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REVIEW

DVD Review: *Neil Young - Under Review 1976-2006*

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There are few musicians who are harder to put a finger on than Neil Young. As one of the artists that came out of the sixties, and with all that he accomplished with Buffalo Springfield, Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young, and all of his solo work, including the classic album *Harvest*, by the start date of this *Under Review*, he would qualify as a future member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame even had he not produced one more song.

Beyond that, I understand from inside information that by 1976, Young had written so many unpublished songs that he could spend the next decade releasing an album a year, and still not run out of material. That being said, *Neil Young: Under Review 1976-2006* is about the thirty years beginning with 1976, and the release of *American Stars and Bars*, and concluding with *Prairie Wind*.

Throughout his career, Young sparked controversy and influence through his music. He has inspired some of the greatest musicians of all time: Lynyrd Skynyrd, Mark Mothersbaugh (Devo), Kurt Cobain (Nirvana), and Eddie Vedder (Pearl Jam). He has been known as both the "flannel-shirted Godfather of Punk" for his Ditch trilogy (*Time Fades Away*, *On the Beach*, *Tonight's the Night*), and his *Rust Never Sleeps* period; and more so as the "Godfather of Grunge," because of the stylization of his music, and the effect it had on the grunge movement of the early nineties.

Neil Young: Under Review 1976-2006 focuses on several areas of Young's music and is broken down into chapters, the first covering the time period of the disjointed *American Stars and Bars*, which was recorded in four different sessions, with the most famous track being "Like a Hurricane." This is followed by the more stylistic *Comes A Time*, which features a return to his country/folk rock sound that was made popular with *Harvest* (1972).

Then the topic moves to the *Rust Never Sleeps* tour in which Young and Crazy Horse recorded one set acoustic and one set electric. In the studio they removed much of the audience tracks and placed acoustic on side A, and the raunchy electric version on side B. This became the album of the year in 1979.

The next movement for Young was his use of the synclavier, which began with 1981's *Reactor*, and added the Vocoder as well in 1982's *Trans*. Here it is speculated that Young was emulating some of the style of the German group Kraftwerk, and their use of the Vocoder. It is also said that when working with the Vocoder, he was able to elicit stronger emotional responses from his son, who suffered with cerebral palsy.

The middle of the eighties is listed as "The Lost Decade," as there was no real significant musical contribution by Young until 1988's *This Note's for You*, which was very well received. The next chapter is about 1989's *Freedom*, which re-launched Young's career after a decade of floundering with the hit "Rockin' in the Free World." This is followed up by *Ragged Glory* which relives the hard rock style of *Zuma* and *Everybody Knows This is Nowhere*.

In 1992, twenty years after the release of *Harvest*, Young created the pseudo-sequel *Harvest Moon* which reunited many of the original *Harvest* artists. In 1994 there was *Sleeps With Angels*, with the title track telling the story of Kurt Cobain's death. It was in Cobain's suicide note that he quoted Neil Young, by saying "it was better to burn out, than to fade away," a line from Young's "My My, Hey Hey".

Then explored are 1995's *Mirror Ball*, 2000's *Silver and Gold*, and 2002's *Are You Passionate?* By this point the panel is divided on their assessment of Neil Young. By the time 2003's *Greendale* is released - the 10-song "rock-opera/audio novel" - the viewpoints are to the extreme. Finally, *Prairie Wind* is discussed. There is mention of 2006's *Living with War*, but only in passing; no analysis.

The analysis of Neil Young and his career was in depth and as complete as one can be for this type of medium. There is plenty of video, concert segments, rare interviews, and photos. The only real bonus material is an interactive Neil Young gaming feature (it is pretty tough), and detailed contributor biographies.

Contributors:

- John Einarson – biographer
- Robert Christgau - journalist
- Barney Hoskins – *Uncut Magazine* editor
- Nigel Williamson – former *BAM* editor
- Dave Zimmer – CSNY biographer
- Johnny Rogan – music historian
- Others...

Extras include:

- The hardest Neil Young interactive quiz
- Full contributor biographies

T. Michael Testi is a photographer, writer, software developer and ardent fantasy football fan and of horse race handicapping. He also blogs at [PhotographyTodayNet](#) and at [All This and Everything Else](#)

Comments

#1 – October 15, 2007 @ 11:51AM – Martin Lav

Thanks for the review Tmike, it was helpful.

