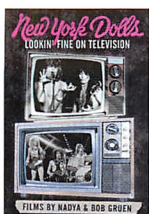


New York Dolls: Lookin' Fine on Television

★★★

(2011) 70 min. DVD: \$14.95.
Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



The New York Dolls were what kids today might call a "hot mess." Perhaps fittingly, so is this collection of live-performance clips. Spliced together with no source credits and peppered with bits of vintage interview footage filmed by Bob Gruen and Nadya Beck, this is nevertheless an exhilarating look at early-1970s music culture. While the visuals are black-and-white and often quite grainy, the sound is fine, and the performances are edited so smoothly it takes a minute to register the venue and costume changes within a single song. Singer David Johansen is a cut-up as an interviewee, and he's nicely backed by the rest of the band: guitarists Johnny Thunders and Sylvain Sylvain, bassist Arthur "Killer" Kane, and drummer Billy Murcia. The Dolls never had any major hits, but fans will appreciate the versions of "Personality Crisis," "Jet Boy," and "Lookin' for a Kiss" presented here, as well as footage of a Halloween show the group played at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, where their proto-glam stylings are completely upstaged by the audience's own costumes. A brief conversation between Johansen, Thunders, and music journalist Lisa Robinson conducted in 1976 is included here as an extra (by then Thunders had already moved on to his own band, The Heartbreakers). Presented in 5.1 surround sound, this is recommended for larger music collections. (H. Seggel)

Pearl Jam Twenty ★★★

(2011) 120 min. DVD: \$19.98,
Blu-ray: \$29.98. Sony Music
(avail. from most distributors).



Although they've certainly made their mark, Pearl Jam seems like an unusual choice for an *American Masters* special, being rather young to qualify as "classic" (the band formed in 1990); nonetheless, director Cameron Crowe makes a fine case here for their inclusion. Anyone expecting insights into their personal lives may be disappointed, as Crowe opts instead to emphasize the group's history, interpersonal dynamics, and indelible performances. He begins with their roots in Malfunkshun and Mother Love Bone; after the drug-related death of singer Andrew Wood, the surviving members decided to start a new outfit. San Diego surfer Eddie Vedder heard their demo, recorded some vocals, flew to Seattle, and after five days of rehearsal, they played their first show. In short order, Pearl Jam released hit records, toured the world, battled with Ticketmaster, and somehow managed to stay together. Crowe has unearthed an impressive array of rare and sometimes humorous

footage to chronicle their journey, along the way incorporating concert clips showing the band's shift from small venues to big arenas. Other than Soundgarden's Chris Cornell, there are few outside voices here, but Crowe's inside-out oral history approach works well. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 surround and PCM stereo (the Blu-ray version adds a PCM 5.1 option), extras include two bonus songs and deleted scenes. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Placebo: We Come in Pieces ★★★½

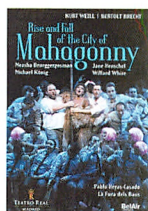
(2010) 179 min. DVD: \$14.98,
Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock
Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Filmed in 2010 at London's Brixton Academy, this is the final concert in the *Battle for the Sun* tour mounted by British alternative rock band Placebo, who combine glam guitars with New Wave keyboards and emotive vocals. The energetic playing here pleases the excitable crowd, but by revving things up, the group loses some of the subtleties of their recorded work, especially on "Special Needs," which is too loud. In some ways, their look is more distinctive than their sound, as tattooed drummer Steve Forrest sports a modified mohawk, bass player Stefan Olsdal wears a metallic suit, and singer/guitarist Brian Molko recalls Jack White with his center-parted hair, eye shadow, and black-and-white outfit (two other players, Bill Lloyd and Nick Gavrilovic, rarely appear). For a few numbers, synth player Fiona Brice switches to violin, but it's hard to hear her over the din. Towards the end of the 20-song set, Placebo covers Nirvana's "All Apologies," although Kurt Cobain's plaintive melody ultimately just highlights the weaknesses of the band's own material. For many numbers, director Paul Shyvers adds cool-looking digital graphics that could be headache-inducing in combination with the strobe lights and fast-cutting. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes documentary and six additional live tracks from the tour. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny ★★★★★

(2010) 138 min. DVD: \$29.99,
Blu-ray: \$39.99. Bel Air
Classiques (dist. by Naxos of America).



The 1930 collaboration by Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht—written both as a critique of Germany's failing Weimar Republic and more broadly as a stinging rebuke to capitalism—is brilliantly mounted in this 2010 performance from the Teatro Real de Madrid. The produc-

tion by Alex Ollé and Carlus Padrissa of the innovative Catalan theatrical troupe La Fura dels Baus opts for simple but imaginative set, costume, and lighting choices. Musically, the elements are also first-rate, with conductor Pablo Heras-Casado securing sizzling playing from the Madrid Orchestra in an unfamiliar idiom, and the cast is superb, headed up by Jane Henschel as Widow Begbick, Measha Brueggergosman as Jenny Smith, Michael König as Jim MacIntyre, and Willard White as Trinity Moses. The chorus also contributes mightily, even engaging in some suitably suggestive bits of stage business as the satirical tale unfolds chronicling the sudden rise and subsequent swift fall of the titular metropolis. The one possible quibble here is the use of Michael Feingold's English translation rather than Brecht's original German libretto; but the decision actually helps emphasize the piece's roots in popular musical theater as well as opera. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this vivid performance of a modern masterwork is highly recommended. Editor's Choice. (F. Swietek)

The Rolling Stones: Some Girls—Live in Texas '78

★★★★½

(2011) 86 min. DVD: \$14.98,
Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Vision
(avail. from most distributors).



Another year, another vintage Stones concert: this one hailing from the Will Rogers Auditorium in Fort Worth, TX, on July 18, 1978, when the bad boys of British rock performed a 17-song set that included seven tunes from their latest LP, *Some Girls*. Today (nearly 35 years later) the Stones are much the same: Mick Jagger remains the quintessential rock 'n' roll frontman, Keith Richards and Ron Woods are still guitar heroes, and Charlie Watts continues to lay down the blues rock beat on drums. The only difference is the absence of stone-faced bass player Bill Wyman, who left the band in 1992. Well, it's also highly unlikely that during a contemporary performance of "Tumbling Dice," you will see Jagger reach down and cup Woods's dice the way he does here, deep in the heart of Texas. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, this is the Rolling Stones during their cock rock heyday, a time when concerts weren't choreographed to within an inch of their life: Jagger staggers, struts, pouts, shakes an ass he doesn't really have, and generally commands the screen as the band works its way through then-brand-spanking-new songs like "Shattered," "Beast of Burden," "Miss You," and "When the Whip Comes Down," coupled with earlier hits such as "Happy," "Honky Tonk Women," "Brown Sugar," and "Jumpin' Jack Flash." A wonderful highlight here is the loving-but-irreverent cover of The Temptations' "Just My Imagination" (with the slightly revised Jagger punch