

NEW YORK DOLLS: ALL DOLLED UP (MUSIC VIDEO DISTRIBUTORS/DIR: BOB GRUEN & NADYA BLACK)

All Dolled Up looks better than a 30-year old black & white videotape has the right. Rock photographer Bob Gruen and his wife Nadya Black hauled a newfangled video camera to New York Dolls shows during the band's heyday and got the inside treatment, privy to backstage party antics, youthful stupidities, and rock & roll on both good nights and bad. Even in monochrome the Dolls are a riot of color. And storied gigs at Max's Kansas City, the Whiskey A-Go-Go, and on *The Real Don Steele Show* offer beautifully ragged performances. Most valuable is a look at guitar immortal Johnny Thunders at the peak of his powers, firing effortlessly on all cylinders even when his bandmates' energy flags. FRED BELDIN



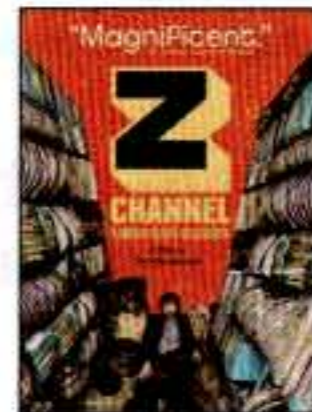
WALL (LIFESIZE/DIR: SIMONE BITTON)

In 1984, the late Palestinian philosopher Edward Said wrote, "Borders and barriers which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory can also become prisons and are often defended beyond reason or necessity." Twenty years later, French documentarian Simone Bitton visually reiterates Said's statement in her eighth documentary, *Wall*. The director examines the physical and psychological territory occupied by people living on both sides of Israel's controversial security wall using deceptively subtle imagery and often complex, incongruous testimonies from both Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. Herself an Arab Jew, Bitton refuses to indulge in simplistic solutions or categorical condemnation. Instead, the film focuses most of its efforts on the everyday human struggle provoked by an unnatural and oppressive barrier. EMMA ZARATIAN



Z CHANNEL: A MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION (IFC/DIR: XAN CASSAVETES)

For ten years, the early pay-television station Z Channel programmed movies and only movies, presenting an eclectic array of forgotten Hollywood classics, rare foreign films, and brilliant box office flops to a devoted following. The mind behind Z was obsessed movie buff Jerry Harvey, but a horrific murder-suicide in 1988 cut short his troubled life and effectively ended the pioneering cable channel's run. Former Harvey associates tell the tale, while famous Z fans (including Robert Altman, Jim Jarmusch and Quentin Tarantino) testify. Director Cassavetes keeps it lively, matching talking head interviews with riveting scenes from a variety of rare Z Channel favorites, which serve as a primer of great cinema for novice cineastes. FRED BELDIN



STEVE + SKY (LIFESIZE/DIR: FELIX VAN GROENINGEN)

An over-abundance of stories about unusual romances burdens the film world, but *Steve + Sky* is not your average unusual love story. Steve, an ex-con, meets up with his former prison mate after being released and helps him open a strip club. In the process he meets Sky, a bewitching blonde beauty who's been a prostitute and factory worker and thinks of every job as temporary. Titus De Voogdt (Steve) and Delfine Bafort (Sky) play their roles impeccably, connecting the viewer to the characters without revealing all of their mystery. Director Felix van Groeningen catches the awkwardness and difficulty of relationships so expertly that *Steve + Sky* becomes the rare exceptional exploration of a broadly-explored subject. TAYLOR LONG



RIZE (LION'S GATE/DIR: DAVID LACHAPPELLE)

Fashion photographer-turned-filmmaker David LaChapelle first encountered "krump" dancing on a Christina Aguilera video shoot and got in on the ground floor with this pulsating paean to the phenomenon: rival L.A. gangs who put on face paint and square off to see which crew can most closely resemble a medieval ergotism pandemic. Like the spasmodic dancing, the documentary is kinda thrilling, kinda silly. On one hand, krump dancing challenges mainstream hip-hop with something totally street-level and decidedly un-bling. On the other, *Rize* is so here-and-now that one fears for its cinematic half-life and suspects the inevitable aging process will be uncommonly cruel and unintentionally hilarious, a *Krush Groove* for the next half-generation, perhaps, or simply cannon-fodder for future installments of *TV Carnage*. ANDY SMETANKA



KRAFTWERK: MINIMUM-MAXIMUM (ASTRALWERKS)

Well, it's the future now, and the world has finally caught up to Kraftwerk. *Minimum-Maximum* documents the primordial electronic band's 2004 world tour and makes an excellent souvenir. The set list spans Kraftwerk's post-*Autobahn* career and hits all the highlights while an expansive video screen behind the players illustrates each synthetic anthem. The Mensch-Maschine itself looks like four community college professors in mid-lecture, placidly twisting knobs and punching keys on their computers to control the technocratic spectacle. One day all pop groups will look like this: Coldly efficient middle-aged Germans standing at attention behind a lectern. Wake me when we get there, okay? FRED BELDIN

