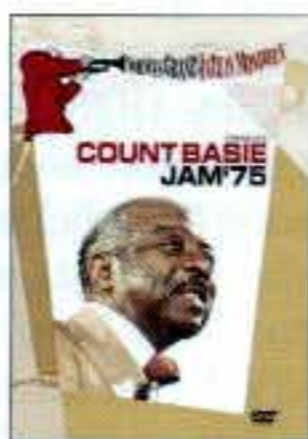


of their groundbreaking work was behind them, while Davis' concerts and recordings in the '50s and '60s in particular continue to occupy a profound and unique place in jazz history. For that reason alone, any visual record of his career is worth checking out—especially one that predates the decade before his death (in 1991). That said, it should also be added that *Miles Electric: A Different Kind of Blue* isn't for everyone: the focus here is on Davis' appearance at the massive Isle of Wight rock festival in 1970, a year after the release of the landmark fusion album *Bitches Brew*, and the music he played that day (presented here in its 38-minute entirety, with strikingly good visuals and excellent, well-mixed DTS Digital sound) consists of one uninterrupted jam. It's funky, raw, loud, sometimes dissonant, even raucous—powerful stuff, but a far cry from Davis' *Kind of Blue*. What's indisputable is the craft that went into producer/director Murray Lerner's documentary preceding the concert itself, including a host of 2003 interviews with folks who either loved the music (Carlos Santana) or disdained it (critic Stanley Crouch calls it a shameless sell-out), as well as musicians who'd worked with Miles before (Herbie Hancock, saxophonist Dave Liebman), and Joni Mitchell, who also performed at the Isle of Wight. Best of all, the six superb players who were onstage with Davis (keyboardists Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett, drummer Jack DeJohnette, percussionist Airto Moreira, electric bassist Dave Holland, and saxophonist Gary Bartz) are on hand to reminisce. Add to that a couple of wonderful new solo improvisations at the end of the program by Hancock and Airto, and you've got an item that no Miles Davis fan should be without. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Graham)

### Norman Granz' Jazz in Montreux Presents Count Basie Jam '75

★★★1/2

(1975) 65 min. DVD: \$11.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Color cover.



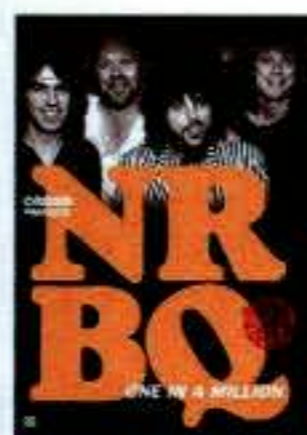
"It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing." Not merely a good line, but a genuine truism, as the ability to swing (along with enough chops to freely improvise and a deep rooting in the blues) is the central element of pretty much every good jazz performance. And while it was Duke Ellington who coined the line, there has arguably never been a jazz musician who could swing with the grace, ease, and sheer joy of the late pianist/bandleader William "Count" Basie. Witness this concert from 1975, which finds Basie in the company of five other veteran musicians, including a rhythm section of drummer Louis Bellson (a veritable swinging machine) and bassist Niels Pedersen, the hugely entertaining trumpeter Roy Eldridge, tenor saxophon-

ist Johnny Griffin (possessor of a full, tough style reminiscent of Coleman Hawkins), and vibraphonist Milt Jackson (who, after Lionel Hampton, remains the most influential player on his particular instrument). Granted, there's nothing surprising or especially exciting going on here; the six musicians play the blues, basically (including two hoary jazz standards, "Billie's Bounce" and "Lester Leaps In"), with the front line soloing at length on every tune and Basie, Pedersen, and Bellson providing rock-solid backing and occasional solos. Technically, the visuals lack a certain crispness, but the remastered sound (in DTS, Dolby Digital 5.1, and PCM stereo) is excellent. DVD extras include a four-minute featurette in which veteran critic Nat Hentoff offers some insight into both the nature of jazz and the character and contributions of producer-promoter-label executive Norman Granz, an irascible fellow who was nonetheless a tireless champion of jazz music and the people who played it. A strong optional purchase. [Note: *Norman Granz' Jazz in Montreux Presents Oscar Peterson Trio '77* is also newly available.] Aud: P. (S. Graham)

### NRBQ: One in a Million

★★★1/2

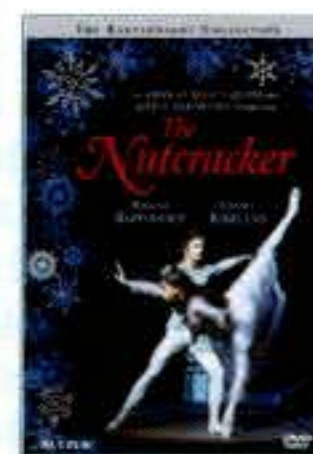
(1989) 40 min. DVD \$16.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors). Color cover.



