

Detroit goes techno

A very interesting and thorough documentary about the development of 'techno' music and its intrinsic relationship to the Detroit music scene, **High Tech Soul The Creation of Techno Music**, has been released by Plexifilm (UPC#082354003920, \$20). There are no complete music sequences in the 64-minute program (you do get plenty of snippets), but it is exhaustively researched and includes interviews with at least two-dozen individuals who were either present during or involved in the refinements that led to the music becoming a distinctive genre, along with an excellent analysis of the music and its variations. Even if you don't care for the music itself, the documentary compels you to respect it as an artform and understand its place in the continuing history musical expression.

The picture is presented in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and no 16:9 enhancement. The image is usually very sharp, with precise colors, even during segments set in dimly lit clubs and dance halls. The stereo surround sound has a strong, clear dimensionality. There are optional English and German subtitles, and 17 minutes of excellent outtakes, including a riveting analysis of Detroit's unique heritage and demographic. "What you get is a city that had 2.2 million people in the mid-1950s. Today it has 900,000 people. It has a physical infrastructure that was created to sustain the lives of over two times the number of people who still live here, which means that there is a great deal of empty space in Detroit. It is no accident that the space left in Detroit, the physical space, is one that techno, with its volume, its kind of industrial logic, immediately occupies."

Blanchard goes with the flow

A 90-minute overview of a year in the life of jazz musician Terence Blanchard is presented on the Jazziz Music & Video release, **Terence Blanchard Presents Flow: Living in the Stream of Music** (UPC#650113-500197, \$20). The footage that shows Blanchard working on the score for Spike Lee's **Inside Man** is fairly rewarding, but on the whole, the show jumps around too much to really satisfy a viewer. There isn't enough music in it to work as a performance program, but the interviews conducted with Blanchard and his fellow musicians are often on the fly and feel a little innocuous. Maybe the scope of the 2006 program can give viewers insights to the lives of globe trotting musicians, and you certainly know who Blanchard is by the time it is over, but the show seems like it would work best as a yearbook for Blanchard's band and staff.

The picture is presented in full screen format, combining letterboxed and full screen images. The color transfer is sharp. When there is music, it sounds terrific on the standard stereo soundtrack. There is no captioning. Also featured are two segments running 14 minutes that apparently didn't make it into the feature, including an interesting price where Blanchard is guiding a college 'improv' class.

Semi-crossover rap

A semi-crossover hip-hop group performs before a largely crossed-over audience on **Blackalicious 4/20 Live in Seattle**, an MVD Visual release (UPC#0228911398799, \$20). No one in the crowd or on the stage appears to be celebrating the 2006 concert date in ways they might have if the cameras were not present, although you can see a haze swirling about the spotlights in the rear of the auditorium. The group's unusually articulate and semi-melodic numbers are more accessible than hardcore, inner city rap, and the crowd responds with great enthusiasm, especially as the lead singer references specific details of the concert's venue. It is a smart, energetic and appealing show, and, like they say about the botanical substance being fêted at the gathering, it could readily lead a fan into an appetite for the harder stuff.

The picture is presented in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and no 16:9 enhancement. The image is sharp and colors are precise. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital has a full dimensionality and plenty of power. There is no captioning. Also featured is a 2-minute piece about the musicians' bus and a cute 4-minute music video about a man chasing after a free-spirited dollar bill.

Swinging Sixties

Two softcore erotic features about life in the Sixties are paired on the Chiller Theatre Something Weird Video release, **Free Love Confidential / For Single Swingers Only** (UPC#014381317220, \$20). Both films have enough narrative content and viable performances to sustain viewers from one nude romp to the next, while the Sixties jazz and pop musical scores make every camera set up seem artistic. In *Free Love Confidential*, from 1967, two frustrated housewives try their hands, and other parts of their anatomies, at nude modeling, only to be compromised by a shady photographer. He turns them over to a lesbian blackmailer, which leads to all sorts of fun, and at 66 minutes, it is over well before they run out of poses, positions and whips. The black-and-white picture is basically clear enough that you can make out the cellulite on the legs of the stars, with no more than moderate grain and minimal wear.

Two female friends lease an apartment in a complex that attracts unmarried tenants in *For Single Swingers Only*. At first they enjoy the attentions they receive from their male neighbors, but the uninhibited environment soon creates a rift in their friendship. The story in the 1968 program is not logical enough to sustain interest on a narrative level, but the performances are funky and the color cinematography has a naturalness to it

that adds to its voyeurism. Once again, the music contributes to the show's appeal as well. The program runs 68 minutes. The source material has speckles, ever-present colored dots, and occasionally faded hues, but the image otherwise looks fresh and reasonably sharp.

On both programs, the monophonic sound is a little scratchy but workable. There is no captioning. Also featured are thirteen trailers for 'swinger' films, a 6-minute montage of ad materials for producer Harry Novak's films accompanied by radio ads for similar features, a 10-minute montage of often erotic stills from such films accompanied by music from similar features, and a 1965 faded color short running 5 minutes entitled *Wife Swappers* that depicts a group of suburban grownups having some sort of groovy cocktail party, with an ironic voiceover narration. Everyone keeps their clothes on, but it is clear that they are just getting warmed up when the clip concludes.

DVD News

JUAN TALK: The late director, Vincent Sherman, provides a commentary track for the Warner Home Video release of the Errol Flynn classic, **The Adventures of Don Juan**.

LOOKING AT HOLLYWOOD: Universal's **Hollywoodland** will have deleted scenes, a commentary and features on the history of Hollywood.

GANDHI REMEMBERED: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment's **Gandhi Collector's Edition** will have a number of retrospective featurettes. **Half Nelson** will have a commentary.

CLOSED OUT OF TOWN: **Hudson Hawk** collector's edition, **Monty Python and the Holy Grail** extra special collector's edition, and **Dances with Wolves** extended collector's edition have been removed from our *Coming Attractions* listing.

DVD and LD Ads

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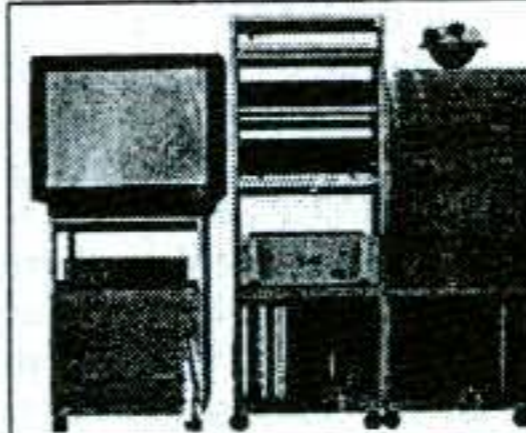
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