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movies, TV, and comedy



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DEJA RE-VU

Pop Culture Classics' Recommended CDs, DVDs and Books

By Paul Freeman

DVDs

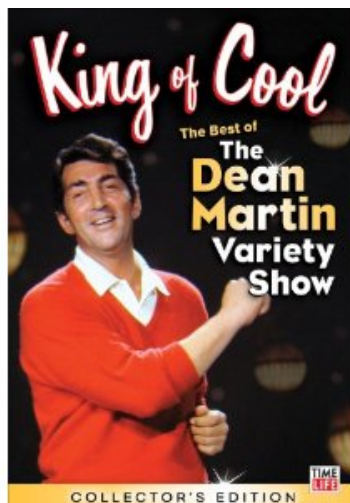
"IAN HUNTER BAND FEATURING MICK RONSON: LIVE AT ROCKPALAST"

These 1980 performances from German TV testify to the electricity of one of rock's great team-ups, Hunter and Ronson. The terrific set list includes such classics as "All The Young Dudes," "Cleveland Rocks" and "Once Bitten, Twice Shy," as well as a cover of Sonny Bono's unjustifiably obscure "Laugh At Me." This DVD is an opportunity to experience vocalists/guitarists Hunter and Ronson in top form.



"THAT SHOW WITH JOAN RIVERS"

Remember when Joan Rivers was young and innocent? When the only target of her barbs was herself? If not, here's a very entertaining reminder. Her 1969-69 syndicated daytime talk show has been unearthed and is now available in this three-disc, 18-episode package. Each show focuses on different topics, such as nudist camps, parenting, the jet set and men's furs. It's very much a window on the era. Expert guests are joined by celebrities, including Soupy Sales, Dick Cavett, Jerry Lewis, Johnny Carson, Orson Bean, David Susskind and Florence Henderson. Joan looks a bit ill-at-ease in some of the early monologues and interviews, but that's just endearing. It's a very different Joan from the one we know today. In fact, at one point, she makes a crack about people being too fixated on fashion! The show on plastic surgery is a hoot, as well. This is a diverting time capsule.



"KING OF COOL: THE BEST OF THE DEAN MARTIN VARIETY SHOW (COLLECTOR'S EDITION)"

This new six-disc collection, the second such Dino extravaganza, offers a wealth of entertainment magic. These high points, culled from Martin's popular series from the '60s and '70s, features many of the era's legendary performers, including Bob Newhart, Sid Caesar, Jonathan Winters, Ella Fitzgerald, Bill Cosby, Ella Fitzgerald, Barbara Eden, Carroll O'Connor, Vikki Carr, Eddie Fisher, Nancy Sinatra, Mickey Rooney, Red Buttons, Orson Welles, Liberace, Art Carney, Edgar Bergen, Herb Alpert and Jackie Mason. Pop buffs will be delighted to see Herman's Hermits, The First Edition and The Supremes singing their hits. And, of course, laid-back Dean holds it all together with his easy-going charm.

"FROM STRAIGHT TO BIZARRE"

Adam Sandler
Al Franken
Al Kooper
Alan Alda
Albert Hammond
Alice Cooper
Alvin Lee
Andy Summers
Ani DiFranco
Arnold Schwarzenegger
Art Clokey (creator of Gumby)
Art Garfunkel
Arthur Lee- Love
Ashford & Simpson
B-52's
Badly Drawn Boy
Barbara Mandrell
Barry Mann
Bay City Rollers
Berlin
Bert Jansch
Betty Buckley
Bijou Phillips
Bill Maher
Bill Medley
Bill Monroe
Bill Wyman
Billy Crystal
Billy Joel
Bjork
Blur
Bob Geldof
Bob Mould
Brendan Fraser
Brian Auger
Brian Regan
Brubeck Brothers
Bruce Hornsby
Bruce Willis
Buck Owens
Buggy Guy
Butch Trucks
Buzzcocks
Cameron Diaz
Carlene Carter
Carlos Santana
Carnie Wilson
Carole King
Cate Blanchett
Chevy Chase
Chicago
China Forbes
Chip Taylor
Chris Farley
Chris Hillman
Chris Isaak
Chrissie Hynde
Christian Slater
Christopher Eccleston
Christopher Reeve
Cinematic Titanic
Coldplay
Colin Blunstone
Collins Kids
Concrete Blonde
Corrs
Count V
Cowboy Junkies
Cranberries
Crystal Bernard
Cybill Shepherd
Cyndi Lauper

