

**In The Court Of The Crimson King: King Crimson At 50**

★★★★★  
Dir: Toby Amies  
MONODUO FILMS. *C/S*

**A peek behind the curtain at prog's most singular group.**

When Robert Fripp asked Toby Amies in 2018 to make a film about King Crimson, Amies wasn't particularly a fan, but accepted as he knew Fripp and found him interesting. Filmed largely behind the scenes, it's an incisive observation of a senior band playing demanding music on lengthy tours. Amies captures revealing interviews with current and former members, but felt he was "in the way" at times, noting that "people got annoyed and antagonistic towards me". Fripp requested Amies re-shoot a second version with more of him in it, but clearly stressed by the situation, he is at times cantankerous, even hostile, then becomes overwhelmed with emotion when recounting a conversation with his spiritual mentor J.G. Bennett. There are moving scenes featuring drummer Bill Rieflin, dry and phlegmatic despite having received a terminal cancer diagnosis, and vox pops with Crimson fans – including a prog rock nun – offer light relief.

Mike Barnes

**Mutiny In Heaven**

★★★★★  
Dir: Ian White  
CARGO FILM & RELEASING. *C/S*

**Birthday Party doc rousinglly narrated from interviews filmed in 2007.**



This coherent audio-visual retrospective on Nick Cave's first combo must've stalled mid-production, 16 years ago. Hard to gauge how today's Cave would process his grimy beginnings in the scratchy Boys Next Door (loads of great Melbourne footage here) who, in relocating to London, mutated into the inspirationally extremist Birthday Party (their malnourished habits clearly eroded filming budgets). Cave, interviewed circa *Grinderman*, fondly outlines the waywardness, narcotics and ructions which fuelled TBP's explosive three-year existence. Cadaverous guitarist Rowland S Howard, who died in 2009, spits hilarious venom about UK post-punk "bilge", as against their own "aggression with intelligence" – to wit: an electrifying Junkyard in a German TV studio. Stetson-wearing bassist Tracy Pew, who died in 1986, looms largest, remembered by Cave "stuffing a cucumber down the front of his leather trousers, then turning to reveal a copy of Plato's Republic in his back pocket." We're unlikely to see their transgressive like again.

Andrew Perry

**Peter Doherty: Stranger In My Own Skin**

★★★★★  
Dir: Katia DeVidas  
PIECE OF MAGIC ENT. *C/S*

**The tortured Libertine's world from the inside looking out.**



Peter Doherty's recent emergence from two decades of heavy drug use has so far seen significant self-reflection: first, last year's memoir *A Likely Lad*, and now this 90-minute film of his life made by his wife Katia DeVidas. Impressionistic rather than journalistic, it reveals almost nothing about, say, tabloid perennials like Doherty's presence at the death of Mark Blanco or his romance with supermodel Kate Moss, or his experiences as a father. Instead, it tries to convey his own existential reality: that of a doe-eyed, suited-and-booted Peter Pan minstrel, ever submerged in the mists and misery of heroin addiction, a bon mot, notebook or canvas never far away. There's enough unfamiliar footage from every era of his life to fascinate fans, and the bursts of colour and energy whenever he's with The Libertines make for exhilarating interludes. The subject's dreamy, poetic self-interrogations are allowed to drift into longueurs a little too often; but then, maybe that's an essential component of this film's truth...

Pat Gilbert

**The Lost Weekend: A Love Story**

★★★★★  
Dir: Eve Brandstein, Richard Kaufman, Stuart Samuels  
KALEIDOSCOPE HOME ENTERTAINMENT. *BR/DVD/S*

**The ballad of John and May: new 90-minute doc.**



"I don't want other people to write my story," says May Pang in the movie memoir she narrates. Its focus is the "lost weekend" – 18 months actually – that she spent with John Lennon when Yoko Ono ordered their young personal assistant to sleep with him, during a marital rough patch, to keep him away from other women. "I said no," says Pang. "She said, 'yes you will.'" May and John fell in love, as the childlike joy on their faces in much of the footage of them seems to attest. Pang's personal story, including her close relationship with Julian and Cynthia, is fascinating, backdropped by John's music adventures with Paul, Ringo, Spector, Elton, et al, as well as the infamous shenanigans with Nilsson. After Yoko decided it was time for him to come home, John and May's intimacy continued, she says, ending only with his death.

Sylvie Simmons

**The Session Man: Nicky Hopkins**

★★★★★  
Dir: Michael Treen  
THE SESSION MAN LIMITED. *C/S*

**Veterans pay tribute to the king of the keys.**



It cannot be easy making a portrait of a deceased backroom hero who rarely appeared on camera, but this profile lacks little for star names paying tribute to "rock'n'roll's greatest session man". Hopkins, who died in 1994 after a life dominated by illness, played on more than 250 LPs over 30 years, and was a go-to guy for The Beatles (including all four solo), The Who, The Kinks (Dave Davies speaks; Hopkins had a bitter falling out with Ray, which is ignored) and, most fruitfully, the Stones. Mick, Keith and Bill remain fans though, oddly, We Love You doesn't get a mention. Sympathy For The Devil and She's A Rainbow, however, are among many tunes that peers dissect to showcase his brilliance. The second half has to work harder to hold interest – his employers/the interviewees being less stellar – but you'll want to return to familiar favourites afterwards to focus on his playing.

David Hutcheon

**The Elephant 6 Recording Co**

★★★★★  
Dir: C.B. Stockfleth  
GREENWICH ENTERTAINMENT. *C/S*

**Love, death and acid pop; a vibrant take on the '90s Athens, GA scene.**



Using rare footage, this documentary on the '90s neo-psychedelic movement Elephant 6 offers precious insight into the scene's reclusive, Brian Wilson-esque figure Jeff Mangum, who withdrew from public life following his magnum opus with Neutral Milk Hotel, *In The Aeroplane Over The Sea*. But director C.B. Stockfleth wisely treats Mangum as only one facet of the story, focusing on contemporaries the Olivia Tremor Control, Apples In Stereo and more. He brilliantly brings to life the anarchic, egalitarian, rabidly creative society these musicians built around themselves in Athens, Georgia, the college town local musician Heather McIntosh describes as "like a beacon for weirdos". Stockfleth's movie is funny and inspiring, a tale of love, imagination and underground acid pop that becomes powerfully moving in its final half-hour, as mortality and tragic twists of fate complicate the scene's essential playfulness.

Stevie Chick

**Immediate Family**

★★★★★  
Dir: Denny Tedesco  
MAGNOLIA PICTURES. *S*

**A sequel of sorts to Tedesco's 2008 documentary The Wrecking Crew.**



Where the director's last ode to the faceless musicians behind the stars focused on the '60s LA session-player supergroup that included Tommy Tedesco, his dad, this celebrates the brilliant musicians-for-hire who backed the singer-songwriters of the '70s, eventually ending up in a group of their own. Tedesco takes a similarly affectionate, feel-good approach to telling the stories of Russ Kunkel, Danny Kortchmar, Leland Sklar and Waddy Wachtel. We see them on-stage in old footage and more currently playing along in a studio with some of the old records they appeared on. A starry roster – including Jackson Browne, David Crosby, Linda Ronstadt, Carole King, Keith Richards and Stevie Nicks – sing their praises. But some of the warmest moments come when the self-dubbed Immediate Family talk shop and tell tales – like the night on tour when Linda Ronstadt insisted she join them at a strip club.

Sylvie Simmons



**Release the bats!: the inspirationally extremist Birthday Party (from left) Mick Harvey, Rowland S Howard, Tracy Pew, Nick Cave and Phill Calvert.**