

The sound, presumably originally mixed for TV, isn't great but fortunately avoids 80s production. The other downer is Jerry Lee: his gimmicks just can't compete with Ray or Fats' natural talents. But despite these drawbacks it's great to see these titans together on stage. The bonus material features recollections of the show from the amiable Schaffer and rehearsal footage, including Ray Charles letting Schaffer know who's really running the show. *Mat Croft*

Barry Manilow The First Television Specials

★★★★
Warners 5144245912 (5-DVD)

MOR king's primetime performances

For 20 or so years from the mid-50s onwards, the likes of Nat King Cole, Tom Jones and even Donny & Marie used TV to their advantage by signing up to long-running series of weekly shows to consolidate their mainstream appeal. Manilow, however, rationed his exposure, staging one-off annual "specials", supposedly to make each appearance in America's front rooms more of an event.

This box gathers together his first four small screen spectaculars, from 1977 to 1980, augmented by a disc from 1988. The first is perhaps the most interesting as, beyond the big hits, there's a nod to his dancehall and jazz club roots, plus a self-mocking medley of the commercial jingles he wrote as a jobbing muso on Madison Avenue.

Later broadcasts saw Manilow duet with a string of famous chums (Ray Charles, John Denver, Dionne Warwick), but with constant reminders that he was the star of the show. Disc Five, featuring 1988's *Big Fun On Swing Street*, has a more identifiable theme, with Manilow vamping through a string of big band classics with Kid Creole, Phyllis Hyman and Carmen McRae. To some he may be a byword for raffiness, but there's no doubting Manilow's professionalism and astute understanding of what his audience wants. *Terry Staunton*

Charles Mingus

Live in '64

★★★★★
Reelin' In The Years Productions/Naxos 2:119006

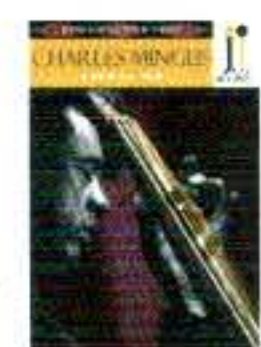
Wes Montgomery

Live in '65

★★★★★
Reelin' In The Years Productions/Naxos 2:119003

Two jazz giants captured at their respective peaks

In 2006, Reelin' In The Years truly raised the bar for jazz DVDs with a stellar collection of lovingly-restored archive footage released under the banner *Jazz Icons*. The second batch of titles is arguably better than the first. This time around, Peck and his crew have exhumed rare film of John Coltrane, Dave Brubeck, Duke Ellington, Dexter Gordon, Charles



Mingus, Wes Montgomery and Sarah Vaughan (if you buy them in a box set format, you get a bonus DVD too).

The Mingus set is particularly arresting, featuring three European concerts from April '64, when the composer-bassist's band included the versatile multi-reed player Eric Dolphy. The band shines on the classic *Meditations On Integration* but the inclusion of *So Long* Eric has an ironic poignancy in view of the fact that Dolphy died just three months later.

Guitar deity Wes Montgomery's death was also tragically premature. *Live In '65* is taken from three European TV programmes and is arguably the most rewarding DVD in the series, as revealing camera close-ups allow us to see Montgomery's unique way of playing (he only used the thumb on his right hand to pick notes). Valuable rehearsal footage also gives an insight into Montgomery's musical thought processes. Jaw-droppingly good. *Charles Waring*

Roxy Music

The Thrill of It All: A Visual History 1972-1982

★★★★★
EMI VDVD 12 (2-DVD)

Your high-class night in at the Roxy



Watching Roxy Music's earliest filmed performance, a take of *Re-Make/Re-Model* from June 1972, they seem more like

space invaders than Bowie did. Phil Manzanera's beard and bug-eyed glasses, Eno's cross between an ostrich and *The Child Catcher*, and Ferry, the sort-of-suave, sort-of-ragged gang leader presenting a motley crew singing odes to blow-up dolls (*In Every Dream Home A Heartache*) and bringing the world a twisted chic (*Virginia Plain*).

