

BY FRED DELLAR, DAVID KATZ, JAMES MCNAIR, CLIVE PRIOR AND LOIS WILSON

David Axelrod

★★★★★

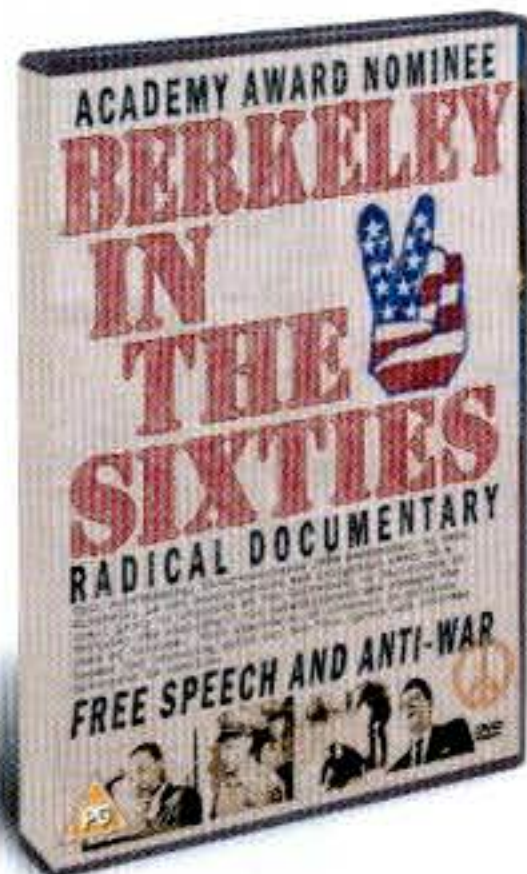
Live: Royal Festival Hall

CHAMPION PRODUCTIONS

DVD and CD of the magus composer live at London's Royal Festival Hall, March 2004.

After a distinguished '60s and '70s creating startling LPs of symphonic, beat-driven jazz, David Axelrod was all but buried by the early-'80s. This makes this concert film, the culmination of a resurrection sparked by beatdiggers including Dr Dre and DJ Shadow, all the sweeter. The applause is wild even before the hard-looking white-haired senior in black conducts a note; what follows, given form by a crack 26-piece orchestra, fully justifies it. Largely drawn from his William Blake-inspired albums from the late '60s, these strange, wide-open flights in space – with a rock solid foundation of R&B and jazz – still have power. Particularly fine is Tensity, 13 minutes spent out of normal time, which sees Axelrod reaching out skinny hands into the dark. Let's hope he comes and does it live again, and soon.

Ian Harrison



then rioted for the right to free speech, laying the groundwork for the psychedelically colourful counter-culture in neighbouring San Francisco – but the telling isn't. Its first half, a linear plod of old footage and talking head interviews with former students, feels like a political science class project. Things get far more colourful when the protest moves beyond the university to the Vietnam War. The hippies – often drawn to the Bay Area by newspaper reports of Berkeley's radicalism, but more interested in personal mind-expansion – join in, then seem to head up the movement. The second half rushes by, as new factions spring up, alliances are formed and broken, and the musical backdrop gets more dynamic (Hendrix; Gil Scott-Heron) than Joan Baez strumming her guitar.

Sylvie Simmons

most wonderfully frenetic Good News music ever made, Danielson: A Family Movie isn't your average rock documentary. Originally enlisting his three brothers and their sister to perform as the Danielson Famile for his college graduation project in 1994, Daniel Smith has since carved out a unique niche for himself with a winning combination of Christian faith and musical innovation. Following a path from underground unknown to internationally recognised solo artist and group leader, this film tracks Smith's evolution as he searches for new ways to present both his art and the Lord's message. Along the way we get some great footage of the Danielsons on tour and in full flight – all handclaps, yelps and nurses' uniforms – Daniel performing solo from inside his 'nine fruit tree', and a photo call with Daniel Johnston and best friend (and sometime Famile member) Sufjan Stevens.

Andrew Carden

Dolly Parton

★★★★★

Dolly Parton & Friends

SONY/BMG

The country queen's first TV series.

The cover is a con, depicting a contemporary, leather-clad Dolly, while the music stems from six episodes of Parton's 1976 TV series when her array of big-hair wigs proved a cause for instant giggles. It doesn't matter because this 2-DVD set provides great viewing. Best of the sequences are those in the company of Linda Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris, where the harmonies are wondrous, even though a sense of unease runs through the performances. Anne Murray, Ronnie

Berkeley In The Sixties

★★★★★

LIBERATION ENTERTAINMENT

Sober, sobering and timely documentary on the history of West Coast radicalism.

