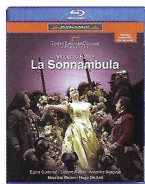


Malcolm Arnold. Unfortunately, the score was later lost—until Dutch composer Marco de Goeij painstakingly reconstructed it from the LP recording made at the time of the premiere. Lord helped refine the result, and the concerto reappeared in its full glory as part of Deep Purple's 30th anniversary performances in 1999. Presented here in a 2012 recording, the concerto follows the traditional three-movement form (also displaying the influence of various standard concert-hall pieces) while allowing for riffs and turns that are characteristic of rock and blues. A substantial, musically serious piece, this performance by Lord and handpicked soloists—accompanied by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Paul Mann—must be considered the definitive rendition. Presented in DTS-HD stereo, Blu-ray extras include a “making-of” documentary, interviews with Mann and de Goeij, and a rehearsal featurette. Packaged with a bonus audio CD, this is sure to appeal to Deep Purple fans, but will also be appreciated by a broader classical audience. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### La Sonnambula ★★★

(2008) 141 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. Blu-ray: \$42.99. Dynamic (dist. by Naxos of America).



Even for a 19th-century romantic opera, Vincenzo Bellini's 1831 *La Sonnambula*—hailing from a period when the composer was at the apex of his *bel canto* powers—sports a silly libretto, as demonstrated in this 2008 performance from Sardinia's Teatro Lirico di Cagliari. After Amina, who is betrothed to Elvino, is discovered asleep in the room of Count Rodolfo at the local inn, her fiancé—encouraged by Lisa, the hostel proprietress in love with Elvino—disowns her. Only the revelation that Amina is a sleepwalker persuades Elvino and his equally suspicious fellow villagers that she is innocent of any infidelity. Despite the laughable storyline, this mounting is visually quite attractive, with colorful sets and costumes and tasteful use of rear-stage projections. And it boasts real star power in the titular role of the sleepwalker, with Eglise Gutierrez exhibiting a rock-steady soprano and amazing dexterity in the florid coloratura. But the other contributions are less noteworthy: Antonino Siragusa as Elvino lets his voice go distressingly nasal in the upper register, conductor Maurizio Benini is inclined to allow the rhythms to sag for expressive effect, and Hugo De Ana's direction is static. Still, this is a reasonably enjoyable performance, especially thanks to Gutierrez. Making its Blu-ray debut with DTS-HD 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and PCM stereo sound options, this is recommended. (F. Swietek).

### Le Nozze di Figaro

★★★★1/2

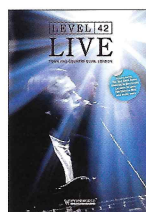
(2012) 154 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$24.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



Mozart has been a mainstay at England's Glyndebourne Festival since it opened in 1934—in fact, the 1786 masterpiece *Le Nozze di Figaro* has been performed here nearly 500 times. The tradition of excellence is maintained in Michael Grandage's staging for this 2012 production, which updates the action to the 1960s. Granted, the shift doesn't exactly fit with a plot centered on a nobleman's reluctant abandonment of the *droit du seigneur* before the marriage of two of his servants, and it's also a bit disconcerting to witness the Count and Countess arriving at their Spanish estate during the overture in a sports car (or spy some characters doing what appears to be the Twist during party scenes). Regardless, the work's spirit is undiminished here, while the sets and costumes are colorful and eye-catching. The cast is superb as well—from Vito Priante's virile Figaro, Lydia Teuscher's charming Susanna, Sally Matthews' melancholy Countess, and Audun Iversen's blustering Count through the lesser roles—all singing splendidly and proving to be solid actors. One minor weakness is the conducting of the original-instrument Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment by the Festival's new music director, Robin Ticciati—the music shows precision and crispness but fails to fully elicit the work's sense of fun on the one hand and poignancy on the other. But that is simply nitpicking, given the high quality, overall. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and a cast gallery. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Level 42: Live ★★

(1992) 89 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



Boomers and older Gen Xers with a fondness for New Wave are the target audience for this concert featuring British pop band Level 42, recorded in March 1992 at London's Town and Country Club. The DVD quality is mediocre and shot in an unremarkable multi-camera style, but the audio is solid on this 16-song set of lively tunes played at high energy in a funky pop jazz performance. Level 42 was in the British New Wave family that also included bands such as Spandau Ballet, Simple Minds, Duran Duran, Heaven 17, Thompson Twins, and other mulleted, poofy-haired, synth dance outfits of the era. Fronted by Mark King, whose distinctive slap-bass guitar sound and keen lead vocals combine with

Mike Lindup's falsetto backup, songs include “Something About You,” Level 42's biggest hit in the U.S., as well as “Lessons in Love,” which reached number 3 on the U.K. Singles Chart. Presented in stereo, *Level 42: Live* is a visually unremarkable concert that is an optional purchase, at best. (T. Fry)

### Manon Lescaut ★★1/2

(1997) 125 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. Blu-ray: \$29.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-5032-3.

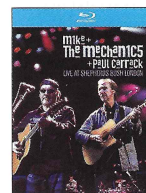


This solid if unremarkable 1997 Glyndebourne production presents Giacomo Puccini's third opera, which never achieved the popularity of his later works—in part because the plot is familiar from Massenet's earlier treatment, but also because the undistinctive score (completed in 1893, three years before *La Bohème*) suggests a young composer still searching for his voice. Adina Nutescu sings well as Manon, a Parisian who spontaneously runs off with young nobleman Des Grieux, sung here with passion and ringing tone by Patrick Denniston. When she discovers that Des Grieux is poor, however, Manon leaves him for the older but wealthy Geronte (veteran Paolo Montarsolo, chewing the scenery but in fine voice). Returning to Des Grieux after he becomes rich from gambling, Manon is arrested on charges of stealing from Geronte and deported to Louisiana. Although Des Grieux follows her to America, she dies in his arms as they cross the arid countryside. In addition to the generally fine vocalism, the strongest element of the performance is John Eliot Gardiner's conducting, which features the London Philharmonic in top form at tempos that make the music seem better than it actually is. Unfortunately, while the costumes are colorful, the sets are plain, especially during the last act, which is mounted on an almost bare stage. Presented in a standard 4:3 format with LPCM stereo sound, this Blu-ray debut is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

### Mike + the Mechanics + Paul Carrack: Live at Shepherd's Bush London

★★★1/2

(2004) 127 min. Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



As one of the founding members of the British progressive rock band Genesis, Mike Rutherford had already been a member of rock 'n roll royalty for almost 20 years when he formed Mike + the Mechanics as a side project in 1985. The band, which has gone through various incarnations (including a resurrection in 2010), is best