This fascinating documentary details how Frank Zappa, embroiled in contract issues with his record company, established two of his own labels, Bizarre and Straight. He put together an intriguing, eclectic, eccentric, avant-garde roster of artists, including Tim Buckley, Alice Cooper, Captain Beefheart, Wild Man Fischer and Lord Buckley. Among the interesting interviews here are Kim Fowley and Pamela Des Barres [The GTOs]. There are some great anecdotes about Beefheart, a colorful character, to put it kindly. There are also insights into Zappa's off-beat approaches to music and business.

"FROM THE SKY DOWN"

This documentary, directed by Academy Award winner Davis Guggenheim ("An Inconvenient Truth"), depicts U2's making of their classic 1991 album, "Achtung Baby." It's an engrossing look at the band's creative process, as well as their personal interaction. Looking back, 20 years later, the musicians have a sense of perspective. Viewers will definitely gain a greater appreciation for what the group achieved with this evolutionary project. Bonus material includes U2 song performances and a segment of Guggenheim, Bono and The Edge responding to questions at the Toronto Film Festival's premiere. The film is available on Blu-Ray and DVD.

"PEOPLE ARE FUNNY"

This early reality/game/prank show provides an amusing chunk of TV history. A radio hit in the '30s and '40s, it became a popular television series, hosted by Art Linkletter, in the '50s. The effusive Linkletter, winking at the exuberant studio audience, brings up guests, common folks, and gives them opportunities to win cash or prizes. Some of his little games presage such later shows as "Let's Make A Deal." There are also practical jokes. Unfortunately, much of the potential hilarity happens off camera. Apparently logistics, technical capabilities or budget didn't allow cameras to follow contestants who find their house has disappeared or who deliver an elephant to an unsuspecting stranger's house. So we just hear the results being described. Nevertheless, the new three-disc, 16-episode set from Film Chest provides lots of good-natured, nostalgic fun.

"TREASURE TRAIN"

This 1982 children's movie (originally titled "The Emperor of Peru"), is a good-hearted adventure, now available, thanks to Odyssey Moving Images, on DVD and Blu-Ray. It stars the indomitable Mickey Rooney as a retired, dotty, physically challenged railroad engineer. A boy and his sister meet a young Cambodian refugee. With Rooney's help, they resolve to fix a battered old train engine and somehow use it to transport the youngster back home. Rooney, of course, engages in his enthusiastic mugging for the camera, making the proceedings fun for the grown-ups watching. As a bonus, there's a new, rambling interview with the screen legend.

CDs

PENELOPE HOUSTON - "ON MARKET STREET"

It's been a long time between new Penelope Houston albums. "On Market Street" was definitely worth the wait. For the last 30 years, Houston has been one of the Bay Area's most vital musical artists. A punk pioneer with The Avengers, she has evolved into a brilliant solo artist. The new album, instantly grabbing, makes a more indelible impression with each subsequent listening. Lyrics and melodies are equally arresting. The indie folk-rock encompasses a range of styles, from edgy to whimsical '50s to subtly textured strings to jangly guitars and swirling Hammond B3. Houston displays a sense of humor on "Scrap" and a deeply moving social conscience on the poignant title track. Other top tracks include "Winter Coats," "Dead Girl" and the biting "USSA." Houston is an expressive vocalist and an extraordinarily eloquent and insightful songwriter. Collaborating with an outstanding team of talents, including co-producer Jeffrey Wood and guitarist Pat Johnson, Houston has created a transcendent work. She will celebrate the album's release with a March 29 show at San Francisco's Cafe Du Nord.



