

McCartney embraces his past

Paul McCartney embraced his Beatles past wholeheartedly in his 2005 concert tour, which has been preserved on the A&E New Video release, **Paul McCartney The Space within US** (UPC733961762914, \$25). Had he roped Ringo into doing the drums, he could have legitimately called the show a Beatles concert, as he sings more than a dozen songs from across the spectrum of the Beatles catalog—he even does *Till There Was You*—along with another dozen of his own numbers. While it is disconcerting hearing someone else do John Lennon's vocals on *I've Got a Feeling* and such, the overall impression of the concert is an explosive resuscitation of music long thought to be embalmed by time. As for the 115-minute show, its only shortcoming is a few too many interruptions between the numbers. Although the songs themselves are played out in full and you don't mind some breaks to soak up the backstage chemistry and other aspects of the concert spectacle, such as a live communication with the Space Station, you do wish that on the whole, the interruptions were fewer and farther between—and the shots of his supposedly enthusiastic wife are always going to be a distraction now, as well.

The picture is presented in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The image is super-crisp and perfectly colored. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a full dimensionality and lots of terrific detail. There are optional English subtitles, an 11-minute three-song set (including *Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On*) done as a sound check to a pretty much empty auditorium), a 4-minute multi-screen montage set to another song, a 10-minute profile of McCartney that opened each show of the tour, and a 10-minute look at setting up the show.

Sondheim review

Ensemble presentations of Stephen Sondheim songs can often be as satisfying stage shows as his actual musicals, and are usually far less taxing. Carol Burnett, Bronson Pinchot and George Hearn are among those appearing in **Putting It Together**, a 96-minute review shot live in New York in 2000 and released by Broadway Worldwide and Image Entertainment (UPC#014381362923, \$20). It is great fun, and features nearly three-dozen songs. Burnett, for example, may not have the true vocal dexterity to deliver *Not Getting Married Today* accurately, but her comedic skills more than compensate, making the piece one of the show's highlights. That really sort of sets the tone for the entire production. The singing is okay, and the performances are marvelous.

The picture is presented in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The image is crisp and unblemished. There is both a 5.1-channel Dolby Digital track and a slightly stronger DTS track, both of which have a viable dimensionality. There is no captioning. Also featured is a 12-minute interview with Burnett and a 4-minute clip of an amusing costume error that happened during the shoot.

Music stars on TV

Six 24-minute episodes from a TV series originally broadcast in 1976 and 1977 are spread to two platters on the MPI Home Video release, **Dolly Parton & Friends** (UPC#03030676314, \$30). There are a couple of lame comedy sketches, but the majority of each episode is focused on chatting with the guests and music. One value of such variety shows is that you get to hear the stars sing songs outside of their repertoire—here, for example, not only does Parton sing *China Grove*, but Rod McKuen also joins in. On the other hand, you also end up hearing her do *Bad Bad Leroy Brown*, twice. Other numbers popping up during the course of the shows include *The Battle of New Orleans*, *I Will Always Love You*, *Feelings*, *My Funny Valentine*, *My Blue Ridge Mountain Boy*, *Proud Mary* and so on. The backgrounds change from show to show, and there is an unseen audience responding to the numbers.

The full screen image has fresh colors and a sharp image, except when Parton is deliberately presented in a haze. The monophonic sound is crisp, and there are optional English subtitles.

On the first platter, she is joined in one episode by Emmylou Harris and Linda Rondstadt, in another by McKuen and in another by Kenny Rogers (Parton and Rogers both look like they're wearing pajamas—ahh, the Seventies). There is also a 3-minute clip from *The Porter Wagoner Show* in 1971 where she sings *Comin' For to Carry Me Home*.

On the second platter, one episode features Anne Murray and Randy Parton, another has Ronnie Milsap, and in another she is joined by Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis, Jr. There is also a 2-minute clip from a 1969 *Porter Wagoner* episode, before she had really perfected her 'look.'

A much more satisfying adaptation to the DVD medium, at least for those who aren't insistent upon unabridged collections of episodes from an obscure variety series, RPM Films is releasing **Best of the Glen Campbell Music Show** (UPC#5013929500259, \$13), presenting complete performances of almost all of his hits during programs originally broadcast in 1972 and 1975. Running 45 minutes, his live performances of songs such as *Galveston*, *Wichita Lineman* and *The Dreams of the Everyday Housewife* do not have quite the precision or energy of his studio recordings, but they are an adequate substitute, embellished by his performance manner and the hit-after-hit

atmosphere of the anthology. The highpoint is an instrumental version of *Ain't No Sunshine*, in which his concentration on his guitar work really does reach parity with his studio material. Also included on the DVD is a 14-minute segment from another 1975 broadcast in which he performs with Jimmy Webb, including a medley of the Webb tunes heard on the other program and then a complete rendition of *MacArthur Park*. Finally, there is a live 1978 performance segment shot in Dublin, which runs 22 minutes and includes *Rhinestone Cowboy*, *I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry*, and several other numbers.

