

DVD Debris

BY DAVID FEAR



TALES OF THE RAT FINK

SHOUT! FACTORY (2006)

Ed "Big Daddy" Roth wasn't just the missing link between graphic designers, greasers, kooky kar kustomizers and horror movie buffs. He also invented the eternal T-shirt icon Rat Fink, who looks like Mickey Mouse after a three-day Benzedrine and malt liquor bender. This doc's blend of animation and archival footage captures the spirit of Roth's work nicely, though questionable choices undermine the hip factor (those testimonies from souped-up vintage rides are cheesier than the entire state of Wisconsin). Still, for anyone interested in vroom-vroom autos and Pop Art, this is a must-watch.



BRAZIL

CRITERION (1985)

Terry Gilliam's masterpiece is the last word on dystopian satire, positing a future broken-down Britannia full of ineffectual bureaucrats, guerilla revolutionaries that double as repairmen and spooky Orwellian doublespeak. It's the most solid of the director's post-*Python* work, and the one movie in which his bric-a-brac set design and visual audacity complements the storytelling rather than overwhelming it. Thankfully, it's just a paranoid fantasy: I mean, a government run by shady corporate fat cats that sanctions torture and imprisoning its citizens indefinitely for no apparent reason? Seriously, could you imagine if that actually happened? It'd be terrifying!



LEONARD COHEN: I'M YOUR MAN

LION'S GATE (2005)

Poet, songwriter, legendary Don Juan and jaded man of the world: ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Leonard Cohen. Filmmaker Lian Lunson's ability to get the notoriously press-shy cult figure to open up on camera is impressive enough on its own, but it's the tribute concert to the Canadian croaker that drops your jaw. Check out Nick Cave lounge-lizarding his way through the title track, Beth Orton bringing down the house with "Sisters of Mercy" and trilling transgender troubadour Antony Hegarty turning his rendition of "If It Be Your Will" into a bona fide religious experience.



MY MORNING JACKET: OKONOKOS

ATO/RCA (2006)

We're going to assume that, like us, you've already worn down your copy of the double live album from these Louisville sluggers. Luckily, the band has also issued this companion DVD, which allows you to watch them perform tunes like the gorgeous "I Will Sing You Songs" from the comfort of your own settee. It also confirms that country-rock dudes are, like, seriously hairy. And dig that prologue in which a guy with an old-timey moustache leads an alpaca to the concert, thus confirming that their ungulate fanbase is now crazy huge.



THE DEVIL AND DANIEL JOHNSTON

SONY (2005)

It's hard to tell at first whether this documentary on manic-depressive songwriter Daniel Johnston is meant to uncover the talent beneath a neurological tangle or present a career car wreck in progress. But in using Johnston's own cassette diaries and back catalogue to detail his professional rises and falls, director Jeff

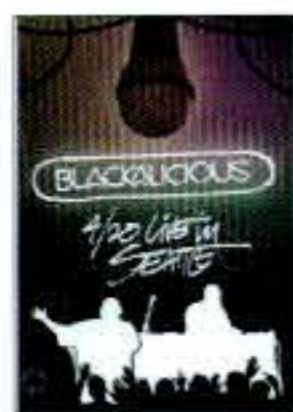
Feuerzeig fashions a moving look at someone who isn't an outsider artist, but a hidden treasure. More importantly, the film doesn't skimp on his pop mini-epics about ghosts, Satan and heartbreak, all of which prove that the delusional naïf is truly a genius.



WONDER SHOWZEN, SEASON 2

PARAMOUNT HOME VIDEO (2006)

The second season of MTV's fucked-up fake kid's show isn't quite as brilliant or shocking as those first eight episodes from Year One, but don't think that creators John Lee and Vernon Chapman aren't able to milk their Molotov-and-graham-cracker mixture for some subversive effects. Seriously, you can't discount what kind of havoc can be wrought by a child (dressed as a dead pope) quizzing bystanders about religion, or by having a friendly puppet annoy homeless people to the point of actual physical violence. And those cartoon parodies...man, it's still just, like, 19 kinds of wrong!



BLACKALICIOUS: 4/20 LIVE IN SEATTLE

MVD (2006)

The dynamic duo from NorCal's Solesides crew bring their linguistics lessons to the city of Starbucks, and unless you think you can rock a rhyme about the periodic table of elements (!!!), we suggest you start taking copious notes. Gift of Gab's wordplay is dense and dizzying enough to tie your cerebral cortex into knots, while Chief Xcel backs him up with the nimblest of beats. Skip past the memory lane bits and hip-hop philosophizing, and just go straight to "Alphabet Aerobics," an exercise in alliteration that tells you everything you need to know.



JEFF TWEEDY: SUNKEN TREASURE

NONESUCH (2006)

Wilco's switch from No-Depression country to cascades of cotton-candy noise was a big leap forward for the band, but all that sonic bluster can sometimes obscure Jeff Tweedy's songwriting chops. As this DVD of the singer's solo tour through the West Coast demonstrates, however, Tweedy's work can withstand the scrutiny of a simple acoustic setting. Compare the Brian Wilson-esque version of "A Shot in the Arm" that's on *Summerteeth* to his version here: Strip down the songs, and his gift for melody stands out. And fans of self-deprecating stage banter, you've got yourself a new patron saint.



NOT A PHOTOGRAPH: THE MISSION OF BURMA STORY

MVD (2006)

From Boston's great post-punk hope to famous premature flame-outs, Mission of Burma was one of those bands who peaked big ("That's When I Reach for My Revolver" is the unsung anthem of the '80s) yet never fulfilled its full potential. In a perfect world, this chronicle of the group's return to touring and recording in 2002 would make everybody bow down in unison. Regardless, it's a perfect primer for those who simply know them as the guys who wrote that Moby song and proof that their angular guitar-rock has aged to perfection.