HOWLIN RAIN - "THE RUSSIAN WILDS"

Fronted by dynamic singer-guitarist Ethan Miller, the Bay Area's Howlin Rain generates a

Dan Aykroyd
 Danny DeVito
 Dave Brubeck
 Dave Clark
 Dave Davies
 Dave Mason
 Dave Matthews
 Dave Mustaine
 David Byrne
 David Cassidy
 David Crosby
 David Gates
 David Grey
 David LaFlamme
 David Lee Roth
 Dean Torrence
 Dean Torrence
 Debby Harry
 Def Leppard
 Deni Moore
 Depeche Mode
 Devo
 Dick Clark
 Dick Dale
 Dolly Parton
 Don Everly
 Doobie Brothers
 Dudley Moore
 Duran Duran
 Dwight Yoakum
 Earl Klugh
 Ed O'Neil
 Eddie Money
 Eddie Rabbitt
 Elisabeth Shue
 Ellen Greene
 Elvis Costello
 Emmylou Harris
 Engelbert
 Erasure
 Eric Andersen
 Eric Burdon
 Faith Hill
 Fiona Apple
 Frank Black
 Fred Willard
 Frosted
 Gary Lewis
 Gene Hackman
 Gene Simmons
 Geoffrey Rush
 Grace Slick
 Graham Nash
 Graham Parker
 Green Day
 Greg Kinn
 Gregory Hines
 Gruff Rhys
 Gunnar Nelson
 Halle Berry
 Harrison Ford
 Harry Belafonte
 Harvey Keitel
 Helena Bonham Carter
 Henry Rollins
 Herb Gardner
 Holly Hunter
 Huey Lewis
 Hugh Grant
 Hyapatia Lee
 Ian Hunter
 Ian Tyson
 Ileana Douglas
 Jack Bruce
 Jack Jones
 Jack Palance
 Jamie Bernstein
 Jane Siberry
 Jane Weidlin
 Janeane Garafalo
 Janis Ian
 Jeff Buckley
 Jeff Lynne
 Jen & Buns
 Jennifer Batten
 Jennifer Connelly
 Jeremy Northam
 Jerry Naylor
 Jesse Colin Young
 Jesus & Mary Chain

classic rock fervor. Heavyweight producer Rick Rubin has helmed the band's new album, its third, "The Russian Wilds," but hasn't tampered with the group's earthy, soulful sense of urgency. Like The Black Crowes, Howlin Rain doesn't just mimic '70s rock 'n' roll; it inhabits that music's fierce, fiery, organic nature and breathes new life into it through a strong, earnest collection of original tunes.

MICHAEL WILLIAMS BAND - "FIRE RED"

With the guiding hand of the great producer Eddie Kramer [Jimi Hendrix, Led Zep, Kiss], blues-rock guitarist Williams proves that he's definitely ready for prime time. The Texas talent displays plenty of grit and fire, both in his vocals and axe-work. The slide artistry on "If You Let Me" will sear its way into your consciousness. The diversity here takes Williams south of the border for "Entre Tus Ojos." He takes a poignant turn with "Dead & Gone." The son of the late blues singer Larry "Junior Medlow" Williams, he exudes earthiness, emotion and self-assurance. Michael Williams should be a big part of the blues scene for years to come.

HEARTLESS BASTARDS - "ARROW"

With singer-songwriter Erika Wennerstrom leading the way, Heartless Bastards spring forward with "Arrow." Their fourth studio album shows marvelous maturation. This one has less of a country feel than their previous "Mountain" album. Here the band finds its groove in roots rock. There's a bluesy sneer in Wennerstrom's voice that complements her bandmates' grit. Top tracks include "Late In The Night," "Skin and Bone" and "Simple Feeling."

ALAN MERRILL - "SNAKES AND LADDERS"

If you don't recognize the name Alan Merrill, you bloody well should! A Bronx native, he was the vocalist with the hit-making U.K. band The Arrows, whose smashes included the original version of "I Love Rock 'n' Roll." A gifted and prolific songwriter, Merrill co-penned that classic. Merrill later played with the bands Runner and Vodka Collins, as well as with Rick Derringer. "Snakes and Ladders," his latest solo release, like the previous "Face of 69" and "Numbers," contains both newly recorded and remixed, remastered tracks. Memorable numbers abound here, such as "Me, You," "No Speed Limit," "Rain Chasing Dreams," "Dead End Zone," the gentle ballad "Phoenix and the Renegade" and the pop-y, pretty "Somebody Special." Whether wandering into Americana territory or hurtling into throbbing rock, Merrill's expressive voice proves riveting throughout.

