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## Music Review

03/01/06

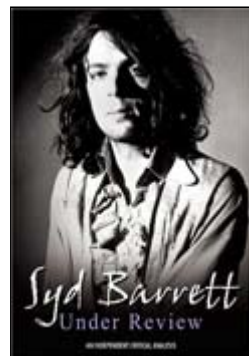
Reviews by - [Lindsay Planer](#)

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It's been far too long since *As The Disc Spins* perused the DVD isles. So, this week let's do just that with a trio of recent arrivals. First up, a new documentary on Pink Floyd co-founder Syd Barrett, and then a pair of multi-disc packages featuring vintage and timeless television shows that have not been seen in decades.

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### Syd Barrett -- Under Review (Chrome Dreams/MVD)

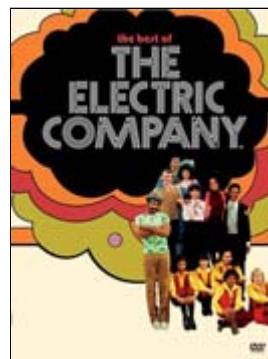


For starters, it is important to note that *Syd Barrett: Under Review* (2005) is wholly unauthorized by the artist. That said, this hour-long biopic does offer various opinions and first-person insights into the misunderstood and often maligned life of Pink Floyd's initial instigator and psychedelic co-conspirator, Syd Barrett. The vast majority of the program is drawn from modern interviews with noted English rock journalist Chris Welch, Barrett biographer David Parker, Nigel Williamson from *Uncut Magazine* and fellow musician Hugh Hopper -- formerly of the exceedingly influential *Soft Machine*.

Between the recollections and commentaries are brief snippets of extremely rare video footage of the original Pink Floyd. While none are complete, submitted for the viewers approval are a host of archival clips. These highlights include scenes lifted from the promotional film [read: music video] for Pink Floyd's "See Emily Play," as well as Pink Floyd's November 6, 1967 Stateside appearance on (of all things) *American Bandstand*. There is even a few seconds of Barrett actually commenting on the music after their lip synced performance of "Apples & Oranges."

*Under Review* then traces Barrett's post-Floydian activities during the chaotic creation of his solo efforts *The Madcap Laughs* (1970) and -- less than a year later -- the eponymously-titled *Barrett* (1970). If you are a die-hard fan, no doubt you'll appreciate the fact that most of the music heard during the post-Floyd era comes from BBC Radio recordings, rather than off the records themselves. For instance, not only are the BBC versions of "Terrapin" and "Dominoes" superior, but they exude the whimsy and lo-fi production quality that became Barrett's trademark.

### **The Electric Company -- The Best of The Electric Company (Shout! Factory)**



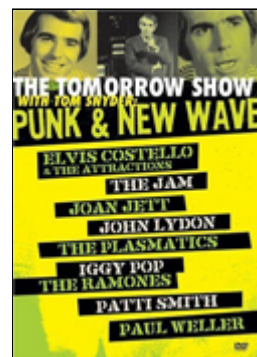
Without the *Electric Company* you might not be reading these words right now. Well, OK that might be a bit of an exaggeration. But what is certain is that your humble columnist undoubtedly enhanced his reading skills on a daily basis by simply watching the show. More importantly, it taught an entire generation to have fun, while learning to love and respect the written word. During its fruitful 11 year run ('71 - '81) on PBS, it is estimated that one out of every three elementary schools in the U.S. were tuning in, turning their students on and probably preventing many kids from dropping out.

A combination of factors made the show undeniably exciting. There was the practically frenetic pacing, with nary a dull moment on the screen. When you add to that the top-shelf talent, you get some unquestionably innovative techniques used to phonetically educate -- all the while remaining entertaining for kids of any age. Sadly, after the show was cancelled, *The Electric Company* was not re-broadcast and until recently remained a vague memory to its' original audience. All that has thankfully changed as Shout! Factory has joined forces with the original creators from the Children's Television Workshop to resurrect over ten hours of classic *Electric Company* onto four jam-packed DVDs.

