

Back to the Palace

Part of the MVD release, **Rock 'N Roll's Greatest Teen Idols** (UPC#022891660590, \$13), is a 67-minute collection of numbers performed at Orlando's Rock 'n' Roll Palace by aged stars reliving their hits of long ago for equally doddering fans. As with the previous anthologies in the series, there are singers who rather frighteningly attempt to act as if time has not advanced and there are those who more rewardingly accept what life has offered them. Included are Tommy Sands, Frankie Ford, Tommy Roe, Troy Shondell, Jack Scott, Joey Dee, Bobby Vee, Lenny Welch and Ray Petersen, the latter being the star of the collection, coming out on the stage quite literally with a cane but celebrating with great affection hits such as *Corina Corina*, *Fever*, and *Tell Laura I Love Her*. The full screen picture has bright hues and viable fleshtones, but is a little soft at times. The sound is monophonic but clear. Then there are 13 minutes of clips from the black-and-white film, *Rock! Rock! Rock!*, featuring Frankie Lyman & The Teenagers, Jimmy Calvallo and Cirno & the Bowties. That would seem to be enough to make a DVD, but there is one last program that makes the collection exceptional, the outstanding 1962 National Film Board of Canada documentary, *Paul Anka Lonely Boy*. Running 27 minutes, the black-and-white program tails Anka during the height of his initial stardom, coping with screaming fans and trying to maintain the stability of his talent within the whirlwind of a concert date at Atlantic City. Whatever you may think of Anka or teen idols in general, the film, directed by Wolf Koenig and Roman Kroitor, is a classy and enlightening work of genuine historical and cultural value, and would be worthwhile even if it were the only show on the disc.

The Palace is also the venue for MVD's **Shirelles Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow** (UPC022891659891, \$13), an enjoyable 20-minute set in which the group performs six of their hits (they do two versions of *Baby It's You*) with great enthusiasm and engagement. Also featured in the program are 12 minutes of additional numbers by The Angels and The Dixie Cups. Again, the picture is colorful but soft, and the sound is centered.

Like Peterson, Johnny Tillotson's set stood out on MVD's **Live at the Rock 'n' Roll Palace Volume 2** (Mar 07) because he managed to celebrate the past in his performance without trying to hold onto it. He sustains that accomplishment reasonably well in MVD's **Johnny Tillotson** (UPC#022891660095, \$13), a 24-minute set which includes the numbers that appeared on **Volume 2** as well as a performance of a more country-western oriented set at Orlando's Church Street Station Theatre. Throughout the show he conveys an appealing enthusiasm for the work he is doing and the happiness it is bringing to his audience. Again, the picture is soft, but colors are fine. The Church Street numbers have a slight stereophonic dimensionality. Additionally, the DVD features 10 minutes of numbers from Church Street Station featuring The Dovells and Lynn Paul.

None of the DVDs is captioned.

Distorted Damone

Smooth singing Vic Damone is roughed up by a distorted audio playback on **Vic Damone On the Street Where You Live**, a Cherry Red Films release (UOC#022891250494, \$13). The 1985 source material, which appears to be monophonic, has a bad electronic swirl that creates both a raspy echo and an undulating volume. Still, the world is hardly awash in Vic Damone DVDs, so fans will have to make do. Damone sings more than a dozen numbers in the 53-minute set, including a 'tribute' to Frank Sinatra, and talks a bit to the London audience between songs. The full screen picture is grainy and a little greenish, but basic hues are discernible. There is no captioning.

Wrong end of the scalpel

A cheap **Frankenstein**-inspired tale about a mad scientist who murders a number of women to construct the perfect one, **Doctor Gore**, is available from Chiller Theatre and Something Weird Video (UPC#01-4381160529, \$15). Directed by J.G. Patterson, Jr., the 1973 feature has its amusements—the doctor has a hunchback assistant and a bunch of loony lab equipment—and an appropriate amount of sex and blood, but despite an adequately constructed narrative (the ironies in the final act are well thought), the staging is rather stiff and the 83-minute concoction is going to appeal a great deal more to fans of the genre than it will win over any new enthusiasts.

The full screen picture is in fairly good condition, with reasonably bright colors and a sharp focus. Wear is minimal. The musical score is a horrible and incessant variation on *My Favorite Things*, but if you can tolerate that, then it is appropriate to say that the monophonic sound is okay. There is no captioning.

