

Television Times

Winter 1992 / Clean reception everywhere, no static at all.

A FREE paper.



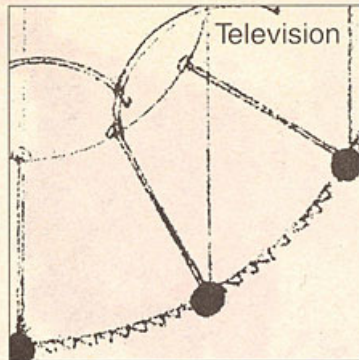
"I don't think I've written any melodies as good as most TV show themes in the 50's." - Tom Verlaine

A New (Color) Television

Rolling Stone (October 1992)

★★★★★ Once out of time, always out of time: in 1977, the stunning ice-blue guitararchitecture and defiant spirit of free-jamming wanderlust on Television's debut *Marquee Moon* blew wide holes through cream-puff AOR rock and the already calcifying primitivism of punk. Fifteen years later, in a guitar decade awash in thick distortion and truncheon riffing, the reunited Television comes in colors - pastel strumming, deep purple vibrato, sunrise orange chords - and celebrates the lost virtues of precision, emotional depth and sonic elegance.

Combining the focused songcraft of the band's second album, *Adventure*, with *Marquee Moon*'s flair for guitar melodrama, *Television* is rich in twang noir - meticulous weaves of pithy guitar agitation and stately sleight of tune underscored with Verlaine's Sahara-dry wit and that unmistakable



death-rattle choke in his singing.

Actually, the '92 model Television is like a twin-guitar version of those Bulgarian women's choirs, a model of complex, unaffected modal and melodic networking dramatically resolving into angry tremolo snivels, star-burst power chords and languid states of grace. One minute you hear Duane Eddy, the next John Cippolina, the next a kinder, gentler Hendrix.

But you hear it all as Television, orchestrated with impeccable clarity, sensual vigor and a gift for breathtaking understatement.

It was worth waiting fifteen years.

They're Baack!

Musician (September 1992)

If a tree falling in the forest with no one around can make a noise; if one hand can clap; then never has a reunion created such a loud buzz among such a small audience.

Along with Patti Smith, Television usually gets credit for founding an alternative rock scene in mid-70's New York City - which begat "punk rock" which begat "new wave" which begat seven time seven hundred bands (some of them even famous) which begat whatever you're listening to right now on college radio.

They paved the way for a scene in which they never appeared comfortable. Their fellow new wavers believed in a short/sharp/shock technique apotheosized by the Ramones. Television would get entwined in extensive dual-guitar interplay, ignoring showmanship for an entrancing combination of fluttering melody, hypnotic rhythm and singer/guitarist

Don't Touch That Dial!

Tower Pulse! (September 1992)

I must admonish you to check out what may be the best record of the year (or at the very least, the best comeback): *Television* on Capitol. This one's definitely going on at least one 10-best list.

Yep, if you get ebullient when you hear great guitar records (and we're not talking about heavy-metal wankfests here), this here disc is a real feastorama. At this point, I'm so thoroughly enamored with it that I think it stacks up most favorably against Television's two 70's Elektra albums, *Marquee Moon* and *Adventure*, both of which were high-water marks for that much-maligned decade. That perception may change in time, but *Television* the album is definitely a top-shelf item; it's more along the lines of the energized *Marquee Moon* than the dreamy *Adventure*, and its mainspring is wound more tightly than either of the earlier discs.

The big deal here is Tom Verlaine's and Richard Lloyd's tres-cool guitars, which slither through the trebly, edgy rhythm section like a roomful of snakes. In terms of building a cathedral of fretboard noise, *Television* is a textbook on how to make a great guitar-band record; it's safe to say that its effect on all the bands that Television has influenced - from REM to Sonic Youth - will be downright seismic.

Tom Verlaine's oblique lyrics. Those who were caught up in the magic found them irreplaceable and compared them to the Grateful Dead. Those who weren't called them "an ill-natured hippie band" and compared them to the Grateful Dead.

Despite a forbidding image, Verlaine has consistently championed one of music's most consumer-friendly elements: melody. "It's odd," he muses, "that in the 80's melody, more than ever, should have gone out the window. In the 40's you had a melody that would float. On this record that's definitely true of some of the guitar things I'm doing. I have no interest in going whacko-whammo with another guitar solo. It's more, 'develop something that stays with the heart of a song.'

"I don't think I've written any melodies as good as most TV show themes in the 50's."

