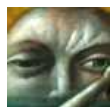




2007 ROUNDUP, PART THE LAST: A NATION REJOICES



'Man cannot live by bread alone. He must also have a beverage.' So sayeth august New Yorker, Mr. Heywood Allen, and so it is with that which I seek out for entertainment and cultural spark. In other words, in addition to the scads of cd's crossing my path in the past year, there were an equal number of books and - since the direct meteor hit taken by my PC, thus requiring a fortuitously DVD-inclusive upgrade! - videos to devour and enjoy.

Speaking of meteors, the visionary music and career of Roger Keith Barrett (Syd to you) of Cambridge, UK, certainly burned as hotly bright and flamed out as abruptly. It is a joy, then, to discover among the innumerable live videos flogged by the post-Barrett/post-Waters Pink Floyd, *THE SYD BARRETT AND PINK FLOYD STORY*, issued by MVD Music Video. This consists of a BBC documentary produced several years ago, thus no maudlin eulogies for the since-passed Syd; a well researched and surprisingly informative look into Barrett's life, including both his solo career after the Floyd and the slow fadeout from public scrutiny.

Yes, the rest of the Floyd gets their POV's in, most notably David Gilmour's fascinating insights into the Barrett solo recordings he produced. But one must ultimately give it up to the doc.'s creators for finding interviewees like Bob Close, Floyd's original second guitarist, and graphics artist Duggie Fields, sharing some disturbing memories of the period he shared a London flat with Syd at his most lysergically altered. There's also contemporary appraisals of Barrett's songcraft from Graham Coxon of Blur, and the man some consider Barrett's present day analog, Robyn Hitchcock, the latter weighing in with well articulated observations on Syd's 'mental verite' composition style. Tasty acoustic renditions of 'Dominoes' and 'Gigolo Aunt' from Hitchcock, too.

Although only in operation a few years, MVD has been doing an exceptional job of making available music-oriented films, some quite rare-ish, but all demanding the attention of those music fans who know quality from *dreck*. Among the vids they've brought back into circulation are select items from those relentless chroniclers of the punk era, San Francisco's own Target Video. These include some choice live footage of Iggy Pop (from the I-Beam club in '81), the Dead Kennedys, and Flipper; one hopes that Target's vault doors will be thrown open wider in time.

MVD has also released many installments of the ongoing music biography/critique DVD series known as *UNDER REVIEW*. These follow a simple enough format: spotlighting a particular band or artist, tracing their career album to album, bringing on assorted talking-head music scribes from either side of the pond, or associates of the featured, for color and attempts at insight. As you might imagine, the results can be either indulgent, redundant and blow-hardy in the extreme, or thoroughly captivating. For me, *UNDER REVIEW* is at its best when featuring artists that haven't already been microscoped to death. With that in mind, I personally and highly recommend UR's Captain Beefheart, Roxy Music, Sandy Denny and Mott The Hoople episodes for maximum enjoyment *and* enlightenment. (And Mott at least were *long* overdue for such a retrospective.)

Yet another noteworthy salvage by MVD must surely be the first-time DVD release of the 1968 British TV film *ALL MY LOVING*. It was directed by one Tony Palmer, who seemed to take it upon himself to actively document the ongoing history of Pop and Rock, seeing as how in the mid-70's he mounted a

Michael Layne Heath is a longtime freelance music writer, put on the path by mags like *CREEM* and then the first wave of Punk fanzines, thus inspiring him to start what became Washington DC's first zine to cover that exploding scene. More recently, he has written for ezines such as *PERFECT SOUND FOREVER* and *TANGENTS UK* (r.i.p.), in addition to the recently reconvened British music magazine *PTOLEMAIC TERRASCOPE* (of Terrastock Festival fame). Mike has also contributed liner notes to a number of CD and vinyl reissues released on Bay Area record label Water Recordings/4 Men With Beards. If all that weren't enough, he is a musician, a published poet, and has been involved in SF/F fandom for the past decade. Which is how he ended up in an auditorium in San Jose one humid night in '02, amazed and amused by Tad Williams' Hugo Awards toastmaster speech...and the rest is not quite history.

