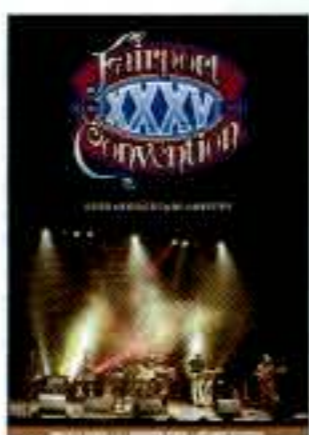


three additional live songs. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Shannon)

### Fairport Convention: 35th Anniversary Concert ★★1/2

(2002) 153 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



Lots of long-running groups go through multiple personnel changes, but Fairport Convention has had so many that even the one original member—guitarist-singer Simon Nicol—appearing in this 2002 concert filmed at the Anvil Theatre in Basingstoke, England took a few years off in the 1970s (“for good behavior”). As it is, this lengthy 19-song set features a mixture of hoary veterans (such as Nicol and bassist Dave Pegg, who signed on for *Full House* back in the early ‘70s) and relative newcomers (including violinist Ric Sanders and multi-instrumentalist Chris Leslie). No doubting the band’s importance: formed in 1967, Fairport Convention was the first and best English folk-rock outfit, combining the electric influence of West Coast American bands like the Byrds with traditional Brit folk songs to forge an original sound. But that was eons ago, when the lineup included great musicians like guitarist Richard Thompson and singer Sandy Denny, so while they are to be commended for soldiering on for what’s now close to four decades, the truth is that this concert is, well, a little quaint. Perhaps it’s the venue; the band would probably be looser and more fun in a pub, or outdoors at their annual Cropredy Festival, than in this theater setting. Although the vocals fall a little short, their chops are still pretty impressive: Pegg (who logged 15 years with Jethro Tull) is brilliant, a virtuoso player who also provides rock-solid backing, and Sanders is no slouch, but the concert lacks excitement, at least when they perform the pleasant but uninspired songs written since their ‘60s-’70s heyday (“Portmeirion,” a terrific instrumental, is an exception), catching fire only during “Everything But the Skirl,” a furious Sanders-Leslie violin duel, and especially the old chestnut “Matty Groves,” which is the rocking high point of the show. DVD extras include a text history of the band and selected musician interviews. Optional. Aud: P. (S. Graham)

### Gigantour ★★1/2

(2005) 2 discs. 85 min. DVD: \$24.99. Image Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



As with so many of these festival tour DVDs, you could watch *Gigantour* with the sound down and still tell when the quality bands are onstage. This Montreal stop on the 2005 Gigantour, organized by Dave Mustaine and his headlin-

ing band Megadeth, is largely unremarkable during the early bands, but as the night goes on—and you see the Bell Centre arena fill up—the show grows markedly better. Unfortunately, only the final two acts, the durable Megadeth and the musically solid Dream Theater, offer much of interest. What comes before them is for devoted metalheads only, a parade of derivative headbangers, hair-whippers, and would-be grunge heroes. The eloquent Mustaine—who also provides some between-bands commentary—and his veteran band perform “She Wolf,” “A Tout le Monde,” and “Kick the Chair,” and are a cut above Dream Theater (“Glass Prison,” “Panic Attack”), who are several cuts above anybody else in the eight-band lineup. Megadeth’s ability to mix melody with their metal—including multi-part vocal harmonies and a twin guitar attack—sets them apart, but never diminishes the potency of their full-on metal assault. In rating the other bands, only the Iron Maiden wannabe Symphony X (“Inferno,” “Of Sins and Shadows”) shows promise, with solid keyboards, impressive speed guitar, and a singer who’s got a little Ronnie James of Dio thing going on. Presented in DTS, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo, DVD extras include a bonus second disc with backstage antics, additional performances, and featurettes. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (M. Moore)

### Gloriana ★★1/2

(1999) 138 min. DVD: \$39.99 (booklet included). Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

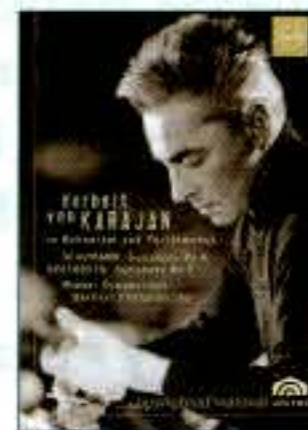


Benjamin Britten composed *Gloriana* as part of the festivities surrounding the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953. Centering on the conflict between love and duty experienced by aging monarch Queen Elizabeth I, the opera was something of a disappointment to those celebrating Elizabeth’s young namesake. Afterwards, *Gloriana* languished in relative obscurity until this inventive 1999 film treatment from director Phyllida Lloyd, which is presented as a play within a play, with backstage activity blending with performance scenes, lending tension and excitement to the dramatic story of an aging Elizabeth confronting her own mortality. A beautiful production, visually evoking a master painting, and boasting a variety of camera angles (including overhead shots which are particularly effective in the dance scenes), *Gloriana* features Josephine Barstow delivering a brilliant performance in the leading role (although I personally find her voice strident, I am in the minority). Barstow is backed by Tom Randle as Essex, the splendid chorus of Opera North, and the English Northern Philharmonia conducted by Paul Daniel, all of whom give superior performances, which keep this from being a one woman *tour de force*. Although significant

cuts have been made to the Britten score, few will feel shortchanged. Presented in DTS 5.1 and LCPM stereo, DVD extras include a cast gallery and meaningful commentary by Barstow, Randle, Lloyd, and Daniel on “*Gloriana* at Opera North,” “Elizabeth and Essex,” “The Idea of the Film,” and “*Gloriana*, a Film.” Highly recommended. [Note: also newly available is a 1996 opera feature film of Britten’s children’s title *Let’s Make an Opera*, priced at \$19.99.] Aud: C, P. (J. Reed)

### Herbert von Karajan in Rehearsal and Performance ★★★

(1966) 140 min. DVD: \$24.99 (booklet included). EuroArts (dist. by Naxos of America).



Herbert von Karajan (1908-1989) was a titan among 20th-century conductors, a charismatic man whose direction of both the Berlin Philharmonic and the Salzburg Festival during much of the Cold War period made him one of the era’s dominant musical personalities. Even those who disliked the smooth, blended orchestral sound that he cultivated would find it difficult to deny his technical mastery or his influence. *Herbert von Karajan in Rehearsal and Performance* includes two black-and-white programs from a series made for television in the mid-’60s, when the conductor was at the height of his powers. The first finds him rehearsing the Vienna Philharmonic in a 1965 performance of Schumann’s Fourth Symphony in preparation for a recording of the work: the camera remains tightly focused on the maestro as he quietly but insistently coaxes the precise emphases he desires out of the players, after which the viewer is treated to a full performance, artfully filmed. The second program from 1966 begins with von Karajan offering advice to an unnamed student conductor who’s rehearsing the Berlin Philharmonic in playing Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, followed by a complete performance of the work under the maestro, more conventionally filmed. Presented in PCM stereo, the orchestral sound is frankly mediocre throughout, but what’s important here is the footage of a great conductor at work, and while some may find von Karajan’s manner studied (he’s not being caught off-the-cuff, needless to say), the result is fascinating—and film buffs should take note that both programs were directed by the great French filmmaker Henri-Georges Clouzot. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Jeanie Bryson: Live at Warsaw Jazz Festival ★★

(2006) 70 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors). Color cover.

It’s not a great sign when a singer’s parentage is more intriguing than her music, but