

### Travel with Kids: Paris ★★★1/2

(2006) 52 min. DVD: \$14.95. Equator Creative Media (dist. by Janson Media).

Continuing to follow the Roberts family (mom, dad, two kids) on their European jaunt (see *Travel with Kids: England* and *Travel with Kids: London*, reviewed in VL-9/09), this guide for families visiting the City of Lights picks up where *London* left off, with the family taking the "Chunnel" (the tunnel train under the channel from London to Paris), where check-in security rivals that of an international airport. Instead of staying at a hotel, the Roberts' rent an apartment in Paris District 9 (the art district), from which they set out to explore kid-friendly sights such as the Louvre (home to the Mona Lisa, Venus de Milo, and other masterpieces). To make the museum visit more compelling, the parents create a scavenger hunt for the kids—giving them cards for each art piece to match up with the real deal. The Roberts' also visit Notre Dame cathedral, underground Paris (including a tour of the city's famous sewer system), Disneyland Paris (which, after a shaky opening, is now said to be one of the biggest tourist attractions in Europe) and, of course, the Eiffel Tower. As with the earlier installments in the series, kid-friendly history lessons are served up alongside the advice for parents. DVD extras include a trip planner, family travel tips, and a bloopers reel. Highly recommended.



Ireland, shrouded in clouds and seemingly little changed by time; the historic heart of Italy, highlighting architectural marvels like the Leaning Tower of Pisa; and the glittering gold coast of the French Riviera, ending at the famous playground and gambling mecca of Monaco. Offering a good balance between attractions—natural and man-made, ancient and modern—the high-def-shot *Sky View* is solid armchair traveler eye candy. Recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

## BIOGRAPHY

### Albert Schweitzer: Called to Africa

★★★1/2

(2006) 52 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

This award-winning inspirational docu drama written and directed by Martin Doblmeier (*Bonhoeffer, The Power of Forgiveness*) follows the life of Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), who at age 30—while serving as a pastor in Strasbourg, France, content to play his beloved Bach on the big church pipe organ—suddenly announced to his flock that he felt called to go to medical school and then serve as a doctor in Africa. With the sponsorship of the Paris Missionary Society, Schweitzer traveled in 1913 to Lambarene—in what was then the French Congo, in West Africa, now Gabon—where he opened a tiny clinic in what he described as "an old chicken coop with no water and a leaky roof." Schweitzer won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1954 for his work in Africa (as well as his "reverence for life" philosophy) and the hospital he founded—much expanded—still operates today. Told from the point of view of Schweitzer's wife, Helene—a nurse—the

film was shot on location in Strasbourg and Lambarene, and features excellent performances by actors Jeff McCarthy (as Schweitzer) and Anne Torsiglieri (as Helene) in the dramatized segments. DVD extras include bonus interviews with Schweitzer's daughter and granddaughter, biographers, and theologians. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Zoretich)

### Angry Monk: Reflections on Tibet

★★★

(2005) 97 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

This biography/travelogue by Swiss writer-director Luc Schaedler should be subtitled "Glimpses of Tibet and India" because few scenes last for more than seconds, whether of the archival film or new footage beautifully shot in the streets and monasteries by cameraman Filip Zumbunn. Featuring narration by Thomas Sarbacher, Loten Hamling, and Phil Hayes, *Angry Monk* traces the path of Gendun Choephel, a Buddhist monk, writer, and artist (1903-1951), who left Tibet and the monastic life to wander in India for 12 years. When Choephel returned home in 1947 to the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, he was falsely accused as a spy and imprisoned. In ill health, Choephel was released from prison after three years, but he refused to obey a government order to stop writing his history of Tibet, and only lived a short time after being freed (although long enough to be carried to a window to see the Chinese troops march into Lhasa in 1951). Controlled for centuries by what Schaedler calls "an unholy alliance of the aristocracy and the monastic establishment," Tibet has now been ruled for more than a half-century by China and occupied by a flood of Chinese immigrants. Choephel is revered today for his efforts to open the tradition-bound country to the

wider world and for helping its people begin to learn Tibet's real history, rather than just its mythology. DVD extras include extracts from Choephel's writings. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Zoretich)

### The Beatles: Rare and Unseen ★★★

(2009) 90 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Such is the appetite for all things Beatles that any related DVD release is bound to generate some interest (especially since the recent proper re-mastering of their catalog, not to mention the debut of *The Beatles: Rock Band* video game). In this case, *Rare and Unseen* also means "Unauthorized and Unofficial," so there is no Fab Four music to be heard, only some vaguely Mersey-esque jangling in the background; nor did any Beatle participate (there are brief excerpts from a 1975 John Lennon French TV interview, but that's it). What we get is a parade of talking heads telling stories, offering insight, and generally basking in the band's reflected glory. Some are legit (like Phil Collins, who as a lad appeared in *A Hard Day's Night*; Gerry Marsden, leader of fellow Liverpool group Gerry and the Pacemakers; Norman "Hurricane" Smith, engineer on many Beatles recordings; and former press officer Tony Barrow, others considerably less so (Len Goodman, "former champion ballroom dancer"). The best moments come from the various clips, which include what's billed as "the earliest known footage of the Beatles on stage" (from Liverpool in 1962), the "only existing film" of the boys in Scotland, and some interesting shots of them performing at the Olympia Theater in Paris, where they shared the bill with Trini Lopez and French singer Sylvie Vartan. But since none of these segments feature the Beatles' music, this program is for completists only. Aud: C, P. (S. Graham)

### Big Pun: The Legacy ★★★

(2009) 95 min. DVD: \$19.99. Vivendi Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Vlad Yudin's *Big Pun* differs from the typical rags-to-riches trajectory of most hip hop documentaries, instead presenting a cautionary tale about the dangers of morbid obesity. Christopher "Big Pun" Rios wasn't just big, he was huge, and that—not drugs or guns—led to his early demise. Photos and video clips tell the visual story, while friends and relatives provide the narrative. Neighbors remember the Bronx of the 1990s as a blighted place, where homeowners torched their property for the insurance money, and the heavily-armed Pun, son of an addict, sold crack cocaine. With the support of his future wife, Liza, Pun traded crack cocaine for rap music, settled down, and started a family. More significantly, he brought Latin flavor to the rap game. Rappers Ghostface Killah, Method Man, and Raekwon (all members of the Wu-Tang Clan) praise Pun's verbal dex-