



Tom's Picks: Ian Hunter, now and then

by Tom Von Malder

€ Ian Hunter and the Rant Band (MVD DVD, NR, 180 min.). The former Mott the Hoople leader - who has had a string of fine solo albums as well through the years - proves he still can rock in this outstanding May 2004 show at The Astoria in London. His band includes hotshot young guitarist Andy York (John Mellencamp's touring band) and a reunion with original Mott guitarist Mick Ralphs. In addition to several Mott hits, including the second encore's closing "All the Way from Memphis" with Queen's Brian May on guitar and Def Leopard's Joe Elliot on extra vocals, the 21-song show includes Hunter's solo hit "Once Bitten, Twice Shy," "Cleveland Rocks" and a strong new song, "Twisted Steel," written in reaction to 9/11, which claimed the life of his wife's cousin. Other highlights are "A Swan Hall," "Rollerball," "All the Young Dudes" (with his daughter, youngest son and Elliot on backing vocals) and the first encore's - Hunter is on piano throughout this encore - "The Journey" and "Dead Man Walking." DVD extras include 13:45 of soundcheck, including May; a biography of Hunter; and a 38-minute interview with Hunter. A



Mott the Hoople

€ Mott the Hoople: All the Young Dudes (1972, Columbia/Legacy, 72:59). After three years of trying to find an audience on Island Records, with no success, the British band fronted by vocalist/songwriter Ian Hunter and guitarist Mick Ralphs was about to toss in the towel - they had even announced their dissolution. But then came fan David Bowie (then in his Ziggy Stardust days) with an offer to produce their next album and with the title song, which became the band's first big hit. It is a classic song that still sounds fresh (see DVD review above), capturing the glam-rock scene of the time and featuring a cool organ. Other album highlights are a cover of Lou Reed's "Sweet Jane"; the rocker "One of the Boys" (opens with the sound of dialing a rotary phone); and Ralphs' rock ballad "Ready for Love," which he also would record with his new band, Bad Company, after leaving Mott in 1973. The reissue production by Bruce Dickinson is sterling, especially on the opening tracks. The seven bonus tracks include three demos, with "One of the Boys" and "Black Scorpion" (the LP's "Momma's Little Jewel") sounding good; and early version of "All the Young Dudes" with Bowie singing the lead vocal; and 1973 live versions of "Sucker" and "Sweet Jane." The year this album came out - 1972 - was also the year this column debuted in The Herald newspapers of Arlington Heights, Ill; then it was known as "Playback." B+

€ Mott the Hoople: Mott (1973, Columbia/Legacy, 58:44). Even better was this follow-up, with all

but one of the songs written by Ian Hunter (a factor that probably led to guitarist Mick Ralphs leaving the band right after to go form Bad Company with Paul Rodgers). Nearly every Hunter song is a classic. There is piano-banging "All the Way To Memphis" with its honking sax, and the massed chorus on the epic "Hymn for the Dude," both of which discuss the perils and non-permanence of rock 'n' roll life and fame, as does the meditative "Ballad of Mott." But there is plenty of straight-out rock too, including "Whizz Kid," the bouncy "Honoloochie Boogie" and the Rolling Stones-like "Drivin' Sister." A personal fav was always the violin-sparked "Violence," which reminds me of Sparks. The album closes with the wonderful tale of jealousy, "I Wish I Was Your Mother." There are four bonus tracks here, including demos of "Honoloochie Boogie" and "Nightmare," the B-side "Rose" and a live "Drivin' Sister." A+

Columbia/Legacy also has reissued "The Hoople" (1974) - but only as a digital download via the Internet. Its length is nearly doubled with seven bonus tracks, including four non-LP singles. "Roll Away the Stone" is probably its most memorable song.

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