

attack on modernism that led to the imposition of standards of so-called socialist realism in music and art (Shostakovich responded by revising the work, adopting—some have argued—a more officially palatable style). *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* must have shocked audiences when it premiered, both due to its libretto—about a wealthy adulteress who, aided by her lover, kills her husband and father-in-law (with further tragic consequences)—and its discordant music. This 2006 production from the Nederlandse Opera follows the original version, and boasts some great strengths: the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra is magnificent, with conductor Mariss Jansons bringing out all the power and spikiness of the score, and the vocal work is wonderful, with Eva-Maria Westbroek overwhelming as Katerina and Christopher Ventris excellent as Sergei. Technically, the mounting is first-class as well, with crisp, fluent camerawork and superb sound (including DTS and LPCM stereo options). But the staging is problematic—not because the action has been updated with modern costumes and spare sets, or because of the extensive nudity (especially in a near-rape sequence) and sexuality (in a bedroom scene performed with strobe lighting). No, the real drawback lies in the fact that the action sometimes makes nonsense of the words, as when we see a man carrying a body that he says is still buried in a cellar. DVD extras include a documentary featuring the director and singers. Overall, this is a good—if not definitive—rendition. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Lesley Garrett: Music from the Movies ★★½
(2004) 59 min. DVD: \$19.99.
Kultur International Films.
ISBN: 0-7697-8417-8.



Fans of British soprano Lesley Garrett may enjoy this 2004 “Opera at the Park” concert performed in Leeds, England, featuring the Orchestra of Opera North, as well as special guest stars Ruthie Henshall and Michael McCarthy. Unfortunately, a talent for opera doesn’t necessarily translate into sparkling renditions of popular songs: Garrett’s takes on “Where Do I Begin?” (*Love Story*) or “Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend” (*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*) feel technically proficient but emotionally lifeless, while her duets with the somewhat milquetoast-sounding McCarthy (on “Puttin’ on the Ritz,” among other songs) are decidedly less than vibrant. Still, Garrett does shine on a handful of the 16 tunes presented here, most notably “Moon River” (from *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*) and “He Was Beautiful” (*The Deer Hunter*), but the real breath of musical fresh air here is clearly Henshall, whose sultry “Mein Herr” (*Cabaret*) steals the show. Presented in Dolby Digital stereo, the

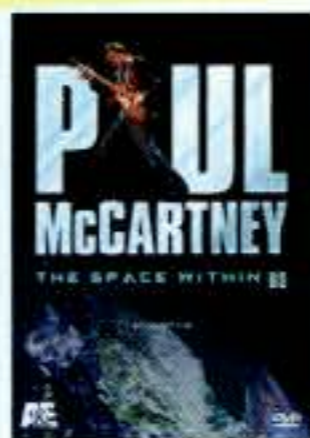
disc includes a half-hour-plus bonus 2003 concert. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (R. Pitman)

Oscar Peterson Trio: The Berlin Concert ★★½
(1985) 80 min. DVD: \$19.95.
Music Video Distributors
(avail. from most distributors).



When it comes to jazz pianists, there’s Oscar Peterson...and then there’s everybody else. With the exception of his idol, Art Tatum, arguably no one has ever matched Peterson’s sheer virtuosity, and while some of the former’s inimitable mannerisms (the florid decorations of the melody, the lightning fast runs, the overall technique and versatility that wowed classical musicians like Rachmaninoff and Horowitz) can be heard in Peterson’s playing throughout this 1985 Berlin concert performance, the man also evokes a mastery of the blues that perhaps exceeded even the immortal Tatum’s. Any way you slice it, this gig is a bravura display of musical brilliance, not only from Peterson but also by Danish bassist Niels-Henning Orsted Pedersen and, to a slightly lesser extent, drummer Martin Drew. If this were an old vinyl LP, you could drop the needle pretty much anywhere and hear something astonishing: Peterson’s solo intro on “Salute to Bach,” followed by Pedersen’s bass counterpoint; the pianist’s extended solo on “Who Can I Turn To”; “Blues Etude,” which finds Peterson meandering backstage while Pedersen and Drew set another ridiculous tempo, only to stroll back, sit down, and hit the keys running; or the pianist’s own “Cakewalk,” an almost contemporary-sounding tune which finds Pedersen playing the melody over Peterson’s blanket of chords. Overall, the Dolby Digital 5.1 audio is a bit cold, but the camerawork is solid, with plenty of interesting angles of the musicians at work. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (S. Graham)

Paul McCartney: The Space Within US ★★½
(2005) 115 min. DVD: \$24.95.
A&E Home Video (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7670-9180-9.



Recorded during Paul McCartney’s 2005 world tour, *The Space Within US*, which originally aired on the A&E Network (in truncated form), is filled with great Fab Four songs, such as “Magical Mystery Tour,” “I’ll Follow the Sun,” “Drive My Car,” “I Will,” and “Yesterday,” along with several from McCartney’s terrific 2005 release *Chaos and Creation in the Backyard* (“Jenny Wren,” a distant cousin to “Blackbird,” is one of his best tunes in years) and earlier solo stuff. The band is first-rate, and the great Dolby Digital 5.1 surround

sound and high definition-shot video favorably add to the mix. But keeping in mind that this was dubbed the “US Tour,” it’s no surprise that the camera also spends a lot of time on the audience, capturing their rapturous and often quite touching responses (many nostalgic tears are shed as baby boomers spend an evening *a la recherche du temps perdu*, as it were), as well as the joy of a Beatles-obsessed family from Columbus, OH, when Sir Paul pays them a brief visit before going onstage. We also see a live feed from his Anaheim, CA gig to the International Space Station, with McCartney serenading the astronauts with “English Tea” (one of the weaker *Chaos* offerings), and celebs from Bill Clinton and Apple’s Steve Jobs to Eddie Vedder and Tony Bennett happily singing Macca’s praises. Bottom line: folks who just want to see and hear the band onstage may prefer other McCartney videos (such as the excellent *Paul McCartney in Red Square*, reviewed in VL-7/05). But Beatles fans will also find much to love about this offering, which includes a number of DVD extras, such as sound check songs, band interviews, and the U.S. tour pre-show film on McCartney. Recommended. Aud: P. (S. Graham)

Pulse: A STOMP Odyssey ★★½
(2002) 40 min. DVD: \$19.95.
Well Go USA (avail. from most distributors).



The Broadway smash *STOMP* is the inspiration for this lushly photographed international IMAX production showcasing percussion-based groups from New York’s Stompers (performing on a large tenement set that looks like something out of *West Side Story*) to Native American dancers in Colorado, as well as the Winchester Cathedral bell-ringers, Spanish flamenco artist Eva Yerbabuena, the Japanese Kodo drummers, Indian parade members (with soloist Shafaatullah Khan), African drummers and choral dancers, and a Brazilian carnival group (there’s also a “duel” between the percussion sections of two marching bands on the Brooklyn Bridge). Linking the sequences together are some vocal “percussion” riffs, mostly featuring *STOMP*’s Keith Middleton (and the *STOMP* crew themselves show up periodically, clanging on cans underwater or riding along deadpan on bikes in the desert, honking horns and sounding bells). *Pulse* has no narration, but the groups are briefly introduced with captions, and the closing credits offer more elaborate descriptions. Celebrating the universality of the rhythmic drive in humankind, *Pulse*’s penchant for continuous camera movement sometimes makes it difficult to appreciate the routines as a whole, but there’s always enough verve to induce a whole lot of toe-tapping. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound, DVD extras include bonus footage that runs