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Tuesday, 24 January 2006



Queen: Under Review 1973-1980

Contributed by Brent Simon
Friday, 20 January 2006



Interesting, really, that at the time no one questioned the sexuality of singer Freddie Mercury, given his penchant for open-chested, skin-tight, checkered unitards. No matter, really. It just makes the continuing irony of thousands of diehard "Red Staters" chanting along to "We Are the Champions" at sporting events that much more delicious.

Yes, we're talking about Queen, folks. While their legend would take a while to grow Stateside, it was between the years noted in

this title that one of England's finest, most eccentric and individualistic rock 'n' roll bands released an outpouring of creativity rarely paralleled in the modern rock era. Over a quarter century later, the legacy of these classic recordings has maintained its indelible stamp on the pop cultural radar, courtesy of continued classic rock FM spins, memorable appearances in *Wayne's World* and of course as the ubiquitous home stadium anthem of choice for sports squads professional all the way down to high school level.

Part concert compilation, part talking head celebration, *Queen: Under Review 1973-1980* collects rare live and studio performances of the band playing some of their best known hits, plus rare and classic interview footage and a host of other material, all interspersed with independent review and analysis from a panel of esteemed music experts that includes broadcaster/journalist Paul Gambaccini, *Uncut* contributing editor Nigel Williamson, ex-*Melody Makers* features editor Chris Welch, journalist Malcolm Dome and guitarist Simon Bradley. While more definitive concert offerings simply must be in the offing somewhere, this is a fine, globe-hopping release to tide fans over, a worthy way to spend some extra, accumulated Christmas cash.

Amongst the included songs here are rare, *Top of the Pops* performances of "Good Old Fashioned Lover Boy" and "Killer Queen," the 1975 Rainbow Christmas concert version of "Stone Cold Crazy" and "Bicycle Race," live from Tokyo's Hippodrome in 1979. Of course, no Queen celebration would be complete without a little "Bohemian Rhapsody," and *Queen: Under Review* obliges with a so-so Dublin version just prior to the song's release as a single. There's also a rousing Austin, Texas performance of "Another One Bites the Dust," a sloppy Paris take on "Crazy Little Thing Called Love" and "We Are the Champions," live from London. Given all the disparate sources, the gathered video quality is fairly solid and the stereo sound mix is passable though not likely to stir up the ire of your downstairs neighbors.

The program's unauthorized roots mean it doesn't have a plethora of *prima facie* interview footage or the remaining members of Queen's official regal stamp, but the recollections gathered here are for the most part affectionate if not provocative. C+ (Movie) C+ (Disc)

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