

The quality of the full screen videos varies from number to number, with the earlier productions looking substantially softer than the later pieces. The stereo surround sound has a basic dimensionality and less immediacy than the CD recordings, but is good enough to deliver the entertainment. Grant supplies an appealing introduction to each number on a commentary track, talking about where her own head was at at the time, and what it took to put each video together. For *Say You'll Be Mine*, in which her image is multiplied with green screen effects: "One of my kids was pretty little when I was playing this for them. I think she was small enough to be on my hip, and she said, 'Look, there's mommy. Look at all the mommies.'" Also featured are 32 minutes of remixes for some of the videos, and an alternate video for *House of Love* with recording studio footage.

### Successful Offspring

Seventeen industrious videos are gathered on the 58-minute anthology, *The Offspring Complete Music Video Collection*, a Columbia Music Video release (UPC#074645533599, \$15). Most of the pieces were produced during the height of the band's popularity in the late Nineties (although the most recent was produced in 2005), and all of them manage to avoid the usual clichés of hard rock videos (no girls in bikinis, no devil costumes) without seeming excessively eccentric. In *Gotta Get Away*, for example, most of the action is set on a concert floor where fans are squeezed together, mashing each other and throbbing wildly to the music, and yet there are these lovely little cuts to a boy and a girl making out as the pandemonium goes on around them. Not only do the shots effectively counterpoint the anarchy of the other images, but they also reinforce what might not be immediately apparent to casual listeners, that despite the raging beat, open larynx vocals and instrumental sheerness of the music, The Offspring is more classy and rewarding than the average hard rock band. This is borne out in many of the other videos as well, as each one has unexpected and imaginative elements that justify the rest of the material and captivate a viewer's attention.

The full screen picture quality varies from video to video, but since many have a makeshift tone to them, an extra layer of grain or haze, if it is there, does not impair the playback. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a full range and clearly defined tones. The band supplies an informative commentary, talking about how each video was staged and what they wanted to accomplish with it. There is no captioning. Along with a discography, there is an excellent 33-minute live set (presented in standard stereo, but vividly delivered), two music videos that weren't included in the regular collection, a 10-minute production featurette on the shooting of one of those videos (*Da Hui*), a cute retrospective interview with an actor from one of the older videos (*Pretty Fly*), and 6 minutes of storyboard comparisons for segments from three of the videos.

### Blues show

A comprehensive 93-minute blues documentary built around a 2004 all-star concert, *Chicago Blues Reunion Buried Alive in the Blues*, is available from Out of the Box Records and Bayside Entertainment (UPC#6-79267301627, \$16). The program features interviews with blues greats old and new, including Barry Goldberg, Harvey Mandel, Nick Gravenites, Tracy Nelson, Corky Siegel and others. There are clips of performances from the musicians in the past, as well as clips from the concert, with the interviews effectively woven through the program to convey not only how the musicians got their own starts and (through the testimony of others) what their strengths are, but also what the nature and heritage of the blues means in contemporary times. It is also no big deal that the concert clips are interspersed with the interviews, because a 63-minute CD platter of the live performance is also included with the set.

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 picture transfer looks fine and the stereo surround sound has a full dimensionality and clear tones. There is no captioning.

### Smooth funk

The smooth but funky jazz of vibraphonist Roy Ayers is presented in an appealing 58-minute concert from the German *Ohne Filter Musik Pur* series on the Inakustik release, *Roy Ayers In Concert* (UPC#707787653794, \$20). Accompanied by a sax, a guitar, two keyboardists and a drummer in the 1995 program, Ayers's music combines the ethereal and transcendent chimes of his own instrument with the more down-to-earth vitalities of his collaborators, creating an atmosphere that is energetic and relaxing in the same moment. Ayers also has some nice vocals. The full screen picture has crisp details and precise hues. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound is effectively mixed and delivered with a reasonably strong dimensionality. There is no captioning. The program is accompanied by the standard *Musik Pur* extras, including a text profile of Ayers and a brief interview with the series producer.

### Dabbling Brooks

High-energy singer Elkie Brooks performs for 45 minutes in the mock nightclub setting of the undated German music program, *Musik Laden*, on the MVD release, *Elkie Brooks Live* (DRB1380, \$20). Brooks is accompanied by a fairly good-sized back up band, including a horn section, two guitars, a piano, drums, several singers and more, with their combined efforts just about balancing out her go get 'em vocals. She sings a variety of

blues numbers, some veering towards gospel in tone, but all of them celebrating more carnal activities (don't miss *Lilac Wine*). It is not really a set you can relax with, but it is an appealing way to kick start an evening.

