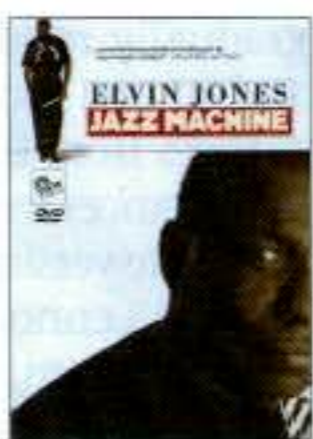


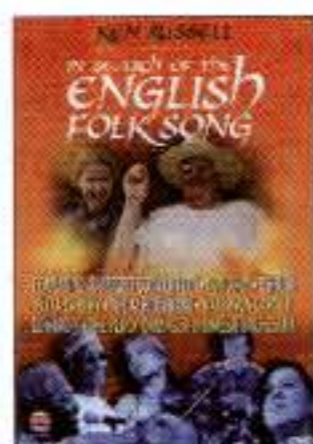
group, which also included McCoy Tyner on piano and Paul Chambers on bass, long-lived by jazz standards (they were together for some six years), the band also made some of the most important records of the post-bop era, including *A Love Supreme*, *My Favorite Things*, and *Live at the Village Vanguard*. Jones' subsequent career wasn't quite as stellar, but this 1991 concert filmed in Stuttgart, Germany is still remarkable. Smooth jazz it ain't: this is aggressive, challenging music, often harsh, rarely mellow, and definitely not for the faint of heart. Only three selections are played during the hour-long program presented in Dolby Digital stereo, featuring lots of extended soloing by all of the musicians (including bassist Chip Jackson, pianist Willie Pickens, and saxophonists Sonny Fortune and Ravi Coltrane, John's son). But these are all world-class players, each with an original sound—especially Jackson, whose solos are marvels of invention, chops, and wit. As for Jones, who was in his mid-'60s at the time, calling him "the world's greatest rhythmic drummer," as one pundit did, sounds redundant—after all, what drummer isn't rhythmic? But the description fits, somehow: while the music swings, it also never loses the distinctive heaviness and drive provided by Jones. While not for everyone, this will be appreciated by serious jazzbos. Recommended. Aud: P. (S. Graham)



### In Search of the English Folk Song ★★1/2

(1997) 60 min. DVD: \$19.99. Kultur International Films. ISBN: 0-7697-8561-1.

*In Search of the English Folk Song* is a peculiar little film—which should surprise no one familiar with the work of Ken Russell (the man responsible for turning the Who's *Tommy* into an overripe slice of pop kitsch), who here serves as writer, director, and on-screen "presenter." But whatever else he may be, Russell knows music (he has also made films about Liszt, Mahler, Debussy, Tchaikovsky, and others). In his hunt for what he calls "songs from the open air" (Cecil Sharp, an early 20th-century British collector and publisher to whom Russell refers, described folk songs as "spontaneous utterances from the unlettered classes"), Russell travels about the English countryside, encountering some genuine oddballs (like Bob Appleyard, whose songs memorialize various local features and events; a woman who sings about equine sex while mounted on a hobby horse; and a fellow who watches American westerns on TV and proclaims, "I feel every part an Indian"). He also meets much more prominent musicians, ranging from June Tabor (whose "The King of Rome," delivered *a cappella*, is simple,

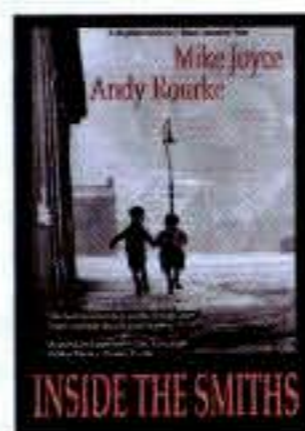


direct, and moving) and Donovan to Fairport Convention and the Albion Band (whose leader, Ashley Hutchings, was a founding member of both Fairport and Steeleye Span). Somewhat puzzlingly, the film also includes performances by people who appear to have nothing whatsoever to do with English folk music, such as the African-Caribbean world music band Osibisa. While *In Search of the English Folk Song* would certainly have benefitted from a little more focus and a little less whimsy (Russell talking to his dog, for instance), this moderately entertaining documentary is still a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (S. Graham)