CANDY DULFER - "CRAZY"

This collaboration with producer/co-writer/multi-instrumentalist/vocalist Printz Board [Black Eyed Peas, Macy Grey] gives the sexy saxophonist an appealing energy and a tasty funk flavor. Jazz, pop, dance and R&B elements figure into the lively equation, as well. Guitarist Ulco Bed, also a co-writer, is another strong presence. The album takes Dulfer in some new directions and she's more than up to the task. Candy knows how to wail!

TOMMY IGOE AND THE BIRDLAND BIG BAND - "ELEVEN"

Tommy Igoe has toured as drummer with The Glenn Miller Band and Blood, Sweat and Tears. He has set the beat for such artists as Stanley Jordan, Art Garfunkel and Dave Grusin. Son of another great drummer, Sonny Igoe (Benny Goodman, Woody Herman), he brings a contemporary excitement to the big band form. His latest swinging album, with an assemblage of 19 top New York musicians, packs quite a punch. On "Eleven," the sound surges with funk and Latin flavors, as well as contemporary jazz.

LYNNE ARRIALE - "SOLO"

On her new "Solo" album, jazz pianist Lynne Arriale demonstrates her exceptional gifts as a composer, elegantly setting very different moods on "La Noche," "Dove" and "Arise." She's also an imaginative interpreter of well known works, such as "Wouldn't It Be Lovely," "What Is This Thing called Love" and Thelonious Monk's "Evidence."

LORRAINE FEATHER - "TALES OF THE UNUSUAL"

Singer-songwriter Lorraine Feather takes the listener on a uniquely compelling journey with "Tales of the Unusual." Both as a vocalist and lyricist, Feather has a hip, happening, very unusual approach to jazz. There's a theatricality and an adventurous quality to these captivating songs. A study in contrasts, the album

Jewel
 Jim Belushi
 Jim Carrey
 Jim McCarty
 Joan Baez
 Jody Stephens (Big Star)
 Joe Ely
 Joe Jackson
 Joel McHale
 Joh Hiatt
 John Cryer
 John Denver
 John Doe
 John Gorka
 John Hughes
 John Lydon
 John Mayall
 John Mellencamp
 John Paul Jones
 John Sebastian
 Johnny Depp
 Johnny Winter
 Jon Bon Jovi
 Jon Favreau
 Jorma Kaukainen
 Josie Bisset of Melrose Place
 Journey
 Judy Collins
 Julia Fordham
 Julian Lennon
 Juliette Lewis
 Katey Sagal
 Kathleen Turner
 Katie Melua
 Keanu Reeves
 Keifer Sutherland
 Kenny Laguna
 Kim Basinger
 Kim Gordon
 Kris Kristofferson
 Larry King
 Laurence Juber
 Lemmy (Motorhead)
 Lenny Kravitz
 Les Claypool
 Lesley Gore
 Leslie Mann
 Linda Ronstadt
 Lisa Loeb
 Lita Ford
 Loudon Wainwright
 Louis Malle
 Lucinda Williams
 Luke Perry
 Lydia Pense
 Maria McKee
 Maria Muldaur
 Marianne Faithful
 Marlo Thomas
 Martin Mull
 Marty Balin
 Mary Wells
 Matt Dillon
 Max Weinberg
 Mel C
 Mel Torme
 Melissa Manchester
 Michael Biehn
 Michael Hutchence
 Michael J. Fox
 Michael Nesmith
 Midnight Oil
 Mike Myers
 Mike Smith
 Milla Jovovich
 Minnie Driver
 Miranda Richardson
 Moby
 Molly Ringwald
 Muse
 Nancy Griffith
 Nancy Sinatra
 Nancy Wilson
 Natasha Bettingfield
 Nelson
 Nick Lowe
 Nick Nolte
 Nicole Kidman
 Nikka Costa
 Nikki Sixx



can turn dark one moment, humorous the next, all with utter smoothness. Her previous album, "Ages" earned a Grammy Nomination. This wonderfully offbeat new effort is even more impressive.

"HEAVY MANIC SOULS"

These dynamic souls (www.heavymanicsouls.com) deliver blues-rock that really packs a wallop. They're led by the fluid, powerful guitar riffs of Chris Francheteau. Elements of soul, psychedelia and punk add further sparks to the sound. One of the top tracks is "Juggernaut (Fury Road)." Among the other noteworthy cuts are "Rollerball" and "Escape From Earth."

