

Gypsy music and more

An excellent documentary about gypsy history, culture and, most importantly, music, **Gypsy Caravan When the Road Bends...**, has been released by Docurama (UPC#767685991237, \$27). The 2007 program, which runs 111 minutes, is about a large family-like group performing Gypsy music on an American and Canadian tour, with background footage of their European base. The music is a unique blend of Eastern and Western idioms and the performance sequences are terrific, but along with behind-the-scenes preparation activities, there are also extensive interviews with the band members, who talk about their vocation, their heritage, and even about the personalities and quirks of their fellow band members. In that they seem to form a kind of miniature world among themselves, the chance to glimpse inside of it is highly fascinating and rewarding.

The picture is presented in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and no 16:9 playback. The color is crisp and the image is effectively detailed. The stereo sound is mostly centered, but adequately delivered. The dialog that is not in English is supported by permanent English subtitles. There are also 39 minutes of deleted footage, 26 minutes of uninterrupted performance footage, an 11-minute interview with fan Johnny Depp who worked with the musicians on a film, a trailer, a text profile of director Jasmine Dellal and a minute-long montage of nice promotional photos.

Cartoon Cat

A half-hour studio performance from 1971 is featured on the Wienerworld MVD Visual release, **A Classic Concert Cat Stevens Tea for the Tillerman Live** (UPC#760137477897, \$15), but doubling the value of the program, a lovely animated music video from 1971, using *Moonshadow* and entitled *Teaser and the Firecat*, inspired by the artwork used on Stevens' albums at the time, appears at the end of the set. As for the concert, Stevens sits on a stool with two fellow musicians and sings eight songs to a group of about two-dozen fans sitting on the floor around him. All of the songs are as much a part of Stevens' *Greatest Hits* album as they were part of *Tea for the Tillerman*, and while the performance is a tad off the quality of his recording studio cuts, the time capsule nature of the program more than makes up for it. The full screen picture is somewhat soft, with mildly faded colors, but not to the point of distortion. The monophonic sound is reasonably clear, and there is no captioning. The animated sequence, about a cat and a boy who fly on a moon-like saucer through abstract landscapes, is also subject to some very light wear and fading, but is still very effective and extremely pleasing.

Miles high

An excellent compilation of performances by drummer/singer Buddy Miles and his band, **Buddy Miles Changes**, has been released by Charly and MVD Visual (UPC#022891474692, \$20). Like his contemporary, Jimi Hendrix, Miles was an African-American musician who was more comfortable with rock than with soul or what would become hip-hop, although his popularity spanned both cultures. The DVD contains a 77-minute concert shot in Geneva in 1995 in which Miles and his band perform covers for a dozen pop hits, from the *Theme to Peter Gunn* to *Hey Joe*. There is also a 33-minute set shot in Paris in 1996 in which his group performs just two numbers, extended by the jazz/fusion improvisations that were a mainstay of his performances. Hence, the combination of the two shows delivers a fairly clear picture of Miles' range and talents (he is on the electric guitar in the second concert). Additionally, there is a good 30-minute interview from 2004 in which Miles looks over his life and career.

Both concert programs are in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and no 16:9 enhancement. The color transfer looks fine. Both shows are in 5.1-channel Dolby Digital with a reasonably effective dimensionality. The audio from the live sets is not as pristine as studio recordings would be, but it is workable. There is no captioning.

Cocker concert

Delivering about a dozen of his best-known cover hits, Joe Cocker performs before a Berlin audience in 1980 on the Rockpalast Collection Eagle Vision release, **Joe Cocker Cry Me a River** (UPC#801213025794, \$15), including *Feelin' Alright*, *A Whiter Shade of Pale*, *With a Little Help from My Friends* and *The Letter*. As usual, his homeless-man-hit-with-a-paralyzing-dart stage manner is half the entertainment—if you just listen to the songs without watching him, the show isn't nearly as enjoyable—and while the 57-minute set is not the best produced representation of his skills, it does provide a viable overview of his talent and appeal.

The full screen picture is a little aged, but workable. The image is crisp, but colors look a touch pale. There is both a 5.1-channel Dolby Digital track and a DTS track, but the sound is steadfastly centered. Hence, it is delivered with a decent amount of power, but loses a little ambiance without a dimensional presence. There is no captioning.

