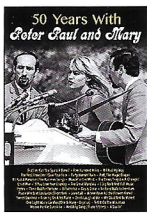


**50 Years with Peter, Paul and Mary ★★★**

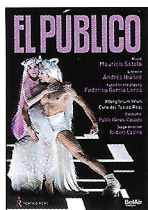
(2014) 78 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



Emmy-winning director Jim Brown presents the story of folk trio Peter, Paul and Mary in this PBS-aired documentary. Founder Peter Yarrow recalls that Bob Dylan's manager, Albert Grossman, suggested that Yarrow form a trio (a fictionalized version of this scenario plays out in the Coen brothers' *Inside Llewyn Davis*). Shortly afterwards, Yarrow was struck by a photo of Mary Travers, a recently divorced young mother, and set out to work with her, although they didn't quite gel as a duo (Gloria Steinem says she had great respect for Travers, who always spoke her mind about social issues). Once the two added Noel Paul Stookey to the group, Yarrow felt sure they had something special, and soon they were playing six days a week for 12 months at a time. Notable performances include the Newport Folk Festival and the March on Washington, as their involvement with progressive politics continued throughout the 1960s. As for their material, they placed as much importance on pre-existing songs, such as Ewan MacColl's "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face," as original compositions, like their megahit "Puff, the Magic Dragon." After years of non-stop performing, the group took a seven-year hiatus, which Stookey found essential for his well-being, although Travers was bored. They returned to support numerous causes, including the anti-apartheid and nuclear disarmament movements, and even after Travers underwent treatment for leukemia in 2004, they continued to perform for four more years. Brown includes footage of the late Travers's 2009 memorial, in which Bill Moyers and other notable figures pay tribute, and concludes by looking at the musical and humanitarian activities of Yarrow and Stuckey. Featuring performances of classics including "Leaving on a Jet Plane," "500 Miles," and "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?," this solid profile of a key '60s musical act—presented in stereo—is recommended. (K. Fernessy)

**El Público ★★1/2**

(2015) 142 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Bel Air Classiques (dist. by Naxos of America).



*El Público* is one of Federico García Lorca's most enigmatic plays, a surrealist exercise made even more inscrutable by the fact that the only surviving text is incomplete. Adapted as an opera by librettist Andrés Ibáñez and composer Mauricio Sotelo, the overall meaning remains somewhat obscure, although it could be read as a general criticism of hypocrisy, calling for

theatre that reflects reality rather than mere surface entertainment, as well as honesty about where true love lies. Both of these themes are conveyed in this story of a stage director (José Antonio López)—confronted by the ghost of his dead gay lover (whom he never publicly acknowledged)—who sparks controversy when his mounting of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* features an older man playing Romeo and a boy in the role of Juliet. Robert Castro's staging for this 2015 premiere production at Madrid's Teatro Real employs starkly simple sets, some cheesy silhouette work with shadow figures, and a bevy of striking costumes (including men dressed as horses with long manes), as well as a crucifixion scene that some will find blasphemous. The score, which juxtaposes declarative passages (very near to *Sprechgesang*) with more melodic flamenco interludes, is for the most part not very kind to the singers, although the instrumental work of the chamber orchestra Klangforum Wien under Pablo Heras-Casado is excellent, as are the flamenco guitar solos by Cañizares. *El Público* is a mixed bag, but will likely be of interest to admirers of Lorca and modern opera. 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 strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

**Gala des Étoiles ★★★**

(2015) 142 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



Ballet companies periodically offer evenings of excerpts to celebrate the principal dancers—the étoiles—of their own companies along with guest stars from other troupes. Captured live at Milan's Teatro alla Scala in conjunction with the city's hosting of Expo 2015, *Gala des Étoiles* features 13 individual numbers. Some are modern pieces, such as Massimiliano Volpini's *Prototype*, which is set to an electronic score and showcases La Scala's own Roberto Bolle, who also appears with Polina Semionova of the American Ballet Theatre in one of the more immediately accessible items, Roland Petit's *Carmen*, danced to Bizet's popular melodies. Svetlana Zakharova is spotlighted in Fokine's *The Dying Swan*, set to the music of Saint-Saëns, which was a signature piece of Pavlova, and she joins Leonid Sarafanov, a principal at St. Petersburg's Mikhailovsky Ballet, in the *pas de deux* from Petipa's *Le Corsaire*. The third of the company's current étoiles, Massimo Murru, pairs with Maria Eichwald of the Stuttgart Ballet in the *pas de deux* from Kenneth MacMillan's version of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. Other numbers of interest include Ben Stevenson's *Three Preludes*, set to solo piano pieces by Rachmaninov; Petit's *La Rose malade*, with the famous adagio of Mahler's Fifth Symphony; and the finale by Stefania Ballone, featuring Ponchielli's *Dance*

of the *Hours*, which is performed by the entire ensemble. The physical production is fairly modest (save for the elaborate *Prototype*), but the orchestral accompaniment is first-rate. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, this will be enjoyed by balletomanes for its variety and splendid dancing. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

**Hairspray Live! ★★★1/2**

(2016) 165 min. DVD: \$14.98. Universal Pictures Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Aired on NBC in 2016, this live version of the 2002 Broadway musical—based on John Waters's 1988 cult movie—centers on a plucky teen who leads the way in racially integrating a Baltimore TV station's *American Bandstand*-like dance program in 1962. *Hairspray*'s opening number quickly establishes the scale and ambition of this production, with a breathtaking army of dancers and varied actions spread over city streets exhibiting polish and careful timing. The terrific cast includes Maddie Baillio in the lead as Tracy, whose overnight celebrity as a dancer on the all-white *The Corny Collins Show* and her strong relationship with African-American students at her school ultimately fuse into a determination to bring black kids onto the hit program. Harvey Fierstein (who wrote the teleplay) returns to drag comedy to play Tracy's hausfrau mom, while Martin Short is her enthusiastic father, and Ariana Grande is her shy best friend. Andrea Martin, Kristin Chenoweth, Rosie O'Donnell, Sean Hayes, Jennifer Hudson, and Ricki Lake (who played Tracy in Waters's film) round out the excellent cast. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

**Heart: Live at the Royal Albert Hall ★★★**

(2016) 102 min. DVD: \$16.98, Blu-ray: \$21.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



This June 2016 performance at London's Royal Albert Hall by Ann and Nancy Wilson and the current incarnation of their longtime band Heart serves up a solid mix of classic rock. The addition of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra is a nice touch, but that ensemble sonically vanishes—or at best becomes irrelevant—as the show goes on, although in better moments the orchestra gives Heart's songs an airier setting than the band's original recordings (reminiscent of the Moody Blues at their most gazing-at-the-trees romantic). On "Heaven," the Indian-flavored pitch-bending on guitars melds well with the Philharmonic's exotic backing to give the song a very different identity, while "Dreamboat Annie" proves to be more spare and haunting than the