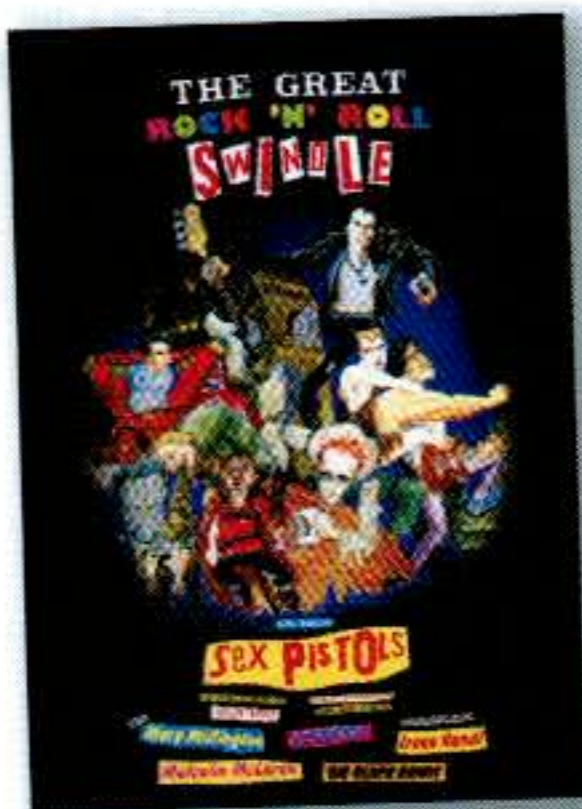


By Randy Harward



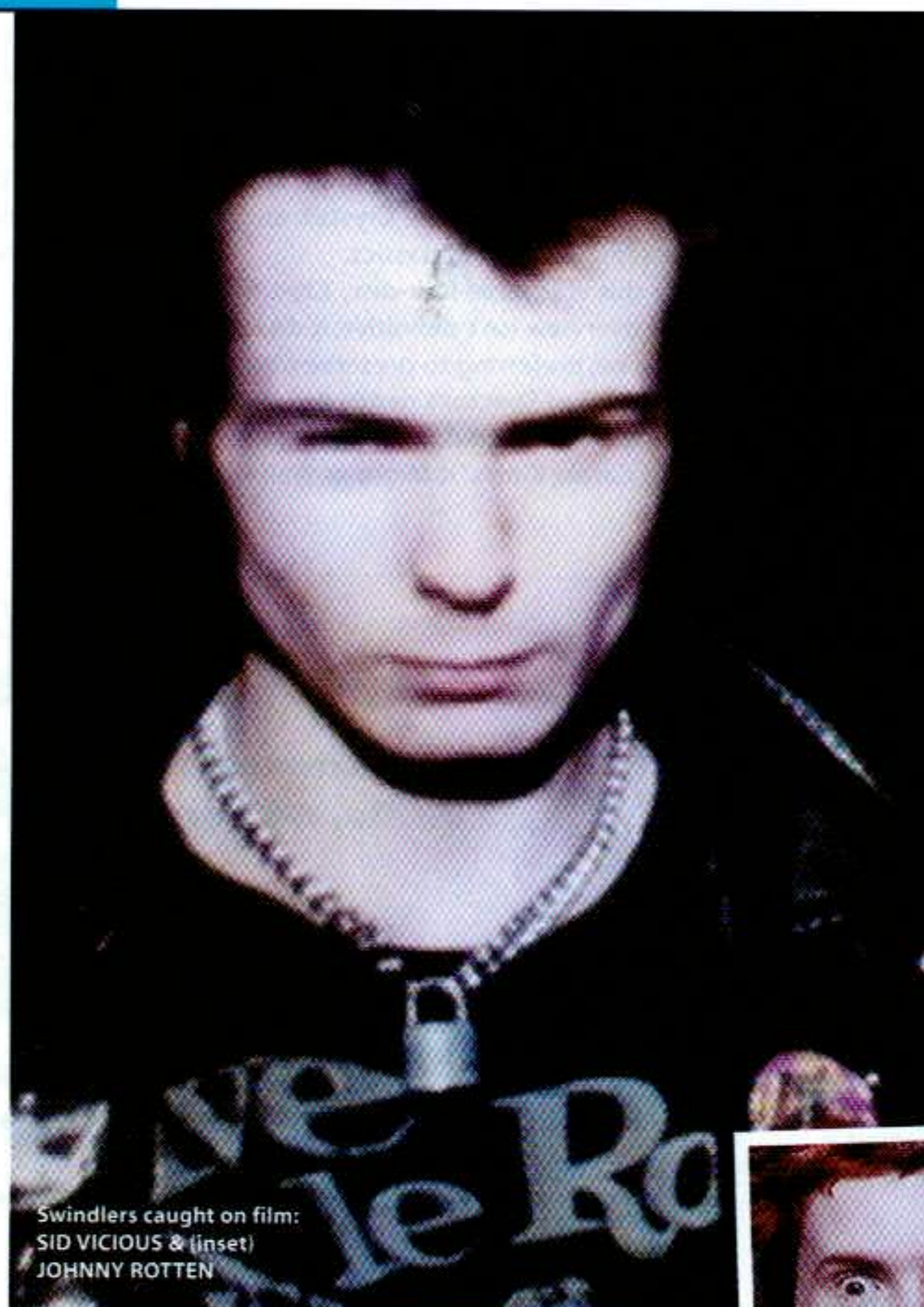
**Sex Pistols**  
*The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*

