

dialog for late night cable viewing. We reviewed the previous seasons in Sep 04 and Feb 06. By 2004 and 2005, when the episodes in **Season IV** were broadcast, there was nothing left of the original show to steal, so the stiffly animated characters are placed in situations requiring minimal enhancement or manipulation, relying on the dialog and what narrative there is to push through each 12-minute episode. Seen separately, it's a pretty desperate strain for a few off-color and esoteric gags, but in the context of the entire series, it works well enough to bring down the curtain with laughs and applause.

The opening episode, for example, *Isla de Chupacabra*, places the characters around a campfire on an island, sharing oddball stories, as many of them meet incidental and gruesome deaths. Several characters are murdered under absurd circumstances as they investigate an initial death in *Joy of Grief*. The underwater station is attacked by zombies in *Green Fever*, but the heroes don't pay too much attention to the mayhem as they quibble over preparations for a luau party. A shark boy tries to study so he can pass exams and become a member of the crew, except that he keeps on eating things in *Sharko's Machine*. Relating his story as he recovers in bed, a team member explains how his foot was caught in a bear trap (at the bottom of the ocean) and he then fended off a number of attackers, including underwater ninjas and the 2001 monolith. Like episodes in *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy* and *South Park*, the lab is turned into an Indian casino in *Casinro*, setting the stage for absurd jokes about Indian-themed casinos. The female crewmember decides to become celibate in *Butchslap*, setting off a few absurd repercussions. A billionaire buys the lab in *Monkey Banana Raffle*, and issues absurd orders. The most definitive episode of the season, and probably the show's last true creative surge, *Shrabster*, advances backwards scene by scene, as one of the crew attempts to develop a genetically enhanced crustacean.

For the entire episode, *Cavemen*, two of the heroes are trapped in a cave as their oxygen runs out and a huge shark prevents them from leaving. The heroes try to cope with an ailing, talking whale in *Moby Sick*. All the water disappears from around the lab in *No Waterworld*, and so the heroes go outside to explore. Finally, *Legacy of Laughter* presents a supposed evening 'special' where the characters reminisce about their adventures on the show. Also featured on the platter is an alternative 11-minute version of *Shrabster*, a half-minute alternate ending for *Legacy of Laughter*, a 2-minute deleted scene from *Joy of Grief*, a 16-minute montage of comical moments from the show (narrated by a pair of talking trees), and what appears to be a cancelled episode, running 11 minutes, entitled *Nightshift*, about the crew that maintains the lab when the heroes aren't around.

The full screen picture on the episodes is sharp and accurately colored. The opening theme song is stereophonic, but very little else in the episodes leaves the center. There are optional English, French and Spanish subtitles.

### Magazine DVD

'Vice,' respective but not beholden to its title, is a magazine that explores topics mainstream journalists shy away from. It is, essentially, a slick variation of an alternative newspaper, and mixes a touch of sensationalism with a sober political awareness and an old-fashioned sense of adventure. Caroline Distributors and Vice have released **Vice The Vice Guide to Travel** (UPC#893467001013, \$20), a small hardcover book that contains magazine-style articles and color photos about visits to seven different locations around the world and, tucked into the back cover, a DVD, which features brief documentaries about those same seven journeys, running a total of 54 minutes. The articles and the documentaries complement one another effectively, reporting upon different perspectives of the same locations and subjects. As for the documentaries specifically, they vary in quality, with the best two being about Lebanese youngsters taught by the Hezbollah to become terrorists, or, at least, to hate Israel, and a visit to a gun market near the Afghanistan border of Pakistan. There is also a look at what Chernobyl is like 20 years after the accident, although it promises more than it delivers; a piece on the slums of Brazil that gets distracted by its quest to attend a street party hosted by drug lords; an amusing look at a Paraguayan town that once hosted a fair sized German community; a trip to a Congolese village supposedly in search of a dinosaur; and a visit with a Bulgarian arms dealer who supposedly has a nuclear warhead buried in his mother's backyard. There are also 19 minutes of shorter pieces shot in some of the same locations. The full screen picture looks fine and the stereo sound is reasonably strong. There are optional French, Spanish, Italian and German subtitles.

### What can be done with a bass?

Two acoustical bass jazz programs from 2005, one traditional and one decidedly more eccentric, have been released by Thomastik Infeld Vienna and MVD Visual, **Live in Vienna Rufus Reid** (UPC#022891990796, \$20) and **Live in Vienna Barre Phillips** (UPC#022891990895, \$20). Reid is joined by Firz Pauer's piano and John Hollenbeck's drums for his 57-minute set. Using both his fingers and a bow, Reid's music is relaxed and straightforward, with distinctive but well blended contributions from each member of the trio. Phillips, on the other hand, sits on the stage mostly by himself for the 54-minute set, coaxing every sound imaginable out of his instrument in a virtuoso effort that ebbs and flows in complexity, as if he were sharing his total stream of consciousness with his audience. Some of it is musical and some of it is abstract rhythms and sounds—this isn't really a background program the way that Reid's set can be—but it is always a stimulating adventure. He is joined on the final number by Hollenbeck, who

twiddles with some electronic and string manipulations of his own.