WHITTON - "RARE BIRD"

Whitton has her very own sound and it's simultaneously fresh and nostalgic. The material can be breezy one moment, dark the next. And her voice is wonderfully versatile and evocative. Among the highlights of this compelling, highly entertaining collection are the playfully seductive "Turn Off The Light," the disturbing "Monster" and the clever "Pity Party." An indie music award nominee for best pop album, this exceptional release is proof that the artist deserves widespread recognition. Whitton is a sheer delight.

"SOLAR PLEXUS #5"

After their eponymous 1979 album earned them a rave from High Fidelity magazine, which called them "the most promising new jazz group of the year," they completed another album, prior to dissolving. That record didn't see the light of day until now. And we're grateful to finally get to hear this fabulous jazz fusion sextet soar. Denny Berthiaume (keyboards), Dave Bendigkeit (trumpet), Eric Golub (electric violin and electric viola), Rory Snyder (saxes and flute), Russ Tincher (drums) and producer/engineer Jon Ward (acoustic and electric bass) interact in exciting fashion on intricate arrangements.

JOSHUA BELL AND JEREMY DENK - "FRENCH IMPRESSIONS"

Violinist Joshua Bell and pianist Jeremy Denk sensitively explore the nuances of Saint-Saens, Ravel and Franck compositions. The two acclaimed musicians have been collaborating for eight years and their wondrously intuitive, graceful interplay is in evidence here. Bell conjures up an exquisitely warm tone. Together the duo paints beautiful musical impressions.

NICK MORAN TRIO: "NO TIME LIKE NOW"

Guitarist Moran, organist Brad Whiteley and drummer Chris Benham form a tantalizing jazz threesome. There's a very contemporary feel to this new album. Moran coaxes sublime tones from his instrument and the B3 and drum kit complement him perfectly. Among the high points is the trio's unconventional take on Cream's "Strange Brew." And "Natalya" is an exotic, sultry beauty. The group explores many moods over the course of the record.

BELA FLECK & THE FLECKTONES: "ROCKET SCIENCE"

The first album of new music from the eclectic group in six years. They were more than ready, judging by the excitement quotient here. Harmonica master Howard Levy is back, adding an extra spice to Victor Wooten's imaginative bass work, Roy Wooten's clever percussion and, of course, Bela Fleck's versatile banjo wizardry. The fare is as fresh and fun as ever. It's virtuosity with both intelligence and feeling.

MEAT LOAF: "HELL IN A HANDBASKET"

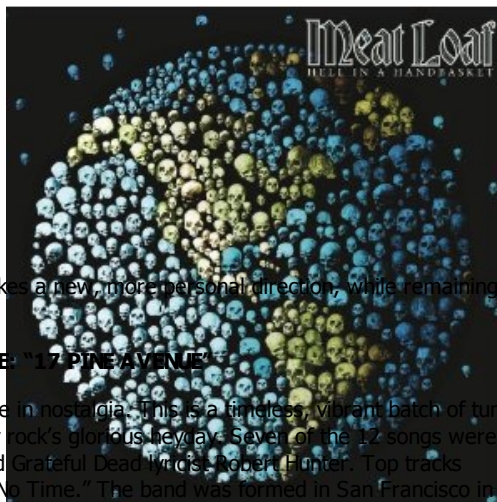
Meat takes his fans on another journey, building ample drama via hard rock, screaming violins, confessional lyrics and even a rap by guest Chuck D (Public Enemy). Subtlety is, as usual, in short supply, but there's a stirring