Archives

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multi-part visual compendium of Rock to that point, titled ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE (also to be released soon by MVD!).

With its footage of global carnage; the language and subject matter espoused in interviews with Paul McCartney, Eric Burdon, Donovan and Frank Zappa (who would later pick Palmer to direct 200 MOTELS); clips that include the Who and Hendrix at their most pyrotechnic, the Pink Floyd awash in a Martian sea of Chroma-Key effects, and more besides, ALL MY LOVING was thought so provocative that the BBC would only show it after the network's ostensible evening signoff. Palmer's noble attempt to convey The Significance Of Pop Music (in one hour!) is admittedly dated, at times sensational, even heavy handed; juxtaposing the Utopian ramblings of Messrs. Burdon and Leitch with newsreels of Vietnam atrocities, for ex, is about as subtle as a falling anvil on this side of the Millennium. Even so, ALL MY LOVING is worthwhile viewing and a fascinating time capsule to boot.

And if my shelves are already groaning under the weight of vids, the books will assuredly finish them off. Three recent ones have been compulsive in their readability. Michael Bracewell's REMAKE REMODEL (pub'd by Faber and Faber), and Jon Savage's TEENAGE (Penguin Putnam), could even be said to share a commonality, both being pre-histories of their respective subjects, both equally enjoyable.

Bracewell's intent is to display the assorted threads of art, music and culture that were assembled over time into the form of Roxy Music's mind-bending, ear-ravaging debut LP in 1972. To his credit as both a writer and veteran culture commentator (with books like ENGLAND IS MINE), Bracewell makes his tales of unsentimental education - Bryan Ferry's fascination with American movies, R&B and Pop Art, the latter carefully taught by early UK Pop proponent Richard Hamilton; Bryan Eno's early academic forays into experimental music and art theory - as entrancing and exciting as the first time 'Virginia Plain' came rocketing off the turntable into one's ears.

TEENAGE is also a prehistory, albeit of a broader and more global nature. Savage - who also wrote ENGLAND'S DREAMING, one of the great books on Punk - has crafted a deep, expansive examination of global youth culture, in the days before such concepts as 'the teenager' were understood or even articulated. Taking in a timeframe from the 1870's to the end of WW2, Savage presents all manner of youth and adolescent culture, the forms of media that appealed and gave inspiration and a voice: the books of Barrie and Baum, the films of Valentino, swing music. Not hesitating to leave out the darker sides of the teenage coin, either: Leopold and Loeb, the genesis of organized gang culture (given a face via the lens of NY photographer Jacob Riis, among others), the effects and after-effects of the Depression and two wars. Social, political, psychological; exhaustive but expertly researched, scholarly but sanguine, TEENAGE is an amazing study of a path of existence, discovery and expression that was here long before Elvis or bobbysoxers put it on the front pages (and Mad Ave. could fashion ways to commodify and prepackage it).

Finally, Jim Walsh's ALL OVER BUT THE SHOUTING (Voyageur Press) is a well deserved and overdue oral history of the Minneapolis band that should have but couldn't or wouldn't, namely the Replacements. Band members, rockcrits, friends, fans, even enemies all chip in to conceive this portrait of a band too willful to let themselves be spoonfed to the mainstream publicoid, yet too inspired (and proud of it) by Rock's Rich Tapestry to ever be totally embraced by punk rock's volunteer armies of the 80's. Paul Westerberg and cohorts - including the immensely gifted and, as all too often a correlation, fatally self-destructive lead guitarist Bob Stinson - were a band out of their time.

