

Sinatra variety hour

It would be nice if somebody would put together a comprehensive set of episodes from **The Frank Sinatra Show**, and it would also be nice if there were some decently preserved source material somewhere, but for now, fans must tolerate piecemeal releases in a better-than-not-having-it-at-all condition. Such is the case with the Quantum Leap MVD release, **The Frank Sinatra Show with Ella Fitzgerald** (DM2501, \$15), a 1959 episode running 59 minutes, replete with nonsensical commercials for Timex watches (they strap one to an arrow and shoot it through a glass window). It's a terrific program. Sinatra is joined by Fitzgerald—who is promoting her *Songbook* recordings—Peter Lawford, Hermione Gingold and Juliet Prowse. They do Cole Porter numbers (long before **Indiana Jones**, here is a version of *Anything Goes* staged with an oriental motif), Irving Berlin numbers and more. The scenes between Sinatra and Prowse have some real electricity to them, and his 'meeting of the titans' duet with Fitzgerald is great fun. Lawford's lapdog antics are tolerable and Gingold brings some classy humor to the show. The production was apparently staged at Palm Springs during the rain or something, though it is difficult to determine what the original plan was and how much they had to divert from it because of the weather. Nevertheless, the show is marvelous, and the more of these that can be resurrected, the better.

The full screen black-and-white kinescope picture is tolerable. The image is soft and contrasts are weak, with speckles, but none of the flaws are severe enough to distract from the entertainment. The monophonic sound is solid and clear. There is no captioning but there are text profiles of the performers.

Play poker with Bon Jovi

Didn't Jon Bon Jovi used to be a hard rocker? He's been getting soft over the years, and while he's not quite Barry Manilow yet, who is to say what the future will hold? Anyway, Island has released a 2003 concert program as a two-platter set, **Bon Jovi This Left Feels Right Live Limited Edition** (8000196209, \$15). He stays mostly on the acoustical guitar or just doing vocals during the 107-minute concert, shot in Atlantic City, and seems to be playing almost exclusively to the female fans with his gyrations and poses. The music is pleasant enough, with a strong country flavor, actually, and is staged in such a way that Bon Jovi sustains an intimate contact with both his audience and the viewer as he does his act. He may be continually remaking himself, but so far, it's worked.

The full screen picture is clearly cropped, with both the opening and end credits sliced off the sides of the screen and even Bon Jovi getting cut off a trip to the edge of the stage or two. Otherwise, however, the picture quality is excellent. Even in subdued light, the image is clearly detailed and colors are accurate. There is both a 5.1-channel Dolby Digital track and a DTS track, and both have rich, distinctively separated tones. Also included is a fine 29-minute documentary about setting up the concert and 3 minutes of outtakes from the concert, featuring between-number patter (including a 'blonde' joke in poor taste). Both are supported by optional English, Spanish and Portuguese subtitles (the menu implies that the subtitles support the concert program, but that isn't the case).

The second platter contains a cute interactive game where you play poker with Bon Jovi and his band, winning musical clips from an outdoor concert where Bon Jovi is more electrified and oriented toward rock 'n' roll. Those 31 minutes of clips can also be played back in a regular fashion. There is a 15-minute interview with Bon Jovi that is also staged in a poker game setting, where he talks about his shift to an acoustic sound. Finally, along with a still frame section of photos of the band, there is an excellent 13-minute segment presenting three numbers from the concert program, the screen displaying all nine camera angles that were covering the show.

Remembering Duran Duran

Issued in a cloth-bound jacket that you have to pry open with something, **Duran Duran Sing Blue Silver**, from EMI (PM807EDV140/UPC#724359943695, \$30) is a 1984 documentary about a North American concert tour that captures the hysteria the band briefly enjoyed during their run of successful music videos on MTV. The 86-minute show does not include the videos, however, although the live performance is energetic and relatively melodic, all things considered. The backstage footage is also extensive and is probably more satisfying now, as a record of the excitement the band enjoyed, than it was when the program was first released and viewers wanted to get on with the music. The full screen color transfer looks fine and colors are fresh, though the film quality does vary from shot to shot under the makeshift documentary conditions. The stereo surround sound has plenty of power. There are optional French, Spanish and Chinese subtitles for the non-music portions of the program. The back of the jacket, printed in white on light blue, incidentally, is almost impossible to read, but included as an insert is a very nice collection of black-and-white photos.