It says something about the age of the voting committee that this got an Oscar nomination. Its story is riveting – how, in the monochromatic early '60s, Berkeley's straight-looking students stood up, sat-in,

Danielson

★★★★★

Danielson: A Family Movie

HVE/IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT

The rise of Daniel Smith and his indie rock siblings, the Danielson Famile.

A story of creative eccentricity, Christianity and some of the

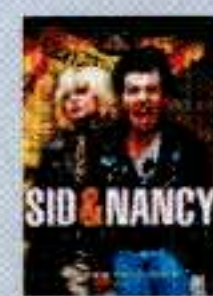


Dolly Parton: flip your wig.

Sid And Nancy

★★★

MOMENTUM



Director Alex Cox meant well; his 1986 flick, equal parts true crime story and Romeo And Juliet update

was intended to reinforce the belief in the power of love; instead with laughable performances from the protagonists – Gary Oldman's Vicious and Chloe Webb's Spungen – plus a wildly inaccurate retelling of the Sex Pistols' story as backdrop, it's an unnecessary addition to the documentation of punk. LW

Leonard Cohen

★★★

Under Review 1934-1977

SEXY INTELLECTUAL

An erudite enough 90 minutes of critical analysis by people who know their subject – singer Ronee Blakley, producer John Simon, biographer Ira Nadel, Cohen's band leader Ron Cornelius etc. But this unauthorised array of talking heads, plus a modicum of obscure footage and photographs, is hardly the stuff of which entertaining videos are made. FD

Yellowman

★★★★ Live In San Francisco 281

Gregory Isaacs

★★ Live In San Francisco 281

The first captures a fine performance by King Yellow

and the Sagittarius backing band delivering rapid-fire medleys of hits such as Zungguzungguzungguzeng and Mad Over Me in 1998. The second offers a lacklustre 1997 set from the Cool Ruler, featuring a band that is hot, but sadly a voice that's not. DK

Ian Gillan

★★★★

Highway Star: A Journey In Rock

UNIVERSAL

Functional, yet value-for-money stuff, extras galore and over six hours of live/interview footage mapping Gillan's apprenticeship with harmonious pop act Episode Six, his stentorian-lunged sojourn with Deep Purple, and much more besides. Pavarotti, Ian's mum Audrey and the late George Best are among the talking heads, but period Purple footage is thin on the ground. JM

War

★★★

Loose Grooves: Funkin' In England 1980

CHERRY RED



War were an immense on-stage proposition: just check out 1972 recording War Live. Eight years later at Halifax's Civic Theatre, they could still deliver mesmeric improvisations on their greatest hits: Low Rider, The Cisco Kid and Me And Baby Brother. It's just a shame that the sound and camera operators weren't up to their jobs that night. CP

Milsap, Randy Parton, Rod McKuen, Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis Jr provide Parton's other foils. But the ultimate success of the show is down to Dolly herself, working her way vocally through material that ranges from My Funny Valentine and Jim Croce's Bad Bad Leroy Brown to bluegrass and gospel favourites. Additionally, she demonstrates that she's no slouch as an instrumentalist on a daft but remarkable assault on Do I Ever Cross Your Mind, performed at super speed.

Fred Dellar

Dinosaur Jr

★★★★★

Live In The Middle East

IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT

Amherst's reunited indie power trio blow minds in Massachusetts.

Anyone who saw Dinosaur in the 1980s will tell you that the gigs were loud, but often

lacked cohesion. Happily, since reforming in 2005 the original line-up have resolved their dysfunctional internal dynamic, and can now play at stun volume while retaining clarity. Filmed at Boston's Middle East club, this 18-song set highlights their new-found drive. Bathed in purple light, crumbly voiced guitar hero J Mascis backs up his sports casual Gandalf image (grey hair, tracksuit top) by conjuring a variegated blaze of riffs, melodies and speaker-shredding textures, most notably on Cracked and Sludgefeast. Lou Barlow is transformed from introspective Sebadoh bard to maniacally committed Rickenbacker bass warrior. Held together by Murph's from-the-gut drumming, laconic anthems such as Budge and The Wagon have an irresistible momentum. Extras include a dry-humoured interview plus fond recollections from Sonic Youth, Kevin Shields, Steve Albini, Matt Dillon etc.

Manish Agarwal