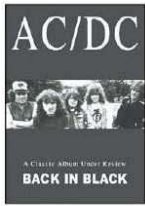


# Stellar DVDs examine 'Black In Black,' 'In Utero'



**"AC/DC — Back In Black: A Classic Album Under Review"** (MVD Visuals) ★★☆☆½ out of five — You probably wouldn't be surprised to learn that Michael Jackson's "Thriller" is the biggest-selling album of all time. But the record that checks in at No. 2 on the list might be a shocker.

With more than 42 million units moved since its release 27 years ago this summer, AC/DC's "Back In Black" is the all-time silver medalist. In an "Under Review" series that hasn't had a misfire yet, this fascinating documentary on the

making of AC/DC's signature album is the best to date.

The DVD examines all 10 tracks on the record in painstaking detail with a panel of experts that includes respected rock journalists, musicians and an absolute coup in Tony Platt, the engineer for the "Black In Black" sessions in 1980. AC/DC hit the studio to record the follow-up to 1979's "Highway to Hell" a mere two months after charismatic frontman Bon Scott died from a lethal combination of alcohol and hypothermia.

Brian Johnson was hired as the new singer and he soon found himself in the studio with the band under the guidance of renowned producer Robert "Mutt" Lange. Where most of the panelists offer informed opinions on each of the classic tracks — from "Hells Bells" to the title track to "You Shook Me (All Night Long)" to "Rock-N-Roll Ain't Noise Pollution" — the first-hand anecdotal recollections of Platt add a layer of credibility.

In addition to breaking down the songs, the 113-minute film (almost twice as long as most "Under Review" entries) also examines AC/DC's reaction to Scott's tragic death, how Johnson became arguably the best replacement singer in rock history and the band's legacy. Extras include extended interviews with Platt, biographies of the panelists (including one "expert" who plays in an AC/DC tribute band) and an interactive quiz.



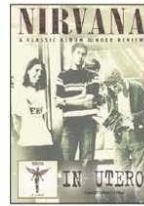
This excellent disc isn't for heavy metal or AC/DC fans only — it's essential viewing for anyone who loves music. (Jeffrey Sisk)

**"David Bowie — Under Review 1976-1979: The Berlin Trilogy"** (MVD Visuals) ★★☆☆ — By the middle of the 1970s, David Bowie was one of the biggest pop stars in the world. He'd created memorable personas (Ziggy Stardust, the Thin White Duke) and had a string of hits to his name.

Of course, he also was in the throes of cocaine addiction and living in Los Angeles didn't help matters. So Bowie, who had a creepy fascination with fascism and ultra-right wing politics at the time, packed up and moved to Germany. There, he reinvented himself and his music with a series of albums ("Low," "Heroes," "The Lodger") that became known as his Berlin trilogy. Another in the excellent "Under Review" series of documentaries, this DVD examines the minimalist, ambient — and, frankly, not very good — music Bowie created during this period through the eyes of music experts, journalists and fellow musicians. With the help of Brian Eno and inspired by such "krautrock" acts as Kraftwerk and Cluster, Bowie was incredibly prolific during his time in Berlin. But with the exception of the title track from "Heroes," the period produced only a couple minor hits in "Be My Wife" and "Boys Keep Swinging." Though the music is some of the most polarizing of his career — avant-garde isn't everyone's cup of tea — it was a fascinating time for one of music's true innovators.

My one criticism, other than the often painful-to-listen-to music, is that because the DVD condenses a four-year, three-album period into 90 minutes, it's not as thorough as some of the other "Under Review" entries. Extras include extended interviews with the panelists, a "Bowie After Berlin" feature and a David Bowie interactive quiz. (JS)

**"Nirvana — In Utero: A Classic Album Under Review"**



(MVD Visuals) ★★☆☆ — There are millions of people, critics and fans alike that praise Nirvana's "Nevermind" as the seminal rock album of the 1990s. You won't find any such hyperbole with the Seattle trio's controversial third — and final — studio effort, 1993's

"In Utero." From its less radio-friendly sound to its off-putting title and song such as "Rape Me," the album got a mixed reception from fans — though it's held up surprisingly well over the years. This documentary, another keeper in the fantastic "Under Review" series

examines "In Utero" thoroughly while detailing Nirvana's history from the band's origins to frontman Kurt Cobain's death in 1994. Through a panel of journalists and industry types, we learn how frustrated the band — Cobain in particular — became in the wake of the "Nevermind" phenomenon. For all its blistering guitars and slurred lyrics, the record that spawned hits like "Smells Like Teen Spirit," "Come As You Are" and "Lithium" essentially was a sickly produced pop album. Cobain, Kris Novoselic and Dave Grohl struggled coming to terms with that fact and were determined to make sure "In Utero" would be truer to their musical roots. When broken down on a song by song, lyric by lyric basis, "In Utero" reads like an extended suicide note — especially the haunting closer "All Apologies." It kind of makes you wonder how nobody saw Cobain's death coming. Though it wasn't as popular as its predecessor, the album had a handful of hits with stellar tracks like "Heart Shaped Box," "Pennyroyal Tea" and "Dumb." And despite its title and subject matter, "Rape Me" contains one of the prettiest melodies Cobain ever wrote.

Extras include a dissertation on whether Nirvana's "Unplugged In New York," released just seven months after Cobain's death is a classic album (it is, in my opinion), biographies of the panelists and a Nirvana interactive quiz. (JS)