

# dagger

## Captain Beefheart: Under Review (Sexy Intellectual)

Reclusive genius Don Van Vliet proves a worthy candidate for a probing documentary and this disc comes close to providing some satisfying insight into a truly far-out cat's music and modus operandi. Former Magic Band mates, most notably devoted collaborator John "Drumbo" French—who sits in a tree talking on an old telephone during his interview—take turns recounting old recording sessions, particularly the grueling "Trout Mask Replica," and analyzing Van Vliet's idiosyncrasies, recording techniques and fortifying love of blues and R&B. An early clip of the band playing "Diddy Wah Diddy" on some nameless teeny-bopper beach party show is worth a giggle, and the band's transformation from garage-rock stompers (which many argue was their best incarnation, with "Electricity" from the "Safe as Milk" album embodying the Magic Band at its conventional rock apex) to mold-breaking bizarros responsible for left-field, arrhythmic tunes like "Ella Guru" that eggheads are still pouring over in an attempt to crack their structurally uncompromising mysteries, is well-documented. And now Beefheart aficionados can add this DVD to their collections to help guide them on their quest for clarity. Perhaps these braniacs can one day tell us whether Van Vliet quit recording because he had nothing left to achieve artistically—or if the whole process was a debilitating drain on his creative spirit?

(John Chandler)