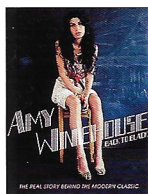


Amy Winehouse: Back to Black ★★★

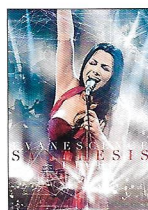
(2018) 93 min. DVD: \$15.98, Blu-ray: \$18.99. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Filmmaker Jeremy Marre's engaging documentary takes a retrospective look at the recording of Amy Winehouse's hit 2006 album *Back to Black*, combining interviews—with producers Mark Ronson and Salaam Remi, members of the backup band Dap-Kings, and other musicians who worked on the album—together with archival footage of Winehouse in interviews and recording in the studio. Unlike Asif Kapadia's Oscar-winning 2015 biographical documentary *Amy* (VL-11/15), the focus here is not on Winehouse's drug-and-alcohol-fueled personal life (although the film can't completely avoid the subject either), but rather the music itself, especially the influence of '60s girl groups like the Ronettes (lead singer Ronnie Spector appears here) on the hit tracks "You Know I'm No Good," "Rehab," and "Tears Dry on Their Own." In archival interviews, Winehouse talks about how her ups and downs drove her lyric-writing (she died in 2011 of a drug overdose; *Back to Black* was her second and last studio album). Also featured on the disc is "An Intimate Evening in London," a private performance from February 2008 on the night that Winehouse won five Grammy awards (she was banned from entering the U.S. due to drug concerns). She sings eight songs—including the aforementioned hits, "Addicted," and "Love Is a Losing Game"—in an intimate lounge setting in this never-before-released mini-concert. Although there are some bright moments, the "never-before-released" decision is understandable given her apparent high and/or inebriated state (halfway through the set she requests a banana daiquiri and adds "I'm serious"). Presented in DTS-5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, this bittersweet chronicle of the making of a great album is recommended. (R. Pitman)

Evanescence: Synthesis Live ★★1/2

(2017) 88 min. DVD: \$20.99, Blu-ray: \$21.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Although Grammy Award-winning Arkansas group Evanescence is a band, frontwoman Amy Lee is definitely the focus of this live version of their fourth studio recording (and earlier material) filmed in 2017 at Connecticut's Grand Theater. The other players are visible during the 19-song set but their time on camera is relatively brief, although they were also sharing the stage with a symphony orchestra. The low lighting also contributes

to the solo artist effect, while the additional players help bring out the grandiosity in Evanescence's quasi-operatic rock. Most songs start out in relative calm before building to a crescendo built around Lee's powerful contralto. In that sense, she recalls Ann Wilson of Heart and Florence Welch of Florence + the Machine, only working with lesser material. Some observers have described Evanescence as a metal band, but that is not evident here, although Lee's red gown and black corset reflect the group's goth rock sound. Throughout the show—which features the hits "Swimming Home," "My Immortal," and "End of the Dream," among others—Lee alternates between standing in front of the microphone and sitting at a Steinway grand piano. She ends by encouraging the audience, "Embrace who you are. We can't waste our lives being afraid to live them," which sums up Evanescence's mission to help alleviate isolation and loneliness among their listeners. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a music video for the song "Hi-Lo." A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Imagine & Gimme Some Truth: The Making of the Imagine Album ★★★

(2018) 152 min. DVD: \$15.99, Blu-ray: \$21.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



John Lennon had only been an ex-Beatle for about a year when he and Yoko Ono decided to make a film about a day in their highly-scrutinized if also frequently misunderstood lives. Directed by the duo, 1972's *Imagine* centers more on Ono's work as an avant-garde artist than Lennon's more pop-oriented material (not that there isn't some overlap between the two). In lieu of narration, 16mm scenes play out like chapters in a live-action autobiography, opening with Lennon, dressed in white, playing "Imagine" on a white grand piano in a white room as Ono, also dressed in white, opens the windows to let in the cool English light. *Imagine* features songs from Lennon's same-titled album together with Ono's less overtly commercial *Fly*, both released by Apple Records the same year. *Gimme Some Truth* (2000), credited to director Andrew Solt, adds recording session footage to excerpts from the *Imagine* film. The participants include drummers Jim Keltner and Alan White, bassist Klaus Voormann, guitarist George Harrison, and producer Phil Spector, with whom the two Beatles collaborated on *Abbey Road*. If *Imagine* shows Lennon at his most playful and relaxed, *Gimme Some Truth* finds him in work mode, including the occasional outburst. For all of the music that flows through these two films—including "Jealous Guy," "Power to the People," "Good Morning," and "It's So

Hard"—they serve more as a document of a high-profile marriage in which the partners appear to be on the same wavelength at all times, whether socializing with Miles Davis and Jack Nicholson (in a sequence shot by Jonas Mekas), playing chess in their summer house, or marching for peace in London. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include outtakes and a photo shoot by David Bailey. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Long Strange Trip: The Untold Story of the Grateful Dead ★★★1/2

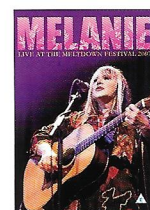
(2017) 242 min. DVD: 2 discs, \$24.99; Blu-ray: \$27.99. Rhino Entertainment Company (avail. from most distributors).



