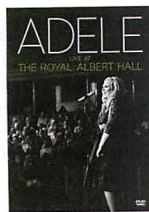


**Adele: Live at the Royal Albert Hall** ★★½

(2011) 100 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$31.98. Sony Music (avail. from most distributors).

British pop star Adele nurtures an adoring relationship with fans at London's Royal Albert Hall, but then breaks up with them and writes a plaintive tune about it. Just kidding, although Adele's identification with bad relationship/lost love songs is so strong she makes romantic misery and her own personal "ex" files a topic of recurring jokes in her frequent, occasionally profane Eliza Doolittle banter during this 17-song concert from September 2011. Featuring all but one tune from Adele's chartbuster recording *21*, and nearly half of her acclaimed debut *19*, the hits here include "Chasing Pavements," "Hometown Glory," "Set Fire to the Rain," "Turning Tables," "Rumour Has It," and "Rolling in the Deep." The audience-participation anthem "Someone Like You," which appears next-to-last, is prefaced with a lengthy, almost TMI intro (the ex-boyfriend is doing fine, she respects him, likely hurt him as much as he did her—wow, sounds like another songwriting session). Adele also inspires a candle-lit (well, cell-phone-screen-lit) backdrop as she sings "Make You Feel My Love" in tribute to the late Amy Winehouse. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and Dolby Digital stereo, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and a bonus audio CD of the concert. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

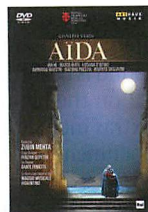


tion of an unjustly neglected composition. Adding to its value, the intermezzo *Livietta e Tracollo*—written as an addendum in 1734—is performed in the two intervals between acts. An amusing trifle in which a clever girl uses disguises to catch a thief whom she winds up marrying, the piece is performed with gusto by two singers and a small instrumental ensemble. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on Blu-ray) and LPCM stereo, extras include an intro to *Adriano in Siria* and a cast gallery. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

**Aida** ★★½

(2011) 151 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).

With so many excellent performances available on DVD and Blu-ray of Giuseppe Verdi's ever-popular 1871 opera—revolving around the doomed love between an Egyptian general and a beautiful Ethiopian slave set against the backdrop of war—a new release has to be fairly special to earn notice. Unfortunately, this 2011 mounting from the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino in Florence evinces more than a touch of the routine. Zubin Mehta conducts the prelude without much expression or subtlety, and while his reading grows more passionate later, it doesn't go full throttle until the last act. Director Ferzan Ozpetek takes a similarly unimaginative approach in which the singers simply stand and deliver, making for very static staging. Even worse is Francesco Ventriglia's klutzy choreography, which renders the ballet interludes—one featuring a bunch of mirrors—nearly laughable. On the plus side, the orchestra plays decently, the sets and costumes are impressive, and Hui He cuts a regal figure in the title role, while also exhibiting a strong, creamy voice. As her lover, Radamès, Marco Berti isn't her equal, neither physically nor vocally, but he and Luciana D'Intino, as Aida's jealous rival, Amneris, are at least adequate. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is a respectable *Aida*, overall, but with such a crowded field (better choices are reviewed in *VL-11/02* and *VL-11/04*), that isn't enough. Optional. (F. Swietek)



**Adriano in Siria**

★★★½

(2010) 190 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$29.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

While Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's comic intermezzos to his serious operas are still performed, the longer works themselves are largely forgotten, making this 2010 revival from Jesi—the Italian composer's birthplace—particularly welcome. Written in 1732, *Adriano in Siria* offers a typically romanticized take on classical history: the Roman emperor Hadrian falls in love with the captive daughter of the Parthian king, which sets off a chain of deceptions and conspiracies (the ending—with Hadrian demonstrating his wise clemency—was de rigueur in the age of enlightened despots). Pergolesi endows this stock story with music of unflinching grace and vivacity, energetically performed by the Accademia Bizantina ensemble under Ottavio Dantone and stylishly sung by a cast of young, vocally agile soloists, led by mezzo-soprano Marina Comparato in the title role. With simple, effective sets and attractive costumes, this is a superb realiza-



**Al Di Meola: Morocco Fantasia** ★★★

(2009) 123 min. DVD: \$24.95. Inakustik (dist. by Music Video Distributors).

Fusion guitarist Al Di Meola and World Sinfonia are captured live at the Mawazine Musique du Monde Festival in Morocco in this 2009 performance. Di Meola plays alongside Fausto Beccalossi (accordion), Peo Alfonsi (guitar), Gumbi Ortiz (percussion),



Peter Kaszas (drums), and Victor Miranda (bass)—adding, on the last two numbers, local players Said Chraïbi (oud), Abdellah Meri (violin), and Tari Ben Ali (percussion). Dressed-in-white Di Meola plays seven originals and a cover of Astor Piazzolla's "Double Concerto," beginning with "Misterio," which combines tango-style strumming with whistling and accordion flourishes, highlighting Di Meola's speed and dexterity on the acoustic guitar as he conjures up lyrical curlicues and filigrees. Fans of Di Meola's six-string expertise will surely welcome this, although the Latin-tinged tracks here are fairly interchangeable, with the exception of "Egyptian Danza," in which Di Meola switches to electric guitar for a harder-edged sound. Filmmakers Francesco Cabras and Alberto Molinari intercut scenes of everyday Moroccan life—fisherman at work, children at play, and women walking around town—as well as static shots that appear to dance in time with the music. Extras include deleted scenes, and behind-the-scenes footage (including a solo performance and jams with street musicians). Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and stereo, this is recommended. (K. Femmessy)

**The B-52's: With the Wild Crowd! Live in Athens, GA** ★★★

(2011) 131 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Vision (avail. from most distributors).

Although the lady singers stopped wearing beehive hairdos decades ago, the B-52's have never significantly altered their modern-rock sound. In this PBS-aired performance from their hometown of Athens, GA, the band combines new material with old favorites in a 20-song set that celebrates their Valentine's Day debut 34 years ago. Original members Fred Schneider, Kate Pierson, Cindy Wilson, and Keith Strickland are backed by a professional (if rather unadventurous) band featuring Tracy Wormworth (bass), Paul Gordon (keyboards), and Sterling Campbell (drums). In addition, Schneider contributes xylophone to "Give Me Back My Man," while Pierson adds keys to "Wig," part of the four-song encore. Pierson and Wilson dress up for the occasion in form-fitting dresses, while frontman Schneider dresses down in a striped jacket and jeans, although he briefly dons a wig for the crowd-pleaser "Party Out of Bounds." Standbys from the 1980s, including "Private Idaho" and "Rock Lobster," sound good, but more recent numbers, such as "Funplex" and "Love in the Year 3000," are forgettable. For a different kind of band this might be a problem, but the B-52's primarily make dance music, and their energy never flags, so it's unlikely that fans will be disappointed. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1,