Sixteen stickers are included on an insert in **Duran Duran Arena**, another EMI release (5994359, \$30). The 59-minute concert program is less satisfying than the program on **Sing Blue Silver**, although you do get clips from **Barbarella** and from the band's provocative *Girls on Film*. It is more dependent upon elaborate effects and the music is not as clear spoken, but the DVD is accompanied by 67 minutes of supporting materials, including a

production documentary, an interview with singer Simon Le Bon, a deleted number, a music video that makes use of the distractions created for the concert, and a couple promotional clips. The full screen picture looks okay, with reasonably fresh colors. The stereo surround sound has plenty of power. There are optional French, Spanish and Chinese subtitles for the text that appears on the screen and other incidental dialog.

Punk tour

The ninth annual effort in the popular punk band concert series is adequately summarized in **Vans Warped Tour '03**, an Image-Entertainment release (KFR2261DVD, \$20). Fans will tell you that the series got a little more commercial that year, but then, that is why there is a DVD, right? The 105-minute program supplies a great sampler of a good two dozen bands, including Pennywise, The Ataris, Simple Plan, The Unseen, Rancid, and Sum 41, along with a decent look at what the experience of attending one of the concerts was like (there's even a 'parent day care' center, where parents who have brought their kids to the concert can sit and watch TV while the kids boogie and slam dance). Although the political diatribes that are normally a central part of the atmosphere at the concerts have been scrupulously circumvented, the program otherwise captures the spirit and tone of the show effectively, and there is a lot of terrific, hard rocking music.

The picture alternates between letterboxed and full screen images and is very crisp, with accurate hues and fleshtones. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has lots of power and clear tones. There is no captioning. Also included is an excellent 103 minutes of interviews with the members of the various bands, who really let their guards down as they talk about the tour and anything else that comes into their heads.

Treats for the eyes and ears

Here's the reason God created Jumbotrons—the attractive Columbian singer, Shakira, not only sings and prances around the stage on **Shakira Live and Off the Record**, an Epic Music Video release (EVD-58499, \$20), she bellydances. Fortunately, the video cameras are there to capture it all, in luscious close-ups. Her singing—she does a few songs in English, but most are in Spanish—is adequate—a little low and throaty, kind of like Alicia Bridges, but gamely energetic—and it is enough to legitimize all her other antics, the real reason at least half the population will want to watch the program, even if they don't know a lick of Spanish.

The 99-minute concert, which was shot primarily in Rotterdam in 2002, is presented in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and no 16:9 enhancement. The color transfer is quite clear and sharp. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound is a little overblown, but adequate. There are optional English, Spanish and Portuguese subtitles for her between-song patter. Also featured is a decent 55-minute documentary profile that includes footage of her receiving painkiller shots and arguing with her manager. There is a discography, too.

A second platter included in the jacket contains a 55-minute CD of a live concert recording, though the audience sounds tend to overwhelm the music at times and the recording lacks subtlety.

Another concert program that will appeal to some viewers who could care less about the music, **Beyoncé Live at Wembley**, is available from Sony Urban Music and Columbia Music Video (CVD58626, \$20). Musically, her 2003 performance is terrific, with a solid vocal range and a reasonable melodiousness for the arena venue. Her stage production, however, takes the entertainment to another level, with elaborate choreography, pizzazzy lights and backdrops, and costumes that will bring the Tex Avery out of your facial features. Additionally, the 74-minute program is quite effectively directed and edited, drawing energy from the numbers and reenergizing the numbers in turn. On top of that, the picture is so clear you can count Beyoncé's abdominal muscles. The image is presented in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. There is no captioning. Also featured on the program is a 56-minute collection of documentary footage, including a performance of *Crazy in Love* from an awards program and a TV commercial for hair color. Additionally, a 35-minute CD is included on a separate platter, offering good sounding studio recordings of a half dozen songs that further show off her vocal dexterity.

Uno, dos, tres,

The audio recording on **Suzi Quatro: Leather Forever**, a Sacred Dogs Entertainment Image Entertainment release (ID2588QTDVD, \$20), has a genuinely live ambience, with less touching up or make up than even the nonsense Quatro herself is sporting. Shot in Stuttgart in 2003, the sound has a tinny resonance, but it is a 'good' tinny resonance, a certification that what you are getting is unadulterated rock. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital track relies entirely upon the prowess of the stage performers themselves to convey the show's energy, and it succeeds, perhaps even hinting to the viewer that there is more snap and kick to Quatro's music than there really is—illusion through the lack of illusion. To back up the audio, the picture is very slick. It is presented in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 2:1 and no 16:9 enhancement. Shot on video, colors are crisp and vivid. The editing is charged up, but keeps you close to the performers. The 47-minute program is not captioned.