How beautiful it was for four years. Disc One proves Roxy the quintessential "art-rock" band, right up until about the 1976 live shows. Regrouping three years later, however, the MOR edge (or, rather, blunt) they could teeter on comes to the fore. A few "I remember that" moments endear, such as *Angel Eyes*, but the we're-punks-gurning *Trash* is a wholesale embarrassment. Watch *Re-Make/Re-Model* again: it's hard to determine how this happened. The answer's probably wrapped up somewhere in the entire Manchester Apollo football-chanting their name in 1979. Seven years previously, it would have been unthinkable.

You just would *not* get a Roxy these days. Hopefully this will remind the major labels they need to allow new talent to be nurtured, and not run them out on a hit-by-hit basis. This is most definitely for your pleasure. *Jason Draper*

Saxon

To Hell & Back Again

★★★★★
SPV 99997 (2-DVD)

Up hill and down Saxon daie, Spinal Tap's inspiration on tour
This could have so easily have been a *Spinal Tap II* (if you believe the stories, Saxon were their main influence), but it's actually done

very well. On this evidence it's very hard not to warm to them.

The main film opens with the end of recording the *Lionheart* album, with Saxon discussing aspects of its creation. Their manager covers promotion and, as Saxon go off on tour, clips of fans, the album launch and the stage crew accompany the live segments. From hall to stadium and festival, Saxon show their professionalism on stage, remaining charismatic throughout. The modern songs fit in well alongside the older ones, while on-tour interviews make for great viewing. Singer Biff Byford talks to the camera like it's his best mate, and it's no pretence.

Disc Two mixes live and promo footage, including two tracks from *Rock For Asia 2005* and a duet with Doro of Judas Priest's *You've Got Another Thing Coming*. The several video clips include *I've Got To Rock To Stay Alive*, featuring Lemmy and Angry Anderson. Many would say "For die-hards only", but those not fully au fait with the band should see how it should be done. *Joe Geesin*

Tupac Assassination: Conspiracy Or Revenge?

★★★★★
Liberation Entertainment LIB 6131
Who killed Tupac? The debate rages on...

Eleven years on from Tupac's shooting on the streets of Las Vegas the argument over who was behind the rapper's demise continues unabated. Co-written by Tupac's bodyguard Big Frank Alexander, *Tupac Assassination* feels like one of the slickly-made crime documentaries that have a habit of turning up on Channel 5 as it goes about its forensically in-depth re-examination of the manner and circumstances of Tupac's death.

Unlike Nick Broomfield's *Biggie & Tupac*, little or no mention is made of Tupac's beef with the similarly star-crossed Biggie Smalls. Instead, using interviews with a former prosecuting attorney, homicide detectives, Tupac protégés *The Outlawz* and, most significantly, his bodyguards, this details the Las Vegas police department's alleged botched investigation. It's argued that Tupac's killing bears all the hallmarks of a meticulously planned hit, with the argued motivation being that Tupac was about to leave Suge Knight's Death Row operation en route to setting up his own label, Makaveli. Numerous angles have been taken now, and still it's destined to remain conjecture. *Grahame Bent*

Tom Waits Under Review 1983-2006

★★★
Chrome Dreams/Sexy Intellectual SIDVD 530

Bone Machine becomes drone machine in late-career appraisal

The previous Waits *Under Review* led us to a jumping-off point of such excitement that part two couldn't come fast enough. What better than a look at some of the weirdest, most continually inventive work from a once faintly traditional singer-songwriter? In today's terms

it would be like Ryan Adams shaving his eyebrows and returning with an album recorded using doorbells of different pitches.

This, however, largely drains it of its excitement and magic. The problem for anyone picking apart Waits' career from hereon in is that it's also the time when he really locked everything down and recorded in a bubble. As such, there's little in the way of willing participants other than the usual talking heads on singer-songwriter based *Under Reviews*, and it's incredibly dry. The fact that each prefaces a lot of what they say with "As Tom told me when I interviewed him..." starts to make the whole thing seem a bit more like one-upmanship. That it closes by mentioning Tom Waits' forthcoming *Orphans* set, which was released over a year ago, is shoddy.