Long? Yes, four hours. Strange? The Dead Heads can be a bit weird. Trip? LSD does play a major role in the story of the Grateful Dead. Filmmaker Amir Bar-Lev's aptly-titled epic documentary traces the evolution of the San Francisco rock band Grateful Dead from their pre-Dead 1965 incarnation as the Warlocks—playing as countercultural novelist Ken Kesey's (*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*) house band at his famed "Acid Test" LSD parties—to becoming Warner Bros. recording artists releasing albums that were notably low on singles (until the breakout 1970 hit "Truckin'"), to performing in the U.S. and Europe in the '70s with their unwieldy 500-speaker "Wall of Sound" array, and up through their surprise popularity in the MTV '80s thanks to the megahit "Touch of Grey," followed by the drug-related death in 1995 of frontman/guitarist Jerry Garcia. New interviews with classic band members (guitarist Bob Weir, bassist Phil Lesh, drummers Bill Kreutzmann and Mickey Hart, lyricist John Perry Barlow), relatives, road crew, early manager Sam Cutler ("The Grateful Dead are dumb"), Warner exec Joe Smith, and Dead Heads (including Al Franken) are combined with extensive archival performance footage for a well-rounded portrait of a highly influential rock group whose freeform approach to music and life was their signature characteristic. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and Dolby TrueHD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

Melanie: Live at the Meltdown Festival 2007

★★1/2
(2007) 145 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

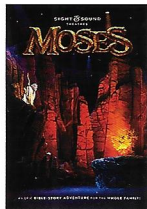


American singer-songwriter Melanie is no less an acquired taste in this 2007 concert than she was in the late 1960s, when she drew attention for her appearance at Woodstock

(although she isn't seen in the famous film), and for her subsequent flirty, near-novelty song "Brand New Key." Approximately age 60 when she recorded this London concert, backed only by her guitar-wizard son Beau Jarred, the older Melanie's erratic yowl of a voice still packs unexpected power as she sprinkles past hits ("What Have They Done to My Song Ma") with crowd favorites ("Poet's King"), then-new compositions ("The Ballad of Crazy Love"), covers ("Carolina in My Mind," her overstated version of "Ruby Tuesday"), and more in this 20-song set (plus instrumentals by Beau). Her engagement with the audience is personal and strong, and she's generous with stories and recollections. Presented in Dolby Digital stereo, this is more likely to appeal to diehard devotees of Melanie than fans of '60s music in general. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

Moses ★★

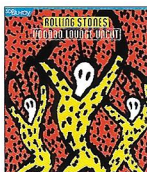
(2015) 121 min. DVD: \$19.99. Virgil Films (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.



The story of Moses is told in this filmed musical production mounted by Sight & Sound Theatres, which offers family-friendly Bible-inspired offerings at venues in Lancaster, PA, and Branson, MO. On the plus side, *Moses* is one of the most extravagant productions in contemporary regional theater, featuring a huge cast (including horses, camels, and assorted barnyard animals) on a massive stage where 60 sets recreate the drama of Ancient Egypt. Highly imaginative special effects bring the miracles of the Book of Exodus to life (the parting of the Red Sea is especially stunning) as Moses leads the chosen people to the promised land. But ultimately this is more a triumph of style over substance. Composer Don Harper's score strives for a Broadway sound, but the music is banal and underwhelming, while the ensemble acting comes across like an overly ambitious community theater group who have taken on far more than they can handle. Presented in 5.1 surround sound, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Optional. (P. Hall)

Rolling Stones: Voodoo Lounge Uncut ★★

(1994) 174 min. DVD: \$24.98 (audio CDs included), Blu-ray: \$32.98 (audio CDs included). Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