The full screen color image is soft at times, but workable, with slightly bland fleshtones. The monophonic sound is not always pristine, but is adequate for the program. There is no captioning.

O'Day in her day

The late Anita O'Day may have already been adapting to the restrictions of age in the 1986 concert performance presented on **Anita O'Day Live at Ronnie Scott's London**, an NBD Image Entertainment release (PC#014381349528, \$20), but she compensates with elegant dexterity, maintaining her unique phrasings and approaches* with only minor compensations in her vocal range and endurance. She sings more than a dozen classics, including songs by George Gershwin, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Rodgers & Hart, and so on, and each is as lovely as it is unexpected in its unfolding. The intimate setting also adds to the relaxing and highly pleasing atmosphere the 56-minute program conveys.

The picture is presented in full screen format only and the color transfer looks fine, with sharp hues and accurate fleshtones. The stereo sound has a viable dimensionality and clear tones. There is no captioning.

Aren't they a pair

Elvis Costello and Van Morrison pitch in to do vocals on several classic standards in the accompaniment of Chet Baker's liquid trumpet on **Chet Baker Live at Ronnie Scott's London**, an NBD TV Image Entertainment release (UPC#014381349627, \$20). Between the jazz numbers, Baker talks a little bit about his past substance abuse and other matters, but it is not enough to interrupt the general pleasures conveyed by the 1986 performance, which includes *Send in the Clowns*, *The Very Thought of You* and *Love for Sale*. While it is funky to hear such numbers being sung by Morrison and Costello, it is the smooth, steadfast confidence of Baker's musicianship that makes the 58-minute program so compelling.

The full screen picture is reasonably sharp, with accurate colors, and the stereo sound has a workable dimensionality. There is no captioning.

Intimate Slim

An intimate 58-minute blues concert made even more close and personal by the tight, effectively composed camera angles, **Memphis Slim Live at Ronnie Scott's London**, has been released by NBD TV and Image Entertainment (UPC#014381349429, \$20). Slim is joined by George Collier and guests Paul Jones and Slim Gaillard in the 1987 performance. Again and again in the program, the smooth but exuberant music is made all the more precise and inviting by the editing and the magnetic camera work, so that the performance may well be even more captivating than it was for those lucky enough to be in attendance.

The picture is presented in full screen format only and is reasonably sharp, with fresh, effectively detailed hues. The stereo sound has a viable dimensionality, and there is no captioning.

The Tenth Annual DVD Consumer Poll

Universal's **King Kong Extended Edition** was voted far and away the 'Best DVD of 2006' according to the respondents of our Tenth Annual DVD Consumer Poll. Asked to name the best produced DVD of 2006, 21% chose **King Kong**, while the closest runner up (and our choice for the year's best DVD), 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment's release of **Kingdom of Heaven 4-Disc Director's Cut**, took 6.5%. Warner Home Video's 50th Anniversary Edition of **Forbidden Planet** and Warner's **Three-Disc Special Edition of The Maltese Falcon** both followed with just under 3%, and Warner's **Astaire and Rogers The Complete Film Collection** had just over 2.5%. Other titles to place significantly in descending and alphabetical order were MGM Home Entertainment's new **James Bond Collection**, Buena Vista Home Entertainment's **The Chronicles of Narnia The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe Four-Disc Extended Edition**, Fox's **X III The Last Stand**, Paramount's **Apocalypse Now The Complete Dossier**, Buena Vista's **Cars**, The Criterion Collection's **The Complete Mr. Arkadin A.K.A. Confidential Report**, Criterion's **Pandora's Box**, Fox's **The Rodgers & Hammerstein Collection**, HBO Home Video's **Rome**, Warner's **The Searchers Ultimate Collector's Edition**, Criterion's **The Seven Samurai**, and Warner's **Superman The Movie Four-Disc Special Edition**.

The 5 Best DVDs of All Time

1. The Lord of the Rings Extended Edition
2. Gone with the Wind
The Wizard of Oz
4. The Alien Quadrilogy
King Kong