

who collectively comment on the wonder of it all. Recollections vary, although considering the attendant debauchery, it's remarkable that anyone remembers anything. One thing they do agree on is that the initial *Exile* sessions were, as Jagger puts it, "fantastically disruptive." It seems the Stones had been ignoring their finances, so when faced with an exorbitant tax bill, they left England and decamped for the south of France, where in Richards' villa in Villefranche-sur-Mer, the work began. Preserved in photos and a surprising amount of black-and-white footage (some of it from the little-seen *Cocksucker Blues*), the scene was chaotic—as were some of the songs, but mostly in a good way. Mick is dismissive ("boring... old recording sessions... Who gives a shit?"), but most viewers will disagree. Presented in newly remastered Dolby Digital stereo, DVD extras include extended interviews and a featurette in which Jagger and Watts visit other spots where parts of the album were made. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Graham)

Swan Lake ★★½
(1996) 118 min. DVD: \$29.99.
Kultur International Films
(avail. from most distributors).
ISBN: 978-0-7697-8962-0.

Choreographer Matthew Bourne's reimagining of Tchaikovsky's beloved ballet had a controversial 1995 London premiere, but went on to become a huge worldwide success. In this 1996 mounting for the BBC, the original score—nicely played by the New London Orchestra led by David Lloyd-Jones—reveals only minor transpositions and cuts, but the tragic story of the swan that becomes a beautiful maiden to win the love of a human prince who eventually betrays her has been radically altered. Set here in contemporary England, the action finds a cloistered young prince (Scott Ambler) visiting a mod club and then being enchanted by the swans in a nearby park—danced not by white-clad ballerinas but by male dancers with bare torsos, feathered trousers, and dark facial markings. One of the swans (Adam Cooper) ultimately becomes the prince's idealized partner. But in this version, it's the transformed swan who is the betrayer, leading to a final tragedy in which the aggressive and violent flock of swans attacks the couple. Bourne's version maintains the original's theme of forbidden love, but adds a gay subtext, which works well, especially thanks to the brilliant performances by the two principal dancers. This *Swan Lake* won't replace traditional versions (see reviews in VL-7/03, VL-9/07, and VL-3/10), but does offer a marvelous complement. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and LPCM stereo, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

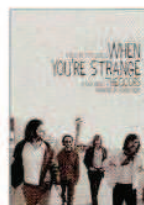
When You're Strange: A Film About the Doors

★★★
(2010) 96 min. DVD: \$14.98,
Blu-ray: \$19.98, Eagle Rock
Entertainment (avail. from
most distributors).

The Doors were a great band largely because of Jim Morrison, a charismatic front man, underrated vocalist, and lyric writer of considerable flair—but also in spite of Morrison, a drunken, unreliable clown, and pretentious, self-styled poet/shaman. Those disparate personas are inevitably part of any discussion about the "Lizard King," just as Morrison himself is bound to dominate any documentary about the Doors—including this one. But director Tom DiCillo, who also wrote actor Johnny Depp's voiceover narration, has at least attempted an original approach in *When You're Strange*. Gone is the usual parade of talking heads (we see a few clips from old interviews, but nothing new from the three surviving members); rather, we're treated to lots of music, including live concert or TV performances of enduring classics such as "Light My Fire," "The End," and other songs illuminating the strange power of the Doors' sound: a unique combination of keyboardist Ray Manzarek's classical chops, drummer John Densmore's jazz background, and guitarist Robby Krieger's flamenco influences. Of course, it all comes back to Jimbo, and as the film chronicles the Doors' tale (including their increasingly anarchic shows, culminating in Morrison's 1969 questionable arrest for indecent exposure), it also details the sorry saga of a young man who cultivated his own myth before deteriorating into a hopeless lush. Of particular interest here is never-before-seen footage from *HWY*, a Morrison project that depicts him, not surprisingly, as a brooding loner. DVD extras include an interview with Morrison's father. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Graham)

Wozzeck ★½
(1987) 97 min. DVD: \$29.99.
Kultur International Films
(avail. from most distributors).
ISBN: 978-0-7697-8970-5.

With its avant-garde atonal score and excessively grim storyline (even by opera standards), Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*, first performed in Berlin in 1925, requires a subtle touch to create a magical experience. Sadly, this 1987 Vienna State Opera production, with Claudio Abbado conducting, offers little in the way of subtlety, let alone magic. Based on a play by Georg Büchner, the story revolves around the title character's jealousy-fueled madness, which eventually leads him to kill his mistress before drowning himself. The key problem here is that the two central performances



often seem to be unfolding in different productions. Franz Grundheber's *Wozzeck* wanders about like a George Romero zombie in a stiff, one-note delivery that fails to capture the character's anguish and deepening insanity. Hildegard Behrens, on the other hand, overplays Marie's emotional neediness. Further confusion comes from Brian Large's lifeless direction of Adolf Dresen's unimaginative staging (the camera rarely seems to be in the right place). Presented in LPCM stereo, this is not a necessary purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

You Really Got Me: The Story of the Kinks

★★★
(2010) 87 min. DVD: \$18.95.
Music Video Distributors
(avail. from most distributors).

Although considered to be on a par with the Beatles, the Stones, and the Who, the Kinks haven't been nearly as well represented on video as their British Invasion peers. *You Really Got Me* attempts to address that shortcoming, with mixed results. On the plus side, the documentary features lots of concert footage: the earliest black-and-white performances are thrilling—poor sound and all—with the original quartet of Ray Davies, Dave Davies, Peter Quaife, and Mick Avory delivering raucous versions of "Til the End of the Day," "Milk Cow Blues," and others. But most of the live stuff dates from the '80s, when the revamped Kinks lineup became stadium rock monsters, finally hitting the big time in America, although with some of the least distinctive material of their career. Even worse, these later tracks all hail from *One for the Road*, a concert video that's been around for nearly 10 years. By contrast, the coverage of the early days (when "All Day and All of the Night" and other Ray Davies' songs helped define British rock) and the '70s (when concept albums like *Preservation* were commercial bombs) is perfunctory and chronologically confusing, further burdened by an unctuous narrator who sounds like Casey Kasem announcing the Top 40 countdown. The brief archival interviews with Ray and Dave are nice, but something is out of whack when the sublime "Waterloo Sunset" gets 30 seconds while the anodyne "Catch Me Now I'm Falling" goes on for nearly five minutes. The Kinks deserve better. Optional. Aud: C, P. (S. Graham)



New to Blu-ray

Maria Assoluta (Naxos of America, Blu-ray: \$39.99). Debuting on Blu-ray is Philippe Kohly's excellent documentary profile (VL Online-2/10) of renowned Greek soprano opera legend Maria Callas.

