



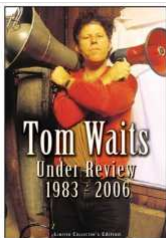
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SEARCH

FEATURES

Tom Waits: Under Review 1983-2006

SIFF Take: A Wink and a Smile  
 SIFF '08: week one  
 Thee Emergency play at Easy Street QA tonight  
 Second-to-last chance to catch Foscil at BLVD Gallery tonight  
 Shane Tutmarc solo love tonight. Have Mercy!  
 Late-breaking Los Campesinos show news...  
 Those who find themselves ridiculous, comeback next to me...  
 Friday gossip: Pop-star offspring  
 School of Rock stars performing \*The Wall\* TONIGHT!  
 Flickr photo(s) of the day: Sasquatch faves



I will admit that some of the early Under Review DVDs were kind of shaky. If you bought one of them back when the critics discussing the albums were primarily old British guys you'd never heard of and there was no real footage of the artists then you may wonder why the series keeps going (new titles often found in the front of Easy Street Records or with the new DVDs at Sonic Boom). Thing is, they evolved, adding better known British critics (not all of them old) like Barney Hoskins and giving Robert Christgau an uncensored platform to eviscerate some myths you might have about your favorite records. Also very cool is the use of more clips and videos of the artists, and the recent ones featuring Bruce Springsteen, Van Morrison, Leonard Cohen, and now especially the new Tom Waits one are

especially extravagant with said footage. The rare photos, music samples, weird facts, and complete coverage of a timeline in a musician's career is extremely helpful to anyone who wants to get a good critical foundation of appreciation for the artists MVD has released these volumes of.

The new "Tom Waits: Under Review 1983 - 2006" is possibly the most important one for Three Imaginary Girls readers, as it covers an artist who multi-generational fans feel no guilty pleasure at all about enjoying, jumping in at any of the spectacularly debris-strewn train-yard cross-sections of the nimble scarecrow god's extremely consistent career. There are iconoclastic but trustable MOJO and Uncut contributors like Nigel Williamson and the aforementioned Mr. Christgau who actually debate very openly with some of Waits' biographers about the quality of some of the records, and it is just like having a drink with some of the EMP Pop Con presenters on the Saturday night of the Conference when people are willing to spill out exactly what they think about their favorite or despised chapters in an artist's career, fellow critics be damned. (Actually, this sort of thing happens even during the Q&A at the daytime panels themselves, but I for one have been learning to control myself, so Mr. Christgau doesn't make fun of me again.)

Remember, these critical assessment videos are quite entertaining and will teach you some things you may not know about artists you may need to write about of study deeper on, say before an interview (Cliff's Notes, cough, hint hint) -- and again, more and more, people truly behind the scenes of the decisions made by the artists while recording their albums are more prominently featured. Bones Howe, for example, was always a mysterious figure to me, as I hadn't bothered to look at the other album jackets in my collection of music he'd also produced, imagining him to be a scary Hollywood noir mentor to Waits alone. (Turns out he was a friend of the Wrecking Crew, the super session musicians who made most of the music on landmarks like "Pet Sounds" or "Mrs. Robinson" and rarely got credited for it; see the documentary from SIFF on them when it gets distribution.) Howe admits when Waits started striving for his early 80s "junkyard soundtrack" style (openly starting to borrow from Harry Partch, Captain Beefheart, and Kurt Weill), leaving behind his more melodic cinematic soundscapes and piano it was time for him to go. This was because of Kathleen Brennan, whom Waits had met during the making of "One From The Heart," the last album (and actual soundtrack) in his original style (and a wonderful parting of the ways with Howe; songs like "Broken Bicycles" could be on anything he's released since). They became passionate partners and collaborators, apparently saving Waits' life in more ways than one.

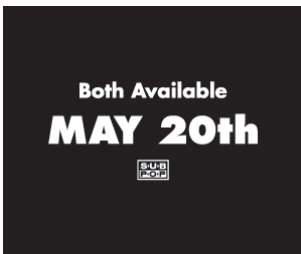
OK, much of this may already be known by the Waits devotee, but there are little things the "Under Review" does that makes it worth your time: For example, while I owned "Real Gone," Waits' 2004 album that features some very politically pointed (for the first time in his career) material, I never had time to listen to it. Christgau and other critics tell me exactly what tracks to go for to dig deeper into it though, and now I've been playing "Hoiist That Rag" non-stop the past couple of days, and enjoying more of the record than I had any of his since "Bone Machine" in 1994. So whilst the "Under Review" series can tip younger fans into checking out older albums (go get "Swordfishtrombones" and "Rain Dogs" now, kids), it also compels vets to keep checking out what artists who transcend career entropy are doing, despite interest fatigue. Because a guy like Waits, you don't want to be a sleeping dog around.

-Chris Estey, May 28, 2008



Today

Into The Storm/When Giants Fall, High Dive  
 C-Leb & A-Bro/Listener Higgins/Alive With Skies, Funhouse  
 Dethklok/Chimaira, Showbox SoDo\*  
 Dilated Peoples/The Alchemist/Aceyalone/88 Keys, Neumo's I  
 Iron Maiden, White River Amphitheatre\*



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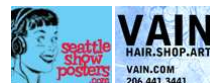
Best Northwest Releases of 2007. See the winners of our readers' poll.

- Chris Estey on Cancer Rising rose above
- JessicaSeattle on Where's the great pop song of the summer?
- JessicaSeattle on Amy MacDonald photo essay
- Kyle Johnson on Flickr photo(s) of the day: Sasquatch faves
- Chris Estey on SIFF '08: week one
- a reliable source on The Dutches and the Duke tour with... why, Fleet Foxes!
- bamamfa on The Dutches and the Duke tour with... why, Fleet Foxes!
- the sleepwalker on Rock Plaza Central at TT the Bear's
- John in Ballard on Where's the great pop song of the summer?
- Tim Hanken on Radiohead Best of DVD



- Daguerreotypes - Tropical Trust EP
- Bon Iver - For Emma, Forever Ago
- Cancer Rising rose above
- The Long Blondes at Neumo's
- The Born Ruffians - Red, Yellow & Blue
- Jim Noir - Jim Noir
- Amy MacDonald photo essay
- Rock Plaza Central at TT the Bear's
- Why? - Alopecia
- The Duke Spirit - Neptune

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