If you've got a good Waits biography (try Patrick Humphries', who comes off quite well here) and a handful of bootlegs, you won't need this. *Jason Draper*

The Who

Amazing Journey

★★★★★
Universal, cat no tbc (2-DVD)

Not quite ready to f-f-f-fade away

The Who's first major "documentary". 1979's *The Kids Are Alright*, was a frustratingly disjointed compendium of archive clips with little or no insight from the band. Thankfully, *Amazing Journey* finds Daltrey and Townshend opening up to the cameras, celebrating their past and bearing its scars.

It's all here, from 1964 footage of *The High Numbers* at a mod night in the Railway Hotel, Wealdstone, to the genesis of the gear-smashing antics; from Daltrey claiming he only found his true voice on *Tommy*, to the madness of constant touring; from the ambition of Townshend's "towering triumph" *Quadrophenia*, to the devastation of Keith Moon's near-inevitable early death; from the late 90s reunion tours hauling John Entwistle out of debt, to *The Ox's* passing and the "love" that belatedly blossomed between the surviving players.

Cleverly presenting the chapters like tracks on an imaginary double vinyl album, this contextualises The Who and reminds us just how pioneering they were. The booze, drugs and fisticuffs are chronicled without any diluting sheen of hindsight, and the overall tone is extraordinarily honest, Pete and Rodge own up to their errors, while



bigging themselves up as one of the greatest rock outfits ever. Who are we to argue? *Terry Staunton*

Fuzz: The Sound That Revolutionized The World

★★★★★
Brinkfilm BDVD 0069

Welcome to fuzz heaven



Clif Taylor's documentary provides a fascinating insight and highly entertaining look into the highly secretive and

obsessive world of fuzz boxes and associated guitar effects pedals, their manufacturers and aficionados. Besides featuring appearances from lifelong fuzz-heads Billy Gibbons, Jon Spencer, J Mascis, Peter Dinklage, Steve Albini and Mike Matthews of *Electro Harmonix*, *Fuzz* includes a full supporting cast of assorted electronics freaks, musicians, guitar techs, producers and connoisseurs behind what's come to be known as the boutique pedal industry.

While iconic pedals such as the Big Muff have been market leaders for decades, *Fuzz* lifts the lid on competing pedal manufacturers, some of them, such as *Analog Man* and *Death By Audio*, little more than one- or two-man operations driven to come up with the furthest-out custom tone modulating gismos on the planet. Bonus features include Angie Bowie's anecdotes on Mick Ronson's fuzz box habit. *Grahame Bent*

Live From Abbey Road

★★★★★
Freemantic, cat no tbc (2-DVD)

Intimate sessions from the famed London studio

The great and the not-so-great decamped to St John's Wood earlier this year for what Channel 4 described as a "revolution" in music television. That's perhaps over-the-top, although seeing performers do their stuff surrounded by wood panelling and soundproof glass partitions made a welcome change from the DayGlo backdrops and camera-friendly stage settings of most small screen offerings.

This double-disc set compiles the best of the series, although some participants (Paul Simon, for example) appear not to have given their permission for the footage to be used on a sell-through souvenir. Of the 27 who did, The Zutons, Richard Ashcroft and Dr John deliver the most exciting and revealing segments, while the likes of *Norah Jones*, *Iron Maiden* and *Gnarls Barkley* seem awkward and uncomfortable, as if bullied into an experiment they don't understand... and there tends to be an over-reliance on those signed to Abbey Road's owners, EMI.

Interviews with the artists appear in fuller form than when broadcast, but there is still repetition, with many blathering on about how legendary the studios are and what an honour it is to play there. You can pick your favourites; the full 165 minutes may be too trying for most. *Terry Staunton*