

Music Review: Rockpalast DVD Roundup—Ian Hunter Featuring Mick Ronson/Public Image Limited/Roy Buchanan/Michael Schenker Group (MIG/WDR, DVDs)

by [Howard Whitman](#) on May 8, 2012 at 3:29 pm

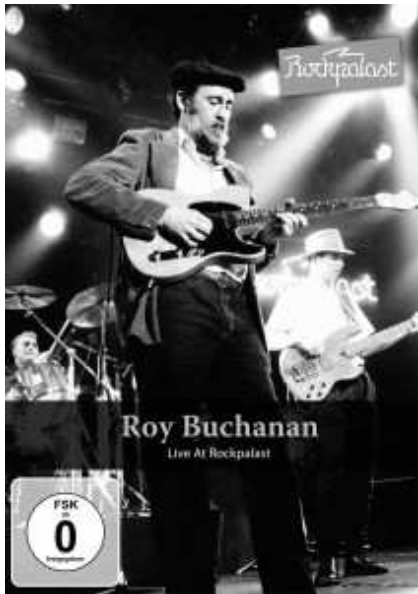
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Roy Buchanan Rockpalast DVD



Public image Limited Rockpalast DVD



Ian Hunter Rockpalast DVD

“Rockpalast” was a 1970s/1980s European counterpart to America’s “Midnight Special” and “Don Kirshner’s Rock Concert” TV shows: A rare (for their time) TV helping of real, live rock music, played in a concert setting, with no lip-synching. But while the U.S. shows were taped in TV studios and edited into segments allowing for commercial breaks, “Rockpalast” shows were full rock concerts, taped in German concert halls. And when I say full, I mean FULL; as the four programs, recently released on DVD, show, these were warts-and-all concerts. You see and hear the musicians plugging in, tuning up, playing a few spare chords or notes between songs. It can be a little jarring, but these concerts are undeniably the real thing.

The artists represented on these discs include Ian Hunter, former frontman for 70s glam (glam in the David Bowie/T-Rex sense, not the latter-day Motley Crue definition) British rockers. When this show was taped in 1980, Hunter was collaborating with guitarist Mick Ronson, the main musical driving force in Bowie’s *Ziggy Stardust*-era band, The Spiders from Mars. Ronson, who died in 1993, was an ideal musical foil for Hunter, who seemed energized by the teaming, and produced some of his most vital solo work, including “Once Bitten Twice Shy”, “Just Another Night” and “Cleveland Rocks”, all represented with high-energy versions on this disc. An energetic backing band that featured future Bryan Adams keyboardist Tommy Mandel and bassist Martin Briley, who would later have a solo hit of his own, “Salt of My Tears,” provides energetic support. It’s loose, not tight, but it rocks, and features a generous helping of Mott the Hoople classics like “All the Way from Memphis” and “All the Young Dudes.” And it ends with Ronson’s instrumental “Slaughter on 10th Avenue”, a fine elegy to a man who could make a Gibson Les Paul sing.

Public Image Limited, shown here in a 1983 concert, was the post-Sex Pistols band led by that seminal punk band’s lead singer, Johnny Rotten, going by his real name, John Lydon, at this point. PiL was decidedly un-punk; the band’s mix of synths, dance rhythms and propulsive bass in a sense was early techno. But Lydon didn’t leave his punk attitude completely behind. Never much of a singer, he’s at his snarling best over the band’s layers of sound. An interesting mix of styles, although it does start to drone after a while. Still, PiL was a cool band, ahead of its time, and Lydon is undoubtedly a charismatic frontman.

I wasn’t familiar with Roy Buchanan, but online sources referred to him as “the world’s best unknown guitarist.” This 1985 concert (filmed three years before his death) shows he certainly was a master of the Fender Telecaster. A whispery singer, Buchanan was an inventive interpreter of cover songs by folks like Jimi Hendrix. This show was slightly hampered by a stiff backing band, but it’s a rare and welcome chance to see a guitar master strut his stuff.

A guitar master of another style, Michael Schenker, is represented on the fourth disc in a 1981 concert. Former UFO guitarist Schenker’s band, MSG, was flying high when this show was shot, and the concert is chock-full of 1980s proto-metal energy. UFO songs like “Doctor Doctor” and “Lights Out” come across especially well, and Schenker knew his way around a Flying V.

These DVDs each offer rare shows from artists captured at pivotal times in their careers. They're better than bootlegs, but note that the quality is 1980s TV production. Camera work is OK, sound is functional if not rich and full, and it's black-bars/full screen all the way. But you won't find these shows anywhere else.

[Buy Ian Hunter – Live At Rockpalast Featuring Mick Ronson at Amazon](#)

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