

traditional hand-drawn animation, the fifth and final film, *Prince Loseno* (2004), is a claymation tale about a childless king who takes a young new bride to sire an heir and later dies during the son's coronation. A fine introduction to a major voice in African animation, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Joe's Violin ★★½

(2016) 26 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries; \$295; colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-7815-1560-2.

This Oscar-nominated documentary short tells a wonderful story about building a bridge between worlds that could not be more different. The "Joe" of the title is Joseph Feingold, a 91-year-old Holocaust survivor who endured six-and-a-half years in a Siberian labor camp and, later in a displacement camp following World War II, traded a carton of cigarettes for a violin. Playing it, he says to filmmaker Kahane Cooperman, helped soothe him after the long trauma and reminded him of the home that he had lost. Immigrating to the U.S., Feingold held on to his violin, donating it almost 60 years later to a school for girls in the Bronx, where 12-year-old Brianna Perez, reeling from the divorce of her parents, is chosen to receive the instrument due to the emotion with which she plays. The parallel tales of Joe's history, the school's, and Brianna's finally merge when Feingold meets her and she plays for him. After an initial awkwardness dissipates, the emerging bond between the two speaks volumes about the ways that very distinct individuals can connect, and perhaps help each other heal. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Lost City of Cecil B. DeMille

★★★½

(2017) 88 min. DVD: \$14.99. Random Media (avail. from www.amazon.com).

Cecil B. DeMille's first foray into biblical spectacle was his 1923 epic *The Ten Commandments*, which features a recreation of ancient Egypt—complete with 20 sphinxes and four massive statues of Ramses—built on the beaches of the town of Guadalupe in California's Santa Barbara County. When production was completed, DeMille worried that his massive sets would be commandeered by rival filmmakers, so he buried them in the sands. Over the years, this earlier version of *The Ten Commandments* was forgotten in favor of DeMille's 1956 remake. In 1982, filmmaker Peter Brosnan was tipped off that the 1923 DeMille set still lay intact beneath the sands, thus launching a 33-year odyssey as Brosnan battled local government agencies, mercurial Hollywood financiers, and a gnawing sense of futility as he struggled to locate DeMille's lost cinematic Egypt. This delightful video diary follows Brosnan and collaborators as they search for evidence of the silent film set while also interviewing local townspeople who worked as extras on the mammoth production. Brosnan was forced to shut down his expedition on three occasions, but was ultimately rewarded when he finally uncovered impressive artifacts from the elaborate set. Also featuring clips from the 1923 version of *The Ten Commandments*, this wonderful slice of cinema history and archaeology is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Now More Than Ever: The History of Chicago ★★★

(2016) 113 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Peter Pardini's CNN-produced documentary serves up a thorough history of Chicago, the long-running, self-described "rock and roll band with horns" founded in 1967 and still going strong. Featuring an unusual lineup of brass and more typical rock band instruments (plus three lead vocalists and—like the Beatles—no designated frontman), Chicago brought together saxophonist Walter Parazaider, guitarist-singer Terry Kath, drummer Danny Seraphine, trombonist James Pankow, trumpet player Lee Loughnane, keyboardist-singer Robert Lamm, and bassist-singer Peter Dinklage. Appearing here are surviving and still active members Lamm, Pankow, Loughnane, and Parazaider, along with the ousted Seraphine and several other players who entered and exited the group through multiple personnel changes. Separately and together they tell the story of a band of brothers who found a sound and rolled out hit record after hit record, touring constantly and pushing the envelope in terms of artistic ambition and political awareness. And then, inevitably, the excesses of the 1970s took their toll: drug use; being ripped off by their longtime producer; the death of Kath; and roiling internal dynamics when Cetera and a new producer decided that the former should be the new focus of the group along with a softer, cheesier sound. This is a tale of contrasts: triumph and defeat, loyalty and expediency, survival and loss—one with much to celebrate, including Chicago's entrance into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2016—all backed by the band's memorable music. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

The Last Laugh ★★★

(2017) 88 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$299 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Although one has an innate sense going into this documentary that there is no simple answer to the question of "Can we joke about the Holocaust?" there does seem to be a discernible consensus that is eventually arrived at: namely, it's okay to make jokes about the Final Solution but only if they're *really* funny. Director Ferne Perlstein's impressive interviewee list of comedians and performers includes Carl and Rob Reiner, Sarah Silverman, Mel Brooks, Robert Clary, and Judy Gold, among others, who all chip in with fairly predictable opinions on the subject. But it's the Holocaust survivors—such as Renee Firestone—whose wizened perspectives hold the most weight for obvious reasons. Firestone herself remembers moments of laughter and humor among the hellish suffering of the concentration camps and has fairly open-minded views on jokes about the Holocaust. However, she does find most contemporary comedians' attempts at racy ethnic jokes—Larry David's and Silverman's in particular—to be lame and unfunny. And many of her fellow Holocaust survivors feel that the Final Solution should be kept a taboo subject. If any sort of guiding principle can be taken away here it's that jokes about the Nazis themselves (Mel Brooks's *The Producers* being a shining example) work better than jokes (like Silverman's) that would seem to ridicule the victims. Even though it sometimes raises more questions than answers, *The Last Laugh* is an often fascinating exploration of a controversial subject. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Sandlin)



Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World ★★½

(2017) 102 min. DVD: \$29.95. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

American popular music has always been a blend of disparate cultural influences that evolve into something unique and new. Much has been said about the merger of Western European, Mexican, and African musical roots in jazz, country, blues, and rock and roll. The exciting documentary *Rumble* reveals the unheralded influence of Native American singing, chanting, and drumming on much beloved music. The jumping-off point in co-directors Catherine Bainbridge and Alfonso Maiorana's film is Link Wray, the dazzling guitar player whose 1958 hit "Rumble" not only introduced the power chord but also has the odd distinction of being the only instrumental banned from radio (due to fears that it could incite juvenile delinquency). The late Wray was Shawnee, and the film makes a strong case that those chords resemble the kind of indigenous chanting that he grew up hearing. Wray and "Rumble"—the song—