

Album analysis

The story of the creation of Nirvana's seminal album is told in the 63-minute **Nirvana In Utero A Classic Album Under Review**, a Sexy International release (UPC#823564509297, \$20). None of the band members is interviewed directly for the 2006 program, so there is not the chord-by-chord detail that some other **Album Under Review** programs have featured, but there is plenty of material on the context of the music's creation and a worthwhile analysis of its subtleties and meanings. Songs are not played in full, but there are healthy excerpts from most of them, and varied orchestrations.

The picture is presented in full screen format with a number of letterboxed clips. The image is sharp and archival footage is stable. The stereo sound is reasonably strong and there is no captioning. Also featured is a 2-minute reassessment of the somewhat overlooked *Nirvana Unplugged in New York* album, text profiles of the interviewees and a trivia quiz.

Rather than focus on just one album, Sexy's **Green Day The Middle Years Under Review 1995-2000** (UPC#823564509396, \$20) covers virtually their entire output to date. The title of the 2006 program is rather dubious, since as much coverage is given to the 2004 *American Idiot* as to *Nimrod*, *Insomniac* and the other albums released within the identified years. Besides, who knows if those are really the 'Middle Years' or just part of the beginning? Because the scope is broader, there is less opportunity to go over each cut on each album in the 68-minute documentary, and so it takes a more generalized approach than the **In Utero** show, and there is less musical analysis of a band that often quite blatantly draws quotations from other pop songs in the course of making their own, distinctive sound. Nevertheless, as a generalized overview of the group's progress (they seem to make one great album, then a couple of okay ones, then another great one, and then a couple more okay ones, which means they're do for another biggie in about 3 years), the program gives you a decent sense of where the band has come from and what they have achieved.

The full screen picture is crisp and the stereo sound is fine. There is no captioning. Also featured is a 7-minute speculation upon where the band is heading next, text profiles of the interviewees, and a trivia quiz.

The best **Under Review** programs are the ones that break down specific albums, but if you're going to fiddle with the format, then Sexy's **David Bowie Under Review 1976 - 1979; The Berlin Trilogy** (UPC#8235-64509099, \$20) is the ideal way to do it. A look at the creative avant-garde streak that Bowie collaborated upon with Brian Eno, the 85-minute program has enough time to deconstruct Bowie's album, *Low*, cut by cut, and still give extensive attention to the follow up albums, *"Heroes"* and *Lodger*. Bowie had gone through a great many phases in his career, mirroring or anticipating pop music trends, and the 2006 documentary is an ideal snapshot of one such sequence. There is not much acknowledgment given to the fact that the albums were being produced during the height of the disco craze (Bowie's next turn was to embrace dance rhythms and atmospheres more directly, and from there to MTV music video concepts), but both biographically and musically, the show is thoroughly detailed and enlightening.

The full screen picture looks okay and the stereo sound is strong. There is no captioning. Also featured is a 4-minute look at Bowie's subsequent musical career, text profiles of the interviewees and a trivia quiz.

Bringing Ipanema to Montreal

The formalized setting and rather large contingent of vocal accompanists does not seem to inhibit the free-spirited music on **Antonio Carlos Jobim Live at the Montreal Jazz Festival**, a DRG Brazil release (UPC#021471800494, \$20). The 1986 stage performance features Jobim at the piano in a concert hall, backed by drums, guitars, a keyboard and at least five female vocalists, and it is amazing, because as soon as he hits his first note, you immediately forget about Montreal and begin to picture the beaches of Rio in your mind. Although the program does not have the 5.1-channel Dolby Digital promised on the jacket cover, the standard stereo track still has a pleasing range and an adequate dimensionality. The full screen picture is a bit soft, but workable, with passable colors, and there are optional English, Spanish and Portuguese subtitles. There is also an excellent 49-minute interview with Jobim done by Brazilian TV in which he talks all about his formative years and his career.

