

DVD Reviews

The Bikini Carwash Company "Dinosaurs!"

DVD, self released, 2006

Bikini Carwash Company consists of sole member Scott Wiener, whose 2004 debut album featured one very short song called "Dinosaurs!" Scott challenged eight filmmakers to each make a video for the song, and they are collected on this DVD. As a bonus, you also get another video for a second song, "At the Rate I'm Going," live footage of Bikini Carwash in action (including one clip of "Everybody's Family" with the Spinto boys as the backing band), and intermittent clips of Scott discussing his favorite places to get the best pizza in the NY/NJ/PA area. (This alone is worth buying the DVD, as there is much debate about this amongst tri-state pizza lovers, and so you can compare Scott's picks with your own). This is a really fun concept overall, and very enjoyable even if you are not yet a fan of Scott's music. (Do, however, check out his full-length album, "Bicycle," to become one if you're not already). The song itself, "Dinosaurs!" is a quirky, repetitive, homemade ditty, which is silly and amusing (intentionally so, I hope). It is the perfect accompaniment to quirky, homemade, silly videos (and I say this with the utmost respect). Virtually all of the eight videos featured a dinosaur in some fashion. Two of them featured cavewomen. All of them feature a mix of live action, animation and a cut-and-paste collage aesthetic. Done with little to no budget, the videos are amateurish, but this indeed is their charm. When you look at them as a whole, you get the sense that Scott has a very rich and full creative life with his friends, and it sure looks like a hell of a good time. The best video by far was the one by Albert Birney (video #5), which was the most artistic and well crafted of the crop (he also added an intro). A close second was the video by Tim Mattson (video #8), which looked like it was being played inside a vintage TV. Overall, get the DVD, get some popcorn (oh, I meant pizza), and enjoy. RE

"Joy Division – Under Review" DVD

Sexy Intellectual, 2006

This 70-minute documentary about post-punk band Joy Division is organized as a critical review of their early career by six people who have intimate knowledge of the band. Most are critics and writers from the local Manchester scene, while one is the former wife of Manchester music impresario Tony Wilson, who was a first-hand witness to the rise of Joy Division. Collectively, their stories and commentary are pieced together to chronologically tell the story of the band. This is an excellent review for new Joy Division fans who want to learn about the band's groundbreaking work and gothic mystique, and it is also a great collection of historical footage for existing fans who want to see the band placed in a greater context than what they previously knew about the band. Starting with the rise of the Sex Pistols, which changed everything in the UK music scene, the discussion of Joy Division starts with July 20th 1976 – that famous day on which everyone from Northern England who was to start a band came out to see the Sex Pistols play in Manchester. All the members of the future Joy Division were in the audience, and singer Ian Curtis decided the next day to start a band. To illustrate the importance of this event, clips from the movie "24 Hour Party People" are included to show what transpired that day. I didn't care for these clips as much as the actual historical ones, but this DVD does have a fair amount of great video, TV and audio clips that help put the discussion in context. After this transpired, the band Warsaw was born. They consisted of singer Ian Curtis, guitar player Bernard Sumner, bass player Peter Hook and drummer Stephen Morris. The critics discuss how the band set themselves apart from other bands of the time, such as The

Clash and Siouxsie and the Banshees. The discussion of the band continues with how the band changed its name to the controversial Joy Division, and how people perceived the band to have flirted with Nazi imagery, which is unfounded. The DVD also covers how the band met Factory Records man Tony Wilson and explores their relationship over the short years. Wilson hooked them up with Martin Hannett, the Buzzcock's producer, who completely shaped their sound. Hannett made two phenomenal records with Joy Division before the band was done, and these records are dissected song by song on the DVD in a critical analysis. This is by far the most enjoyable part, as the viewer gets to savor each song while learning about the aesthetics behind each one. The DVD spends a fair amount of time reviewing the band's collective persona as opposed to each individual member's persona, and of course a lot of time is spent looking at Ian Curtis' demise: his epilepsy, his depression, his lyrics, his genius. The live concert footage is a treat, and to watch Ian Curtis dance on stage as if he were having an epileptic fit is thrilling but very sad. Also discussed is Peter Saville's cover art for both albums, the evolution of the band's sound with studio experimentation, the critical acclaim the band received, their US tour, and the song that made them an instant modern rock classic. Ian Curtis' suicide isn't discussed until the two albums are fully analyzed, which is strange to me, as Ian died before "Closer" was released posthumously. There is also a nice piece on the formation of New Order, which I didn't realize happened immediately after Ian's death. The band, reformed with a new keyboard player, Gillian Gilbert, played five weeks after the tragedy. You can definitely hear Joy Division in early New Order, and this is also discussed in the DVD. The DVD ends with a summation of the legacy of Joy Division, which is palpable today. Extras with the DVD include: an audio interview with Ian Curtis from 1979, bios of the experts interviewed in the film, a Joy Division quiz and a merch page. You can skip all that, except the interview (which is set to some great photographs). RE

"Kill Your Idols" DVD

Palm Pictures, 2006

"Kill Your Idols" is a documentary of the No-Wave scene in late 70s New York ... or at least I wish it were. See, the film is supposed to be a study of how one generation of musicians affected another (in this case, we have the No-Wavers influencing Sonic Youth influencing the Yeah Yeah Yeahs and others), but it doesn't make this argument very clearly. The new generation recognizes Sonic Youth as the end-all and be-all of the progenitors of experimental noise/punk rock, but there is no direct connection to the earlier generation of no-wavers except through Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo, who pay great homage to the New York scene of the late 70s/early 80s (and let's not forget that the title of the film is taken from a Sonic Youth song "Kill Yr Idols"). It is made clear by director S.A. Crary that the current generation of NYC bands (besides the Yeah Yeahs Yeahs, we have Gogol Bordello, A.R.E. Weapons, Liars and Black Dice) have no concerns other than to figure out what they're doing through their music; they have no connections to the past and no responsibilities for creating something groundbreaking and vital.

The film opens with Martin Rev of Suicide, the great noise band of the No-Wave, and from there on uses current interviews and vintage concert footage to try and put the late 70s music scene in context. Although it was very short lived, this very fertile time produced legendary bands like Teenage Jesus and the Jerks, DNA, Theoretical Girls and Suicide and produced music that wasn't valued for its output but more for its concepts. The interviews with the scenesters at the time, such as Lydia Lunch, Glenn Bracca and Arto Lindsay, are