

most successful of the experimental pairings of British and American blues. In 1976, a brain tumor was discovered and he passed away from a heart attack during surgery.

Wolf's story is given life through the recounting of tales by his longtime guitarist Hubert Sumlin, his two daughters, Marshall Chess, Billy Boy Arnold, Sam Lay, author Mark Hoffman and the Wolf himself. There is incredible performance footage of Wolf at the Newport Folk Festival, German television (from the American Folk Blues Festival mentioned in last month's Manifesto) and his one U.S. TV appearance on Shindig! in 1965, that came about only because the Rolling Stones demanded it as part of their contract.

The Howlin' Wolf Story is beautifully directed by Don McGlynn and is not just for blues fans, but by anyone interested in the history of American music. Bonus features include Sam Lay's 8mm home movies of Chicago Blues clubs, a look at the supposed rivalry between Wolf and Muddy Waters and part of a blistering live radio broadcast on WOPA.



Blank Generation / Dancing Barefoot
(MVD)
New York 1975. CBGBs was ground zero for the burgeoning punk rock / new wave movement and this double feature DVD puts you right in the heart of the action.

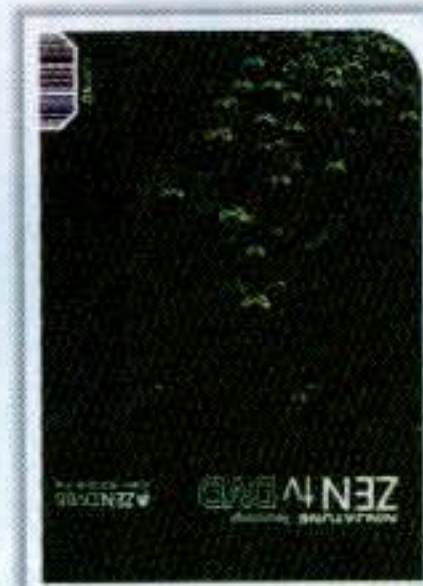
Documentaries don't get much more punk rock than Blank Generation. Directed and produced by Amos Poe and Ivan Kral, grainy footage of the Ramones, Patti Smith Group, Talking Heads, Television, Wayne County, Johnny Thunders and others are spliced together, seemingly at random. Demo sessions and live tracks that sound like piss-poor cassettes serve as the soundtrack, but bear no relation whatsoever to the visuals. Depending on your perspective and tolerance level, this can be brilliant or completely infuriating—maybe a little of both. I'm fortunate that I got to see most of the bands back in the day in small clubs here in San Francisco, but for those who missed out, this may or may not serve as an adequate substitute.

Dancing Barefoot was produced for Czech television in 1994 and focuses on the life and career of Ivan Kral. Due to his father's outspoken political beliefs, Ivan's family was booted out of Czechoslovakia and emigrated to the U.S. A budding musician since the eighth grade, he soon found his place as a member of the Patti Smith

Group and remained with them up through their final recording sessions. This period of graphic work that perfectly complements the electro-jazz of Flanger's "Option In The Fire" There are cool extras, such as Hex-static's 17-minute video mash-up, an album cover slide-show and the ability to sequence the clips, chronologically, in reverse order, or at random.

Of course a key factor in the success of this package is the music itself and that is Ninja Tune's greatest strength. Over the years it's managed to bring a steady stream of innovative producers, bands and DJs into its stable, the majority of which have contributed their own unique vision and style to the electronic music world. Happy anniversary—here's to the next ten!

ZEN TV DVD: Video Retrospective
(NINJA TUNE)
Having recently celebrated its tenth anniversary, Ninja Tune decided to commemorate the event by issuing three retrospective packages: two double-disc CD collections (one with original releases / one of remixes) and a DVD compiling 35 of the best (and strangest) videos produced over the years.



Since none of the artists have never had the luxury of a large budget for video production, most of the clips utilize found or licensed footage from old movies, industrial films and historical events, computer graphics and animation. While this may be perceived as a limitation to some, the assorted directors make the most of what they have to work with. Mr. Scruff's cute cast of animated characters come to life most successfully in "Sweetsmoke" while the members of Jaga Jazzi are portrayed as two-dimensional photo collages with their heads superimposed on jungle animals and other creatures. Hexstatic are known for their video manipulation software and make the most of scratching and sampling images and found sounds into the beats and rhythms of their songs.

Dancing Barefoot contains a fair amount of Ivan's 8mm footage seen in Blank Generation, but given its context, is nowhere nearly as frustrating to watch. These two films together serve as a valuable historical document of one of the last great periods of musical revolution in recent memory and is a reminder of where bands like the White Stripes, the Strokes, the Rapture and others got their inspiration from.



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Curtis Mayfield
In Concert
(IN-AKUSTIK)
Filmed for German television in April of 1990—just a few months before a tragic accident would permanently end his performing career, Mayfield and band spend an hour looking back at some of his most memorable songs. Three songs from Superfly and another four from his early days with the Impressions make up the majority of the material here, along with "To Be Invisible" from the soundtrack of Claudine, "Do Be Down" from Take It To The Streets and the classic "Move On Up."



Mayfield is in fine form and the concert production is crisp, but the band is a little too clean-sounding. The keyboards have that cheesy '80s sound and the bass player's hairdo and white sport coat scream new wave, yet they do an adequate job of backup nonetheless. Since there isn't much in the way of concert footage from the late, great soul master, this is worth checking out.

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