

a fine introduction to the band, *Gogol Bordello: Non Stop* is better than *The Pied Piper of Hützovina* (VL Online-7/08), which focuses on Hütz, and nicely complements the CD/DVD combo *Gogol Bordello: Live from Axis Mundi*, which combines a concert with radio sessions and outtakes. DVD extras include deleted scenes, numerous additional performances, and interview footage. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Hiromi Kanda: *Hiromi in Love* ★★

(2010) 120 min. DVD: \$18.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99. Music Gate (avail. from most distributors).



The well-worn corpus of traditional jazz-pop standards that comprises the "Great American Songbook" is resurrected yet again, this time by Japan's mid-20th-century throwback chanteuse, Hiromi Kanda. With more saccharine than a box of Sweet 'n Low, Kanda does her best to sweeten up 13 immortal ditties, including Rodgers and Hart's "My Funny Valentine," "Unforgettable," and the Gershwin classic "Someone to Watch Over Me," among others. However, these cobwebbed classics demand a savvy song stylist who knows how to resell old standards in new ways, much like Julie London did in the 1960s or Combustible Edison's Miss Lily Banquette in the 1990s. Here, backed by the Honolulu Symphony's competently conventional arrangements, Kanda can't quite deliver these songs in an original or compelling way, visually or vocally. Actually, it's the two music-only extras on this DVD, "How Deep Is the Ocean" and "All the Way," that stand out, possibly because her exaggerated mugging for the camera doesn't get in the way. Kanda's overall performance could have been spiced up by, say, adopting a more tongue-in-cheek, late-'50s cocktail jazz/exotica vibe; instead, she approaches every song like Marilyn Monroe singing "Happy Birthday" to JFK. Although Kanda's heart is in the right place, *Hiromi in Love*—presented in stereo—takes too few risks to seduce demanding golden-oldies buffs. Not a necessary purchase. Aud: P. (M. Sandlin)

How Sweet It Was: The Sights and Sounds of Gospel's Golden Age

★★★★1/2
(2010) 70 min. DVD: \$29.98 (audio CD included). Shanachie Entertainment.



Compiled by producer Anthony Heilbut, this two-disc set offers 27 performances on DVD plus 26 on the accompanying CD. In honoring the genre's golden age, Heilbut draws on television programs from the 1960s, such as *TV Gospel Time*, with acts ranging from solo performers such as J. Robert Bradley ("God's Amazing

Grace"), to acoustic duos like the Consolers (Sullivan and Iola Pugh with "The Grace of God"), to several outfits in tandem with full choirs. Sister Rosetta Tharpe performs "Up Above My Head I Hear Music in the Air" (with fiery electric guitar accompaniment) and "In the Garden," with Delois Barrett Campbell and Professor Alfred Miller. Other highlights include Ira Tucker and the Dixie Hummingbirds with the swinging "If You See My Savior," the Sensational Nightingales belting the barn-burning "Somewhere to Lay My Head," and the post-Sam Cooke edition of the Soul Stirrers serving up the rollicking "I'm a Soldier." Complementing the performances, Heilbut's 32-page booklet of liner notes (with period photos) offers illuminating background information on each act. About the Meditation Singers, for instance, he notes that R&B star Laura Lee got her start with the Detroit combo before later striking off on her own with secular hits like "Stand Up and Fight (For Your Love Rights)." The CD features a completely different set of songs, including nine unreleased tracks and two numbers by the legendary Mahalia Jackson (who doesn't appear on the DVD). Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Icons Among Us: Jazz in the Present Tense

★★1/2
(2010) 96 min. DVD: \$24.95. IndiePix (avail. from most distributors).



Some would argue that jazz, the great American art form, has lain fallow for at least the last 20 or 30 years, but documentary co-directors Michael Rivoira, Lars Larson, and Peter J. Vogt disagree, assembling here comments on the subject from a substantial group of musicians. Some are quite articulate, others philosophical; some complain about the constant labeling and categorizing of the music, and a few are clearly tired of having to live up to the expectations engendered by their legendary predecessors ("Fuck John Coltrane" is one's pithy dismissal). Among the veterans on hand are Herbie Hancock, Wynton Marsalis, and Wayne Shorter. But in the end, talk is cheap: by far the best evidence of what trumpeter Terence Blanchard calls "the quiet revolution" among younger musicians lies in the film's performance footage, which spotlights keyboardist Marco Benevento, guitarist Bill Frisell, the trio of Medeski Martin and Wood (with guitarist John Scofield), Norwegian pianist Bugge Wesseltoft, Israeli clarinetist Anat Cohen, and Dutch saxophonist Tineke Postma. Presented in Dolby Digital stereo, DVD extras include five complete performances, profiles of jazz advocacy organizations, and footage of a Living Daylights Mardi Gras party from 2002. The music (especially in the bonus sets) renders much of the verbiage essentially

irrelevant. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (S. Graham)

Jeff Healey and the Jazz Wizards: *Beautiful Noise*

★★★★
(2006) 57 min. DVD: \$16.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



Best known as a bluesman, Canada's Jeff Healey (1966-2008) reveals a jones for jazz in this live set from 2006. According to bass player Colin Bray's liner notes, the blind Healey became a jazz fan in childhood, amassing a 27,000-strong collection of 78 rpm records. In this performance recorded in Toronto for the Canadian television series *Beautiful Noise*, Healey adds trumpet to his Stratocaster and voice-based repertoire. Joined by the Jazz Wizards (guitar, stand-up bass, piano, drums, saxophone, clarinet, and violin), he runs through a nine-song selection of swing and Dixieland classics in the spirit of Louis Armstrong and Django Reinhardt. Healey performs with the full band—except for a few specialty numbers like "Wild Cat" (a duet with violinist Drew Jurecka) and turns with guest vocalist Terra Hazelton—keeping the stage patter to a minimum as the program alternates between the live set and short interview segments. Despite a somewhat narrow vocal range, Healey's conversational tenor still works well with the material. Viewers who have been following his career since the 1980s aren't likely to be surprised by the change of pace, but cult-movie fans who know him best for his appearance in the 1989 Patrick Swayze vehicle *Road House* may be surprised. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo, DVD extras include two bonus tracks, "You Go to My Head" and "Long John Blues" (with Hazelton). Recommended. Aud: P. (K. Fennessy)

La Boheme ★★

(2009) 120 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Kultur International Films (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-0-7697-8975-0 (dvd).



Director Jonathan Miller has a reputation for bringing a modern-day sensibility and dramatic authenticity to a production without compromising the spirit of the original, which he does in this 2009 English National Opera performance of *La Boheme*, transplanting Giacomo Puccini's struggling artists and their conflicted love lives to Paris in the 1930s, while lending an edgy but effective realism to the familiar tale. With spare but attractive sets by designer Isabella Bywater and credible acting by the principals (some vocally stronger than others), the drama offers a moving experience as it follows Mimi and Rodolfo (Melody Moore