

Deep Purple With Orchestra Live In Verona

★★★★
Eagle Vision EREDV 1021
**Strings most definitely
attached**

It's fitting that Deep Purple, one of the first hard rock groups to record with an orchestra, should be making a real spectacle of it in the 21st Century. This 2011 "latest and greatest" performance took place at an ancient Roman amphitheatre in Verona, the classic Mk III trio of Gillan, Glover and Paice being joined by Steve Morse and Don Airey in place of Ritchie Blackmore and Jon Lord.

The surroundings are frankly epic and the production appropriately classy; the sound is perfect, the camerawork and lighting superb and the celebratory atmosphere of the warm summer night comes across vividly. As for the performance, the musicianship, as befits a band of their experience, is excellent, though Ian Gillan's voice is (forgivably) a little ragged at the edges compared to 40 years ago.

The real question about this – and most similar ventures – is what the orchestra brings to the music. There's no doubt that the ensemble is skilled and the arrangements effective but, despite the massive sound, it's questionable as to what classics such as Highway Star, Space Truckin' and (of course) Smoke On The Water gain from floating atop a pillow of lush strings. *William Pinfold*

Depeche Mode Live In Berlin

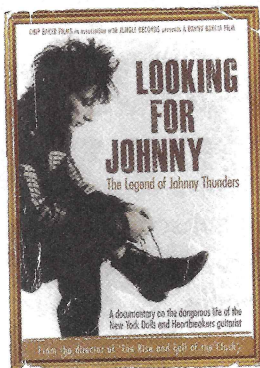
★★★★
Columbia, cat no tbc (2DVD+3CD)
Moves like Jagger

Where are concert films to go since such game-changers as U2 3D and the Beastie Boys' *Awesome!* I Fuckin' Shot That!? Great directors are needed to breathe life into stadium rock's impersonality, and Anton Corbijn has worked

with many totemic acts. There is deep trust here: Corbijn's links to Depeche Mode stretch back to the 80s; he tends towards weighty material and the band have crafted a pan-European style – which suits the action here, having been recorded at the heart of the continent. In this context, encore Just Can't Get Enough sounds deliciously camp if slightly out of place.

However, the director can only take you so far. To capture the pomp he has largely left behind his oft-preferred black-and-white styling. Some of the stage glitz is hence rendered overly dazzling in close-up and the sound also seems strained at times. Still, DM are gifted elder statesmen, Dave Gahan acting the part of synth-rock's Mick Jagger while the band re-develop old hits and weave in sturdy newer songs.

The deluxe edition's *Alive In Berlin* re-runs the entire sprawling concert, interspersing interview segments and tacking on a couple of acoustic Martin Gore vocals (filmed at a fruitier Berlin location). This bonus cut alone would have sufficed as the main release. *Phil Smith*



Looking For Johnny: The Legend Of Johnny Thunders

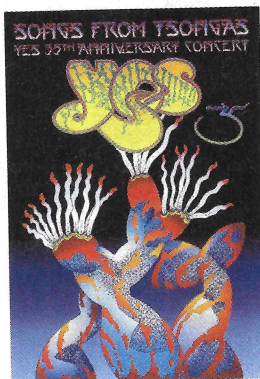
★★★★
MVD Visual/Jungle MVD 6544 D
Calling up Thunders

Narcotically challenged New York Dolls/Heartbreakers guitar legend Johnny Thunders lived fast and died aged 38, his lonely demise in a New Orleans hotel in April 1991 often rumoured to be the result of foul play.

Controversy and hearsay has blighted Thunders' reputation in life and death, but in the painstakingly researched *Looking For Johnny: The Legend Of Johnny Thunders*, director Danny Garcia (previously responsible for *The Rise & Fall*

Of The Clash) sifts fact from fiction to present a compelling portrait of this complex but influential rock'n'roll individual. Filmed in classic documentary style, *Looking For Johnny* includes testimonies from a myriad of Johnny's contemporaries, including fellow New York Doll Sylvain Sylvain and sole surviving Heartbreaker Walter Lure. Their candid insights assist Garcia in tracing the arc of Thunders' life from his early years as a shy, baseball-loving teen through to his poignant latter years battling substance abuse and leukaemia.

