

Brainwashed - Jon and Jonathan's Rules of Compilations

Written by Jon Whitney with Jonathan Dean

Thursday, 18 August 2005 04:59 - Last Updated Tuesday, 23 August 2005 23:22

Nekesa Mumbi Moody has just published an article on how ["Best Of" albums are not so great these days](#). But have they -ever- been? She identifies who's doing it all wrong but bands and labels are often confronted with the task of "how to do it right." Here's a helpful guideline to anybody faced with making a compilation.

1. Best Of's should exist in the rare case that you get to release something dirt cheap almost as a "promotional" item and don't intend to make money off it.
2. Compilations should be "Singles" or "B-Sides" or "Compilation tracks" - something to compliment albums and not overlap material - alternate versions of LP tracks should be used in every case. Music fans who own albums don't need to buy something for 1 track and often a "Best Of" is just some label exec's picks of what their fave songs are. It's never a definitive (or respectful) collection of somebody's career if you omit singles.
3. On the same note, make deleted or out-of-print music available again. Seriously, even if you hate the music you personally recorded 20 years ago, try to keep those eBayers from making fuckloads of money just for music you probably didn't make much off to begin with.
4. Singles compilations shall be in chronological order. Always. Since a buyer has already resigned themselves to listening to a retrospective and -not- a fully-conceived long-player, they should hear the progress of the artist over time, getting better or worse, depending on who it is and who you ask always. (This can only be broken for reverse chronological order.)
5. Include detailed information: booklets with singles cover images, release dates, chart positions always make for the best packages. It's also great with a retrospective to see the changes in hairstyles over the years (see: Bowie, Duran Duran, anybody else who's English and loves hair products).
6. Nobody should make a compilation after only having two full-length albums. Sorry, I love Frankie Goes to Hollywood but that *Bang* comp was pointless.
7. Likewise, there should never be no Best Of compilation by artists that only ever recorded one song that anyone would remember or want to own. Examples of this offense are "Greatest Hits" collections from Peter Schilling, Information Society or Thin Lizzy, which could easily have been reduced to one-song CDEPs, but were instead padded out with 11 other songs no one cares about.

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8. NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF REMASTERING!!! There's plenty of singles and Best Of comps out there with half-assed compiling, disregarding the differences in volume levels, sometimes leaving faint clicks in between tracks in those silent spaces. Good move guys.

9. Boxed sets can be great ideas, but once again, stray from the overlap. Boxed sets of singles are really cool when CD sleeves are made as replicas of "sleeves" - but do everybody a favor and omit no track. These have become great packages for bands like Depeche Mode, Massive Attack, and Blondie.