

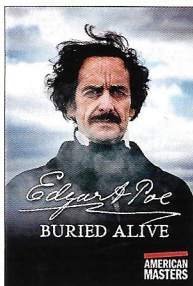
question to ask about Maurizio Cattelan, the artist whose bizarre works and penchant for self-promotion make him something of a clown prince within the contemporary art scene. Director Maura Axelrod's portrait of the artist feels a bit like a commercial for Cattelan, whose most famous works include a fully-functioning 18-karat golden toilet, a sculpture of Pope John Paul II being struck down by a meteorite, a sculpture of Adolf Hitler on his knees in penance for his misdeeds, and a live art gallery employee duct-taped to the wall. In what feels like a nod to Orson Welles's *F for Fake*, Cattelan sometimes hired stand-ins to handle his media interviews, while his own actual forays into being interviewed are peppered with cutesy quotes, including "I am not an artist—I make art, but it's a job." It certainly seems to be a profitable job, as his work has fetched up to \$10 million at auction and has been displayed at the world's leading art venues. Some will consider Cattelan's antics entertaining and provocative, while others will be bored by his off-kilter work and attention-seeking stunts. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

### Chicago: The Terry Kath Experience

★★★1/2

(2017) 80 min. DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95. FilmRise (avail. from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)).

A fine companion piece to the recent CNN documentary *Now More Than Ever: The History of Chicago* (VL-1/18), *Chicago: The Terry Kath Experience* approaches the subject from a far more personal angle, since it is written and directed by Michelle Kath Sinclair, the daughter of Chicago's original guitarist and musical mastermind, Terry Kath, who died in 1978 of a gun-related accident. Sinclair embarks on a journey here to get to know her father, talking with Kath's old compatriots in Chicago and his earlier bands; his widow, brother, and mother; and old friends and guitar-slinger peers such as Joe Walsh, Mike Campbell, and Jeff Lynne. Without saying so directly, the film certainly underscores the fact that Kath was not fully appreciated in his time as a guitar virtuoso, lead singer, or innovative composer (whose "Introduction" track on Chicago's first album was the most technically challenging music that drummer Danny Seraphine says he ever played). Interviews with people who knew Kath when he was trying to get a foothold in the music business recall his uncanny ability to pick up a song on first listening, and a memory is shared of a night that Jimi Hendrix called Kath the better musician. Throughout, Sinclair allows others to tell her dad's stories, backed by archival footage and old letters. And her search for her father's prized guitar—unseen for decades—becomes her own holy grail quest. Extras include bonus footage and a compilation of Kath's 8mm home movie footage with commentary. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



### Edgar Allan Poe: Buried Alive ★★★1/2

(2017) 84 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0267-0.

Narrated by Kathleen Turner, filmmaker Eric Stange's PBS-aired *American Masters* documentary notes that the works of Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) continue to fascinate readers due to their timeless quality—not rooted in era or place, but motivated by universal themes of doubt, dread, loss, and fear. Poe lost his mother early, and he always seemed to be searching for perfect love. Sent to a Richmond, VA, foster home, Poe was brought up by a loving foster mother, but had a cold, distant father, who eventually denied him his inheritance. After an unlikely stint at the West Point military academy, Poe worked in the new, burgeoning field of periodicals, where he earned the nickname "tomahawk man" for his brutally honest literary reviews. The background for Poe's own writing was the new world of crime and urban violence that was then plaguing cities like Baltimore, New York, and Philadelphia, all homes for Poe. The author was good at cultivating a moody, romantic public persona, but he suffered from alcoholism and self-destructive behavior, and money was always a problem, particularly after his marriage to his sickly child bride. Poe was sensitive to the phenomena of early death—which was unfortunately common in 19th-century America—and he tapped into a universal dread with his short story "The Premature Burial." His poem "The Raven" created a sensation, securing his reputation, which led to popular (and lucrative) public readings of his work, but worries about his wife's health, coupled with a knack for making enemies (one critic wrote a scathing obituary of Poe) affected his stability, and he would die mysteriously in Baltimore at the age of 49. Featuring insights from modern critics, readings from Poe by Chris Sarandon, and dramatic re-creations with Denis O'Hare playing Poe, this is a fine portrait of the artist. Extras include outtakes from the film. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