Looking For Johnny inevitably lingers longest on the making of Thunders' chaotic, career-defining LPs with the New York Dolls, plus The Heartbreakers' notorious *LAMF*. To its director's credit, it also pulls in captivating live footage from all phases of Thunders' career, plus underrated tracks from his short-lived later projects Gang War and The Oddballs. These are replicated on Jungle's simultaneously released, standalone film soundtrack, issued on red vinyl as a 2LP set. *Tim Peacock*



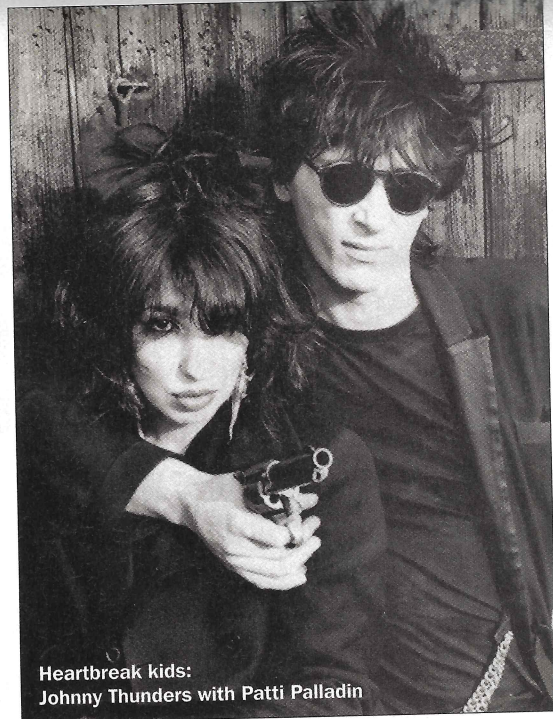
Yes Songs From Tsongas: The 35th Anniversary Concert

★★★★
Eagle Vision EREDV 1026 (2DVD)

**Elaborate birthday bash,
and a humbler bonus**

Though some fans may contest the claim, the five men who comprise Yes on this 2004 show represent what's generally perceived as the band's "classic line-up". The gig, at the Tsongas Arena in Lowell, Massachusetts, was the final date of the tour where Jon Anderson, Steve Howe, Chris Squire, Rick Wakeman and Alan White performed together for the last time.

It's worth noting, however, that a sixth man



Heartbreak kids:
Johnny Thunders with Patti Palladin

played an integral role, the elaborate stage set having been designed by Roger Dean, responsible for the bulk of the group's iconic album sleeves. Visuals aside, it's an occasionally intriguing setlist, taking in relatively unheralded album tracks such as 1970's Sweet Dream and 1997's Mind Drive, though the band seem more assured on home bankers Yours Is No Disgrace and Going For The One.

Arguably, the acoustic portion of the set makes the most impact, Anderson's vocals less swamped by instrumentation on Wondrous Stories and Roundabout, giving the songs more room to breathe. A second disc features 70 minutes of a show from earlier in the tour, filmed in Lugano, Switzerland, on a stripped-down stage where the players – guitarist Howe in particular – let rip on rockier versions of old favourites. *Terry Staunton*

Freak Jazz, Movie Madness And Another Mothers: Frank Zappa 1969-1973

★★★★
Sexy Intellectual SIDVD 580

**The step-Mothers,
presumably**

The original Mothers Of Invention were a daunting, thankless act to follow. What some members may have lacked in steroidal

musicianship, they made up for with sharply delineated character, exacerbated by Zappa's meticulous myth-making. Kudos to Tom O'Dell, then, for assembling an unsanctioned but authoritative film, crammed with archive footage, which concentrates instead on their still-controversial replacements, and thoroughly contextualises the mountain they had to climb. (Billy The Mountain?)

As *Freak Jazz* relates, newbie vocalists Howard Kaylan and Mark Volman were initially dismissed by rock snobs for their purportedly shallow pop background with The Turtles, then taken to task for perpetrating a sleazy streak of Rabelasian humour. The debate persists: interviewees include noted critic Mark Paytress, who sighingly observes that the knobs-and-knobbing gags represented a puerile coarsening of a formerly incisive wit, and Zappa biographer Ben Watson, who stands up for the crudity as a legitimate facet of Frank's canon. Both have a point.

Elsewhere, Volman and his contemporaneous Mothers (including George Duke, Aynsley Dunbar and Ian Underwood) mount a loving case for the defence. Our favourite is bassist Jeff Simmons, who famously bailed on the eve of the 200 *Motels* filming. His rationale? "I felt I had too much hair to be on film. And I wanted to rock." *Oregano Rathbone*