The film is accompanied by a terrific commentary track featuring **Gore's** original theatrical distributor, Jeffrey C. Hogue. Prompted by genre expert Cynthia Starr, Hogue talks all about his career as an exploitation film promoter (he once turned on a real chainsaw in the back of the theater during a screening of **Texas Chainsaw Massacre**) and producer. It is one more valuable oral history in Something Weird's outstanding and often entertaining efforts to preserve the legacies of an industry that has sadly been displaced by the very home video business that is Something Weird's reason for being. A 5-minute alternate opening to **Doctor Gore** is included as well, featuring exploitation director Herschell Gordon Lewis, who explains what 'gore' is and who Patterson was.

Also included on the DVD is Lewis' 77-minute full screen color sex comedy from 1968 entitled *How to Make a Doll*, about two nerdy scientists who invent a machine that creates attractive, pliant females, the experience enabling the hero to go out into the real world and get one of his own. The source material is a little ragged, but workable, which is more than one can say for the film itself. Additionally, there are a dozen trailers, a 6-minute montage of horror comic book covers set to instrumental rock music, an undated (it looks like very early Thirties) 9-minute black-and-white *Tom Terriss The Vagabond Adventurer in Quest of the Perfect Woman* short entitled *The Vampire of Marrakesh* that combines travelog footage with some interesting tomfoolery in which the hero slips into a harem and barely escapes with his soul, and an undated would-be avant garde 12-minute short that combines black-and-white footage (probably lifted from an older source) with abstract color footage of a man and a woman embracing on a bed designed like it was lifted from **The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari**, segueing to a man on a surgeon's table being prepped for operation by a group of sinister doctors.

DVD News

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS: Kenneth Brannagh will provide a full commentary track for his longish **Hamlet**, which is being issued by Warner Home Video. The Max Reinhardt **Midsummer Night's Dream** will have a film scholar commentary. **Viva Las Vegas** will have a commentary and a featurette. **300** will come with deleted scenes, but apparently, only the Blu-Ray release will have a commentary.

EXTRA PATHFINDER: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment's release of **Pathfinder** will be an 'unrated' version 7 minutes longer than the theatrical release. There will also be deleted scenes, a commentary and production featurettes.

OTHER FORMATS: The following titles have recently been released on HD-DVD—The Architect, District B13 (Magnolia); Dreamgirls, Flags of Our Fathers Special Edition, Freedom Writers, Mission: Impossible, Mission: Impossible 2 (Paramount); Alpha Dog, Dragonheart, The 40-Year Old Virgin, The Frighteners Director's Cut, The Hitcher, Lost in Translation, Midnight Run, The River, The Skeleton Key, Smokey and the Bandit (Universal); Battle of the Bulge, The Complete Matrix Trilogy, The Fountain, Letters from Iwo Jima, The Road Warrior (Warner). The following titles have recently been released on Blu-Ray—Apocalypto, Pirates of the Caribbean Dead Man's Chest, Pirates of the Caribbean The Curse of the Black Pearl (Buena Vista); Basic Instinct, Dirty Dancing, Happily N'Ever After, Weeds Season 1 (Lionsgate); District B13 (Magnolia); Dreamgirls, Flags of Our Fathers Special Edition, Freedom Writers, Mission: Impossible, Mission: Impossible 2 (Paramount); Catch and Release, Chris Botti Live with Orchestra & Special Guests, Closer (Clive Owen), Curse of the Golden Flower, Donnie Brasco Extended Cut, Revenge Unrated Director's Cut, Stomp the Yard (Sony); Battle of the Bulge, The Fountain, Letters from Iwo Jima, The Road Warrior (Warner)

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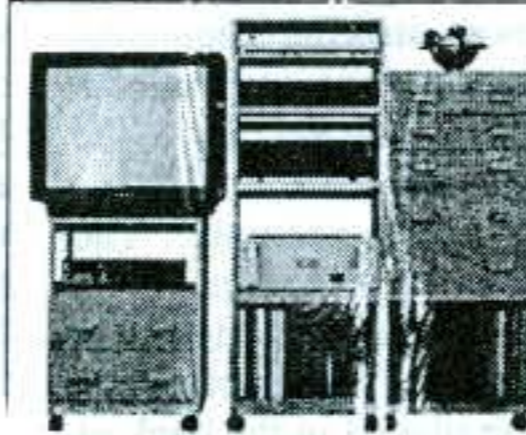
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