

DVD



U2: 'The world's greatest showband.'



U2 PopMart Live From Mexico City

★★★★★ **Q RECOMMENDS**

The one starring a giant lemon. Better than you remember.

The overblown tour of an underachieving album, PopMart is the elephant in U2's room. Nothing is surer to put Bono on the defensive or to send Larry Mullen's eyes rolling than mention of their band's 1997/8 world tour, a monumentally ambitious production that cost \$250,000 a day, featured the world's largest video screen and saw its architects taking hits to both pocket and ego. Insufficiently rehearsed for a tour of an album that was never properly finished, this chastening experience profoundly influenced U2's subsequent musical direction, but the sense that both Pop and PopMart are ripe for reappraisal has lingered in certain corners of the band's camp.

It seems clearer than ever from this two-disc DVD that in their haste to trump 1992/3's Zoo TV extravaganza, U2 erred on the side of surface dazzle. For all its pretensions to ironic social comment on consumer culture, the show

is best exemplified by its 40-foot high mirror-ball lemon, out of which the four members of U2 would emerge each night (except in Sydney, Oslo and Osaka, when the hydraulics jammed). When pitched at such a gargantuan scale, rock'n'roll inevitably courts the farcical elements so acutely parodied by Spinal Tap; U2's saving grace here is their willingness to acknowledge the absurdity of the scheme. On Lemon For Sale, one of Disc 2's bonus documentaries, potential new owners are sought for the now redundant mechanical fruit. "It takes three adults and a child,"

says the ever mischievous Adam Clayton.

Even on this reduced scale, PopMart Live... is a perspective-scrambling orgy of smoke, mirrors, silly costumes and very bright lights. The visual gags, like the ascent of man from ape to supermarket-trolley-pushing drone, are smarter than

doubtless many of the audience appreciated. Pop songs such as Gone and Last Night On Earth benefit from muscular treatment, while there are the usual U2 live staples of cringe (Bono: "Thank you for giving us a good life"), poignancy (One dedicated to the then recently deceased Michael Hutchence) and the sheer euphoria that occurs when the world's greatest showband hits its stride.

For all the contention their success provokes, when the surface dazzle subsides, U2 stand or fall on their ability to punch above their weight as a harder-working-than-most rock group. Which means that even a merely fair U2 concert film is better than most. ■ KEITH CAMERON



Key Scene

Midway through an acoustic version of Desire, Bono forgets the words. Edge starts laughing but continues until Bono eventually gives up. (52mins 53secs)

Fact File

KEY TRACKS:

Pop Muzik
Last Night On Earth
Discothèque

EXTRAS: Bonus disc with extra tracks, docs, promo clips, DVD-ROM features.

RELEASE DATE:

10 September

EDITED BY MATT YATES

JOHN LENNON & YOKO ONO

Give Peace A Song

FABULOUS FILMS/FREEMANTLE HOME ENT
★★★★★

THE STORY OF THEIR 1969 MONTREAL "BED-IN".

Against a backdrop of war in Vietnam and civil unrest on the streets of the US, on 26 May 1969, John and Yoko staged a week-long "bed-in" for peace in a Montreal hotel room in front of the world's media. Made for Canadian TV, this documentary recalls the event using a balanced mix of archive footage and reminiscing talking heads, including Yoko herself.

Ultimately all that came out of the event was the song Give Peace A Chance. But whether an act of well-intentioned naivety or self-serving media manipulation, the message still holds good - more's the pity.

EXTRAS: Interviews, press conference. ■ PETER KANE

THE PIED PIPER OF HÜTZOVINA

SLINGSHOT

★★★★★

GYPSY-PUNK STAR FENDS OFF FILM-MAKER'S ADVANCES.

In 2005, mustachioed Gogol Bordello frontman Eugene Hütz went on an Eastern European jaunt in search of his Romany roots with Czech film-maker Pavla Fleischer. Although it is interesting to see the Third World conditions in Ukraine's Gypsy camps and Hütz performing impressive impromptu sets with local musicians, the film offers little insight into Hütz himself. His reluctance to give away too much might be because Fleischer spends much of the film going on about how much she fancies him - meaning she's less Nick Broomfield, more Bridget Jones - making this an opportunity missed.

EXTRAS: Making Of doc. ■ PHIL MONGREDIEN

ROY ORBISON

In Dreams

SONY/BMG

★★★★★

ALL-STAR TRIBUTE

TO THE BIG O.

As befits a documentary where Orbison's widow and second wife Barbara is executive producer, this is the tale of a gentle, kindly soul, told in sanitised fashion. So, while the first Mrs Orbison's fatal motorcycle crash is passed over in a brief montage of newspaper cuttings, more time is given to various parties revealing just how great Barbara is. Even so, Orbison's voice remains uniquely affecting and he dominates his own posthumous show, one where Bono sounds atypically humble, Bruce Springsteen awestruck and Robert Plant gives vocal credit where vocal credit is due.