Sixties softcore

Two blatant softcore porn films from the late Sixties are combined on the Chiller Theatre Something Weird Video release, **Babette/Monique, My Love** (UPC#014381359725, \$20). Both black-and-white films, which run 65 minutes each, were shot silent and are accompanied by wonderful musical scores and less enthralling voiceover narration. *Babette*, which has an on-screen title of *"Babette" in Return of the Secret Society*, is from 1968 and *Monique, My Love* is from 1969. Neither has a real plot, just a few situational dynamics. In the first, the heroine makes a new friend during a photography session, and is then introduced to more friends, some of whom appear to enjoy applying a feather duster to places that don't look the least bit dusty. The second also involves making friends at a photography studio and discovering what can be done with string and a chair. Both programs are presented in full screen format and are in reasonably decent condition, with stable monophonic audio tracks. There is no captioning. Also featured are six trailers, a 9-minute montage of ad materials and explicit stills for various exploitation features set to an energetic musical score, a marvelous 7-minute collection of black-

and-white bra and girdle commercials, a 14-minute washed out black-and-white silent film that shows two girls wrestling over a paddle on a mattress and on the floor, a cute 11-minute black-and-white silent that appears to be about housewives dressing up to pretend they are participating in a Roman orgy, a 13-minute faded color silent entitled *Real or Knot* about a woman imagining that she is being tied up, and a straight 17-minute black-and-white *March of Time* educational short from 1946 entitled *Careers for Girls*, about worthy occupations for females now that the men are home.

After dark in the land of the midnight sun

A 1975 hardcore Swedish feature, **Justine & Juliette**, is being released by Impulse Pictures (UPC#654930100196, \$30) in Swedish with optional English subtitles. The two heroines are sisters who are kicked out of their house by a nasty stepfather and go off to find their fortunes in the big city. One is free spirited while the other is more reserved, but they both sort of end up at the same place by different paths, with an ironic conclusion that gives the 96-minute program the semblance of a plot. Both actresses, Baric Forsa and Ann Bie Warburrg, look substantially older than the teenagers they are supposedly portraying, but viewers are unlikely to quibble with such details. Most of the film is about their farcical adventures after dark, with less focus on the mechanics of such activities than American films at the time had succumbed to. Harry Reems also appears.

The picture is presented in letterboxed format only, slightly windowboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. Colors are a little faded but viable and the image is sharp, although the source material has its share of speckling. The monophonic sound is workable.

DVD News

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED: Oliver Stone has dredged up another 45 minutes of fresh footage for **Alexander** to be issued by Warner Home Video as **Alexander Revised The Final Cut**, with a total running time of 220 minutes. Should make for an interesting afternoon. **Blood Diamond** is being issued as a two-platter set with a commentary and a number of production featurettes. **The Departed** will be accompanied by several documentaries and several deleted scenes. Dustin Hoffman will be supplying a commentary track for **Straight Time**.

HARTMAN ON DVD: The first twenty-five episodes of **Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman** are being released by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment on a three-platter set, **Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman Volume One. The Natural** will have 15 minutes of additional footage and a number of other features. **Running with Scissors** will have a few featurettes. **A Man for All Seasons** will have one featurette. **Casino Royale** will have three featurettes.

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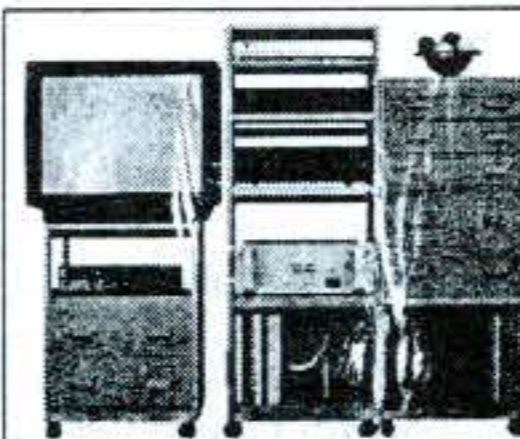
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