



DVD Review – ‘David Bowie – Under Review 1976 - 1979: The Berlin Trilogy’

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Posted by [Collider](#)

Reviewed by Jackson

I am not a huge David Bowie fan. I like a lot of his big songs and own one of his greatest hits CDs, but have never fully explored the breadth of his music or listened to any of the other tracks from his studio albums. The best thing I can say about the *David Bowie – Under Review 1976 - 1979: The Berlin Trilogy* is that it has piqued my curiosity for listening to more of Bowie’s music, particularly some of his more experimental work.

This documentary is a very straight-forward account of Bowie’s years working in Berlin on the *Low*, “*Heroes*” and *Lodger* albums, his collaboration with Brian Eno and some of the other projects he was involved in at the same time. It consists mostly of modern interviews with critics, rock historians and Bowie’s musical contemporaries from that period in his career. Rounding out the film are some old music video footage and snippets of audio interviews with Bowie himself from the time in question or shortly thereafter.

This is a film for the serious Bowie collector or more general rock fans whose interest goes beyond the music into an album’s backstory and the creative process (I fall into the latter). While the film does provide some very interesting information on Bowie’s life and work, the presentation itself is completely uninspired. It’s as if the producers read a textbook on documentary filmmaking and followed it to the letter, resulting in a film that is serviceable but devoid of any energy. While a certain straight-forwardness may be acceptable in some of the onscreen interviews (you never know how a particular interview subject may come across), the editing and narration do little to inject the movie with any flavor. Even the graphics are at their most basic.

If content infuses a documentary with purpose, style is what makes a docu interesting to wide audiences. Sadly, *David Bowie – Under Review* completely lacks any filmmaking style.

Video / Audio / Extras

The video is, well, video. It’s obviously that the interviews were shot on a standard professional video camera—a clean, clear, color-balanced image with the telltale artifacts that separate video from film (or 24p). The older footage does show its age, but all things considered, still looks pretty good.

Audio is in stereo, but is not Dolby Digital. While clearly recorded, neither the narration nor the interviews sound like they've undergone any sound design, giving the DVD a rather raw quality.

Special features leave a lot to be desired. There is a featurette about Bowie after Berlin that just as well could have been included inside the main feature as an epilogue—same style (or lack thereof), same interview subjects in the same sessions, etc. Also included are text bios of the interviewees and a Bowie quiz. That's all, folks.

Final Words

If you're a Bowie fan, buy this DVD. If you're interested in rock history, you may also find the film interesting. Everybody else will probably be pretty bored.