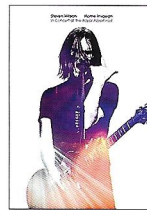
Filmed at Miami's Joe Robbie Stadium in 1994 (not in widescreen, unfortunately), Britain's reigning rock kings the Rolling Stones—Mick Jagger (vocals), Keith Richards (guitar), Ronnie Wood (guitar), and Charlie Watts (drums)—are backed here by their legendary lineup, including Darryl Jones on bass, Chuck Leavell on keyboards, the late

great Bobby Keys on sax, and Lisa Fischer on backup vocals. Introduced by Whoopi Goldberg, the Stones perform a mammoth 27-song set that features plenty of hits, including "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," "Tumbling Dice," "Sympathy for the Devil," "Honky Tonk Women," "Start Me Up," "Brown Sugar," and the closer "Jumpin' Jack Flash." The Stones are joined by special guests Sheryl Crow ("Live With Me"), Robert Cray ("Stop Breakin' Down Blues"), and Bo Diddley ("Who Do You Love?"), and they perform a standard B-stage breakout mini-set of three songs, including the lovely ballad "Angie." As per usual, viewers must suffer through Richards singing two songs ("Before They Make Me Run" and the aptly-titled "The Worst"), and are subjected to too many tunes from the Stones' then-current and mostly forgettable *Voodoo Lounge* album, but overall this is well-performed classic-arena-rock Stones. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include five bonus tracks from a New Jersey show and two audio CDs capturing the entire Miami concert. Recommended. (R. Pitman)

Steven Wilson—Home Invasion: In Concert at the Royal Albert Hall

★★★

(2018) 178 min. DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.98 (audio CDs included). Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

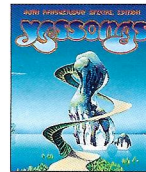


Home Invasion captures a 2018 performance at London's Royal Albert Hall by Steven Wilson, who was on tour in support of *To the Bone*, the fifth studio recording made under his own name. At almost three hours, the 21-song set certainly gave the audience their money's worth. In a bonus interview, Wilson acknowledges that, "I don't have any hits. It's kind of liberating." While that may be true, he has a deep catalog (not even including his work with Porcupine Tree), which allows him to range across genres from synth pop to prog rock. Wilson has collaborated with Robert Fripp and Alan Parsons, who co-produced 2013's *The Raven That Refused to Sing (And Other Stories)*. If Wilson has a pleasant voice, it isn't especially distinctive, so it's fortunate that Israeli vocalist Ninet Tayeb joins him for a few tracks, including "Pariah," where her soaring vocals overpower her to the extent that she's more like a lead singer than a duet partner. Wilson's quasi-psychedelic guitar playing brings to mind Pink Floyd's David Gilmour, especially in his interplay with keyboard player Adam Holzman, a former Miles Davis sideman. Visually, Wilson's artistic collaborators have pulled out all the stops with video backdrops that include stop-motion animation, photographic collages, and kaleidoscopic imagery, and the lighting

ranges from clouds of fuchsia and violet to stroboscopic effects. If Wilson is better known in the U.K. than the U.S., this release—which includes "Nowhere Now," "Refuge," and "The Same Asylum as Before"—should help change that. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, additional extras include three rehearsal tracks. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Yessongs ★★★

(1972) 70 min. Blu-ray: \$19.95. MVD Entertainment Group (avail. from most distributors).



Filmed on 16mm in 1972 and later successfully released theatrically, *Yessongs* features the classic Yes lineup of singer Jon Anderson, guitarist Steve Howe, bassist Chris Squire, keyboardist Rick Wakeman, and drummer Alan White performing a seven-song set before an appreciative audience at London's Rainbow Theatre. At the time, Yes was evolving into their prog-rock long-song signature sound, playing two of the three songs from their 1972 LP *Close to the Edge* (the title track plus "And You and I") here, along with "I've Seen All Good People," "Yours Is No Disgrace," and their hit single "Roundabout." A couple solo turns are added—Howe's "Clap" and Wakeman performing excerpts from what would be his 1973 album *The Six Wives of Henry the VIII*—as well as the "Würm" section of "Starship Trooper." Spiffed up for Blu-ray, the show is visually fairly dark (it is also presented in 1:33:1 aspect ratio, with occasional trippy microscopic cellular footage), although some extra light is thrown off by Wakeman's sparkly cape. But musically the band is in fine form, even though the actual sound quality is fairly mediocre. Still, this remaster of the 40th anniversary special edition of this landmark concert film does look and sound better than it ever has before and Yes fans will surely appreciate the trip down memory lane. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 (the menu incorrectly lists DTS-HD 5.1) and LPCM 2.0 (and the sound options are also incorrectly reversed), extras include Howe's guitar short "Beginnings" and the 2012 retrospective documentary "Yessongs: 40 Years On." Recommended. (R. Pitman)

The Hills Are Live

Shout! Factory has released *The Sound of Music Live* (DVD: \$16.98, Blu-ray: \$22.98), Rodgers & Hammerstein's beloved family musical classic—featuring songs including "Edelweiss," "My Favorite Things" and "Sixteen Going on Seventeen"—performed live with Kara Tointon as Maria, the tomboyish nun who reluctantly becomes the governess for seven children.

