

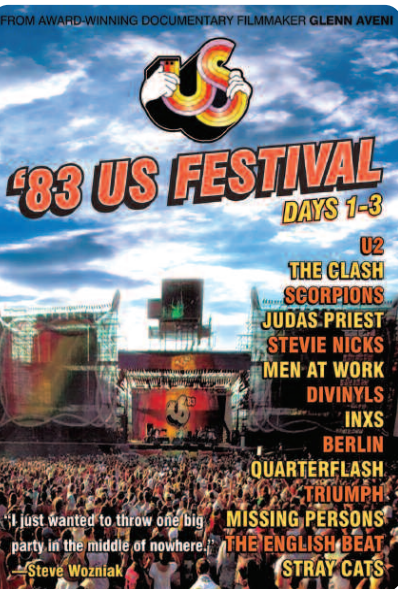


QUEUED UP

BY BRYAN REESMAN

ROCK 'N' ROLL TIME MACHINE

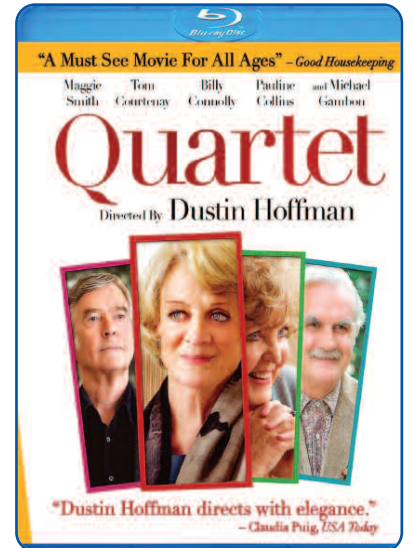
The famous US Festival in 1983 took place in San Bernardino, California, and allegedly drew in nearly 700,000 people over four hot late spring days. The second of only two such events, it united the rising stars and chart-toppers of the time, from Stray Cats to Berlin to Scorpions. After the initial Showtime airing, none of the footage was officially seen until recently, when Triumph, Judas Priest, Quiet Riot, Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, and The English Beat released their own sets on DVD. But there's way more left. It's not enough, but **'83 US Festival: Days 1-3** is a solid two-hour concert documentary featuring select songs by most of the above artists and others (no country, however), along with commentary from festival organizer/former Apple employee Steve Wozniak and original MTV VJ Mark Goodman. Sometimes their words are overlaid during songs, which can be annoying, but it's great to see groups like Missing Persons, Quarterflash, and Divinyls light up the stage in their heyday. The U2 performance of "The Electric Co." is a standout, with Bono climbing up to the lighting grid and singing half the song from above the stage. The video and audio quality is generally pretty good, especially considering the source is 30-year-old videotape.



Wozniak's Unuson Corporation holds the video rights to most of the festival footage, but it says some artists have allegedly not been willing to sign off on some of their performances for home video release, notably Van Halen as David Lee Roth was reportedly smashed during their set. But come on, it's rock 'n' roll from an era that has long since has passed. Someone could make good money from an US Festival '83 box set.

DIVAS TO THE END

While *Quartet* came out on video back in June, I missed the chance to watch and cover it at the time and regret so. So I'm making up for it now. This cheeky, charming comedy directed by Dustin Hoffman focuses on the Beecham House retirement home for classical musicians, and in particular a foursome of famed opera singers (Maggie Smith, Billy Connolly, Tom Courtenay, and Pauline Collins) coping with sweet and bittersweet memories, personal differences, and struggles with aging in order to put on the annual gala fundraiser to keep their residence open. Screenwriter Ronald Harwood adapts his own play and strikes a nice balance between the joy these characters get from making music and the melancholia they face in getting older and feeling past their prime. Beyond the heartbreak that Smith and Courtenay's characters confront, there are other scenes that strike a chord, one of the most interesting being one where he teaches young students about opera and begins to draw parallels to rap music in their mutual depiction of tragedy. *Quartet* is a smart, funny, sentimental film that will linger long in your thoughts.



The Giant Mechanical Man (2012)

Netflix Fix:

While there is plenty of blockbuster fare to be found on Netflix, you can often discover enchanting indie titles as well, such as this Detroit-based romantic dramedy starring Jenna Fischer (*The Office*) and Chris Messina (*The Mindy Project*). She's an aimless temp and he's a silver painted, stilt-walking street performer (the title character), and the socially adrift duo begins a slow-moving, awkward courtship while working together at a zoo. Her judgmental sister is trying to fix her up with an egomaniacal writer (a slightly over-the-top Topher Grace) and generally fix her life, while his live-in girlfriend leaves him for his lack of ambition and direction. This is one of those modest films with a simple premise that lures you in because you know people just like these, and the resolutions to their different conflicts feel real and natural. I rarely watch films like this, but the stars and story of *The Giant Mechanical Man* had me rooting for underdogs that I don't personally relate to, and that's a minor triumph in my book.



FAMILY IN OVERDRIVE

Paul Walker's recent death in a high-speed car crash was a shame (and sadly ironic), and it naturally has cast a dark shadow over the fast-paced movie series that made him a star and kept him in the spotlight. Ultimately, the key to the success of the *Fast & Furious* franchise is not just its crazy, hyperactive chase and fight sequences but the way in which Dominic Toretto (Vin Diesel), Brian O'Conner (Walker), and their girlfriends and associates are bonded like family throughout all of their insane global escapades taking on various crime lords. Bringing back various characters from the series in later installments has also given it a special continuity (one which has now been disrupted). *Fast & Furious 6* continues the revved up if unrealistic exploits of our infamous outlaws as they get sucked back into another mission by their old nemesis, DSS agent Luke Hobbs (Dwayne Johnson). He let them go before but now needs their help to bring down Owen Shaw (Luke Evans), ruthless head of an international crime syndicate for whom Dom's old girlfriend Letty (Michelle Rodriguez), believed to have been killed, is now working for. This setup not only allows for the usual badass CG shenanigans but for rekindled romance as



Dom discovers Letty is an amnesiac and must secretly find ways to reawaken her memories of him. If you loved the other movies, you'll enjoy the ride again. If not, then you'll pass. The series' charm lies with its likeable characters and the fact that, despite their own thievery and illegal street racing antics in the past, they bring down people far worse than themselves. (A percentage of the DVD/BD proceeds will benefit Walker's charity, Reach Out WorldWide.)

A FLURRY OF NEW RELEASES

So many releases, so little space at this time of year, so here's a rundown of other notable new and recent releases.

Insidious: Chapter 2

Horror maestro James Wan delivers more heart-pounding scariness old school style. We need more directors like him.



Big: 25th Anniversary Edition

The classic Tom Hanks comedy, co-starring the adorable Elizabeth Perkins, gets a snazzy reissue loaded with bonus features.

Prisoners

Hugh Jackman is ferocious as Wolverine, and de-clawed he is fierce as an angry dad hunting down the kidnapper of his two daughters.



Despicable Me 2

Gru and the girls are back for more family bonding and minion mayhem.