### Inside the Smiths ★★

(2007) 52 min. DVD: \$16.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

*Inside the Smiths* is the latest manifestation of what you might call the Pete Best Syndrome. Best, of course, was the original drummer for the Beatles; replaced by Ringo Starr before they became the Fab Four, Best has spent the better part of the last 50 years basking in (and capitalizing on) his brief moment in the sun. To be fair, Mike Joyce and Andy Rourke weren't kicked out of the Smiths, where they served as drummer and bassist, respectively (although Rourke's heroin habit did lead to his getting temporarily sacked), but with the Manchester, England quartet having long since split, and singer Morrissey and guitarist Johnny Marr in fruitful solo careers and other projects, Joyce and Rourke are all that remain to rehash the salad days. And that's just what they do, reminiscing about their auditions for the band, discussing the making of albums like *Meat Is Murder* and *The Queen Is Dead*, talking about their former mates, and so on (others weighing in include members of the Buzzcocks, the Kaiser Chiefs, New Order, and the Fall). None of this is presented with particular rancor (the mid-'90s lawsuit in which Joyce sued Morrissey and Marr for back royalties is mentioned, but not dwelled on); rather, Joyce and Rourke are clearly proud to have been part of the Smiths phenomenon. DVD extras include seven featurettes, ranging from less than a minute to about half an hour. As for the music of the Smiths, described by one pundit as the group who "bridged the gap between the demise of pub rock and the beginnings of rave culture" (hey, it's a dirty job, but somebody had to do it), unfortunately there's nary a copyrighted note to be heard here. An optional purchase. Aud: P. (S. Graham)

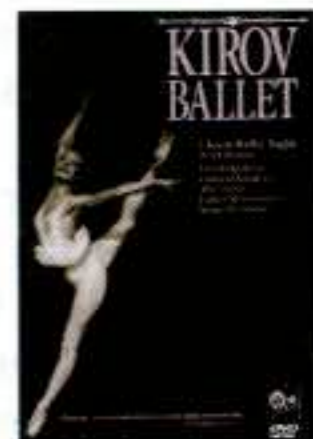


### Kirov Ballet: Classic Ballet Night ★★1/2

(1982) 60 min. DVD: \$19.98. V.I.E.W. Video (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-8030-2203-9.

The Maryinsky Ballet of St. Petersburg is one of the most important dance compa-

nies in the world, especially famous for its Vagonova School of Choreography, named after its best-known teacher, who taught many of the greatest performers of the 20th century. This Soviet television-aired program dates from 1982, after the company was renamed for Sergei Kirov, the Bolshevik leader whose 1934 assassination in Leningrad led to Stalin's party purges. *Kirov Ballet: Classic Ballet Night* features the company principals and ensemble from the last decade of communist rule in six short scenes, each the work of a different choreographer, with four set to music by Cesare Pugni, the official ballet composer to the St. Petersburg Imperial Theatre in the mid-19th century (the other two feature music by Riccardo Drigo, who served as music director to the Imperial Ballet, and little-known Danish composer Edvard Helsted). The performances of the troupe—both soloists and ensemble—are undoubtedly impressive, but the Dolby Digital stereo and video qualities are frankly mediocre. Viewers might also be taken aback by the audience applause after each set, which sounds so regimented that it has an almost military precision—adding a real Soviet flavor to the performance. DVD extras include artist biographies and a film clip featuring a second version of one of the numbers, "The Venice Carnival," with a different set of soloists. Optional. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



### La Bayadère ★★1/2

(1977) 130 min. DVD: \$19.99. Kultur International Films. ISBN: 0-7697-8666-9.

Based on ancient Indian lore, the ballet *La Bayadère* recounts the forbidden love of the noble Solor for the slave girl Nikia, who is murdered by her jealous rival Gamzatti. This 1977 performance, a foreshortened three-act production, was filmed at St. Petersburg's Kirov Theater (on the same stage where it premiered in 1877), and became the basis for all subsequent modern productions. The ambiance of the Kirov is beautifully captured by the ornate vintage curtain, which opens onto sets of elaborate detail. The female roles are particularly strong: Gabriella Komleva as Nikia and Tatiana Terekhova as Gamzatti add convincing emotive qualities to their impressive dance skills, while Rejen Abdyev makes a handsome and ardent Solor, and all are backed by an amazing corps ensemble. Although filmed in 1977, the picture quality here is amazing—crisp and beautifully lit—while the camerawork is outstanding, with a judicious mix of close-up and full stage views, as well as overhead shots capturing the precision and symmetry of the corps. Unfortunately, every other pirouette