### Conor McGregor: Notorious ★★

(2017) 90 min. DVD: \$19.98. Universal Pictures Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Mixed martial arts fighter Conor McGregor knows better than anyone the degree to which he committed himself to ascending from apprentice pipefitter to undisputed featherweight champion in his bloody sport. So it makes sense that he sees himself as the center of his own universe and expects those in his orbit—trainers, family, his girlfriend Dee Devlin—to feel the same about him. McGregor's profound solipsism when in training mode—which he always seems to be in this worshipful documentary directed by Gavin Fitzgerald and co-produced by McGregor's media arm—is overwhelming, although mitigated a bit by occasional flashes of the native Dubliner's Irish wit and charm. Shot over four years, the film tracks McGregor's skyrocket rise to the top ranks of MMA fighting, culminating in a challenge for his belt that becomes very personal. But little is said about his crossover boxing duel with Floyd Mayweather last year, which McGregor lost. Extras include deleted scenes. MMA fans may be drawn to this hagiographic profile, but others can skip. Optional. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

### Finding Joseph I: The HR From Bad Brains Documentary ★★★1/2

(2017) 91 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Bad Brains is a legendary band spawned

from DC's hardcore punk scene circa the late 1970s—encompassing elements of punk, reggae, funk, soul, and hip-hop into a unique sonic stew. While covering the history of Bad Brains, this documentary focuses on their on-again, off-again lead singer Joseph I (Paul Hudson, aka Joseph I, better known as "H.R." for "Human Rights") and his struggles with what may be mental illness. The band started as a jazz instrumental group but segued into hardcore punk—becoming perhaps the first black band to not just adopt the style, but completely own it. Known for his incredible range of vocal styles, H.R. turned from taking acid to embracing the Rastafarian religion after seeing Bob Marley and the Wailers perform. Bad Brains took Marley's gentler rhythms and channeled them into punk shows that are repeatedly called "religious experiences" by those interviewed here. Inspired by the figurative meaning behind the biblical Joseph's "coat of many colors," the lead singer adopted the identity of Joseph—and later H.R. While H.R. was initially focused, determined, and hyper-spiritual, friends say that something happened amidst the craziness of the rock 'n' roll lifestyle, leading H.R. to engage in chaotic and inconsistent behavior. While onstage he was always bombastic, his offstage behavior veered towards violence. Today, however, he is much more chill, although in 2016 his wife said he suffers from a rare disorder that causes excruciating headaches. Filmmaker James Lathos's documentary serves up a gripping

look at a man, a band, and a key music era. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

### Gray Matters ★★★

(2014) 76 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Born to an Irish mother and English father, architect Eileen Gray (1878-1976) spent little time in either country as an adult. Her family was aristocratic and artistic, but this “mother of modernity” always remained true to her own unique vision. Filmmaker Marco Orsini’s *Gray Matters* describes Gray’s long life and career as a “rolling experiment.” Drawn early to Paris, where she worked in the bathroom of her apartment, Gray created eccentric household objects and furniture using various lacquers and layering techniques. Always ahead of her time in choice of materials, Gray also worked with chrome—making screens, moveable room partitions, adjustable tables, and other multi-functional pieces (some are still in production). Not all of her ideas were welcomed, with one critic describing her decorations as creating a “room of horrors.” Gray’s interest in how people interacted with their living spaces led her to an increasing attention to architecture, and an association with architect Jean Badovici and the artist Le Corbusier. Her non-conformist personality was evident in three houses that she helped design in the south of France, one with the unlikely name “E-1027.” Gray felt that homes should offer a protective shell from the often harsh conditions of modern life, and she designed with the aim of providing maximum sun exposure and allowing air to move freely through the house. Gray’s reputation in later years was obscured by the egotism of others, sexism, and her own agoraphobia, although her rediscovery has led to scholarly reevaluations and celebrations—and record prices at auction houses. Although some facets of Gray’s personal life (including her rumored bisexuality) remain a mystery here, this is a welcome and overdue tribute to an important tastemaker. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

