

**Germanic junkyard rock**

A terrific German rock group that uses found objects for its percussion performs for an intense 82 minutes on the MVD release, **Einstuerzende Neubauten Palast Der Republik** (UPC#022891456490, \$20). If you enjoy the rhythmic harshness of German rock to begin with, then the 2004 concert becomes a brilliant extension of the music's themes, suggesting quite readily the decay of civilization and the attitude that led to it. As a visual program, the concert is equally engaging because of the manner in which the musicians are banging away on various pieces of scrap metal and discarded appliances. Perhaps the lead singer is actually crooning about flowers and baby birds, but you tend to doubt it.

The full screen picture is somewhat grainy, but to no detriment. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound is great, with plenty of power and separation detail. There is no captioning. The musicians also provide a decent commentary track that is mostly in English, explaining what they were up to and how they put it together, and sharing anecdotes about their experiences. Featured as well are 14 minutes of deleted numbers, and a trailer.

**Something for everyone**

Not a band to be pinned down by any particular genre, NRBQ, featured on the MVD release, **NRBQ & The Whole Wheat Horns Derbytown Live 1982** (UPC#022891452492, \$15), stretch from rockabilly and blues to country-western and light pop to jazz and Latin on the 42-minute program. The videotaped presentation has the feel of a home movie and is at times out of focus, although there are cuts and close-ups, depicting the energetic group playing at a small Louisville club. The monophonic sound seems similarly raw and unmixed, although it transmits the spirit of the show effectively. There is no captioning. Also featured are 4 minutes of other performance and promotional clips.

**Welcome to Wynette's world**

Accompanying the 29-minute 1986 concert shot live in Orlando, Florida, **Tammy Wynette Greatest Hits Live**, an MVD release (UPC#022-891658795, \$13), contains an excellent 51-minute interview from 1990 in which Wynette talks not only about her career, but discusses the ups and downs of her personal life extensively and intimately. The concert segment delivers a succinct summary of Wynette's catalog, from *Stand By Your Man* to *DIVORCE*, as it were, performed in a cozy, unfettered setting that makes up in immediacy what it lacks in slickness. The full screen picture is drab and the monophonic sound is adequate. A text profile of Wynette is included, and there is no captioning. Despite the brevity of the show, having it bolstered by the interview sort of turns the whole package into the ultimate Tammy Wynette DVD.

**Dream of Bruce**

Ray Sharkey and, to a lesser extent, Robert Downey, Jr., come to mind immediately as one watches the young Lenny Bruce dabble in a celluloid career on **Dream Follies / Dreamland Capers**, a Chiller Theatre Something Weird Video release (UPC#014381359824, \$20). Both films are burlesque revues from the Fifties, altering between lame comical sequences and chaste stripteases. *Dreamland Capers*, from 1958, running 75 minutes, is the better of the two. The dances are hotter, the jokes are funnier and there are some decent novelty acts. But *Dream Follies*, from 1954, running 60 minutes, has a bookending narrative (about office workers trying to slip away from their job) that was penned by Bruce, who also appears in the film as one of the workers, and it is the cultural importance of seeing him in the beginning stages of his brief career that makes the program worthwhile. Also, although you have to read the fine print on the back of the jacket to realize it, two even more important entries in Bruce's filmography are also included on the disc, the highly amusing 1971 7-minute color posthumously animated rendition of Bruce's profane Lone Ranger routine, *Thank You Mask Man*, and a fascinating and violent 1955 gangster film running 62 minutes entitled *Dance Hall Racket*, in which Bruce is one of the henchmen for the owner of a nightclub. It is *Racket* that is the most compelling component of the DVD—and where Bruce seems the most interchangeable with Sharkey—demonstrating that his talents extended well beyond his groundbreaking standup comedy, and that if his personal life had not been encumbered by so many distractions, there were many maverick directors who would readily have utilized his manner and abilities on screen.

On all three features, the full screen black-and-white picture has scattered instances of wear but is generally in decent condition, with effectively defined contrasts. There is no captioning. Also featured are three trailers, and an 8-minute montage of ad materials and stills for burlesque films, set to an aging instrumental musical score.