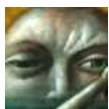
Even so, with songs that rocked as hard as 'Color Me Impressed' or 'Left Of The Dial', were as vividly vulnerable as 'Here Comes A Regular' and 'Within Your Reach', the 'Mats were oh so much of their time, of *that* time. And it's a treat, albeit a sobering one - fig. but also quite lit., when one thinks of the arc of Westerberg's post-'Mats art and life; spare a thought too for Tommy Stinson's indentured servitude under Axl Rose - to have that represented within the covers of ALL OVER BUT THE SHOUTING.

So then, with the above fraction of goodies that passed thru my line of vision in the past 12 out of the way: more music, more new music especially, to let all of you in Tadbogland know about... so STAY TUNED, won't you?

MLH

Posted on March 24, 2008 | 06:56 PM |  0 Comments | [Post a Comment](#)

2007 ROUNDUP, PART THE FIRST



I had this dream the other night. Me and Mme. Beale in a two-seater airplane, flying over the English Channel. *Wow Deb*, I said, *this is a truly fabulous view from here. It's gonna get bumpy*, she said as she pushed me out of the passenger side, fortunately with parachute. On the ride down I realized that my partner R. was perched on top of the parachute screaming 'WTF, Mike, you're going down, and you're DRUNK too!' (really it was just the rarefied Channel air going to my head in wafts of wooziness), *now get over to the damned typewriter and do the next Groovers' Grotto column!* I had no idea what he was talking about till a typewriter came floating down, slightly out of reach, with its own parachute. 'You don't have to do this, you GET to do this, remember that!' I could hear R. screaming from above. *OK, OK*, I said, lunging for the typewriter and soon we made a soft enough landing together.

That's when I woke up, bee-lined it to the computer...and this is what came out...

So then, What Did 2007 Mean To Yours Truly? Casting my a.m. caffeinated grey matter back, some of the more intriguing cultural occurrences made me almost believe in that old saw that 'good things come to those who wait'.

Things like the sight and sound (and how) of curmudgeonly old Uncle Lou revisiting two of the most polarizing pieces of work from his 70's resume (strangely comforting to think of an sexagenarian Lou Reed, thinking of all that time back when that he and Keith Richards were neck and neck for the top slot of the R&R dead pool).

For indeed, '07 saw Lou, along with original helpmates like producer Bob Ezrin and guitarist Dick Wagner, staging live performances of 1973's deliciously depraved concept album *Berlin* (one of which was filmed for an imminent DVD release!), which in itself years ago would have too much for some to hope for, myself included.

But even that was topped by Lou's collab with the German avant-garde string quartet *Zeitkratzer*. In a thoroughly ingenious step that perhaps only their US counterparts *Kronos* could have brainwaved, *Zeitkratzer* took it upon themselves to compose and perform an arrangement for string quartet of Lou's notorious *Metal Machine Music*. Lou was so taken by their endeavors that they ended up performing it together (!), the results of which can now be found alongside the original in CD racks planetwide. As I say, who'd have thought? And what is ostensibly Lou's latest work - static, ambient instrumental pieces assembled on disc as *Hudson River Wind Meditations* - proves to be a more placid but no less challenging chip off the old *Metal Machine*. Further evidence that both the man and his muse are still worthy of attention; don't think Lou'll be making the cover of *AARP Magazine* any time soon. Hallefreakinlujah to that.

Another equally unlikely but just as welcome reemergence in '07 came with the album *Dangerous Game* (on Norton Records) by Mary Weiss: the original teenage pop drama queen, lead singer of the *Shangri-Las*. To her credit and that of everyone involved - her sympathetic and rocking Memphis-based backing group *Reigning Sound*, all the song contributors (including the Dictators' Andy Shernoff and veteran Boston rocker John 'Real Kids' Felice), right down to veteran true believers Billy Miller and Miriam Linna just for getting her back in a studio - *Dangerous Game* neither tarnishes Weiss' past achievements nor attempts a post-Millennial makeover. All 'girl groups' and girl rock singers from the Sixties forward took notes from the *Shangs'* playbook, and this disc happily presents Weiss, self-assured and in great voice, laying down a solid new chapter worth picking up on.