(SHOUT! FACTORY, 100 MINUTES)  
It's no *KISS Meets the Phantom of the Park*. Pity that

A film or television show where a band is taken out of context and given a plot to manage runs the risk of looking like a crappy Scooby-Doo episode (even when, as with *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*, the plot is the Sex Pistols' embellished genesis). Look no further than *KISS Meets the Phantom of the Park*, the Ramones' *Rock 'n' Roll High School*, *Slade in Flame*, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and even the actual Beatles' films and rock operas like the Who's *Tommy*. Although each has its individual charm, they all have a lame, bullshit quality about them because the bands are always portrayed as noble knights on gleaming white stallions charging in to save the day (or at least clean up their own mess). So here we have the Sex Pistols—a band whose name is a dick joke and who thumbs its collective nose at virtually everything—in just such a film.

The spin on *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle* is that it's a mockumentary—the Pistols are being cheeky little monkeys, taking the piss out of themselves. And they're barely in the damn thing! How funny is it that?! And here, most of us have eaten it up, bought into *Variety's* line about it being "the *Citizen Kane* of rock 'n' roll pictures." Pah-leze.

*The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle* isn't much different from all these other band films. Aside from some great performance footage (best of all being Sid Vicious croaking "My Way"), its main merit is that it does manage to point out the ridicu-



Swindlers caught on film: SID VICIOUS & (inset) JOHNNY ROTTEN

lousness of a band's ascension to fame and the concept of idolatry as it paints the Sex Pistols as two-dimensional characters. But the punch line comes early, and one joke can't carry the entire film, so sitting through it is almost as tedious as sitting through that wretched *KISS* flick. Except, you know, the Pistols don't shoot dotted-line lasers from their eyes, fight robot werewolves or solve a mystery. And isn't it sad that such Scooby-Doo elements could have actually made *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle* more enjoyable?

**Notable special features:** Interview with director/writer Julien Temple by rock journo Chris Saliewicz.

**Beulah**  
*A Good Band Is Easy to Kill*

(MUSIC VIDEO DISTRIBUTORS, 89 MINUTES)  
A tour before dying?



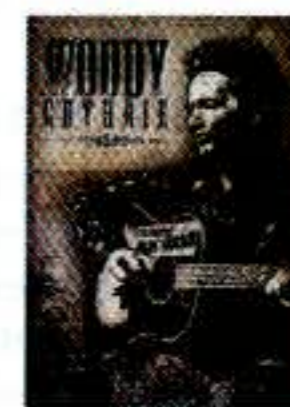
In the first few minutes of Beulah's bonvoyage doc, singer-guitarist Miles Kurosky is venting his frustration at the

band's imminent demise: "Even if we are the shittiest band in America, if nothing else, we've been the most progressive and I think we've pushed ourselves more than most bands do." Implicit in that statement is that Beulah shouldn't be on the verge of splintering. Somebody, somewhere, with some sort of taste or vision should have seen how good this band really was. Alas, that's the fickle music biz for ya: A good band really is easy to kill. You can always go out with a bang, though, and that's what Beulah did on its final tour in 2003, which is reverently documented here. The performance footage is as feisty as Kurosky in interview mode, and the drama of a dissolving band is poignant to the extent that you feel Beulah's frustration, discomfort and resignation as if it were your own. In the end, the sentiment is that it's better to have been Beulah, the great band, than to have been just another faceless group.

**Notable special features:** Two hours of deleted scenes and 17 full-length live tracks!

**Woody Guthrie**  
*This Machine Kills Fascists*

(SNAPPER MUSIC, APPROX. 172 MINUTES)  
Putting the original singer-songwriter under a microscope



What does it say about Woody Guthrie that this biographical documentary runs nearly three hours? Put simply (in a cliché): He's the proverbial riddle wrapped in an enigma. It's so easy to package him as the O.G., the first real singer-songwriter (as he is referred to in the film by biographer Ed Cray), the first guy to put the plight of the American worker (of any human, really) to music and make sense of it. But the reality of Guthrie, as this film so deftly delineates, is that he was a complex character who ranged from scumbag to saint, and his demeanor was colored by his state of mind: If the

world wasn't making sense to him, he'd reflect that instability. And as he figured everything out, he'd be closer to peace and therefore kinder. Yet he is and isn't that simple (or complex); getting his number takes a helluva lot of analysis, which is why the film runs so

damn long, including insights from Guthrie offspring (including Arlo), biographers, friends (Pete Seeger), scholars and devotees (folkie Dan Bern) and compiling every existing piece of Guthrie footage. The long journey, however, has a satisfying end.

**Notable special features:** Each song in the film can be accessed by a menu in the special-features menu.

**The Flaming Lips**  
*VOID (Video Overview in Deceleration)*

(WARNER BROS., APPROX. 75 MINUTES)  
The Flaming Lips A/V club knocks it out of the park



What's that? They've compiled 13 years of music videos from one of rock's most inventive and prolific bands?

Not only do you get 12 of the Flaming Lips' best tunes, but you