

DVD Review

Nirvana/Foo Fighters

Nirvana: In Utero

Sexy Intellectual/Chrome Dreams (SIDVD513)

Grade: ★★

Nirvana: Live! Tonight! Sold Out!

DGC/UME/Chronicles (80007914)

Grade: ★★★★★

Foo Fighters: Skin and Bones

Roswell/RCA/BMG (RCA 88697 02451-9)

Grade: ★★★★★



In Utero: A Classic Album Under Review is not to be confused with a similarly-titled Classic Albums DVD series; the DVDs in the "Classic Album Under Review" series are unauthorized releases. Nonetheless, this DVD does have some interview footage with people who were associated with the band, including its *Bleach*-era drummer Chad Channing and early producer Jack Endino.

But after providing a summary of Nirvana's career prior to recording *In Utero*, it's left to an assortment of (mainly British) journalists to discuss each song on the album, and that's where you really miss having someone actually involved with the band providing commentary (though there are brief interview clips from other sources scattered throughout the program, along with live clips). The end result is an overview of Nirvana's last album with one talking head after another telling you what you should think of it. Bonus features include more chat about the band's *Unplugged* album, and bios of the interviewees.

Live! Tonight! Sold Out!! was initially released on video in 1994, and its reissue on DVD has been long awaited. The picture and sound upgrades are both excellent, making it well worth buying even if you still have the original video. The documentary brings together performances from the band's peak years when they crashed into the mainstream, from a Halloween performance in Seattle in 1991 (mistakenly identified as 1992 in the liner notes) to a January 1993 performance in Rio, with interview footage linking the musical sequences.

Live! Tonight! provides a great reminder that not only was Nirvana a powerful live act, they also had a terrific sense of humor, something usually overlooked given their sorry demise. In the interview clips especially, each member of the band readily cracks jokes, as when Kurt Cobain wears a yellow gown while being interviewed on MTV's *Headbanger's Ball*, saying simply, "I'm dressed for the ball," then bemoaning the fact that Krist Novoselic didn't bring him a corsage or wear a tux; "At least I asked you out!" Novoselic responds.

The performances also don't disappoint, whether Cobain's getting smacked in the head by an angry bouncer in Dallas, delivering "Smells Like Teen Spirit" in a deep baritone in London, or losing his voice in Amsterdam. The final shot of him dragging himself offstage on his hands and knees in Rio is frighteningly harrowing, a stark depiction of how physically and mentally draining a great show can be for a performer, a dark underside audiences probably don't think about. The bonus

features include five more performances from a November 1991 show in Amsterdam (again, mistakenly identified as 1992 in the liner notes), and "personal playlist" function. For Nirvana fans, this DVD is a must.

Skin and Bones shows what drummer Dave Grohl went on to do after the end of Nirvana. The band he formed, Foo Fighters, has now been around longer than Nirvana, won more Grammys, and, with *Skin and Bones*, followed in Nirvana's footsteps by doing an *Unplugged*-style performance, this one recorded at Hollywood's Pantages Theater.

The title track becomes the theme song in the DVD, as you hear it three times, most memorably during an opening sequence where Grohl plays it on guitar while strolling around the backstage area, a sequence that then segues into the band playing the song in a park. The concert itself features five more songs than are presented on the accompanying CD release, making the DVD a more complete experience. And the toned-down format, Grohl explains, gives him the chance to chat more with the audience. Though he seems to need to say "f**k" as much as Ozzy Osbourne, other anecdotes are more revealing, as when he explains how the song "Friend of a Friend" was inspired by his living with Cobain in Nirvana's pre-fame days.

Wisely, there are minimal audience shots, keeping the focus on the band and their music. The songs translate well to stripped-down arrangements; indeed, some songs were largely acoustic to begin with, such as "Marigold," which Grohl first recorded on a solo tape, then re-recorded with Nirvana. The new arrangements also give additional poignancy to songs like "My Hero," particularly in Grohl's vocal delivery. The band members, including former Nirvana/Foo Fighter Pat Smear, are all clearly having a great time, and Grohl graciously lets drummer Taylor Hawkins sing lead on "Cold Day in the Sun." Still, you can sense his relief when he breaks free vocally at the end with "Best of You" and "Everlong," treating the audience to the kind of full-throated performance they're more used to.

— By Gillian G. Gaar