There was no dearth of delight and surprise on the reissue front in '07. Two of my own favorites were long overdue for reappraisal and refurbishment. Welsh trio *Young Marble Giants'* one and only LP, *Colossal Youth*, stood out back in 1980 and still stands out: Alison Statton's unruffled murmuring and the ticking timebomb guitar and queasily piping organ backdrops of the Moxham brothers, locking together to manifest a sound even now so tunefully soothing as to be disturbing. Surely, 'quiet is the new loud' began here. The folks at Domino Records did a bang-up job with this YMG reish, expanding it to three discs by throwing in home demo tapes, 45/EP sides and BBC sessions, enlightening historical notes from contemporary post-punk archeologists like Simon Reynolds, and vintage pics.

You wouldn't use words like 'soothing' to describe the music of the Scottish quartet from that same timeframe known as *Fire Engines*. Theirs was an excitable racket of scratchy guitars, yelping vocals and clattering rhythm, casting their stylistic net as wide as to include the artsy funk of downtown New York (strained through the Ga. red clay rambles of James Brown) and the Cali high desert emanations of D. Van Vliet. Danceable but difficult, fifteen-minute sets were the norm for the *Fire Engines* during their brief career (a fact that highminded then-*NME* scribe Paul Morley was positively gleeful about throwing in the

bemused face of interview subject Jerry Garcia).

In any case, their collective work has been out of print since the early 90's, when unearthed by Alan McGee at a time when his Creation Records empire could seemingly do no wrong. Leave it again to Domino Records - home of Franz Ferdinand, incidentally, who've been less than shy about their stylistic debts to bands like Fire Engines and the equally timeless Orange Juice - to come through succinctly and splendidly. *Hungry Beat* compiles the band's singles and their curious mini-LP of rasping instrumentals, *Lubricate Your Living Room*, among other representatively rough gems. Compulsory listening for those who enjoy the sound of razorblades (or Stanley knives) mating in a trashcan - and really, what sentient being doesn't?

Yes, good things come etc. And that for me includes some dandy DVD's and books happened upon this past year which I will elaborate upon in a subsequent installment, which I assure you dear readers won't be kept waiting for too long.

...to be continued later this week...

MLH
Prez Day wknd.
2008

Posted on February 25, 2008 | 06:56 PM |  2 Comments | [Post a Comment](#)

The Zine Scene!



Thought I'd pass this link along: an astonishing and quite validating series starting up on BBC Radio about the history of fanzines.

My personal awareness of Zines started in the punk days; the likes of *Sniffin' Glue* in the UK, John Holmstrom's *Punk*, Alan Betrock's *New York Rocker* and *Trouser Press* from the Northeast US, and *Search And Destroy* from the Bay Area all had a cumulative inspiration and impact on the zine work I would do from then on. But the idea and culture of zines had been going on for quite a long time previous, and not rooted strictly in music.

So, good for an org. like the Beeb to recognize that and investigate this mainstay of creative communication. Jarvis Cocker (former frontman of Pulp and quite the literary gent in his own way) is host, and the first part of what looks like an extensive, unsuperficial look into zine culture in all its shades is already up at the following link.

Digafreakinroonie folks. (Year Seven update is on its way! No really.)

