

Ariadne auf Naxos

★★★1/2
(2013) 121 min. In German w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

This 2013 Glyndebourne production represents another unconvincing attempt to rethink Richard Strauss's peculiar take on the Greek myth about the titular daughter of King Minos who was left to die by Theseus after helping him defeat the Minotaur. In the now-standard 1916 iteration, a prologue features the opera's supposed composer railing against a demand by the lord of the house that his serious work be performed simultaneously with the antics of a commedia dell'arte troupe. The resultant combination of tragedy and farce serves as a commentary on the balance between the sublime and the ridiculous in art. Although the prologue is customarily set in a Viennese mansion, Katharina Thoma's staging moves the action to a WWII-era English country estate that is bombed and then turned into a hospital ward where shell-shocked Ariadne debates her longing for death with Zerbinetta, the flirtatious leader of the comic players. While the overall concept is arguably well-suited to Glyndebourne—itsself a country estate—the approach doesn't really work dramatically. Musically, however, the production is fine, with the London Philharmonic—reduced to chamber proportions—responding enthusiastically to conductor Vladimir Jurowski, and eloquent singing from Soile Isokoski (Ariadne), Thomas Allen (the Music Master), Laura Claycomb (Zerbinetta), and Kate Lindsey (the Composer). Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, extras include a "making-of" featurette, interviews with Allen and Jurowski, and a cast gallery. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



enjoyed wild years as youths, Justin tends to stick to the music in concert, whereas "my father's shows have gotten very political." The director also solicits commentary from Caitlin Rose, Nora Guthrie (the daughter of Woody Guthrie), John Carter Cash (the son of Johnny Cash), and historian Dr. John Rumble of the Country Music Hall of Fame. An instantly recognizable actor-director here initially seems like an odd choice, especially since he's identified as "Kevin Costner, Country Musician," but Costner does have a band, Modern West (his daughter, Lily, ably handles vocals). Schroeder also travels around the South, interviewing regular folks whose professions include maid, shopkeeper, pastor, journalist, and even a lawyer who represents fishermen affected by the BP oil spill, but these segments don't work as well as the music-specific interviews and performances. Presented in PCM stereo on DVD and Blu-ray, extras include an hour-long concert by Justin Townes Earle at a Pace University tribute to Woody Guthrie. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Der Fliegende Holländer

★★★★1/2
(2013) 140 min. In German w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

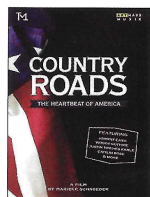
If you don't mind modern costumes, bizarre sets (mixing geometric patterns and flashing numbers), and a concept that situates the action in a commerce-dominated world where some of the characters appear to be half-cyborg, this 2013 Bayreuth Festival production represents a superb realization of Richard Wagner's 1843 opera about redemption through love. The orchestra and chorus perform with phenomenal energy and richness for conductor Christian Thielemann, while Ricarda Merbeth is amazingly powerful vocally as Senta, who sacrifices herself to free the Dutchman (Samuel Youn, who very nearly matches Merbeth) from the curse that compels him to endlessly sail. The rest of the cast—Franz-Josef Selig as Senta's father, Daland; Tomislav Mužek as her suitor, Erik; and Benjamin Bruns as the Steersman—are also outstanding. In fact, the musical side is so strong that many will go along with the peculiarities in Jan Philipp Gloger's staging, which include setting the spinning scene in Act II in what looks like an electric fan factory, where female choristers are assembly-line workers. This version offers solid competition to the 2010 Netherlands Opera mounting (VL-9/11)—another successful modernist take on the tale—although traditionalists should look elsewhere. Presented in DTS-5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, extras include interviews with cast and crew, and a cast gallery. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



Country Roads: The Heartbeat of America

★★★1/2
(2014) 89 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).

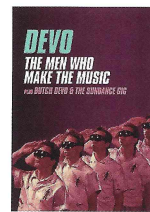
German filmmaker Marieke Schroeder's travelogue documentary *Country Roads* celebrates roots-oriented country music of the past and present, with singer-songwriter Justin Townes Earle serving as onscreen host, and fellow musician Timothy Touchton providing narration. Aside from Earle's music, Schroeder also includes songs from his father, Steve Earle—with whom he shares influences, including his Texas namesake, Townes Van Sant. Justin splits the difference between embracing his father's legacy and distancing himself from it; although both



Devo: The Men Who Make the Music ★★★

(2014) 66 min. DVD: \$14.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Like the recently reviewed *Devo: The Complete Truth About De-Evolution* (VL-5/14), this 1979 film compiles Devo music videos, while also adding concert clips from the band's 1978 tour. The 13-song set here closes with the former release's opener: "Devo Corporate Anthem," a video made before the four-piece New Wave electronic pop/art group ("spud boys from tire town" Akron, OH) fronted by Mark Mothersbaugh were even a band. Other music video repeats include: "Jocko Homo," a cut from their 1978 debut *Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo!*, which set forth the Devo manifesto (essentially casting a questioning eye on the prevailing idea of human progress); the classic, stripped-bare monotone version of the Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction"; a cover of "Secret Agent Man"; "Come Back Jonee," a song the band called "neo-fascist Bonanza music"; and "The Day My Baby Gave Me a Surprise," featuring an Atari-video-game-console generated background. The (roughly) other half of the program consists of Devo concert performances of favorites including "Uncontrollable Urge," "Wiggly World," and "Smart Patrol/Mr. DNA." The General Boy/Booji Boy characters interstitial material charting Devo's rocky relationship with "Big Entertainment" will be lost on non-fans, a truth underscored in the bonus hour-plus concert featuring Devo in a 1996 live gig at the Sundance Film Festival: the audience response to being asked whether they want Booji Boy (Mothersbaugh in a baby-face mask) is tepid at best; but the band has the last laugh when Booji Boy comes out to sing "Beautiful World"—and digs deep into his droopy soiled diaper to retrieve (and subsequently hurl) a voluminous amount of faux excrement into the no-doubt-puzzled crowd. The Sundance dozen-song-plus set features many of the aforementioned tunes as well as the hits "Whip It" and "Girl U Want" off 1980's *Freedom of Choice*. Other extras include a music video for "Gates of Steel," and rehearsal footage. Despite the repetition, fans will still appreciate this oddball Devo music film, which is presented in Dolby Digital stereo. Recommended. (R. Pitman)



Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg ★★★1/2

(2013) 2 discs. 270 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$49.99. EuroArts/Unitel Classica (dist. by Naxos of America).

Stefan Herheim's 2013 Salzburg Festival production of Wagner's warmheartedly romantic but also culturally

