable enough to sit for a documentary are not going to have many nasty things to say. For the most part, all of the interviews were interesting enough and drove the narrative through a fairly simple, straightforward route from one album to the next. Initially, the most



interesting interviewee was Simon Bradley. He had his guitar with him during his interviews and would break down Brian May's licks piece by piece, noting both technique and equipment, in order to illustrate what May's work did to create the "Queen sound." As I said, "initially." After awhile, it got a little repetitive, and some of the bits were so very technical that they derailed the flow of the piece. The film drifts away from Bradley for a

bit, so his eventual return is actually welcome towards the end.



All of the interviews were cleanly shot, if a bit generic. They are lit well and provide an interesting composition, but tend to lay there flat

after awhile. The real gold here is the Queen footage and stills. We get looks at a lot of BBC and European television performances as well as a number of their true, live shows. There are some things that I had never seen before, and they were fascinating to watch. While most of the clips illustrated what the talking heads were saying, there were one or two that were off enough (in either the song played or the era in which the footage originated) that they stood out and became distracting. I would probably chalk that up to the limited supply of footage available to the filmmakers. There was also a very nice Mercury interview included. This footage has been seen before and is available on one of the Queen video collections, but it fit in well with the narrative. Sadly, that was the only footage of a band member speaking, but at least they were consistent with the theme of the piece.

As the filmmakers were very specific about the years covered, we get very little information about the formation of the band or their rise. Essentially, it was "they get together, and they release their first album."

Disappointing, but consistent with their perspective of the record buying public.

Additionally, the cut-off says nothing about their return to form after a stretch of time off, and that resurgence

being cut tragically short by Mercury's rapidly declining health due to complications of the AIDS virus. It has a cheery, rose-colored perspective which, while not unwelcome, needs to be part of a larger whole for those interested in the band.



Presentation

As I had mentioned, the current interview footage looks and sounds pretty good, but the band footage is more of a mixed bag. The filmmakers obviously did not go to the original sources and much of it looks like multi-generation tape. None of this bothered me much

and none of the footage was so bad that it became annoying. Most of these types of documentaries have established a standard of substandard clips, so my viewing eye was already adjusted to it. The same can be said for the sound. While none of this would be mind-blowingly spectacular running through your home theater, it wasn't really meant to be. None of the songs or performances are totally intact, so they are used more to illustrate a point. In this respect, the standard stereo mix is acceptable.

The disc chapters are divided by each album title released by Queen during the years on the cover. The menu and title screens are of the barest minimum and look like something that any home-use software creates by default.

Extras

The extras are similarly minimalist, and consist of: *The Hardest Queen Quiz Ever* and a *discography*. The discography is generally text based with thumbnails of the album art. It is surprisingly thorough, listing release years, tracks, and even including the bootleg releases, but it is nothing that can't be found on the Internet. The quiz, also text-based, lives up to its billing, but it is far too minutiae-based for any normal human being. Few of the questions asked are even touched upon in the main title and it is useless to the 98% of the people who would buy this title.



Overall

Queen: Under Review is a nice little title that would fit well in the collection of any Queen fan. It certainly isn't strong enough to stand alone, nor would it be of much interest to anyone who doesn't enjoy the band or to people getting their first look at Queen, but it is like a great conversation with a bunch of music nerds who know their stuff.