EXTRAS: An eight-track CD featuring Orbison at Batley Variety Club. ■ JOHN AIZLEWOOD

THE PINK FLOYD AND SYD BARRETT STORY

MVD VISUAL

★★★★★

EVOCATIVE PORTRAIT OF ART-ROCK'S ORIGINAL LOST BOY.

The somewhat unpsychedelic presence of Newsnight's Kirsty Wark as narrator betrays this film's origins as part of the BBC's Omnibus strand. No UFO-style freakout, then, but it tells the story of "The" Pink Floyd's late founder member and reclusive cult drug casualty Syd Barrett in touchingly sober detail. All of Pink Floyd recall their absent bandmate, while Graham Coxon and Robyn Hitchcock offer loving fan perspectives on the beautiful madcap.

EXTRAS: Extended interviews with Roger Waters and Dave Gilmour, performances from Hitchcock and Coxon, Barrett biography, reproduction memorabilia. ■ VICTORIA SEGAL

RESPECT YOURSELF

The Stax Record Story

UNIVERSAL

★★★★★

THE GREAT SOUL LABEL'S RAGS-TO-RICHES-TO-RAGS STORY.

Founded by white brother and sister Jim Stewart and Estelle Axton in Memphis 50 years ago, Stax rose from its inception as a tiny country label to become the soundtrack of black consciousness. Its story of love, trust, respect, guns, excess, betrayal and bankruptcy is liberally garnished with amazing live footage of acts such as The Staple Singers, Otis Redding and Isaac Hayes. Everyone denies it was their fault Stax went under, but to their credit no one denies exploiting the gravy train. Two extra discs feature the stunning Stax revue tour from 1967 and an extended biography of Redding. Quality viewing.

EXTRAS: None. ■ ANDY FYFE

THE ROLLING STONES

The Biggest Bang

RST

★★★★★

FOUR-DISC DOCUMENT OF THEIR LATEST TOUR.

The most reliable business in rock, The Rolling Stones grossed more than \$500 million from their A Bigger Bang Tour. In every sense, they are a singular phenomenon. The Biggest Bang holds fast to their long-held ethos that bigger is indeed better. Four discs stretching to a cheek-numbing five hours-plus running time, it includes three complete gigs (a free show to two million people on Rio's Copacabana Beach among them) and a slick, if unrevealing tour documentary. As has become the Stones' norm, the whole is precision-drilled but perfunctory.

EXTRAS: Additional footage and extra tracks. ■ PAUL REES

SCOTT WALKER

30 Century Man

VERVE PICTURES

★★★★★

QUALITY DOCUMENTARY

OF THE CULT SINGER.

A few years ago you'd never have believed it; the mythical Scott Walker, not only chatting genially about his work but letting a camera crew into the studio while his percussionist punches a side of pork for last year's The Drift album. But here it is, a smartly assembled, careful retelling of how a golden-voiced titan of '60s pop made four stunning solo albums, lost his nerve and went MOR, and finally elected to descend to the underworld of the avant-garde. With lashings of archival footage and interviews with such collaborators and admirers as David Bowie and Jarvis Cocker, it's highly recommended.

EXTRAS: Director's commentary, interviews, full song animation. ■ IAN HARRISON



Scott Walker: pork percussionist just out of shot.

TELEVISION MUSIC ON THE BOX THIS MONTH

Marc Bolan: 20th Century Boy

ITVI, TBC

★★★★★

MR GLAM ROCK EULOGISED.

This month marks the 30th anniversary of glam rock pin-up Marc Bolan's untimely death in a car accident. This documentary features interviews with producer Tony Visconti, early manager Simon Napier-Bell, son Rolan Bolan and long-term girlfriend Gloria Jones, driver on that fateful night.

Mercury Prize BBC 4, 4 September

★★★★★

HIGH-PROFILE AWARDS CEREMONY REVAMPED.

Jo Whiley and Jools Holland present live coverage from this year's Mercury Prize. In a departure from previous events, nearly all the shortlisted bands will perform prior to the announcement of the winner. With Amy Winehouse, Arctic Monkeys, The View and Klaxons all nominated, there's potential for a show-stopping line-up. Can Alex Turner's mob do the double?

Singing With The Enemy

BBC Three, 25 September

★★★★★

MUSIC MEETS REALITY TV.

This six-part series is the music equivalent of Wife Swap. A "wholesome all-girl pop band" are forced to collaborate with a "misogynistic death metal group"; a "sleazy sex-obsessed punk band" share a house with "an evangelical Christian group"; and, perhaps most amusingly, East London Nathan Barley types meet a boy band centred on the cousin of Antony Costa from Blue.

Transmission With T-Mobile

Channel 4, TBC

★★★★★

POST-PUB FRIDAY NIGHT VIEWING.

Steve Jones and Lauren Lavernne return to host the second series of this late-night music magazine programme featuring live performances and interviews. Previous guests include The View, Kasabian, The Fratellis and a memorably caustic interview with Fall frontman Mark E Smith.



Marc Bolan: there goes another flamingo.

REX, PA PHOTO