



BOOKS, FANZINES AND OTHER GOOD READS...

Docs That Rock, Music That Matters
by Harvey Kubernik
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Presenting a history and exploration of the music-documentary genre is an intriguing idea for a book. Of course, the difficulty involved in such an undertaking is the sheer amount of films that could be included ... the list is already huge and continues to grow!

At over 500 pages, this is a hefty volume but it concentrates on Harvey Kubernik's personal choice rather than attempting to cover everything. That being said, he includes an interesting and varied selection of films that cover many different styles and artists and doesn't limit it strictly to documentaries, which certainly helps to maintain your interest.

Early chapters include interviews with the legendary Dick Clark, producer of "American Bandstand," before moving on to DA Pennebaker, the man behind the Bob Dylan film, "Dont Look Back" and the classic "Ziggy Stardust" concert movie. Further chapters include insider stories from Elvis Presley's '68 Comeback" show as well as lesser known documentaries such as "Rumble," a film that told the story of Native Americans who made their mark on the rock'n'roll scene.

The nature of music films and documentaries is such that the chronology seems to go back and forth, depending on when the films or shows were made, so it can get a little confusing at times but the subjects are usually fascinating even if they may not involve your particular favourites, artist-wise.

There are some great insights into the Jimi Hendrix films, "All Is By My Side" and "Live at Monterey," while the Rolling Stones are represented by chapters on "Rock'n'Roll Circus," "Charlie is My Darling" and "Gimme Shelter." Elsewhere, the likes of The Doors, Motown, Bob Marley and The Johnny Cash Show are covered in depth, whilst a chapter is also devoted to Alan Arkush, the Ramones and "Rock'n'Roll High School." More recent times are also covered with pieces on the eclectic soundtrack for Quentin Tarantino's "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" (evidently a lot more interesting than the film itself...) and David Leaf's acclaimed documentaries on John Lennon, Brian Wilson and James Brown.

The final chapter is taken-up by an interview between Kubernik and publisher Travis Pike, whose career across five decades has also involved several music-related movies including "Feelin' Good" and the ongoing "Morningstone" project. I have to admit it's a little difficult reviewing this book, because there are so many different subjects within the chapters and a lot will probably depend on your own personal tastes, but there really is a lot here for any music fan who really wants to know more about the way things have developed over the years. This is certainly a book that will give you plenty to think about.

Andy Pearson