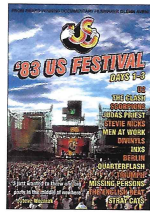


'83 US Festival: Days 1-3

★★★1/2

(2013) 135 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



The US Festival—brainchild of Apple's other "Steve" (Wozniak)—was a sunny California three-day blowout concert held during the 1983 Memorial Day weekend, featuring a wide (and somewhat discordant) array of bands on New Wave Day, Heavy Metal Day, and Rock Day—presented here in three separate programs that mix full or partial songs, interviews, and comments from original MTV DJ Mark Goodman. Given the musical spread, it's no surprise that this will likely please some of the viewers some of the time, as fans of the ska/reggae band English Beat ("Jeanette") will not necessarily appreciate the big-hair guitar-shredding sounds of Triumph ("Fight the Good Fight"). Some acts perform an entire song (or three), beginning with the opening number by The Divinyls ("The Boy in Town"), while others are severely truncated, such as Berlin's "Sex (I'm A)." Highlights (which will surely vary among viewers) include the Stray Cats ("Rock This Town"), The Clash ("Should I Stay or Should I Go"), The Scorpions ("Can't Get Enough"), U2 ("Sunday Bloody Sunday"), and Stevie Nicks ("Stand Back"). The lowlight here is Triumph, who not only play an unprecedented four songs total but also suffer from an audiovisual syncing problem on the DVD. Presented in a 4:3 standard aspect ratio with Dolby Digital stereo, this is a mixed bag of a concert video that will nevertheless appeal to fans looking for a blast of '80s past. A strong optional purchase. (R. Pitman)

Death in Venice

★★★★1/2

(2013) 153 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



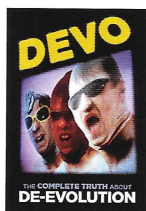
To celebrate the 2013 centenary of the birth of Benjamin Britten, the English National Opera revived its superb 2007 production of his last work in the form, an adaptation of Thomas Mann's novella in which dance is an element as integral to the piece as vocalism. Perhaps for that very reason (along with the possible implications of the plot), *Death in Venice* is often considered a "problem" piece. The role of Aschenbach, the self-doubting author who during a trip to Venice discovers a beautiful Polish boy he embraces as his muse, is brilliantly sung by John Graham-Hall. But Tadzio, the entrancing youth, is a wordless part expressed through ballet, with Sam Zaldivar here as remarkable as Graham-Hill. Of course Aschenbach's hope that Tadzio's Dionysian passion will shatter the Apollonian intel-

lectualism that has rendered his writing so sterile proves to be a delusion—indeed leading to his destruction, partially at the hands of a Mephistophelian figure who appears in seven guises throughout the opera and is here sung well by Andrew Shore. The remaining cast members, including countertenor Tim Mead as Apollo, are consistently excellent, and Edward Gardner brings out the score's myriad orchestral felicities without sacrificing urgency. Tom Pye's sets, Jean Kalman's lighting, and Kim Brandstrup's choreography also deserve high praise. Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LCPM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a cast gallery. Slightly superior to the recent Venice release (VL-9/13), this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Devo: The Complete Truth About De-Evolution

★★★★

(2014) 70 min. DVD: \$14.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

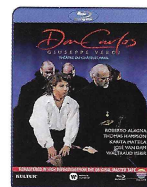


Originally released on Pioneer laserdisc in 1993, this re-release of a compilation of Devo music videos from the '70s and '80s adds the popular "Theme from *Doctor Detroit*," as well as exclusive bonus material. The 20 clips kick off with the "Devo Corporate Anthem," a video which was made before the Akron, OH, "spud boys from tire town" were really even a band. The four-piece New Wave electronic pop/art group fronted by Mark Mothersbaugh were pioneers of music videos that were influenced by Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, the Dadaists, and TV commercials. "Jocko Homo," a cut from their 1978 debut *Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo!*, set forth the Devo manifesto (which essentially cast a questioning eye on the prevailing idea of human progress). Also featured here from the opener is the classic, stripped-bare monotone version of the Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," as well as "Come Back Jonee," a song that—according to the audio commentary by Mothersbaugh and fellow band member Gerald V. Casale—was "neo-fascist *Bonanza* music." By the time of their second album, 1979's *Duty Now for the Future*, Devo was experimenting with electronic visuals, such as the Atari-video-game-console generated background in "The Day My Baby Gave Me a Surprise." Other standouts here include the commercial breakthrough hit "Whip It" (banned in Europe because dorky-looking cowboy Mothersbaugh bullwhip-snaps the clothes off a woman), "That's Good" (banned by MTV because it featured animation of a french fry entering a donut followed by a shot of a woman with a pleased look on her face; as the commentary notes: "now, Madonna could stick a french fry in her buttole and they wouldn't care"),

"Love Without Anger" ("love without anger isn't love at all," offering a realistic take on romance illustrated with a fighting Barbie and Ken); and "Worried Man" (a 35mm clip featuring Devo in Neil Young's 1982 movie *Human Highway*). Extras include early live performance clips, Bruce Conner's seminal music video film "Mongoloid," illustrated essays, and more. Presented in a standard 4:3 format with Dolby Digital stereo, this is an entertaining slice of pop art cultural history charting the evolution of a band that found itself rebelling against consumerism while lodged "deep between the buttocks of the Me generation." Definitely recommended. (R. Pitman)

Don Carlos ★★★1/2

(1996) 210 min. In French w/English subtitles. Blu-ray: \$29.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-5069-9.



Verdi's 1867 masterpiece—a romantic triangle involving King Philip II, wife Elisabeth, and son Charles, set against the backdrop of the Spanish Inquisition—was written as a "grand opera" for Paris, but the composer's 1884 and 1886 revisions (including translation into Italian) became the repertory standards. This 1996 Théâtre du Châtelet production, however, presents the 1867 French original, adding a few passages that Verdi cut before the premiere while also eliminating a couple others (a peasants' chorus and the ballet that was mandatory in Paris). This superb performance finds the Orchestre de Paris responding brilliantly to Antonio Pappano's vigorous, sensitive conducting, and the young Roberto Alagna exhibiting a remarkably firm, heroic tone in the title role. He's matched by Karita Mattila, in resplendent voice as Elisabeth, and Thomas Hampson, exuding nobility as Carlos' friend Rodrigo (despite an unflattering wig). The rest of the cast—Waltraud Meier as the "other woman" Eboli, José van Dam as Philip, and Eric Halfvarson as the Grand Inquisitor—make a strong team, even if each shows occasional vocal imperfections. The sets are relatively spare, but the costumes—in black, white, and red—are striking, and Luc Bondy's staging is nearly flawless, except for the hokey lightning that accompanies the Inquisitor's entrance. There are fine Italian versions available—including Bernard Haitink's 1985 Covent Garden production (VL-3/06)—but this is the best French mounting. Presented in LPCM stereo, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Le Corsaire ★★★

(2013) 100 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

Adolphe Adam's 1856 ballet—loosely