NRBQ has, in its long history, embraced just about every popular music style—from rhythm and blues, to jazz-rock, to alt-country—often before these genres became well known. This too-brief 1989 Montreal concert finds band members Terry Adams (keyboards), Joey Spampinato (bass), drummer Tom Ardolino, and guitarist Big Al Anderson (long-gone founding guitarist Steve Ferguson is not on hand to perform his magnum opus "Flat Foot Flewzy") serving up nine tunes, including signature selections such as "I Got a Rocket in My Pocket," "Girl Scout Cookies," and "12 Bar Blues" in 5.1 surround sound. (What?!? No "RC Cola and a Moon Pie"? Oh well.) The performances are energetic and loose, with the musicians obviously enjoying themselves (even after decades of touring and recording to little if any chart success) and the band's iconic laidback professionalism imbues the entire package, which also includes "It's a Wild Weekend," "Little Floater," "You're So Beautiful," "Crazy Like a Fox," and the band's show stopping rendition of "Shake, Rattle & Roll." DVD extras include a bonus 2004 music video for "Dummy," a slideshow with biographical sketches of band members, and Dave DiMartino's (who wrote for the late *Creem*) highly informative essay on the band and its Miami, Florida roots. Great stuff from a historically significant pop music act, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Tribby)

### The Nutcracker ★★★

(1977) 78 min. DVD: \$29.95. Kultur. Color cover. ISBN: 0-7697-2925-8 (dvd).



Even though the orchestral work of the National Philharmonic under Kenneth Schermerhorn doesn't have the punch or luster of more recent recordings (despite the fact that the soundtrack has been remastered to offer both Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo options), and some will bemoan the abridgment of the score, this 1977 PBS-aired perennial favorite still retains much of its magic, thanks in part to Boris Aronson's production design and Frank Thompson's lovely costumes. *The Nutcracker* was the first choreographic effort by the legendary Mikhail Baryshnikov, and under his supple leadership the members of the American Ballet Theatre dance with energy and grace. Baryshnikov himself takes the role of the Nutcracker Prince to magnificent effect, and he finds an equal partner in sweet-faced Gelsey Kirkland as the radiant Clara. Granted, some have objected to various aspects of Baryshnikov's interpretation—his transformation of the Act II Sugar Plum Fairy *pas de deux* into a *pas de trois* for Clara, the Prince, and Drosselmeyer has elicited particular criticism—and Tony Charmoli's direction is sometimes too busy, cutting to unnecessary close-ups rather than allowing full view of the performers. But on balance this *Nutcracker* has faded very little with advancing age, and deserves a warm welcome on DVD. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Reggae Nation: Island Movement ★★★1/2

(2002) 2 discs. 51 min. DVD: \$19.99 (CD included). Image Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Color cover.



As a wise person (my son) has observed, the more prominent the bikinied babe in the cover art, the further from Bob Marley-style roots the reggae music is likely to be. That's certainly true in the case of this dancehall-style reggae/X-sports extravaganza featuring the aforementioned cupcake on the cover and reggae performers Ky-Mani Marley, Sizzla, Beenie Man, Buju Banton, Mr. Vegas, Sean Paul, Tippa Irie, Long Beach Dub Allstars, Slightly Stoopid, Common Sense, Badfish, Isouljahs, Super Jerry, THC, Ooklah the Moc, Marty, and Natural Vibrations in song snippets, live performances, and interviews (additionally, pro surfers Sunny Garcia, Shane Dorian, and others appear, riding the waves to a reggae beat). Reggae luminaries Luciano, Bushman, David Hinds of Steel Pulse, Junior Reid, Eek-A-Mouse, Half Pint, and Michael Rose appear briefly, mainly to comment on the "Irieness" of the other artists and their work. The organizing premise here is a round-the-world look