On both programs, 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 picture is a touch soft and the stage lighting has occasional limitations, but the image workably clear. On both programs, the sound is clearly defined, but tends to remain centered. Each DVD has some text background information and a decent interview with the featured artist, Reid's running 3 minutes and Phillips' running 7 minutes.

### Neo folk

Playing his heart out, Bob Brozman sits on a stool with several guitars at hand, strums deftly and intensely, and sings witty, thoughtful, intelligent songs for 76 minutes on the Inakustik release, **Bob Brozman – Live in Germany** (UPC#710347301271, \$20). The 2005 concert is a highly entertaining and stimulating experience, renewing your faith in folk music and the congeniality of balding bearded guys who make a living playing the guitar.

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 picture is sharp and colors are accurate. There is both a 5.1-channel Dolby Digital track and a DTS track, and both deliver the sound clearly and crisply. There is no captioning. Also featured is a 23-minute interview with Brozman, a few promotional photos in still frame, and an outstanding 22-minute lecture by Brozman on playing the guitar—if you own one, you owe yourself this DVD.

### Great Foley work

Some female electric guitarists play up the fetishistic aspects of their performances, but Sue Foley, appearing on the impressive Ruf and Inakustik release, **Sue Foley Live in Europe** (UPC#710347301370, \$20), has no inclination or need to do so, since her musicianship alone is enough to keep a viewer engaged. She plays a 73-minute rock set with her backup band in the primary program, which was staged in Köln, Germany, delivering viable vocals and an adept lead guitar that keeps the show energized from the first number to the last. But then, the DVD also has a separate 48-minute set that was recorded in Amsterdam and is more blues oriented. Here, her guitar work is as solid as it is on the main program, but her vocals are even more impressive, with a Joplinsque totality of effort that is both raw and captivating.

Both shows were shot in 2005, and the picture is in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. On both, the colors are at the mercy of the stage lights, but remain vivid, and the image is sharp. The blues program is in standard stereo only, but sounds great anyway. The rock program has 5.1-channel Dolby Digital, with distinctive details, and a DTS track, with even more power and clarity. There is no captioning. Along with a still photo section, there is a good 14-minute interview with Foley.

### OK okay

Hailed as 'the last great rock album of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century,' the story of the creation of Radiohead's *OK Computer* is told through interviews, archival clips, still photos and analysis on the Sexy International release, **Radiohead OK Computer A Classic Album under Review** (UPC#82135-64508696, \$20). Every song from the electrifyingly eclectic album is addressed (the DVD's chapters are the album's cuts) in the 2006 program, with explanations of how each song was developed and appreciations of each one's artistry "Letdown is a classic example of *OK Computer*, about where the music appears to be doing something that lyrics aren't. It is a conceptually despondent lyric, and yet musically, it's one of the most rousing tracks. On one level it's an absolutely rousing song, but it's also this rapturous kind of cathedral-like tribute to utter misery." While there are few complete numbers on the 59-minute program, there is a lot of music, and as a corollary, the personalities and drives of the band members are also explored.

The picture is presented in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and no 16:9 enhancement. The color transfer is sharp. The stereo sound is largely centered and there is no captioning. Also featured is a trivia quiz and text profiles of the interviewees.

### Humperdinck concert

With his flared sideburns and scowl-like concentration, Engelbert Humperdinck looks more like the villain from a Charles Dickens story than a popular romantic singer, but he's still gives it a go in the 2006 Canadian concert presented on **Engelbert: Totally Amazing**, an Image Entertainment release (UPC#014381295627, \$20). The vocal fluidity that brought him to pop stardom several decades ago has long since run dry, but he can manage to hit most of his notes and deliver twinges of his old recordings, which seems to be enough to keep his fans happy. The 77-minute program constantly cuts to his backup band and uses long angles to prevent any close-ups from lingering enough to induce giggles, and if you just sort of let the whole show play in the background and not pay total attention to it, it works reasonably well.

The picture is presented in letterboxed format, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The image is crisply detailed and precisely colored. There is a DTS track as well as a 5.1-channel Dolby Digital track, though despite the accuracy of their delivery, you really don't want to turn up the program too loud. There is no captioning. Also featured is an 8-minute deleted number and a good 22-minute interview in which Humperdinck talks about his life and career.