Tube Heads!

Time Out (September 1992)

The new album, *Television*, is brilliant. There is, if anything, greater coherence and interpenetration of the four group 'voices' here than on *Marquee Moon*, and in their playing the group still ring their own chimes.

Television was recorded live in a studio, with a lot of "tube stuff," which is to say valve, as opposed to transistor, technology. "Tube amps, tube delay units, tube pre-amps, echoes, compressors." Verlaine sits up, rubs his eyes. "The whole album's completely tubed up so you get all the overtones, string squeaks and stuff, and no artificial silences. Mind you," he adds affably, "by the time it gets to CD, it's all fucked up."

NME (September 1992)

"We're an analog band, we're not digital," announces Richard. "When things come out on CD, they have to be digitalised. There's a good engineer I know who says that analog is like film and digital is like video. If you put something you've filmed on video then it will retain all of the beauty and sheen of film. If you record something on video it will be grainy, and if you put that on film it will retain its graininess. We're analog... valve. We're valve people, not solid-state people."

Rip Van Television - Plugged In Again

NME (June 1992)

The biggest news is in small print on this year's Glastonbury bill. Slotted alongside old sensations and new phenomena is a bona fide legend: *Television*, playing their first show for 14 years.

Long-time readers will know the name, but, for those who do not: this dazzling group represented the cool school of the flowering New York rock n' roll scene of the mid-70's. Hip citizens could catch them and their emerging contemporaries in scuzzy clubs like CBGB, Max's Kansas City and My Father's Place. *Television*, Blondie, Talking Heads, Patti Smith, Suicide, The Ramones... an extended family of inspired outcasts, oddballs and art students, reclaiming the night from the hated boogie men. Long before *Television* were signed, David Bowie was raving about them and Lou Reed was taping their gigs.

Television's debut LP, *Marquee Moon*, arrived by February 1977, after time lost label-shopping and on false starts. By then, three chords were poised to take over the world, yet these guys unashamedly offered two guitars soloing and a title cut more than ten minutes long.

NME's Nick Kent reviewed the

disc as "a 24-carat work of pure genius. *Television* are a band in a million. The songs are some of the greatest ever." As usual, he was right.

In 1992, we can all dish up retrospective praise, but old Nick's pronouncement was some foresight considering the major names since who have paid tribute to *Television*. Step up U2, REM, The Smiths, The Cure, Echo and the Bunnymen, Lloyd Cole, The Fall and Hüsker Dü, to name a few. Primal Scream and Teenage Fanclub lead the new-school devotees, while a list of the indie-level TV doppelgangers of the last decade would fill this page.

Fifteen years ago, their impact on amphetaminized inklingers was remarkable, especially as the six-minute musicianship and compositional talents of Tom Verlaine, Richard Lloyd, Fred Smith and Billy Ficca were so out of time.

Marquee Moon not only blew away reviewers worldwide, it saw off the debuts by the Sex Pistols and The Clash to sweep most critics' polls at year-end. Nowadays it's a regular in the 20 Greatest Albums Of All Time lists, a desert island disc for hipsters.

This was the ultimate garage band with brains, caught at their peak.

INSIDE REPORT

What's In A Name?

NME (September 1992)

"Do you remember when we were picking the name and we all went away for a couple of weeks?" says Richard. "We were looking for something that sounded so common it was everywhere, but something that sounded modern too so that it cut through. *Television* was exactly that."

The name also fit the way *Television* tried to sound on stage and in the studio. A modern power-glide 70's band who, if you stuck your ear really close to the speaker, echoed the same sonic static which throbbed from late 60's garage punk records, old TV show soundtracks, and the hum of something glowing brightly in the dusty darkness.



"Long before *Television* were signed, David Bowie was raving about them and Lou Reed was taping their gigs." -NME

We Now Return You To Our Previously Scheduled Programming:

A Moment In Time

High Fidelity (June 1978)

Despite healthy critical acclaim for its 1977 debut LP, *Marquee Moon*, Television has yet to become a household word. Leader Tom Verlaine seems to further obscure the band's identity by going out of his way to make himself untrendy. His taste runs to layers of oversized reefer coats, discount store button-down leather jackets, and instantly forgettable plain trousers - not an ornament or carefully constructed tear in sight. Nor does he frequent New York's New Wave night spots with their sardine-like crowds and barely tolerable PA systems. Like the music he writes, Verlaine's personality cuts its own path: mysterious and intriguing on the surface, displaying increasing intricacy on closer examination, yet never wholly fathomable. So much for the ill-informed press's categorization of the band as punk rock.

