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Music DVDs look at history of bands

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Recently I received a handful of music-related DVDs to review, so I've stepped outside of my normal CD review mode to take a look and listen.

The first disc I watched, not because of the music tie, but because I just knew from the title that it was going to be a bad B-movie, and I was in the mood for some kitschy cinema. **Gothic Vampires From Hell** is the title, and it was just released via a cooperative venture of MVD, Sterling Movie Factory and Cleopatra Records.

Goth fans will recognize Cleopatra as one of the original labels behind the early goth music scene and, as it turns out, the music is definitely the best thing about this movie.

Gothic Vampires From Hell doesn't really know if it wants to be an old MTV music video or a movie. It follows a goth band competing in a battle of the bands and offered a record deal with Gotham Records, represented by two suspiciously sexy women who, as it turns out, also happen be vampires.

Talk about the record industry sucking the creative juices out of bands -- this label sucks their blood!

It's a fun concept and the actors actually do a decent job, but it's all terribly low budget -- there are numerous typos in the opening credits (including the consistent misspelling of "special" as "speical") and all of the vampire scenes end up with the victims spouting gallons of blood from their necks like a Monty Python movie -- it looks as if their hearts are connected to a water hose (you can even SEE the blood tubing in one scene). The first half of the movie has a lot of small club concert footage before the whole plot starts to gel and the movie changes its focus to follow its vampire intrigue.

But the live band sections have cheesy special effects from the dawn of the music video age (like having the screen break into fluttering triangles). If you enjoy seeing low budget cheesy horror movies and like goth music, you will likely enjoy at least some of this film -- it includes great catchy dark music from **Christian Death**, **Electric Hellfire Club**, **Razed in Black**, **Switchblade Symphony**, **Leather Strip** and more, including **Pitbull Daycare**, who landed music in the Saw soundtrack.

Fans of MTV's "Behind The Music" series and other such documentaries about music might be interested in picking up DVDs from MVD Visual that actually deal more explicitly with music (as opposed to bad goth horror flix).

MVD has partnered with Britain's Chrome Dreams label to issue a series of "unauthorised" documentaries of a variety of artists. The unauthorised tag means these programs often don't include interviews with the band members themselves, but rather tell the band's stories via discussions with rock critics, early collaborators and friends of the artists.

If you're a fan of early **Pink Floyd**, you'll find the critical evaluation of the band's "Meddle" album of interest, as a series of music critics, a studio engineer, and a founding member of Yes (Pete Banks) all talk about the circumstances that produced the band's first great album, released in 1971.

The DVD is called "Meddle: A Classic Album Under Review." The band's early history with **Syd Barrett** is covered along with a discussion of the album, the development of **David Gilmour's** bass sound and the influences that led to "Meddle"'s creation. Unlike some of the label's interview programs, it actually includes some film of the band performing in early live shows.

Another band covered by MVD's "Under Review" series is recent pop darlings, **The Killers**. Their "Leaving Las Vegas" DVD features interview footage taken from British TV sources, as well as those close to them, including a member of an early incarnation of the group, before they became The Killers. The disc goes into the band's beginnings on the Las Vegas scene, the development of their breakthrough "Hot Fuss" album and celebrates how, despite going to England to develop their sound, they still recognize their Las Vegas roots.

The MVD label also has compiled two hour **U2** documentaries as "U2 The DVD Collector's Box." One disc offers "U2: An Unforgettable Journey" and the other includes "Bono: God's Favorite Son." Again these DVDs revolve around interview footage with close friends and music business colleagues.

In addition to its unauthorised interview discs, MVD has also issued a series of discs that are authorised, and feature more music from the artists. One of those '60s troubadour **Tim Buckley's** "My Fleeting House" offers substantial interview footage with the late Buckley's frequent collaborator **Larry Beckett**, along with a series of Buckley's TV performances ranging from his appearance on "The Monkees" to sing "Song To The Siren" in 1967 to his performance of "The Dolphins" in 1974 on "Old Grey Whistle Test."

On the alternate musical spectrum from Buckley, a live music DVD recently issued from MVD captures a moment in time that fans of the late '80s Chicago punk scene will appreciate reliving. **Jesus Lizard** formed here in 1987, and put on a legendary incendiary shows. A new DVD simply titled "The Jesus Lizard" offers decent film footage from a 1994 Boston show and captures lead singer **David Yow's** wild antics, ranging from rolling around on the floor of the stage to singing while being supported by the hands of the audience as he stage dives into the crowd.



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For more information on these and a host of other music-related discs, check the label's site at mvdb2b.com.

E-mail John Everson at john@popstops.net. Pop Stops archive of reviews is at www.popstops.net.

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