The full screen picture is somewhat soft, with slightly paled colors (the close-ups are good enough that you can see her curling her tongue when she sings—how does she do that?). The monophonic sound serves her vocals well, but tightens the ranges of her accompanists a bit too much here and there. There is no captioning. Also featured is a discography and text biography.

### It's always time for Lunch

A wildly energetic and engaging punk rock concert, *Lydia Lunch presents Willing Victim The Audience as Whipping Boy*, is available from MVD (DR4436, \$17). Although shot in 2003, in Austria, the 62 minute show is fully evocative of punk rock concerts from three decades earlier, with Lunch talking/singing/screaming to an intense, focused beat, as guitar riffs fly off like errant fireworks every time she takes a breath. The fact that Lunch looks like a house frau three decades beyond her punk past also adds to the show's intoxicating frazzle. The full screen picture, showing the concert with occasionally superimposed stock footage (which is also appearing on screens behind the band), has pale colors, but is sharp enough to follow Lunch and her band without eyestrain. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound is marvelous, sustaining the tinny veracity of a live recording but still delivering it with an effective dimensionality and power. There is no captioning.

### Intelligent music

EELS is primarily one person, Mark Oliver Everett, but he is backed by a full fledged string quartet and other collaborators on the excellent showcase concert, *EELS with Strings Live at Town Hall*, an Image Entertainment release (UPC#014381304428, \$20). Everett's range can really not be pinned down to one genre, but is mostly folk-like in its feel. His lyrics are thoughtful and rewarding, while his music, particularly in the 2005 New York concert with its emphasis on string backups, is distinctive and enticing. The 99-minute program intercuts numbers from the concert in color with black-and-white behind-the-scenes footage, but the interruptions rarely upset the program's mood. 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 stereo sound is finely detailed. There is no captioning. Also featured is a 19-minute collection of two music videos and unused behind-the-scenes footage.

### Less intelligent music

The 1993 London concert program, *Poison Seven Days Live*, from Cherry Red Films (UPC#5013929931459, \$20), combines performance footage in color with black-and-white behind-the-scenes shots, as the heavy metal rockers sing about demons and sex and such—every one of their song titles sounds like it was taken from a porn film. The important thing is not the simplicity of their melodies or the single-mindedness of their lyrics, but the fact that they deliver their songs to their enthusiastic fans with an eager energy and, despite their somewhat nutty wardrobes, an efficient professionalism, encouraging the viewer to get stupid right along with them. The full screen picture has clear, sharp hues, and it looks like the camera operators were practically tripping over the musicians to get their shots, which adds even more to the show's energy. The stereo surround sound is not elaborately mixed, but the basics are conveyed. The 81-minute program is not captioned.

### Invisible pleasures

Two softcore sex films with invisibility as a prominent narrative device have been paired on the Chiller Theatre Something Weird Video release, *The Girl from S.I.N./Henry's Night Out* (ID1229SWDVD, \$20). *S.I.N.*, from 1966, is an espionage spoof with voiceover narration. An Asian mastermind attempts to kidnap a scientist, and the scientist's pretty assistant uses an invisibility pill the scientist has developed to save him. The pill wears off at an inopportune moment, however. The lack of dialog is a drag, but otherwise the film is a hoot. *Henry's Night In* feels like it is older than *S.I.N.*, but it actually comes from 1969 and is about a henpecked husband who discovers an invisibility serum and starts having fun with his curvaceous neighbors. It is in this film where naked actresses demonstrate their thespian skills by holding out their arms in a circular fashion, pretending to receive the ministrations of an invisible lover. Does the movie need anything more than that to captivate easily entertained viewers?

Both black-and-white films are in full screen format and are in reasonably decent condition, although there are flurries of scratches now and then. *Henry*, which runs 77 minutes, is a bit soft, while *S.I.N.*, which runs 68 minutes, is a little sharper, but more prone to damage. The monophonic sound on both films is adequate, and there is no captioning. Also featured is a 1963 full screen black-and-white program running 53 minutes entitled *The Naughty Shutter*, a farce set in a hotel about a camera that leaves out the clothing when it takes a picture of someone. Again, the program has voiceover narration instead of dialog, and the plot is convoluted, but as a generally silly example of early Sixties raciness, it's a gas. Additionally, there is a trailer for *S.I.N.*, a 10-minute montage of sex film magazine covers accompanied by radio ads for exploitation films, and a 1952 Chevrolet promotional film, *You're Ahead, Mr. X*, which features an 'invisible' customer examining the ins and outs of the latest model.