Television shuns identification with the New York underground scene, even though they did gather their first fans at CBGB. "We started the CBGB band circuit," says Verlaine. "In New York to have music in a bar you have to have a cabaret license. So we just walked the streets looking for a guy that had one. That's when we found CBGB. At that time, Hilly Kristal (the owner) was folk-oriented, but he put us on Sunday nights anyway. So we were playing there in 1974 when it was a folk club."

Television began to get some attention, despite the less than ideal performing conditions at CBGB. "We didn't have any money," says Verlaine. "We were playing on equipment that was falling apart. There were no monitors so I couldn't hear myself sing. People breathing down my neck. CBGB is sort of a fun place, and I love it, but there aren't many places that are as bad to play."



Marquee Moon 1977

Village Voice: Pazz And Jop Poll 1977:

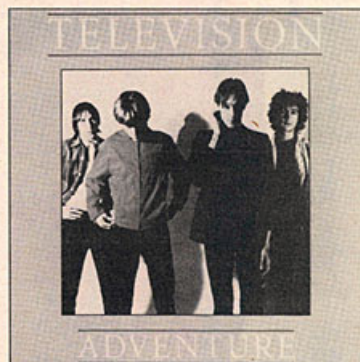
1. Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols
2. My Aim Is True - Elvis Costello
3. Marquee Moon - Television

Rolling Stone (April 1977) -

Marquee Moon, Television's debut album, is the most interesting and audacious of this triad, and the most unsettling. Leader Tom Verlaine wrote all the songs, coproduced with Andy Johns, plays lead guitar in a harrowingly mesmerizing stream-of-nightmare style and sings all his verses like an intelligent chicken being strangled; clearly, he dominates this quartet. Television is his vehicle for the portrayal of an arid, despairing sensibility, musically rendered by loud, stark repetitive guitar riffs that build in every one of *Marquee Moon*'s eight songs to nearly out-of-control climaxes.

"The first song that made me want to pick up a guitar was '19th Nervous Breakdown,'" says the lyricist/guitarist/vocalist of Television, a four-man band whose first album has elevated them from the Lower East Side's CBGB rock club to high-organic critical acclaim. "Ravel and Albert Ayler were also big influences. Ayler was the first musician in the Sixties who everyone said was total noise. He played a screaming, honking saxophone with kindergarten melodies occasionally thrown in. It was pure feeling."

These influences add up to an accurate description of Television's music: intricate guitar work, less intricate rhythm work, accessible melodies and less accessible words that convey moods more than statements - all with a strong undercurrent of chaos. As one of the first rock groups to play CBGB in February of 1974 and draw a following of intellectuals and punks, Television is in many ways the quintessential New York band.



Adventure 1978

Stereo Review (August 1978)

It's crow-eating time again for this reviewer, because Television's new *Adventure* is an embarrassingly brilliant album. I'm embarrassed because in retrospect it is not really all that different from its predecessor, which I dismissed as a production triumph and not much else.

Call me a bandwagon jumper if you will, but I have suddenly connected with what they're doing, and it turns out that most of the hype is justified. Television really is the Last, Best Psychedelic Band, and Verlaine and Richard Lloyd are breathtaking, absolutely remarkable guitar stylists. Their sound together has, in reviewer Noel Coppage's phrase, an almost machine-tooled purity that recalls the pseudo-Oriental modal approach of the old Haight-Ashbury outfits, only without the excess - there isn't a wasted note or a cliché idea here. Add to this a near

Please see **ADVENTURE**, A4

LISTINGS:

- 1971:** Tom Verlaine forms first band, The Neon Boys, with high school friends Richard Hell on bass and Billy Ficca on drums.
- 1972:** Neon Boys break up.
- 1973:** The band reforms under a new name, Television, with guitarist Richard Lloyd, and in December they play their first gig at the Townhouse Theatre (capacity 88).
- 1974:** In February begin playing Sunday nights at CBGB's, attracting a diverse audience. In November Eno produces a demo for Island Records, who want to sign the band and release the demo as their first record. Verlaine rejects the idea.
- 1975:** In March, Fred Smith of Blondie replaces Richard Hell on bass. In July, they record and release their first single, "Little Johnny Jewel."
- 1976:** Television signs to Elektra in August, and in December records their first album.
- 1977:** Television releases debut album *Marquee Moon* to instant critical acclaim. Theater tour of Europe follows. In the U.S. they open for Peter Dinklage. From October to December they record their second album.
- 1978:** *Adventure* is released in February. In August the band decides to take a break (for 14 years or so).
- 1992:** Television records and releases their third album, *Television*.

