

TD What did you think of the music genre that then became affiliated with the drug counterculture, groups like Jefferson Airplane and The Electric Prunes. Who are some of your favorites?

DA My favorites are The Beatles and Electric Light Orchestra. As far as the drug culture and music, none of that bothered me. I think I was so naive, I didn't even know what was going on. I was never a druggie.

TD Is there any chance that you would consider, at some point, writing a book about your life and career?

DA Oh boy, I have talked about that so many times. I even met with somebody a few years back. I was going to write it with somebody. He took it to his publisher and they said, "No, we're not interested in this." I think part of it is that you can't really say much about Mike Curb without getting in deep shit. Briefly, I'll tell you why they do that. LeAnn Rimes and The Judds and one other artist took him to court because they were unhappy. They wanted out. They lost and he kept them on the label. This is a powerful guy, so nobody wants to really touch that part of a book. So, I don't know what to do. I've threatened to write a book for many, many years. Not that I threatened *him*—just, well, the audience!

TD Do you have any dates that are coming up in 2016? The fans still want to be able to see you perform live!

DA I did a lot of dates last year, the most I've done in a few years. Probably in the summer I do something.

TD I'm sure you've heard from your fans that you're nothing in person like what they expected.

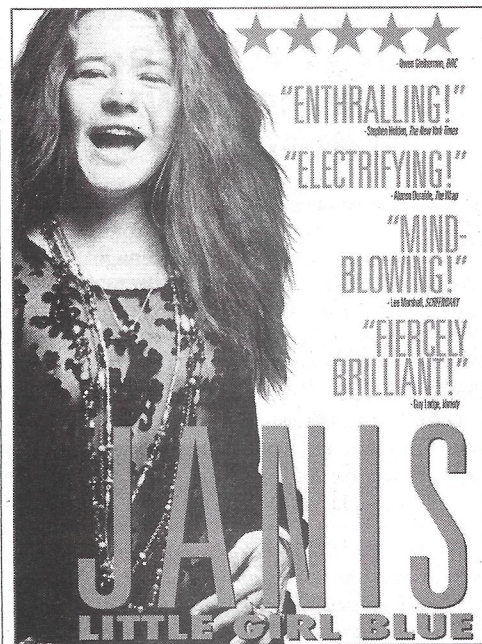
DA I hear that all the time! They expect this hairy, biker type image, right? And it's just not there. When I get on stage, though, I'm just as gnarly as ever. ☘

JANIS: '60s SIREN!

JANIS: LITTLE GIRL BLUE (2015) ☘☘☘1/2
D: Amy J. Berg. Cat Power (narration), Karleen Bennett, Dick Cavett, Clive Davis, Dave Getz, Laura Joplin, Michael Joplin, Julius Karpen, Kris Kristofferson, Country Joe McDonald, Dave Niehaus, D.A. Pennebaker. 105 mins. (MVD Visual) 5/16

Forty-six years after Janis's death from an overdose at age 27 (doomed 27, same as Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Amy Winehouse and Brian Jones), the pang of her loss, at the moment she was expanding her already considerable talent, still smarts, and her peers, band mates and on-again, off-again lover David Niehaus, all old men now, still tear up recalling her death. The contours of her life are well known: born in 1943 in provincial Port Arthur, Texas; growing up feeling out of step and ostracized at school; discovering at 17 she could sing like Etta James; finding a psychic home in San Francisco; and helping write the history of classic rock. **Janis** fills in the gaps, revealing through Janis's letters home—she wrote futilely to her loving but prissy parents wanting their approval in an old-fashioned, courtly style—as well as people who knew her and worked with her, the ambition, hurts, aspiration and disappointments, personal, musical and commercial, that created the enduring myth. If you can't get enough of Janis, see this doc. It's achingly complete. In Port Arthur, Janis liked "playing the bad girl." It became the Janis brand, but this doc shows how nearly impossible it was for her to get her very mediocre Big Brother and The Holding Company band mates to take her seriously or give her the respect she commanded in the studio. They were upstaged and jealous, of course, but even interviewed on television, her cogent insights into her music talent were considered hippie blathering; she was treated like a little girl. The doc tells the professional and personal stories well, suggesting how Janis picked up her signature stutter rhythm from Otis Redding, giving info on the tensions roiling backstage at the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival, and expertly weaving the recollections of numerous scene-makers—Big Brother manager Julius Karpen, Dick Cavett, Kris Kristofferson, the equally ambitious Country Joe McDonald, boyfriend David Niehaus, who fell in love with a girl in a bikini on Ipanema Beach without knowing it was Janis, among many others. Then there's the archival footage: Otis Redding, The Who, Cass Elliot, wide-eyed in wonderment, watching Janis on stage, Jerry Garcia, Yoko and John. Embedded is the fatalistic story of the drugs. **Janis** can't explain it or do what these heartbroken old men still want: come up with a better ending. Extras include **Avalon vs. The Fillmore**, **Big Brother Singing Acapella**, **Influences**, and **Walk of Fame Ceremony** shorts. ☘

—Nancy Naglin



ROCK AROUND THE SCHLOCK

Elsewhere on the music scene, HBO Video spotlights the rock miniseries **Vinyl: The Complete First Season** (6/16, 4-disc \$59.99 Blu-ray, \$49.99 DVD). Our initially high hopes for the show were slowly dashed over the course of its 10-episode run, done in by hoary mob and music-biz tropes, risible historical inaccuracies (such as the phony-baloney Warhol Factory-related threads), repetitive story arcs, and protag Richie Finestra's (Bobby Canavale) increasingly uninteresting plights. Co-creator Mick Jagger's offspring Steven, meanwhile, cast as an aspiring sneer-driven proto-punk rocker, seems in desperate need of charisma therapy, while deservedly heralded director Martin Scorsese bowed out after helming the semi-intriguing feature-length debut episode. Despite a few bright flashes, like Ray Romano and Max Casella's turns as pressured record execs, **Vinyl** serves up more schlock than rock. As Pope once put it: To air is human; to cancel, divine—and we wouldn't mind if **Vinyl** met that very fate. And speaking of flash, Jonathan Demme's sleep-encouraging dramedy **Ricki and the Flash** (Sony Pictures, 11/15), driven by scripter Diablo (**Juno**) Cody's oft-ear-curling dialogue, plays out as a tuneless compendium of contrived characters and cliched situations overflowing with false notes. As for eponymous star Meryl Streep's stab at rock idol-dom, we can only advise: Ms. MS, stick to your day job. Patriotic Ricki's blue-and-white Fender Telecaster even failed to soothe the eyes; double ditto for screen sideman Rick Springfield's banana-colored Danelectro. On a more upbeat note, MVD Visual issues several spirited music documentaries highlighted by **Pride and Joy: The Story of Alligator Records**, **The Kingdom of Zydeco**, and **Zydeco Crossroads: A Tale of Two Cities**. ☘

—The Phantom