

# DVD ROUNDUP

Reviews by Michael Buffalo Smith

## ***Mitch Ryder: Live at Rockplast 1979 and 2004*** (MVD)

is a two-disc set of serious rock and roll from the leader of the Detroit Wheels. The '79 concert found Ryder showing up drunk off his ass, carrying a half empty bottle of Jack Daniels. There is also the infamous Ryder interview, also included here. Oddly enough, Mitch managed to put on one hell of a show, intoxicated or not. He delivered a stellar "Ain't Nobody White Can Sing the Blues," and his famous medley of "CC Rider" and "Jenny Take a Ride." The '79 show ends with a rousing "Soul Kitchen." Twenty-five years later, Ryder returned to Rockplast with a new band and once again rocked then German audience with a blistering 18-song set, including a cover of Dylan's "From a Buick 6" and "Subterranean Homesick Blues," as well as Stones tunes "heart of Stone" and "Gimmie Shelter." Great covers of Lou Reed's "Rock and Roll"

and Jimi Hendrix's "Little Wing." Of course there are the show stoppers, the medley of "CC Ryder/Jenny Take a Ride" and "Devil with a Blue Dress/Good Golly Miss Molly," all of which are a perineal part of Bruce Springsteen's tribute to Ryder over the years. Over 220 minutes of rockin' entertainment on two discs. Some balls to the wall Detroit rock and roll fellow babies. Highly recommended. (MPV also offers an outstanding 3-CD version of these same two shows.) ...Johnny Winter, Live in Japan (MVD) was recorded in 2011 on Johnny's first ever visit to



Japan. The band smokes and Johnny sounds great on songs like "Good Mornin' Little School Girl," "Got My Mojo Workin'," "Bonie Moronie," "Dust My Broom" and "Highway 61 Revisited." Johnny has to sit in a chair to ply these days, due to hip problems, but that doesn't keep the man from rocking the blues. This is a hot DVD folks. Highly recommended...**John Mellencamp, It's About You** (MPI) is simply an amazing documentary film. Shot by noted photographer Kurt

Markus and his son Ian, the artsy, sometimes grainy film, shot in super 8, follows John Mellencamp around the country on his 2009 concert run with Bob Dylan and Willie Nelson. The cameras take us to the stages, back stage and to scenic vistas along the way. We go inside Sun Studios in Memphis and watch John record, and inside the most loved African American church in New York. From the San Antonio hotel room where Robert Johnson once recorded to the stage of Madison Square Garden. The film is packed with great

Americana acoustic renditions of classic Mellencamp songs as well as new tunes. This is an outstanding musical documentary, worthy of an Oscar...**John Lee Hooker: Cook with the Hook: Live in 1964** (MVD) was recorded at an outdoor festival called Down in the Dumps, stage in Gardner, Massachusetts. It was the first in a proposed series of concerts to be held at the city's landfill area, where Hooker performed for around 6,000 people. The black and white film was shot with three cameras, and finds Hooker doing a set with a three piece backing band that

includes "It Serves You Right to Suffer," "Sweet Sweet Thing," and his biggest hit, "Boom Boom," among others. The set clocks in at 45 minutes, and the film is old and not of the quality you may expect. But it is a rare moment in time, and the sound is okay. The vocals are strong. Blues archivist will love this one... **Styx, The Grand Illusion and Pieces of Eight Live** (Eagle Vision) is one fine rocking DVD. Shot in high-def in Memphis, Tennessee, Styx rock through the entire album "The Grand Illusion," in order, including stellar performances of the title track, "Come Sail Away," and "Fooling Yourself (Angry Young Man)." Tommy Shaw and the band sound as good as ever. Set two finds them doing the same treatment with Pieces of Eight, rocking the entire album front to back, including hits "Blue Collar Man" and "Renegade." The disc is around 130 minutes, and includes a cool bonus feature, "Putting on the Show," spotlighting the people behind the scenes who make it all happen. A really good show, from a timeless classic rock band... **The Beatles- Their Golden Age** (MVD) is about as weak as a documentary can be. All of the film clips have been seen dozens of times by even the casual fan, and the Beatles "story" is told yet again. And not very well. Maybe if you had never heard of the Beatles at all - and I cannot begin to even imagine that- you might find this retelling somewhat interesting. The newsreels are kind of fun, but we have seen those many times before. Oh, and there is absolutely no Beatles music in the film.

The film is written and narrated by Les Krantz, which brings me to my biggest beef of all. As a narrator, Krantz is stiff and uninteresting. At 60 minutes in length, this "documentary" is about 60 minutes too long... **From Straight to Bizarre** (DVD) is a really good documentary concerning Frank Zappa's record labels, with lots of interviews, including Dennis Dunaway and Neal Smith from the Alice Cooper Band, John French of Captain Beefhearts Magic Band, Kim Fowley and many others. There are really cool clips of Zappa and the whole Los Angeles Lunatic fringe, the same clique that included Wildman Fischer and The GTO's. At 161 minutes in length, From Straight to Bizarre is a captivating story with loads of great clips and rare shots.... **The**

**Story of Rock and Roll Comics** (MVD) is a real winner for us comic book fans, but is much more. It is the story of one man bucking the system and doing things his way come hell or high water. It's all about the life and times of publisher Todd Loren, perhaps the ultimate comics fan and rock and roll lover, and how he started his own comics company on a show string, and published biographical tales in comic book form on everyone from KISS to New Kids of the Block. It tells how he fought through numerous law suit threats by everyone from Guns n' Roses to Bon Jovi and all about his landmark First Amendment court case, and finally up to his savage murder in 1992. It's a very well done documentary about a man that was both loved and hated with equal fervor. Loaded with interviews with such notables as Alice Cooper, Mojo Nixon, and the notorious Cynthia Plaster Caster, there are plenty of clips of interviews with Loren himself, and a great deal of bonus footage. It's a very interesting story, whether you have a passion for comics or not... **Taylor Swift, American Beauty** (MVD) is a film made to look like a documentary, an unauthorized bio on the superstar young country crossover singer. The actress who plays Swift looks so much like her, you will forget it isn't actually her. It's kind of interesting, but I have a real hard time seeing someone so young portrayed by an actress. Maybe many years after she is dead, but now, at the height of her fame, it's a little weird. Still, I remain torn. The story is very inspirational, and well acted. But the fact remains, there is only one true Taylor Swift... **Dawn of the Dead: The Grateful Dead & The Rise of The San Francisco Underground** (MVD) is a really enjoyable documentary that tells the Dead story very well, utilizing all new interviews with folks like Peter Albin of Big Brother, Dead manager Rock Scully, Tom Constanten, Mike Wilhelm of The Charlatans, and comment from writers Anthony Curtis (Rolling Stone), Robert Christgau (Village Voice) and Ritchie Unterberger (Mojo), among others. The film follows the sounds and events that helped to shape The Grateful Dead into one of the most memorable bands of the 1960's. This is good one. Check it out. •