### I Am Sam Kinison ★★★

(2017) 98 min. DVD: \$19.99. Virgil Films (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Thirty years after late comedian Sam Kinison (1953-1992) peaked in popularity on TV and in standup shows, this Spike TV-aired documentary answers an important question: was Kinison all that funny? Yes, and frequently so. From a contemporary perspective, it’s easy to lump Kinison in with misogynist poseurs from the same era such as Andrew Dice Clay. But while Kinison could go too far (phoning ex-girlfriends of guys in his audience to scream at them), and his jokes about gays were ill-considered, his broader sensibility about calling out repressed rage concerning relationships and the world’s absurdity struck a chord. While there are generous clips here of Kinison doing his act,

most of filmmaker Adrian Buitenhuis’s *I Am Sam Kinison* consists of recollections and impressions from other comedians, family members, and friends such as Charlie Sheen and Corey Feldman. Most poignant are the memories shared by Kinison’s older brother, who served as the star’s manager and saw him through good and bad times, and was present for Kinison’s final moments following a highway collision. Also covering Kinison’s years as an evangelical preacher, the honing of his comedy craft, and the emotional toll of a younger brother’s suicide, this biographical profile successfully makes its subject more of a sympathetic figure than one might have imagined. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### Long Shot: The Kevin Laue Story ★★1/2

(2012) 93 min. DVD: \$19.99. Virgil Films (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

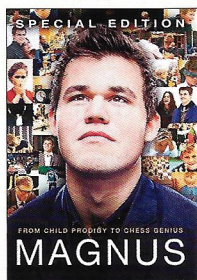
Franklin Martin’s documentary focuses on Kevin Laue, who became the first basketball player with only one hand to receive an NCAA Division I scholarship. Born without half of one arm, Laue grew to six-foot-eleven and worked endlessly to overcome his physical disadvantage and stand out as an athlete at Amador Valley High School in Pleasanton, CA, until he broke a leg and was sidelined for much of his senior year. Laue did a post-graduate stint at Fork Union Military Academy, where he was able to regain and surpass his earlier athleticism and gain interest from college recruiters. The film stresses Laue’s unresolved feelings towards his late father, who died when he was 10 and with whom he had a rocky relationship. But for most of the running time Laue comes across more like a teen (goofy or surly), a figure whose lack of star charisma is so pronounced that one of his peers wonders aloud why Laue is the subject of a film. And that is a problem: while Laue’s boundary-breaking story is inspiring, Laue

himself is not particularly engaging. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

### Look & See: A Portrait of Wendell Berry ★★★1/2

(2017) 80 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$75; public libraries & high schools; \$250; colleges & universities. DRA. Tugg. PPR.

Filmmaker Laura Dunn’s documentary is in part an encomium to Wendell Berry, the highly-regarded Kentucky poet and novelist who is also a champion of the traditional American values associated with rural life and family farming vs. urbanization and agribusiness models of food production. Berry declined to be interviewed, but his wife Tanya and daughter Mary talk about him, and Dunn includes excerpts from audio recordings in which Berry reads from his work, as well as archival footage of the author in panel discussions. The film’s second emphasis is a more general portrayal of the difficulty of maintaining a small farming operation in today’s economy, with Kentuckian Steve Smith, among other locals, talking about increased costs of production and decreasing profit margins. Smith also discusses his adoption of organic production methods—a change that encouraged him to continue the work he loves but once considered abandoning. *Look & See* exudes a pastoral quality, enhanced by luminous cinematography and a meditative music score, and while some viewers might question the nostalgic glow of the archival footage when the crop shown being harvested is heavily-subsidized tobacco, this would likely appeal to Berry’s many admirers. But while it raises a significant socioeconomic issue—the decline of family farming—the prosaic treatment of that subject coupled with the poetic portrait of Berry makes for a somewhat unbalanced film. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



### Magnus ★★★1/2

(2016) 76 min. DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95. FilmRise (avail. from www.amazon.com).

Dubbed the “Mozart of chess” because of his seemingly natural gifts, chess prodigy and current World Champion Magnus Carlsen doesn’t have the compellingly tormented charisma of a Bobby Fischer. Yet director Benjamin Ree’s documentary portrait is often fascinating, especially when exploring just what makes this Nordic super-geek tick. At the age of 13, Carlsen gained notoriety for playing champ Garry Kasparov to a draw, and from then on just kept getting inexplicably better, his mind working in ways that flabbergasted even the most astute experts. Although Ree’s conservative Scandinavian sense of detached objectivity occasionally threatens the film’s dramatic pacing—he’s often too reticent to probe into Magnus’s intensely inward-looking personality—thankfully there are enough dramatic set pieces of Carlsen besting his foes to give a good idea of his extraordinary capabilities. In one segment, Carlsen goes to Harvard and beats 10 of the world’s best chess players in simultaneous games—while blindfolded. And his centerpiece performance in the 2013 World Championships in Chennai, India, boasts high drama, marking one of the most extraordinary comebacks in the history of chess. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Sandlin)