ADVENTURE

Continued from A3

architectural grasp of pop-song structure and Verlaine's pinched yet oddly affecting vocals and you have a very potent mix indeed, moving despite its icy reserve.

The lyrics on *Adventure* hardly matter. It's the sound of the band that is crucial, a sound that is unique and so compelling that it has given me more pleasure than anything else I can remember since the days when Roger McGuinn's twelve-string guitar was bouncing off the eccentric rhythm work of David Crosby. Even if you are put off by all the New Wave brouhaha, you should get between a pair of headphones with this astonishing album posthaste.

And Now, The Latest

Melody Maker (September 1992)

Television were a legend, fragile idols with an awkward charisma, born out of the neo-beatnik poet scene in New York in the Seventies.

Television finally release their edgy, off-centre masterpiece, *Marquee Moon*, in 1977. They sound like no one else, but you can hear them in everyone, even now.

In Britain, during punk, they're incredibly hip - the following year's *Adventure* goes Top 10. Then they split.

Verlaine wafts in and out of semi-obscurity, a faint but respected presence. And now, 14 years after *Adventure*, Television release their third album, as seamlessly as a granny picking up a dropped stitch.

It's a dangerous game, blazing a trail, cutting yourself down in your prime, then coming back like you'd only just stepped out for a pack of cigarettes. But this time it worked. They aren't quite the jittery youths that they were, but this new Television is as angular and disturbed, and in its weird way, beautiful as ever.

Details (November 1992)

...And now a new album, called simply *Television*. It's been a long time coming, but it's superb. It's like the bones of Verlaine's '87 solo classic *Flash Light* crossed with the soul of Television's 1977 debut *Marquee Moon* plus some weird film noir swingin' stuff, and it's so crammed full of what Richard Lloyd calls "differentness" that it can only be the work of one band.

NME (September 1992)

...tasteful and undeniably impressive.

Spin (October 1992)

A smart album in a stupid world; clean, cool, pointed, well woven and evocative. Yet it has that Television intensity pushed to the bursting point.

Television Live - A Set Worth Watching



Rolling Stone (June 1978)

From the opening moments of its first date at the Roxy, Television seemed set to test the strength of its hold on a Hollywood music-industry audience. A shrill blare of reedy notes from leader Tom Verlaine's guitar led an atonal barrage that gradually and effectively took a lucid rock form, something like Ornette Coleman giving way to a Rolling Stones siege. In concert, Television leans into its music, not away from it, with the stress of a band primed on fear-fed adrenalin.

Verlaine is Television's visual focal point as well, stooping his skeletal frame under the strain of his solos, his frightful sunken eyes fluttering and dilating. Second guitarist Richard Lloyd and bassist Fred Smith flank him on either side, the placid watchdogs of a hellhound.

What's going on musically is far more commanding. Like Lou Reed in his recent shows, Television reworks its songs into paradigms of relentless tension, laced with snippety, often dissonant guitar passages and driven by the blustery, atypical patterns of the rhythm section. The group drives the songs until they either drop or surrender, while varying the dynamics by shifting the percussive and melodic roles between the guitar bank and Billy Ficca's tuneful drumming.

Whether Television can compel half as much on record remains to be proven, but in any case, the band is unflinching in its idiosyncrasy, even to the point of risking the alienation of a movement it helped foment.

Village Voice (June 1978)

If these be wimps, they're the loudest wimps I've ever heard, and their notorious diffidence has been well modulated since they began to tour in 1977. They may be perfectionists in the studio, but live they're rip-roaring rock and rollers without the macho staginess that implies.

The sound of the ensemble was hotter and fuller and tighter than ever before, but that in itself was not what the capacity crowds were there for. They craved guitar. "Richard Lloyd could play lead in any band in the country except this one," someone yelled, and Lloyd proved it during his first-set solo on "Ain't That Nothing," which climaxed with a simple climb-the-scale raveup that he pulled tighter and tighter, shedding stray note-clusters as he advanced. That remained the best guitar I'd heard all year until about 25 minutes later, when Verlaine launched into a portion of the "Marquee Moon" solo that was so eerie and airy and out of this world he could have been playing bagpipes.

