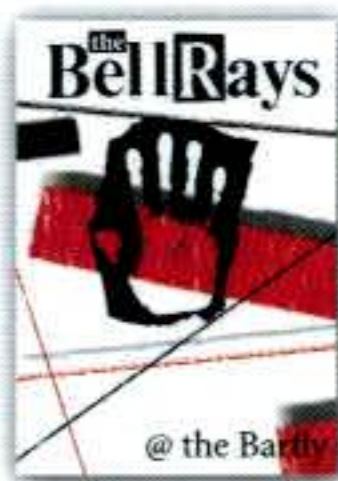


DVD REVIEWS



THE BELLRAYS

The Bellrays @ the Barfly

You don't have to be familiar with The BellRays to get into their "maximum rock n' soul" sound. Shot in London in late April, this DVD brings viewers up close and personal to the veteran band that has yet to break into the mainstream (although maybe you've heard their song "Revolution Get Down" in recent Nissan commercials). Led by Lisa Kekaula, The BellRays tear through 18 songs in this hour-long performance that leaves everybody sweaty. Tony Fate (guitar), Bob Vennum (bass) and Craig Wright (drums) pepper Kekaula's R&B vocals with a fiery mix of hard rock and punk on tracks like "Voodoo Train" and "Pay the Cobra," and the influence of The Stooges, MC5, and The Ramones is obvious in The BellRays sound. Tight camera shots make viewers feel like they're in the front row; it's the next best thing to experiencing the band live.

[Punkervision, punkervision.net] *Chip Midnight*



BOUNCING SOULS

Live at the Glasshouse

Fans of the long-running, quirky pop-punk band Bouncing Souls will enjoy this. The bulk of this DVD is a live set showing the band ploughing through a series of old and new cuts, with more pronounced emphasis on playing the songs good instead of being goofy. They're kinda sloppy, but the energy's there. I dunno, I still don't really get it, but I do find the mixture of melody and raw punk energy quite endearing. The thing looks great, and there seems to be lots of bonuses on this DVD's menus, but they all add up to nothing. A short behind-the-scenes segment is a highlight, as is being able to watch one song with nine potential camera angles to toggle through. But yeah, for fans only—folks like me who just don't quite get it would be advised to start with one of the albums. [Kung Fu, kungfurecords.com] *Greg Pratt*



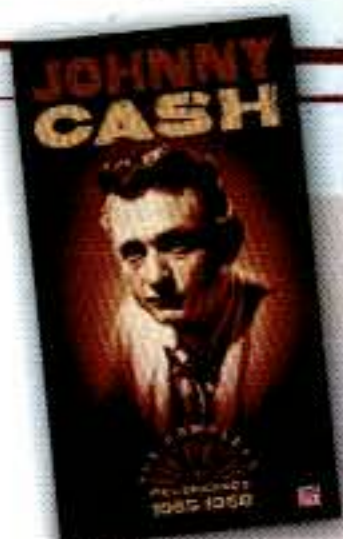
THOR

An-THOR-Logy

Fans of human train wrecks will probably be aware of Jon Mikl Thor. In an attempt to capitalize on the popularity of shock-rockers such as KISS and Alice Cooper, Mikl—a bodybuilder with no musical experience—created his stage persona of THOR, a steel-bar-bending rock 'n' roller. Totally irony-free, THOR would release a slew of poor selling, poor sounding records, while drawing crowds to live shows whose central event seemed to be THOR's ability to blow up a hot water bottle with his mouth. Collected on this DVD are numerous live performances and music videos from 1976 to 1985. While THOR's music left something significant to be desired, his stage persona did not, and the resulting live footage is generally gold. The videos, sadly, are not. Most enlightening here are the news clips and interviews with THOR, who takes himself so seriously you can't help but laugh. Plus, a stone cold serious audio commentary from the rock god himself. [Smog Veil, smogveil.com]

Sam Sutherland

PRODUCT REVIEWS



JOHNNY CASH

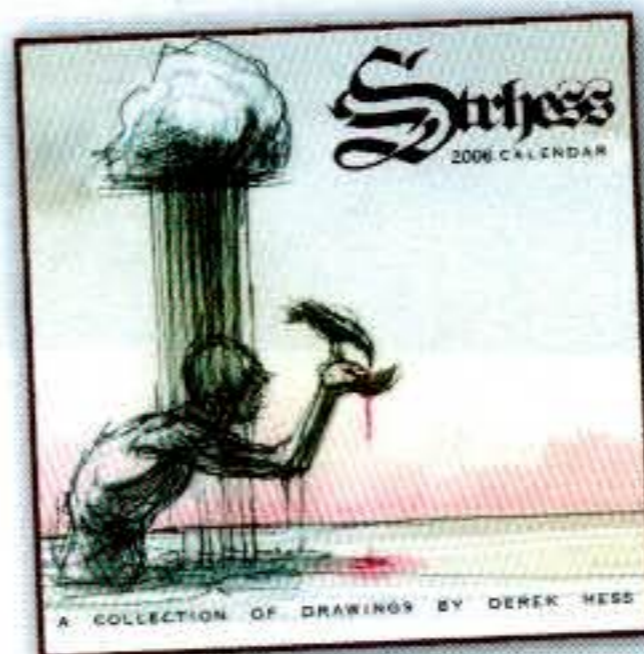
The Complete Sun Recordings 1955-1958

No presence in country music is as intimidating and complex as Johnny Cash. The Complete Sun Recordings 1955-1958 proves this. The Man in Black sang about everything from killing people and doing time in "Folsom Prison Blues" to dedicating oneself to another in "I Walk the Line." Both classics were cut within the first three years of Cash's recording career on Sam Philip's Sun Records, known for their work with Jerry Lee Lewis and the King himself, Elvis Presley. This three-disc collection of 61 songs contains every track Cash recorded for Sun between, including classics such as "Cry, Cry, Cry," "Get Rhythm," and "Hey, Good Lookin'." Featuring the early recordings of what would become an expansive and influential catalogue, this wonderful box set is essential to any Cash fan. [Time-Life, timelife.com] *Joseph Larnerd*

What made Cash so important to both country and rock music?
Music historian Colin Escott: The artistic integrity, the sense of adventure, [and] the willingness to keep on singing. Towards the end he wasn't singing "I Walk the Line." He was singing Trent Reznor's "Hurt."

Cash recorded 61 songs between 1955 and 1958. Which would you say were his most important?

The obvious one is "I Walk the Line." It's just so different from any country song that had come before it or after it, really. It's just a magic combination of the words, which are very sincere and very heartfelt, and the music, which is... simple [and] hypnotic.



STRHESS 2006 CALENDAR

A Collection of Drawings by Derek Hess

Cleveland-based artist Derek Hess describes this calendar as his "first step towards a book of art." After his drawings started selling for several hundred dollars a pop, Hess put his images onto shirts through the Strhess Clothing Company as a means of making his art affordable to his peers.

This calendar is a logical progression, as the print medium is where Hess truly shines. His ink and color drawings skate between sloppy and meticulous, where every angry scribble goes on to form a careful composition. Perhaps the best illustration graces the cover, where a sinewy youth offers his hand up to crow, which pecks through the muscle, dripping blood into the water the boy huddles in. Several times the calendar falls away from functionality and into the artistic side of the endeavor—there's really no way to actually keep dates on either May or July, considering the day-boxes are either stretched diagonally or hopelessly smushed to one side. Still, Hess's eerily beautiful drawings are the focus of this project, and his depictions of broken down, bludgeoned loners and hopeless angels are sure to be a daily reminder of the darker side of life. [derekhess.com, strhessclothing.com] *Lansie Sylvia*