

Kurt Cobain: Montage of Heck ★★★

(2015) 132 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.98. Universal Music Enterprises (avail. from most distributors).

While other filmmakers have made documentaries about Nirvana singer-songwriter Kurt Cobain (1967-1994), Brett Morgen's *Montage of Heck* is likely to prove definitive, especially since Morgen had unfettered access to family members and archival material. Serving up a chronological biography, the film interweaves home movies with insightful interviews. Some speakers, like Cobain's mother, Wendy O'Connor, have never talked about him on camera before, but agreed to participate after Kurt's daughter, Frances Bean Cobain, signed on as producer. So it's somewhat surprising that the documentary paints a fairly critical portrait. O'Connor praises her son's musical talent as a child, but says that after her divorce from Don Cobain, Kurt never recovered from his feelings of betrayal (this thematic thread runs throughout, making Kurt seem more emotionally stunted than sensitive and sympathetic). Morgen draws on journal entries, drawings, and audiotapes to track the stages of Cobain's development, skillfully editing the material together (although the animated segments, which depict Kurt in private moments, seem extraneous). Since the director opted to focus on Cobain's point of view, he keeps interviews to a minimum, but does include key figures such as Nirvana bass player Krist Novoselic, and Cobain's widow, Courtney Love. Morgen appears to have little interest in rehashing the details of Cobain's suicide—one of the music world's more tragic losses—but otherwise does a fine job of telling Cobain's story. Extras include bonus interviews and a photo gallery. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Sinatra: All or Nothing at All ★★★1/2

(2015) 2 discs. 259 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$29.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Oscar-winning director Alex Gibney's HBO-aired profile of singing legend Frank Sinatra uses Ol' Blue Eyes' 1971 retirement concert as a structuring device, with the 11 songs he performed serving as a kind of autobiography. Gibney combines new and archival interviews with footage from Sinatra's life, while his kids—Nancy, Frank, and Tina—provide much of the voiceover, along with collaborators, such as composer Nelson Riddle. Gibney also incorporates several interviews with Sinatra himself, including a revealing conversation with Walter Cronkite from the 1960s. Sinatra grew up in Hoboken, NJ, during the Depression. When he proved more successful at singing than studying, Sinatra dropped out of school, and his fame grew as he worked with Harry James and Tommy Dorsey. Once Hollywood beckoned, Sinatra moved to California, where he embarked on

a film career and a series of affairs—after meeting Ava Gardner, his first marriage was over (Gina Gershon provides Gardner's perspective from her writings). Gibney then moves to Sinatra's Oscar-winning turn in *From Here to Eternity*, his campaigning on behalf of John F. Kennedy, and his marriage to Mia Farrow, which ended just as his work was starting to seem passé. Along the way, the film examines his Mafia ties and his exploits with the Rat Pack in Las Vegas. Although he intended to retire in 1971, Sinatra would revive his music career a few years later, and Gibney closes with a 1978 rendition of "New York, New York." It's a positive note on which to end an evenhanded portrait of a life with as many lows as highs. Extras include bonus audio interviews. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Turned Towards the Sun ★★★

(2014) 91 min. DVD: \$19.95. MVD Entertainment Group (avail. from most distributors).

Michael "Micky" Burn (1912-2010) was an Englishman whose life often played like a wild thriller. His father was employed by the House of Windsor and as a young man Burn was briefly enchanted by the early economic promise of Nazism in rebuilding the German economy (he even had an audience with Hitler). But Burn quickly became disillusioned with the Third Reich and served in the Royal Army in World War II, participating in the commando raid on St. Nazaire. Captured and held in a POW camp, Burn later won the Military Cross for his valor. Burn would go on to embrace Marxism and enjoy a successful writing career. Greg Olliver's documentary plays up Burn's links to many prominent individuals—some on an intimate basis (a bisexual, Burn was once the lover of future Soviet spy Guy Burgess) and some that are rather tenuous (Burn's claim to have rescued Audrey Hepburn during wartime was based on his sending food and cigarettes to the future star's mother, who sold them on the black market in the Nazi-occupied Netherlands). Burn found new audiences as a journalist while covering the frontlines of the 1956 Hungarian uprising, and in his final years was a beloved raconteur. Offering a glowing tribute to a man whose life was fascinating, fast-paced, and full of adventure, this biographical profile is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Video Librarian Online

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Series Update

The following titles are new additions to series that were previously recommended. Titles are available from most distributors unless otherwise noted.

Lidia Celebrates America: Home for the Holidays (60 min., DVD: \$24.99)

is the most recent special from WGBH and PBS Distribution's public television-aired series featuring culinary expert Lidia Bastianich, who here looks at a variety of holiday traditions. See review of *Lidia Celebrates America: Life's Milestones* in VL-5/14.



Shout! Factory has released the newest addition to their animated animal series, **Pound Puppies: A Rare Pair** (110 min., DVD: \$12.99), which follows the pups of Shelter 17 and the Kennel Kittens as they work together to help pets find the best home. See review of *Pound Puppies—Mission: Adoption* in VL-7/13.

Paramount Home Entertainment's latest release in their Nickelodeon-aired computer-animated series about monster trucks is **Blaze and the Monster Machines: Rev Up and Roar** (87 min., DVD: \$14.99), which includes four episodes featuring dinosaur and monster truck pals. See review of *Blaze of Glory: A Mini-Movie* in VL-5/15.

The Family Films Collection (120 min., DVD: \$14.99), the latest Vision Video release of Gospel Films Archive's collection of vintage short films featuring Christian themes, includes *This My Son* (1954), *Missionary to Walker's Garage* (1961), *Rim of the Wheel* (1951), and *Honor Thy Family* (1951). See review of *The Christopher Films Collection* in VL-9/15.

NCircle Entertainment's Guess How Much I Love You: The Song of Spring (80 min., DVD: \$9.99)

is the latest animated compilation featuring the Nutbrown hare family and their meadow and forest pals, based on the children's books by author Sam McBratney and illustrator Anita Jeram. See review of *Guess How Much I Love You: Hidden Treasure* in VL-1/14.