The regular cast included an array of veteran performers -- most notably Bill Cosby and Rita Moreno -- alongside a few soon-to-be stars such as Oscar winner Morgan Freeman -- whose portrayal of EZ Reader and disc jockey Mel Mounds were indelibly stamped on many a young psyche. As were the guest appearances -- in the form of voice-overs during animated segments -- from the likes of Joan Rivers (who narrated "The Adventures Of Letterman") and Mel Brooks, who was more often than not the foil for a written or visual practical joke. And who could forget musical satirist Tom Lehrer's surreal razzamatazz for the song "Silent E."

Each of the 20 episodes is preceded by a brief introduction from Ms. Moreno and among the special features are never-before-broadcast outtakes and bloopers, a newly-created karaoke version of "Silent E," as well as short mini-documentaries and cast interviews with Morena, Short Circus mainstay June Angela, the show's co-creator Joan Ganz Cooney and members of the behind-the-scenes production team. The only question remaining is: Why hasn't someone taken the concept of using television as a learning tool -- rather than a babysitter -- to the next level? And no, *Blue's Clues* doesn't count.

### The Tomorrow Show with Tom Snyder -- Punk & New Wave (Shout! Factory)



In many ways, Tom Snyder's *Tomorrow* set the table for the plethora of talk fodder that currently gluts the late night television landscape. *Tomorrow* offered a wide spectrum of guests. The famous, the infamous and the unknown alike were given a platform to discuss practically every topic under the sun. This included musicians of every genre and taste. The audio-visual archivists at Shout! Factory have scored a major league coup with their acquisition of vintage *Tomorrow* telecasts from the 1970s and '80s. The first volume -- in what one can only hope will be a long running reissue series -- contains eight full-length programs covering the then-burgeoning punk scene. More often than not, this was the initial exposure that viewers had to some of the most influential musicians of the day.

This double DVD set boasts nearly five hours of music and conversation with the likes of Elvis Costello & The Attractions ("New Lace Sleeves" and "Watch Your Step"), Iggy Pop ("Dog Food," "Five Foot One," and the Stooges classic "TV Eye"), The Plasmatics ("Head Banger" and "Master Plan"), The Jam ("Pretty Green" and "Funeral Pyre") and with fill-in host Kelly Lange, The Ramones ("We Want The Airwaves," "I Wanna Be Sedated," and "The KKK Took My Baby Away"). There are likewise a trio of non-musical shows with Patti Smith, John 'Johnny Rotten' Lydon and a roundtable discussion of the punk/new wave revolution with industry insiders Bill Graham, Kim Fowley, critic Robert Hilburn and artists Paul Weller from The Jam and Joan Jett of the Runaways.

And by no means do you have to be a fan of punk and new wave to enjoy these complete and unedited broadcasts -- which have been fully restored to replicate the original transmissions. In fact, the other guests are equally as illuminating. Among them are legendary cinematic director Frank Capra, a ten-year-old Ricky Schroeder -- recently of NYPD Blue fame -- as well as author Robert Townsend. Perhaps the most revealing non-musical visitor on this anthology concerns

one-time Washington Post journalist Janet Cook. She was forced to give up her Pulitzer Prize after she was exposed for totally fabricating her award-winning story about an eight-year-old drug addict. While Ms. Cook isn't on the show, one of her supporters, esteemed author James Michener and media critic Judith Crist discuss the indignity that the journalist community suffered because of the story. Riveting stuff and funny how the more things change ... well, you know the rest.

Hopefully future installments will include the Rolling Stones, the Grateful Dead (who play several acoustic numbers), Tom Waits, David Crosby and the final television interview given by John Lennon in 1975. However for now, the premiere *Punk & New Wave* package is not only a musical time capsule, but a reminder of how far both TV and rock and roll have digressed in the ensuing two-plus decades since these were originally seen.

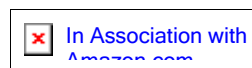
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"Even though most of the people I knew in my youth are gone, I still reach out to them..." Norman Maclean - Paraphrase

"...we should enjoy every sandwich." -- Warren Zevon

"Buy the ticket, take the ride." -- Hunter S Thompson

