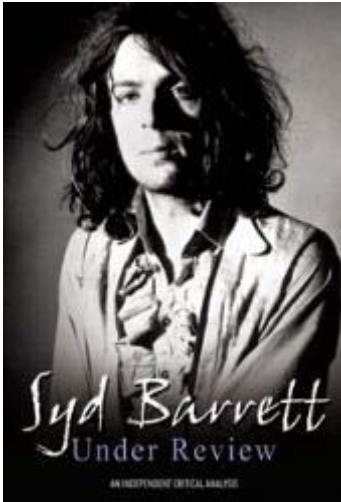


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SYD BARRETT UNDER REVIEW CHROME DREAMS/MVD

The short career of Syd Barrett has been one of great fascination for fans and journalists. Not only did Barrett produce some of the most unique pop music of the day, but he vanished after just a few years. Yet unlike many of his famous contemporaries (Morrison, Hendrix, Joplin, Jones) he didn't die, he simply retired from public life amid rumors of excessive LSD intake and schizophrenia, tales that continue to this day. Syd Barrett – *Under Review* is a new DVD that attempts to tackle the man and the myth.

As with many unauthorized DVDs, the footage presented is often intriguing but still has much to be desired in terms of quality. Rare TV and promo clips are often silent and/or grainy, yet it's still a treat to see these early videos and obscure footage, like the band performing Barrett's eerie self-aware swansong, "Jugband Blues." *Under Review* claims to be "The ultimate review and critical analysis of the music of Syd Barrett," but this is really a silly boast, as there are only a handful of pundits here, though there is some insight. Fond memories and praise for the back-to-basics method found on his first solo record *The Madcap Laughs* are understood, and while it's appropriate to point out that the charming LP was a very real one (with its inclusion of false starts and such) as well as an early example of lo-fi, the critics fail to recall that the early Floyd's brand of psychedelic music had already become passé by this time, and he surely would have tried a different approach anyway. It's widely assumed that Barrett succumbed to mental illness accelerated by massive acid-intake, but MOJO writer Mark Sturdy says that recent interviews with former roommates and friends claim Syd rarely used LSD. Sturdy sums it up by remarking that what makes Barrett so fascinating is that we don't really know what happened to him.

Much like Barrett's career, the documentary ends suddenly. There's no mention of the still-unreleased single, "Vegetable Man"; his final studio recordings in 1974 (said to have been wiped); nor his showing up unannounced at a recording session for Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* wanting to contribute and freaking out his former bandmates (he was quietly ushered out)—all stories worth recounting. Everyone knows Pink Floyd carried on without Barrett, becoming one of the biggest groups in the world during the '70s. Syd remained an influence though, his unseen presence impacting the characters brought to life on such mammoth albums as *Dark Side Of The Moon* and *The Wall*. The band never got over the loss of their leader, and he was even mentioned during their much-publicized reunion at Live 8.

It's highly unlikely Syd Barrett will ever return, but if he did, that would be real news. The probable reality is we will continue to have biographies like *Under Review*. Nothing sells like a good mystery.

--Bart Bealmear

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