

practicing witch is killed and the suspects include Telly Savalis as a fakir who sleeps on a bed of nails, Gloria Swanson with wild, broom-like hair, and Wally Cox, as a wannabe vampire who lives in a hearse and makes appearances at midnight horror shows. Beyond the gimmicks, the story has an expected but still satisfying big twist. Janet Blair, Ruggles again, and Nancy Kovack (playing a character named, 'Girl Girl') also guest star. A body drops out of a box in a house that is being moved in *Who Killed Cynthia Royal?*, and so the heroes have to figure out who she is and why she was murdered. There is a reasonably good twist to the solution. Frankie Avalon, Stubby Kaye, Marilyn Maxwell, and Una Merkel are among the suspects.

A dead body is found to have replaced a dummy in a macabre carnival display (which also contains a funny allusion to Barry's **Bat Masterson**) in *Who Killed Eleanora Davis?*. The story has some good twists and is fairly satisfying. Adams, hidden by a beard, reappears, along with Jane Darwell, Edward Everett Horton, Arthur Hunnicutt, Debra Paget, Dean Jones, and the wonderful Elsa Lanchester. Barry makes out with June Allyson, a lot, in *Who Killed Beau Sparrow?*, even though she may be a suspect. Barry's character witnesses the murder—a gigolo dives into a swimming pool and comes up dead—but still has difficulty determining how he died, let alone who did it. Yvonne DeCarlo, Jack Haley, the exquisite Agnes Moorehead and Ken Murray are featured. There is a not entirely unexpected but still quite satisfying twist. The members of a high stakes poker game are suspect when one of them is found dead in the hotel suite they were using in *Who Killed Jason Shaw?*. Tammy Grimes, Meredith again, Wynn again, and Oscar Homolka are among the suspects. The opening of *Who Killed Snooky Martinelli?* has Barry singing *C'est Si Bon*, so, understandably, he gets shot. It turns out, of course, that the victim, a playboy who lived off of rich women, was a look alike of the hero. Hoagy Carmichael, Broderick Crawford (his hair in curlers), Carl Reiner (trying on toupees), Romero again, and Janice Rule are featured.

### International man of intrigue

One of the primary inspirations for Austin Powers was the otherwise forgotten British TV series originally broadcast in 1971 and 1972, **Jason King**, which has been released in its entirety by Granada International and Image Entertainment (UPC#014381364125, \$60). If there was a point in the early Seventies when men's hair was at its absolute longest in style, that is when this is set, with the star, Peter Wyngarde, decked out like Tony Orlando. Wyngarde, who is actually a better actor than the show deserves (he was Oberon in the Diana Rigg **Midsummer Night's Dream**), plays a foppish spy novelist who is regularly drawn into the international intrigues that then serve as fodder for his bestsellers. Many of the creative personnel involved in the better British spy programs of the time had a hand in the show, and stellar character actors making the rounds, such as Roy Kinnear and John Le Mesurier, show up now and then as well. While the show's tone is uneven and the hero's egoism is sometimes unlikable, many of the episodes are reasonably entertaining and are even more appealing if you have a nostalgic affection for the era and its presumptions.

Twenty-five 52-minute episodes are spread across seven platters. Each episode automatically advances to the next on every platter. The picture is in full screen format only. The image always looks a little aged and drab, though the loudness in the colors of the décor and costumes is still adequately communicated. The monophonic sound is also rather bland and the musical score is a good ten years behind its times. There is no captioning.

It is best not to watch the opening episode, *Wanna Buy a Television Series?* first, because it toys too much with a format that is not yet established, as the hero describes a proposal for a television pilot to a producer and, as they talk and alter details, the imaginary show is depicted, with Wyngarde in the leading role. It is probably the cleverest episode in the entire series, but it will mean more after you have a few other episodes under your belt and know the characters better. A more pedestrian effort, the hero picks up a hitchhiker who asks him to deliver a package in *Buried in the Cold Cold Ground*, and is then killed. In *A Page before Dying*, spies pretend to be movie producers so they can access the hero's imagination to solve a dilemma they face. In the more enjoyable *A Deadly Line of Digits*, the hero is coerced into putting on a disguise and infiltrating a robbery gang so he can determine who is tapping Scotland Yard's mainframe.

There are direct allusions to shots and locations from **The Third Man** in the Vienna set *Variations on a Theme*, in which the hero is asked to assist in a defection, but not much really happens. In the cuter *As Easy As A.B.C.*, a pair of burglars copy robberies from the hero's books, and he is called upon to stop them. In the equally enjoyable *To Russia with...Panache*, which features some great music hall-style Russian caricatures, the hero goes behind the Iron Curtain to help solve a murder. Confusion at an airport leads to the hero being mistaken for a hired assassin in *A Red Red Rose For Ever*.

Although it is spread to two parts and there is a lot of running around, *All That Glisters...*, about a stolen figurine, doesn't have much substance. In a similar but dependable variation on *Red Red Rose*, the hero is mistaken for a spy when he inadvertently utters a password at an airport in *Flamingoes Only Fly on Tuesdays*. He falls for a gangster's girlfriend in the bittersweet *Toki*.

