



**GUNS N' ROSES: DVD COLLECTOR'S BOX (Chrome Dreams)**

With Axl Rose announcing a tentative March 6 release date for the long-awaited new Guns N' Roses album, *Chinese Democracy*, remaining fans of the Gunners might want to check out *Guns N' Roses: The DVD Collector's Box*. The two-disc set consists of two unauthorized documentaries - 'Guns N' Roses: Sex N' Drugs N' Rock N' Roll' and 'Axl Rose: The Prettiest Star'. 'Guns' documents the band's beginnings on LA's Sunset Strip, with various aging hipsters and minor players recalling the genuine excitement GN'R created with their loud, sexy rock & roll. Axl, the more interesting program, focusses on how the volatile frontman became the antagonistic recluse he seems to have become. The producers do a good job of making both interesting, given that a lot of info is necessarily repeated and neither doc features actual Guns N' Roses music (a problem). But the stories from former managers, employers and fans are fun, and both programs stoke interest in what could be the comeback of 2007. (SP)



**U2 — A CLASSIC ALBUM UNDER REVIEW: ACHTUNG BABY (MVD)**

The success of 1987's *The Joshua Tree* and 1989's *Rattle And Hum* had two significant effects on U2: it made the supposedly anti-establishment band very much part of the establishment with their chart-topping American success and it garnered them their first heavy media backlash in Europe (one critic described U2 at this juncture as "epically pompous"). In an effort to get back to their roots, the band decided to 'Europeanize' their next album by retreating to Berlin, where, following the lead of David Bowie, they created a radically new sound that merged Bowie's synthesized leanings on *Low* and *Heroes* with the emerging Manchester dance sounds of Stone Roses and Happy Mondays. With Brian Eno parachuted in to referee the squabbling which threatened to destroy them, U2 emerged in 1991 with an album so drastically different that it alienated some fans but won over a new generation. First single 'The Fly' did little to win over critics, but further singles such as 'Even Better Than The Real Thing', 'Mysterious Ways' and their classic 'One' relaunched the band, which would then cash in on their eye-popping Zoo TV tour. Obviously produced without U2's cooperation, *Under Review* is short on concert and studio footage (there are no band interviews) but long on talking head critical analysis. But it does shed light on the remarkable career U-turn which has carried U2 through to the present day. (KS)



**RAMMSTEIN: VOLKERBALL (Universal)**

One of the disadvantages of living in North America is not being able to see Rammstein live. The bombastic German industrial metallers just aren't big enough over here to warrant them bringing their huge, pyro-heavy show to these shores. Thankfully, they document the spectacle, well, spectacularly on the three-disc *Volkerball*. Handsomely packaged, the *Volkerball* DVD contains a nineteen-song set filmed in Nimes, France, as well as excerpts from London, Moscow and Tokyo (there's something wonderfully bizarre about seeing Japanese fans singing in German). The band is in fine form (even if singer Till Lindemann is looking a tad fat these days), and the stage show includes some great gags, including a bloody Lindemann taking a flamethrower to a giant pot containing spidery keyboardist Flake (during 'Mein Teil'). A bonus DVD contains a great band documentary ('Anakonda Im Netz') and a solid 'Making of the Album *Reise Reise*' featurette. An accompanying audio CD contains sixteen tracks from the Nimes concert. (SP)

with chainsaws created such controversy that the US government stepped in and tried to cancel her shows. Yet her death-defying videos (the convertible car to low-flying plane stunt is particularly memorable in the 'It's My Life' video) and her penchant for showing up on mainstream chat shows kept her in the media spotlight. This detailed

two-hour rockumentary (plus one-hour bonus video and performance clips) graphically shows what all the fuss was about. Sadly, the censorship, lost record deals and venue bans eventually took their toll, and Wendy O would commit suicide in 1998. This documentary is a fitting tribute to her short but colorful legacy. (KS)

**AMERICAN HARDCORE (Sony)**

Of the many amazing moments in Paul Rachman's documentary *American Hardcore*, one of the most noteworthy comes midway through: Black Flag's Henry Rollins onstage, swaying back and forth, a maniacal grin on his face as an unidentified punk reaches up and slaps him a few times. It is bizarre but seemingly harmless.

Suddenly, Rollins snaps out of his reverie as would a coiled snake and starts smashing the punk in the face - over and over and over. Rollins is hitting the punk hard - really hard - and his friends are scrambling to pull him away. He looks astonished. Rollins, meanwhile, looks utterly unfazed.

The vignette neatly captures why it is impossible to tear away one's eyes from *American Hardcore*. It brilliantly charts the US hardcore punk scene's beginning, middle and end - showing why the punk subgenre was so important (it recaptured the sense of danger British punk lost to New Wave) and why it was ultimately doomed (it was the most violent youth culture anyone had ever seen).

Rachman admits as much. "There definitely was violence, sure," he says, while stressing that it is important not to dismiss the entire hardcore movement as some *Clockwork Orange*-style experiment collapsed under the weight of too much spilled blood and too many broken bones. For the most part, Rachman's film - containing plenty of Super 8 footage Rachman shot himself when he was a hardcore punk fan enrolled at Boston University - accomplishes that.

Containing snippets of performances by Minor Threat, Bad Brains, Circle Jerks, MDC, Agnostic Front and even Canadian punk legends DOA - and featuring revealing interviews with the hardcore punk pioneers themselves two decades later - *American Hardcore* captures the unrestrained energy and sheer youthfulness of the Reagan-era hardcore scene. It's fascinating, even if you dislike punk.

Was it a political movement? Rachman laughs. "It was a political movement, but it was incoherently political. The conservative governments, like Ronald Reagan's, made for an easy target."

Rachman doesn't make excuses for the near-total maleness of the hardcore scene, or its whiteness. Kira Roesler, who played bass for a latter incarnation of Black Flag, continues to exhibit discomfort with the realization that the hardcore scene was, too often, too anti-women. Says Rachman: "[The hardcore scene] was really teenage boys, who were in a state of rage about everything and everyone."

Near the film's end, Minor Threat's Ian MacKaye effectively sums up his departure (and those of the rest of us): "The violence had become too central... [I said], 'I'm out. This sucks.'"

*American Hardcore*, however, does not. Check it out if you want a glimpse into one of the least-understood youth movements of the past three decades - and if you want to see what is arguably one of the best rock & roll documentaries since *Woodstock*. Warren Kinsella

**WENDY O WILLIAMS AND THE PLASMATICS: 10 YEARS OF REVOLUTIONARY ROCK AND ROLL (MVD Visual)**

Not even the Sex Pistols or The Clash could create the controversy that Wendy O Williams and the Plasmatics inflicted on the States during the late '70s and early '80s. Called The Queen Of Shock Rock, Williams, with her distinctive Mohawk, bare breasts (strategically covered by duct tape) and penchant for blowing up cars on stage, cut a swath of destruction through the American psyche. Beaten up by police in Milwaukee, arrested in Cleveland and banned from performing in London, England, Williams' sonic assaults, car explosions and the playing of guitars



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