**Interviews and more**

A 1970 German softcore sex film with a substantial documentary interview component, **Schoolgirl Report Volume #1**, has been issued by Impulse Pictures (UPC#654930100295, \$30). Running 84 minutes, the film mixes on-the-street interviews with women and short erotic vignettes. The women are queried about their opinions and experiences with sexual matters. Their answers are usually curt and rarely interesting. The vignettes have plenty of nudity and are mercifully brief, but most at least try to convey a psychological or emotional component to their staging. The actresses pretend to fit the sensationalized title, but most are just dressed for youth. The picture is presented in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The image is a little

grainy, but generally the color transfer is fresh and viable. The monophonic sound is fine and the film is in German with optional English subtitles.

**DVD News**

**THE POST OFFICE GOES POSTAL:** The price for mailing the Newsletter in a traditional large envelope is being raised by 34 cents with the new postage rates being implemented this month. Therefore, to avoid a ridiculous spike in costs or the necessity of raising subscription prices, the Newsletter will henceforth be folded two times and mailed in a standard business envelope. If you insist upon receiving a pristine, non-folded copy, please contact us and we can work something out. Thank you.

**CRITERION PLAYS AN ACE:** The Criterion Collection will be releasing Billy Wilder's *Ace in the Hole*. It will be accompanied by a scholar commentary track and several pieces on Wilder.

**IWO JIMA FROM ALL SIDES:** Warner is releasing a two-platter presentation of *Letters from Iwo Jima*, and is also issuing a five-platter set, *The Battle of Iwo Jima*, which will feature *Letters*, a two-platter presentation of *Flags of Our Fathers*, and more bonus material on a fifth platter. Warner is also releasing *The Pirate* with a commentary and other special features. *Popeye The Sailor 1933-1938 Volume 1* will contain 9 hours of cartoons and many special features. The re-released *Superman Ultimate Collector's Edition* will include the corrected discs for *Superman III* and *Superman: The Movie*, which were missing bonus content upon their release last fall. When the inadvertent omission was discovered, replacement discs were made available to initial *Ultimate Collector's Edition* buyers. Replacement discs from the first release of the *Ultimate Collection Edition* can still be obtained, at no cost to the consumer, by calling 800-553-6937.

**MEATBALL TALK:** Director Ivan Reitman will supply a commentary track on Sony Pictures Home Entertainment release of *Meatballs Special Edition*.

**BLU-RAY TRACKER:** The following titles were recently released in Blue-Ray format—*Dragon's Lair* (Digital Leisure); *Déjà Vu*, G.I. Jane, *King Arthur*, *The Queen*, (Buena Vista); *Night at the Museum* (Fox); *Discovery Atlas Australia Revealed*, *Discovery Atlas Brazil Revealed*, *Discovery Atlas China Revealed*, *Discovery Atlas Italy Revealed*, *Ultimate Avengers Collection* (Lionsgate); *Failure to Launch*, *Payback Straight Up The Director's Cut* (Paramount); *Identity*, *Incubus Alive at Red Rocks*, *Secret Window*, *Tony Bennett An American Classic*, *Volver* (Sony); *The Dirty Dozen*, *Dog Day Afternoon*, *Enter the Dragon*, *Planet Earth The Complete Series*, *A Scanner Darkly* (Warner).

**HD-DVD TRACKER:** The following titles were recently released in HD-DVD format—*Digital Video Essentials* (DVD International); *Discovery Atlas Australia Revealed* (Image); *Failure to Launch*, *Payback Straight Up Director's Cut* (Paramount); *Antarctica Dreaming Wildfire on Ice*, *HDScape Exotic Saltwater Aquarium*, *HDScape Sampler* (Ryko); *Children of Men*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *The Game*, *The Good Shepherd*, *The Jerk*, *The Nutty Professor*, *Smokin' Aces* (Universal); *Dog Day Afternoon*, *Planet Earth The Complete Series*, *A Scanner Darkly* (Warner); *Feast*, *School for Scoundrels* (Weinstein)

**DVD and LD Ads**

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