Tatum tunes

A very good 52-minute biographical profile, **Art Tatum – The Art of Jazz Piano**, has been released as a *Reggae Nashville* title from Screen Edge and MVD Visual (UPC#820680105396, \$15). The full screen program, mixing black-and-white archival footage with color interviews, not only traces Tatum's career and rise as a prominent jazz pianist, including talks with many of his contemporaries (he passed away in 1956), but compares Tatum in an itemized fashion to other prominent jazz pianists so that the viewer can differentiate each one's style and sound. The 1991 program is a little worn in

spots, and the archive material is uneven, but it is an excellent compilation of the sparse footage showing Tatum in action, and a valuable preservation of the memories of those he worked with. The monophonic sound is also somewhat scratchy because of the nature of the source material, but not to a point where the distractions overwhelm the pleasure of the artistry. There is no captioning.

Does Sweden even make porn films any more?

A hardcore Swedish porn film, the 1974 **The Second Coming of Eva**, an Impulse Pictures release (UPC#654930100790, \$25), has a nominal plot—a wealthy playboy opens a ritzy girls' school so he and his friends can get all the nooky they want, until his inheritance is threatened by visitors discovering what is going on—but the story is just an excuse to stage long, redundant sex scenes. Running 89 minutes, some attention is paid to the plot in the final act, but that was how porn films did things in those days. Although there are no shots of culminating passion, there are otherwise plenty of clinical close-ups and standard group activities. The picture is a little soft or overly pinkish in spots, but is generally in good condition. The presentation is in letterboxed format only, slightly windowboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.7:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The monophonic sound is reasonably strong, and the film is in Swedish with optional English subtitles.

DVD News

MURNAU AND MORE: Like last year's John Ford collection, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment will be releasing **Murnau, Borzage and Fox**, which will contain two coffee table books and twelve movies, including a remastered presentation of **Sunrise**, along with *City Girl*, *7th Heaven*, *Bad Girl*, *Lucky Star*, *Street Angel*, *Lazy Bones*, *They Had to See Paris*, *Song O' My Heart*, *Liliom*, *After Tomorrow*, *Young America* and a 'reconstructed' presentation of *The River*. **The X-Files I Want to Believe** will have 4 extra minutes and come with a commentary and featurettes. The BD of **Meet Dave** will have deleted scenes and a number of other extras, but the DVD will not have much more than a blooper reel. The classic **The Day the Earth Stood Still** collector's edition will have a new commentary track and a number of featurettes. Normally we pay no attention to the rebundling of DVD titles, but we have to tip our hats to Fox for coming up with the following *Triple Feature* release—**Unspeakable/Don't Say a Word/Hush...Hush, Sweet Charlotte** (UPC#024543536765, \$20).

DOG HAS ITS DAY: The Criterion Collection will be releasing Samuel Fuller's rowdy **White Dog**. It will be accompanied by a few interviews.

LONGER HANCOCK: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment will be releasing both the standard version of **Hancock** and a 10-minute longer Unrated version. They will be accompanied by featurettes. Each movie in **The Films of Budd Boetticher Box Set** will have a commentary. **The Perfect Holiday** will have a commentary. **Step Brothers** will have a Will Farrell and John C. Reilly commentary, along with other extras.

PANDA DOUBLED: Dreamworks Home Entertainment's **Kung-Fu Panda** is being bundled with a made-for-video companion film, **Secrets of the Furious Five**. **Panda** will also have a commentary and extensive featurettes.

LEGEND TALK: Warner Home Video's **I Am Legend Ultimate Collector's Edition** will have a director's commentary. **Star Wars The Clone Wars** will have a commentary and more promotions for the TV series. **The Dark Knight** will have a few featurettes. **Get Smart** will have a few featurettes.

WHO YA GONNA E-MAIL: A 25-platter set of the entire animated series, **The Real Ghostbusters**, is available on the web at www.realghostbustersdvd.com. It includes 3 hours of special features.

DVD and LD Ads

(All DVD and LD Ads are 50 cents a word. Deadline is 5 business days before the end of the month. Address all ads: DVD & LD Ads, The DVD-Laser Disc Newsletter, PO Box 420, East Rockaway NY 11518-0420.)

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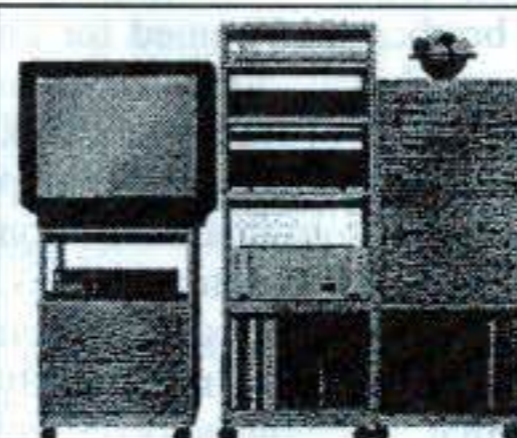
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