Nina Gordon
 Oliver Stone
 Olivia Newton-John
 Ossie Davis
 Ozzy Osbourne
 Patty Smythe
 Paul Kantner
 Paul Michael Glaser
 Paul Westerberg
 Paul Williams
 Paula Cole
 Paula Poundstone
 Peggy Lee
 Pegi Young
 Penelope Houston
 Penny Marshall
 Perry Ferrell
 Peter Fonda
 Peter Gallagher
 Peter Noone
 Peter Tork
 Peter Wolf
 Petula Clark
 Phil Lesh/Rick James
 Phish
 Phyllis Diller
 Pierce Brosnan
 Piper Laurie
 Polly Parsons
 REM
 REO Speedwagon
 Radiohead
 Ramblin' Jack Elliott
 Randy Bachman
 Randy Newman
 Randy Travis
 Ray Bradbury
 Ray Liotta
 Ray Manzarek
 Richard Carpenter
 Richard Dreyfus
 Richard Lewis
 Richard Thompson
 Richie Sambora
 Rick Springfield
 Ricky Skaggs
 Robbie Krieger
 Robert Klein
 Robert Schimmel
 Robin Williams
 Robyn Hitchcock
 Rod Argent
 Rodney Crowell
 Roger McGuinn
 Ron Sexsmith
 Roseanne Cash
 Roy Orbison
 Rufus Wainwright
 Sam Elliott
 Sam Neill
 Sammy Cahn
 Sammy Davis
 Sarah Brightman
 Sarah Jessica Parker
 Sarah McLachlan
 Scotty Moore (Elvis' original guitarist)
 Seal
 Sean Connery
 Sean Lennon
 Shari Lewis
 Shawn Colvin
 Sheena Eastman
 Shelby Lynne
 Shelley Long
 Sinead O'Connor
 Social Distortion
 Soul Asylum
 Stallone
 Stan Freberg
 Steely Dan
 Stephen Stills
 Stereolab
 Steve Earle
 Steven Seagal
 Steven Tyler
 Super Furry Animals
 Susanna Hoffs
 Suzanne Vega
 Tanya Donnelly
 Temptations

amount of righteous rage. There's enough stylistic variety to keep things interesting through all dozen tracks. Peaks include "Our Love and Our Souls" (duet with Patti Russo), "Party of One" and a surprisingly effective cover of "California Dreamin'" Though longtime collaborator, producer/songwriter Jim Steinman is missing, Meat Loaf successfully takes a new, more personal direction, while remaining a bigger-than-life figure.

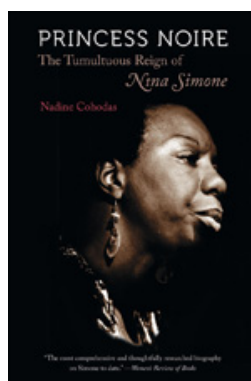
NEW RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE: "17 PINE AVENUE"

The Riders' new album is no exercise in nostalgia. This is a firmness, vibrant batch of tunes that serves as a reminder of country rock's glorious heyday. Seven of the 12 songs were penned by guitarist David Nelson and Grateful Dead lyricist Robert Hunter. Top tracks include "Prisoner of Freedom" and "No Time." The band was formed in San Francisco in 1969, basically split in the '80s, but resurfaced in 2005. Now, in 2012, The Riders are still firing on all cylinders.



Temptations
Terry Gilliam
The Donnas
The Jayhawks
The Knack
The Motels
The Turtles
The Who-John Entwistle
Thomas Haden Church
Tim Burton
Tim Robbins
Timothy Dalton
Todd Rundgren
Tom Hanks
Tom Jones
Tom Smothers
Tommy Davidson
Tommy James
Tommy Roe
Tori Amos
Tower of Power
Trisha Yearwood
Vanessa Carlton
Vince Neil
War
Warren Haynes
Waylon Jennings
Wendy and Bonnie
Willem Dafoe
Willie Nelson
Wink Martindale
Yardbirds

BOOKS



"PRINCESS NOIRE: THE TUMULTUOUS REIGN OF NINA SIMONE"

BY NADINE COHODAS (UNC Press)

Cohodas, an award-winning author, who previously wrote books on Dinah Washington and Chess Records, has penned a wonderful biography of the great Nina Simone. Incredibly well researched, "Princess Noire" gives us a remarkably detailed account of the singer/songwriter/pianist/activist's extraordinary life. Simone was born an artist, but struggled to accept the role of performer. She crossed myriad boundaries, delving into many musical genres. Simone achieved greatness, making her mark on society not only through her music, but also in the civil rights movement.

Cohodas chronicles Simone's politics and performances, as well as the emotional and mental fragility that plagued her. Despite fame and acclaim, Simone endured financial troubles and painful personal relationships. She was a complex, enigmatic woman, but this new book gives us a far greater understanding of her mind, her soul and her talent.

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