MLH

BBC Radio 4 Program - The Zine Scene with Jarvis Cocker

- > Jarvis Cocker explores the history of fanzines, small publications
- > designed and produced by devotees of popular phenomena.
- >
- > With the help of fanzine makers, collectors and experts,
- > including Roger Sabin, Teal Triggs, Jon Savage and John Robb, Jarvis
- > discovers the origin of fanzines in science fiction, long before the
- > explosion of home-made fanzines during the punk rock days of the late
- > 1970s.
- >
- > <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b008pcb6/episodes/tags/jarvis%20cocker>

Posted on January 16, 2008 | 07:25 PM |  2 Comments | [Post a Comment](#)

Practically For Dan Fogelberg, R.I.P. (A Holiday Memoir)



(There *will* be the promised year end update sooncome...meantime, here's a Yuletide remembrance of sorts...season's greetings and happy Crimble to all! -MLH)

Tooling around the financial district of DC as a payroll courier in the fall of 1980, just turned twenty-two, between gawking at a track suited Wilt Chamberlain on a street corner (with, for all I know, two of his ten thousand conquests), being in elevators with Coretta Scott King, sniffing 'head cleaner' in rush hour just to make the craziness of downtown DC seem a little shinier...you know, normal courier stuff back then for those who hadn't figured out who to shmooze or how to get to New York...

I'd listen to the company car radio (AM? Well, yes): the big hits then included 'Funkytown', 'The Tide Is High', John Lennon's comeback single, and inevitably Dan Fogelberg's 'Same Old Lang Syne'. As someone in my first blush of roadying and hanging out with bands that I thought were real musicians, I favored the latter tune more for its concluding sax solo than lyrics like...

*'I said the years had been a friend to her
And that her eyes were still as blue
But in those eyes I wasn't sure if I saw
Doubt or gratitude?'*

Bottle of poppers halfway up my nose, my exploding brain would yowl: Go for the gratitude, Danny boy, everyone joneses for love on NYE. Or as they say now, whatever works.

I used to tease my very first college-era roommate about 'Old Fogeyberg' bigtime, back in the fall of 1977. Richard was an earnest post-hippie, a bearded well-bred serious collegiate putting his shoulder to the granola wheel. He worked at the campus natural food deli, did yoga twice a day, grew alfalfa sprouts on the kitchen window sill, and worshipped bands that looked like him, but especially Dan Fogelberg. He'd play Fogeyberg's records on his state of the art stereo, which I'd counter by playing John Cale's PARIS 1919, Colin Blunstone's ONE YEAR, TAKING TIGER MOUNTAIN, you get the idea. I used to get great joy in ticking Richard off, as Fogeyberg murmured his tales of wysteria and unrequited love, by saying things like: 'You know, he'd have a better chance if John Cale wrote his arrangements...'

Fortunately we both agreed on Pure Prairie League's BUSTIN' OUT; I'll give Richard this and not even now refute - a classic country-rock disc, especially side 2. Mick Ronson handling the string arrangements. All hail Craig Fuller.

Then John Lennon was murdered, which made zipping around in the winter rain delivering corporate payrolls somewhat less appealing.

At work, an older dude who was the company campy queer mascot among his workmates objected to my asking if he really *was*. God forbid. Oh honey.

Then Dug and Wendy, concert-going pals I had distanced myself from due to their incorrigible drugging activities, did the R and J thing in a public courtroom in Maryland. We had a mutual exchange for awhile: thrown out of their parents' homes, I let them get high and have sex in my room, leaving their remnants of coke-and-psychoactive-fueled passion for me to clean up, including my marooned Iranian roommate's objection to guests. For my part I turned these diehard progrock fans onto the first Psychedelic Furs album.

The decade was over. So was my job, and the lives of two dear if messed up friends. I put silver foil on my bedroom walls in tribute to Warhol's then new *Popism* book, smoked a lot of pot, and waited for instructions.

San Francisco/12-21-07

Posted on December 23, 2007 | 12:41 PM |  1 Comments | [Post a Comment](#)

The Grotto's Year End Review Preview



So much to discuss this late in the year, dear Tadblog folk. So you can count on my debut column to relate to some, if not all, of the discs and dvd's that made a sizable impression on your reporter in the past twelve. So watch this space over the next few days!

Posted on December 09, 2007 | 01:32 PM |  0 Comments | [Post a Comment](#)



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