

Discoveries...America National Parks: Mount Rushmore ★★

(2014) 50 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-172-6 (dvd), 978-1-60490-195-5 (Blu-ray).

Rich in historical detail and entertaining anecdotes, this latest entry in Jim and Kelly Watt's high-def filmed *Discoveries...America: National Parks* series focuses on South Dakota's unique and fascinating national parks. Towering over all, of course, is Mount Rushmore, the largest piece of public art in the world. Built by 400 men over 14 years, this monument to several American presidents—carved into solid rock—was the brainchild of South Dakota historian Doane Robinson and sculptor Gutzon Borglum, whose original plans for the monument changed due to geological variables. Viewers will also accompany a park ranger who gives a tour of Wind Cave National Park, which boasts plentiful wildlife, as well as one of the longest caves in the world, caked in limestone (with so many narrow entrances into the cave, it's easy to get lost and exit out another hole). Jewel Cave National Monument has the third longest cave in the U.S., while Badlands National Park features beautiful grasslands and rugged formations created from the accelerated erosion of rock. Badlands is also home to a remarkable fossil trail that has recorded the presence of prehistoric animals (evidence also suggests that the area was once covered in water). Sure to appeal to armchair travelers and park enthusiasts alike, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

BIOGRAPHY

Anita: Speaking Truth to Power ★★

(2014) 77 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Borrowing her title from Anita Hill's own 1998 autobiography, filmmaker Frieda Lee Mock heroically profiles the woman whose 1991 testimony concerning sexual harassment challenged—unsuccessfully—the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court. In retrospect, Hill (who is treated like a veritable icon by admirers here) was instrumental in raising the public's consciousness regarding workplace impropriety and sexism. Perhaps the documentary's most eyebrow-raising revelation is that Hill brought many witnesses who could have supported her bombshell allegations that Thomas had made numerous lewd remarks and advances when he and Hill worked together in the U.S. Bureau of Education during the early 1980s—but none were called to testify by the presiding investigator...a certain Joe Biden. No mention is made of Hill's vindication following the publication of David Brock's 1993

right-wing bestseller *The Real Anita Hill*, a book that was later repudiated by its own author after he switched political sides. One of the more timely interviews here is with *New York Times* ex-executive editor Jill Abramson (co-author of a book on the Thomas confirmation hearings), whose own ouster from the newspaper earlier this year was tinged with innuendo about office gender inequalities and old-boys networks. DVD extras include a keynote address by Hill, and a performance in honor of Hill coordinated by Eve Ensler. Generally hagiographic but also featuring insightful commentary about a key figure who stirred up water cooler debates across the nation in the early '90s, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

B.B. King: The Life of Riley ★★

(2014) 119 min. DVD: \$16.95, Blu-ray: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Morgan Freeman narrates this well-rounded profile of blues musician Riley "B.B." King, who began life in 1925 as the son of Mississippi sharecroppers. As a structuring device, director Jon Brewer here draws on an annual visit by King to his Delta birthplace, along the way adding comments from friends and relatives, accompanied by photos and archival performances from King and those who have inspired him, such as Django Reinhardt and T-Bone Walker. Blues contemporaries, including Buddy Guy and Bobby "Blue" Bland, also offer reminiscences. After his parents split up, King's mother died from complications due to diabetes (a condition he shares), and he was raised by a succession of relatives. King developed an interest in the guitar at an early age, and picked up paying gigs after moving to Memphis, where he worked as a disc jockey. Once King started touring, he never stopped, and he doesn't consider it unusual to play 365 days a year (although that workload did contribute to the end of his first marriage). King also acknowledges a weakness for the ladies, saying, "I never met a woman that I didn't like." With the rise of British blues-rock in the 1960s, King's audience actually grew larger, particularly after he released the pop hit "The Thrill Is Gone," which added strings to his sound, and he toured with the Rolling Stones. Collaborations and more tours with U2 and Eric Clapton in later years would continue to expand his reach. *B.B. King: The Life of Riley* pays tribute to the electric blues that King popularized as much as the man himself, and includes commentary from several high-profile fans and practitioners, including John Mayall, Leon Russell, and Bonnie Raitt. Extras include extended interviews and a 2011 performance from London's Royal Albert Hall. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Femmessy)

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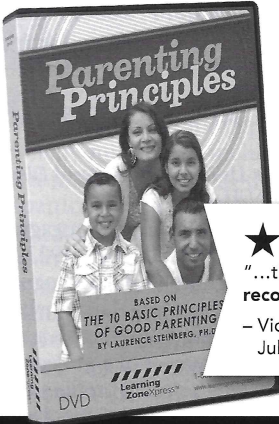
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