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Sacred Triangle: Bowie, Iggy & Lou, 1971- 1973
Brian Wilson: Songwriter, 1962-1969
John Scofield: New Morning: The Paris Concert

Unlike most MTV and VH1 rockumentaries, the biographies and career retrospectives distributed by MVD Visuals more closely resemble doctoral theses than Wikipedia clip jobs. No better examples exist than the newly released **Sacred Triangle: Bowie, Iggy & Lou** and **Brian Wilson: Songwriter**.

None of the subjects of these documentaries are unknown quantities, of course. Their stories have been told countless times in books, video profiles and liner notes. What differentiates these titles not only is an attention to detail, but also a willingness to dig for intellectual context. Today, David Bowie, Iggy Pop and Lou Reed appear to have been iconic figures from Day One. Sacred Triangle targets a period, 1971-73, when each of these artists was desperately trying to re-ignite the flame produced by early pop successes.

Their labels fretted about everything from decreasing album sales to outrageous lifestyles, fueled by drugs, sex and way too much available cash. Bowie, especially, was responsible for finding a common denominator between himself, the Detroit bad boy and heady New York singer-songwriter. Already friends, they co-produced each other's records, exchanged songs and critiqued themselves and other musicians. At approximately the same time, young people were demanding something radically different than the output of hippy-dippy bands from San Francisco and the Hollywood Hills. It presented itself in the form of glam-rock, a genre that embraced androgyny, outlandish designer costumes and precisely coiffed hairdos.

The scene bore absolutely no resemblance to a three-day weekend with the Grateful Dead and critics were slow to embrace its eccentricities. By the time glam-rock wore out its luster, the artists had established the street cred that would allow them to be accepted by punk rockers, club kids and Goths, as well as fans not glued to a specific trend. The music created during this two-year period continues to be heard on both classic-rock and progressive radio stations. Any tour featuring Bowie, Iggy and Lou, today, would sell out stadiums around the world.

In addition to well-chosen newsreel, concert and video footage, the film is informed by contributions from Bowie's ex-wife, Angie; Billy Name, a confidant of Andy Warhol during the heyday of the Factory; MainMan Management vice president, Lee Black Childers; New York scenester Jayne [née Wayne] County and other contemporaries.

The two-disc **Brian Wilson: Songwriter** is even more comprehensive, covering the period that spanned the dawn of surf music and Brian Wilson's psychedelic experiments. No one in the history of rock music has experienced more personal and creative change than Brian Wilson, who, at one point, had ventured to a point so far out in the ozone that he was written off as a basket case. Songs, once as simple as they could possibly be, began to evolve into intricate rock

symphonies and song cycles, fusing standard instrumental backgrounds with animal noises, wind chimes and electro-theremin.

The themes reflected the many ideas and sounds buzzing through and around Wilson's brain while he relaxed in his living-room sandbox. As long as the Beach Boys produced hit singles, the label and Wilson's fellow band members were content to follow his lead. When, however, his music began to challenge mainstream tastes, it began to look as if Brian would be thrown out with the bathwater, and some important projects actually were deep-sixed. Songwriter makes the case for Wilson's enduring genius, while also pointing out his many idiosyncrasies and shortcomings. The set includes historical musical performances and rare and classic recordings, re-assessed by a panel of music scholars, critics, friends, fellow musicians and producers, and management figures. If this DVD doesn't make you want to re-visit your Beach Boy collection, nothing will.

John Scofield's guitar playing, compositions and arrangements have been admired by aficionados for more than three decades. Filmed earlier this year, **New Morning: The Paris Concert** provides a compelling retrospective of Scofield's interpretations of jazz, funk and R&B, while also tipping his hat to his primary influences, including Miles Davis, with whom he recorded and toured. Here, he's backed by drummer Bill Stewart, bassist Ben Street and pianist Michael Eckroth.

- Gary Dretzka