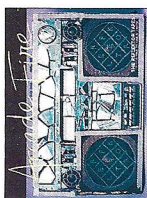


**Arcade Fire: The Reflektor Tapes** ★★1/2

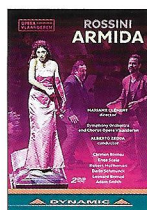
(2017) 2 discs. 265 min. DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Kahlil Joseph, the filmmaker behind Beyoncé's visual album *Lemonade*, directed this kaleidoscopic look at the making of Arcade Fire's 2013 album *Reflektor*, which the Grammy Award-winning Montreal art rockers recorded in Jamaica. Joseph combines rehearsal, recording, and concert footage with interview excerpts and scenes of island life. Most of the spoken-word sequences come from front couple Win Butler and Régine Chassagne. Although the voiceover tends towards the opaque, Chassagne adds a few introspective moments by way of her Haitian heritage and its influence on the record. The look of the material here varies widely, from saturated color sequences to abstract imagery to black-and-white footage processed to appear silvery grey, making for a visually attractive film, but also one that feels more like an extended highlights reel, particularly since most of the 23 songs here are presented in truncated form. For those who aren't already on the band's wavelength, *The Reflektor Tapes* will likely leave them cold, while fans may want to play it on an endless loop like a tuneful screensaver. The second disc, which captures a 20-song 2014 concert at London's Earl's Court, should have wider appeal since the band draws from all four of their studio albums and the show includes the favorites "Rebellion (Lies)," "Neighborhood # 1 (Tunnels)," and "Wake Up." Although Joseph uses some of the same techniques featured in the documentary, the effect during the concert proves less distracting since the band's famously intense performances come to the fore. Presented in DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, and DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, extras include promo videos and alternative cuts of various tracks. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

**Armida** ★★

(2015) 162 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Dynamic (dist. by Naxos of America).

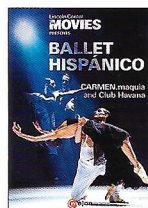


The tale of the Saracen sorceress Armida who bewitches the courageous Crusader Rinaldo, first told by Italian poet Torquato Tasso in the 16th century, has been a favorite with composers from Monteverdi to Dvořák (it is estimated that more than 50 operas have been based on the story). Rossini's 1817 version was largely forgotten until it was revived for Maria Callas (more recently, Renée Fleming has triumphed in the lead role). While it was heroic of the Opera Vlaanderen of Antwerp/Ghent to mount

this demanding work in 2015—requiring six ringing tenors and two rock-steady basses, as well as a coloratura soprano—the result is sadly undernourished. Rossini specialist Alberto Zedda conducts the score energetically but without much elegance, and although Enea Scala is a more than adequate Rinaldo and Dario Schmunck, Robert McPherson, Leonard Bernad, and Adam Smith handle the remaining male roles adequately (sometimes doubling up), Carmen Romeu simply cannot compete with Callas or Fleming as Armida, though she improves as the performance proceeds. Mariame Clément's staging does the work no favors, merely having the chorus meander about during the ballet music, and Julia Hansen's sets are overly sparse, especially for the scenes set at the sorceress's garden of delights, while her costumes are decidedly odd, with the Crusaders often dressed in what look like soccer outfits. Presented in DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, and Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, this is a workmanlike effort that does not measure up to better productions. Not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

**Ballet Hispánico** ★★★

(2015) 104 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).

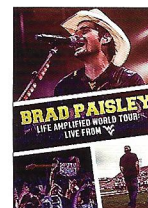


The latest release in the *Lincoln Center at the Movies* series showcasing American dance focuses on New York's Ballet Hispánico, founded in 1970 by Tina Ramirez to present works reflecting Latino and Hispanic culture in the United States. The longer of the two signature pieces that are presented here, Gustavo Ramírez Sansano's *Carmen.maquia* draws on orchestral selections from Bizet's opera (slightly altered and embellished) to offer an abbreviated take on the romantic conflict involving gypsy seductress Carmen, smitten soldier Don José, bullfighter Escamillo, and José's hometown girlfriend Micaela. Set against plain white boxes and walls, and featuring simple white costumes—only Carmen's black gown and a bit of color on Escamillo's outfit stand out—Sansano's ballet (the first full-length narrative piece in the company's history) is far too abstract to coherently reflect the opera's plot (newcomers would be lost without the occasional written summaries here), but it does offer the opportunity to create sequences that effectively express character emotion, and the company responds exuberantly to the changing moods. The shorter *Club Havana*, choreographed by Pedro Ruiz to songs by various composers, recreates the elegant, vivacious atmosphere of a nightclub in the titular Cuban capital before the Castro revolution. The series of dances allows the principals and corps to show off their moves without the confines of narrative. Presented in DTS 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and

DTS-HD 5.0 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

**Brad Paisley: Life Amplified World Tour Live from WVU** ★★★

(2016) 95 min. DVD: \$16.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.



In this PBS-aired *Great Performances* special, Grammy Award-winning country star Brad Paisley performs for a 20,000-strong crowd at West Virginia University. Showing his hometown pride by way of the WVU jersey he wears with requisite cowboy hat and jeans (he is later joined by the local Mountaineers cheerleaders for a number), Paisley is backed by his band, the Drama Kings, which includes players on fiddle, guitar, steel guitar, keyboards, bass, and drums. Paisley kicks off with the celebratory "Crushin' It" in this energetic 20-song set during which he frequently communes with the audience, dazzling them with quicksilver guitar solos played on a succession of glittery guitars. During the song "Water," Paisley spots a fan with a guitar, calls him over, signs it, and returns it while Justin Williamson saws away on the fiddle. During "Mud on the Tires," Williamson gets his own solo spotlight (but it's nearly impossible to hear him). If most of Paisley's songs revolve around simple pleasures, he also addresses social media in "Online," quipping that "I grow another foot and I lose a bunch of weight every time I log in." He also relaxes the crowd with slower songs such as "Letter to Me," switching from electric to acoustic guitar, and duets with Chris Young on "I'm Still a Guy." Presented in DTS 5.1 and stereo, this is also available in a DVD/CD Combo edition. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

**Def Leppard: And There Will Be a Next Time... Live from Detroit** ★★★

(2016) 112 min. DVD: \$21.98 (2 audio CDs included), Blu-ray: \$26.98 (2 audio CDs included). Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Veteran metal band Def Leppard plays a pleasing mix of old and new material in this 2016 engagement at the DTE Energy Music Theatre in Clarkston, MI. The title comes from singer Joe Elliott's promise at the show's conclusion: "See you next time—and there will be a next time." The band members are in fine form, although Elliott's voice isn't quite as prominent in the mix as it could be. The video wall behind the Sheffield quintet provides the most notable special effect, changing visuals from song to song, including a collection