There is a quick glimpse of topless dancers in the Parisian nightclub scene in *The Constance Missal*. A pair of female burglars

hypnotize victims into assisting them, and blackmail the hero into participating. It is a good example of the show's excesses and basic appeal. The hero is recruited to help break up a drug cartel *Uneasy Lies the Head*, but the less said about the plot, the better, as it has some clever turns. A woman is forced to plant drugs on the hero to smuggle them across the border in *Nadine*. One of the better episodes, both the government and the rebels want to know where the hero got his information for his novel in *A Kiss for a Beautiful Killer*, as he stumbles into the middle of a Latin American revolution.

The hero is sent to a sanatorium where nasty things are going on and there are lots of cute models getting treatment in *If It's Got to Go It's Got to Go*. There are some decent twists in *A Thin Band of Air*, in which the hero is the target of a hit because of his earlier involvement in a kidnapping where the ransom was never found. The hero is not initially involved in the elaborate murder tale involving a stolen vacuum cleaner, *It's Too Bad about Auntie*, but he is asked to piece together what happened. Told in flashback with the hero apparently apprehended for robbery, it turns out he is investigating someone else's crimes in *The Stone of Venice*, and also trying to figure out who has written a phony book using his name.

A spy who has been cornered in a bar drops an important device into the hero's pocket as he balances his romantic intentions between a princess and her assistant in *A Royal Flush*, which has a reasonable amount of twists and turns. In the elaborate *Every Picture Tells a Story*, set in Hong Kong, a local paper is altering the comic strip adaptations of the hero's stories, and when he investigates, he discovers that the alterations are being used as a code. A persuasive explanation is never really provided in *Chapter One: The Company I Keep* to explain why the hero's writing is anticipating various murders down to the smallest details. As he investigates it, he uncovers an Italian prostitution ring and complications arising from blackmail. The hero recognizes an assassin in the airport of a foreign country in *Zenia* and warns the leader that his life is in danger. When the threat proves out, the hero is then asked to rescue the leader's kidnapped daughter. There is an expected twist in the tale, and the story doesn't really amount to much.

The final two episodes, on the last platter, *An Author in Search of Two Characters* and *That Isn't Me It's Somebody Else*, both involve doubles who are attempting to represent the hero. In the funnier *Author*, Wyngarde plays both parts as the hero attempts to track down a murder he believes he has witnessed while the villains set up a robbery using the double. In *Somebody Else*, an imposter attempts to get close to a Mafia chieftain who is a fan of the hero's books, but the plans are upset when the hero coincidentally arrives for a visit.

### Talkin' 'bout pop music

An outstanding sixteen-part series about popular music, **All You Need Is Love**, has been released by MVD (UPC#604388700004, \$100). Originally put together by Tony Palmer in the late Seventies, each episode runs 51 minutes and looks at a particular component of pop or its antecedents. While the show, as a whole, is not definitive, it is comprehensive, and loaded with fantastic archival clips, illuminating interviews, and terrific music. As packed as the episodes are with information and insight, the music clips are also allowed to play for decent lengths of time, and each episode has an artistic structure, building to emotional crescendos again and again. The effort to clear the rights to the clips and bring the program to home video, incidentally, must have been Herculean.

The picture is presented in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. That's fine, but on more than one occasion, an archive clip that was originally in a squarer format is squeezed to fit the framing. The picture usually looks a little aged, but colors are reasonably fresh. The sound is generally centered but in terrific condition, and the music is often vivid. There is no captioning.

The sixteen episodes are spread to four platters and there is no 'Play All' option. A seventeenth episode, identified as the first episode, appears by itself on a fifth platter, but it is a sampler/introduction program and is not worth bothering with unless you want to get a taste of the show's content and scope. The real first episode looks at the traditions of song making in both Africa and Europe, and how these traditions traveled across the Atlantic. The second episode is a very good exploration of ragtime and Scott Joplin. The third episode, about jazz, is less focused, but still features some terrific clips. The fourth episode, about the blues, is somewhat stronger. The fifth episode, about music hall and vaudeville performers, is wonderful. The sixth episode is about Tin Pan Alley, and explores the changing economics of songwriting. The seventh episode looks at operettas and musicals, and the eighth episode is about swing. The ninth advances to rhythm and blues, but then the tenth backs up a bit to cover country music, while the eleventh delves into folk singers and protest songs. Then, finally, the twelfth episode gets on to rock and roll, and is especially interesting in its look at the perspective the British had of American music in the Fifties. The thirteenth episode covers the Beatles and their contemporaries, the fourteenth is an interesting analysis of what is termed 'sour rock' featuring the more serious and less playful bands, and then the fifteenth episode looks at how the business had to morph into glam rock and other more theatrical acts. The final episode does not mention heavy metal, punk, disco or hip-hop, but instead looks at the ability of a musician, such as Mike Oldfield, to create entire albums without leaving his house or inviting anyone else in, and also covers Muzak and suggestions by some that rock has dumbed down and corrupted the youth of the world.