

Video

Best of John Belushi (Warner)

John Belushi died of a drug overdose on March 5, 1982. His life and death are ghoulishly presented in Bob Woodward's grim book *Wired*. Before *Animal House* and *The Blues Brothers*, Belushi perfected his comic style on *Saturday Night Live* (Oct 1975 to May '79), an extension of the National Lampoon stage shows and a return to the innovative humour of '50s TV shows like Sid Caesar's *Show of Shows*.

This video presents a collection from *SNL*, with Belushi in fine form. He is truly a great American comic, a mixture of Phil Silvers, Milton Berle, Sid Caesar and the crazy physical comedy of the Three Stooges. He is great playing Ultio Corleone at a group therapy session, attempting to "unblock" his true feelings, and as Captain James Kirk on the "real" last voyage of the Starship Enterprise. Very funny also is Belushi imitating Liz Taylor consuming pizza, and as Beethoven discovering Ray Charles.

Belushi can't really sing, but when you have Steve Cropper and Donald 'Duck' Dunn behind him, the Blues Brothers segments really work, especially 'B-Movie Boxcar Blues'.

The video ends with a black and white clip of Belushi as an old man



looking over the graves of his *SNL* friends. He has survived them all, because, as he says, "I'm a dancer."

Rather than sink in Woodward's snow-packed pages, remember Belushi as the "dancer" of these clips and the manic characters of Bluto and Joliet Jake — a fitting memory.

Kerry Buchanan

Videodrome (CIC Video)

The horror genre has few truly great modern auteurs, my favourites being Romero, Herschell, Gordon Lewis, Fulci, Argento and David Cronenberg. All of Cronenberg's films centre on the transformation of the body, either through contamination (*Rabid*, *They Came From Within*) or some inner power (*Scanners*). In *Videodrome* he is still "body conscious". Here the body becomes a form of

media, man is evolving technologically, a product of the global village, the body is the video image made flesh.

Max Renn is a sleazy video station controller looking for something "to break through, something tough". He discovers the Videodrome show, just images of real torture and murder. The brainchild of Brian Oblivion, who talks just like Marshall McLuhan — "The television screen has become the retina of the mind's eye" — and runs the Cathode Ray Mission for those unfortunates without television, so they can be "patched back into the world's mixing desk". But *Videodrome* "bites". It's a hot medium/message that creates brain tumors that produce hallucinations which have their own reality.

There are some startling images when Renn's stomach opens up into a slit to receive video cassettes, and when his hand transforms into a real "hand-gun".

A film of complex ideas that will keep you thinking and stimulated. Vital cinema from one of the most original film-makers around. KB

The Last Dragon (CBS Fox Video)

In the mid-70s the popularity for martial arts movies had taken over from Blaxploitation flicks that used to pack out 42nd Street picture palaces. Jackie Chan, Bruce Lee and the multitude of Shogun assassins, Ninjas and Grandmasters had hit a cultural nerve somewhere.

Motown's *Last Dragon* continues the fascination with the im-

ages and ideology of kung fu, filtered through American popular culture. The film revolves around the pure but naive Bruce Le-roy seeking the 'glow' and having to battle the evil 'Shogun of Harlem', a cool despot with great one-liners like "kiss my converse". Things hot up when Le-roy gets involved with the queen video jock played by Vanity (in her first, and perhaps last, screen role). She gets kidnapped by these white fools (heaps of reverse racism here) to make her play their video on her show. A truly horrible affair this video — all about corsets and stuff ... funny, that's what Ms Vanity usually does! Bruce Le-Roy finds the 'glow' defeats the Shogun in a duel straight out of *Star Wars* and gets Vanity to teach him some new moves.

Basic exploitation stuff, but some great moments in the fight scenes, and a comic trio of Chinese guys who just want to be black and say, "hey blood, my man" a lot. Best bit is a montage from Bruce Lee films with Willie Hutch's 'The Glow' in the background. Entertainment with a capital E. KB

British Rock: The First Wave (Columbia Video)

"Britain emerged from the shadow of World War 2 to face a new threat: American rock 'n' roll." I thought *The Rutles* had put an end to hypey scripts like this, but if you ignore the narration (by Michael York — maybe they thought the accent would add credibility) you'll enjoy the archival footage in this video. The empha-

sis is on *archival* — very little of it is well-filmed, and much of it has lousy sound, but there are enough great moments to make *The First Wave* worthwhile hiring.

It's encouraging to see how powerful the Beatles were live, despite the monkey suits and screaming; plus the *menace* of the early Stones that we've read so much about: the outrageous arrogance of Mick (before he became a self-parody) Brian (whose shampooed mop spells SEX) and Keith (even at a pimply 21, he defines *rock style*). Plus there are the revelations: the Kinks, Manfred Mann, Eric Burdon and the Animals (short people have a reason to live: they can sing R&B) ... and Andrew Fagan's true pop ancestor: Peter Noone of Herman's Hermits.

But there's a rush at the end, through the Who and the Mods, Swinging London, the Yardbirds and Cream, because "Meanwhile, in San Francisco, a colourful new sound was emerging ..."

Chris Bourke

Falcon and the Snowman (Roadshow)

In July 1974 Christopher Boyce (Timothy Hutton) started work in an American intelligence monitoring agency, a few months later he sells secrets to the Russians. Partly on impulse and partly on his growing consciousness of the "level of deception" practised by the American government. This was the year of Watergate and the decade of the Vietnam hangover. Aided by his cocaine-dealing friend Andrew Daulton Lee (Sean

Penn), Boyce becomes very important to the Russians.

Director John Schlesinger handles the film in fine style, less image-laden than his previous works, but with some great set pieces. Just before the duo make their final leap into the spy world, we see them perched on the Californian cliffs hitting golf balls into oblivion. The scenes with the Russians start with touches of humour, with Daulton selling secrets as if it were cocaine, and the truly horrible-looking Russian food served to them. But things get blacker as the drug-addled Daulton starts to crack and the CIA latch on to their schemes.

An interesting dramatisation of two rich suburban kids turning traitor, one for money, the other for half-formed ideals. Daulton gets life imprisonment and Boyce 40 years. Somewhere between the images of the free-flying falcon and the cocaine deals we find the destruction of the American dream. KB

New Videos

CIC Video have a swag of interesting videos, including *The Breakfast Club* with Emilio Estevez and Molly Ringwald; and *Chinatown*, the Polanski classic seen on TV recently with Faye Dunaway and Jack Nicholson. Also new are: *Falling In Love* (Robert de Niro, Meryl Streep), and two music videos, *The Doors* (live and promo clips, 65 mins) and *Stand By Me*, a portrait of Julian Lennon.

From Vestron comes another rock video, *The Cars*, an hour of live footage from 1984-85.

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