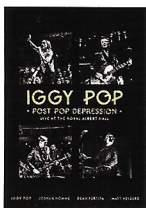


1970s-era original. Nancy Wilson's featured vocals on "Two" and "These Dreams" are charming, after which the sisters enter into a near-suite of strong rockers, including a terrific "Beautiful Broken" and "Mashallah!" Throughout the 16-song set, Nancy underscores her place in rock history as a rhythm guitarist of distinction, while Ann shows that she can still vocally travel from a hush to a shout. What is most satisfying, however, is the interesting new textures that Heart brings to signature tunes, offering more than an oldies act. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include an interview with the band. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Iggy Pop: Post Pop Depression—Live at the Royal Albert Hall ★★★

(2016) 118 min. DVD: \$21.98 (2 audio CDs included), Blu-ray: \$26.98 (2 audio CDs included). Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Then-68-year-old Iggy Pop is in energetic form throughout this 2016 engagement at London's Royal Albert Hall, backed by a versatile band that includes drummer Matt Helders, bassist Matt Sweeney, guitarist Troy Van Leeuwen, keyboard player Dean Fertita, and singer-guitarist Josh Homme (the latter three from Queens of the Stone Age). Pop wrote his 17th album, *Post Pop Depression*, with Homme and Fertita, and has said that it will be his last. The 22-song set here includes eight songs from the new record, but leans even heavier on his solo career. While the players wear red lounge lizard suits (designed by Hedi Slimane of Yves Saint Laurent), Pop sports a black number sans shirt, but loses the jacket quickly (the better to reveal the red briefs that peek out from his low-cut waistband). The group, which splits the difference between proto-punk and glam rock, starts with the signature song "Lust for Life" and ends with "Success." Throughout, Pop dives from the stage and sings while in the audience, none of which negatively impacts his performance, not even when he cuts his face (he just keeps on going, and the bleeding eventually stops). If the vintage tracks make a better impression than the new ones, the mix still works well, especially *Post Pop Depression's* "Gardenia," which recaptures the sound of the 1970s albums Pop wrote and recorded with David Bowie. Other highlights include "Some Weird Sin" and "Funtime," although "The Passenger" might have benefited from a less hurried pace. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include two bonus audio CDs. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Judy Collins: A Love Letter to Stephen Sondheim ★★★1/2

(2016) 90 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



Is it possible to have a more sublime combination than the erudite music of Stephen Sondheim and the ethereal song stylings of Judy Collins? Originally broadcast on PBS, this 2016 concert finds the legendary songstress performing the Broadway master's finest works at Denver's Boettcher Concert Hall, backed by the Greeley Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Glen Cortese. Collins has a unique talent for recreating Sondheim's most biting and acidic songs with a distinctive sense of ruefulness—a bit of musical magic that lends a new layer of ironic serenity to tunes that are too-often plumbed for bitterness. Here, Sondheim classics including "I'm Still Here" and "Send in the Clowns" are presented as introspective last laughs at an uncaring world, while "Gun Song" offers a disturbing note of wonderment to a harrowing portrait of a dreadful weapon. Collins's beautifully-phrased performances of intellectually intricate songs like "Children and Art" and "Finishing the Hat" offer a magnificent display of the songwriter's peerless command of language. Oddly, Collins also includes a few non-Sondheim numbers in this 18-song set—including the Joni Mitchell-penned pop hit "Chelsea Morning" and a pair of John Denver songs—that do not fit the marvelous mood created by the Sondheim canon, but this is still a magical show. Presented in stereo, extras include an interview with Collins, and rehearsal footage. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Mefistofele ★★★1/2

(2015) 140 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99. C Major/Unitel (dist. by Naxos of America).



Arrigo Boito's greatest claim to fame might rest on his role as librettist for Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* and Verdi's late masterworks *Otello* and *Falstaff*, but he was also a composer in his own right, although his only completed opera was this take on the Faust legend. While poorly received at its 1868 premiere, Boito's 1875 revision was a success and it has retained a tenuous place in the repertory. Roland Schwab's 2015 Bayerisches Staatsoper staging of the later version is certainly elaborate, albeit in Eurotrash style. The massive set consists of a half-circle of overarching metal scaffolding, which houses first the devil's domain—a place full of debris and people costumed to look decadent in a risibly 1970s sense (Mefistofele is garbed like some Vegas lounge lizard)—and later a carousel with women writhing on the floor, before transforming into what looks

like an old-age home or mental institution. The visual cacophony never comes together in any unified concept—more like mere spectacle for spectacle's sake—but happily the musical side is far more praiseworthy. The company orchestra plays eloquently for Omer Meir Wellber, and René Pape and Joseph Calleja could hardly be bettered as Mefistofele and Faust, with Kristine Opolais only slightly less impressive as Margherita, who is doomed by her romantic involvement with Faust. The two versions from San Francisco (VL-1/91 and VL-1/15) are also sung well and more traditional in style, and while less visually spectacular than Schwab's mounting, both are truer to the spirit of the work. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, the musical virtues here make this a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Norma ★★★

(2015) 176 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$34.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).



Bellini's 1831 masterpiece—featuring a first-act aria (in which the heroine prays to the moon) that is virtually a summation of *bel canto* style—centers on the love of the titular Druid high priestess for the Roman proconsul Pollione, with whom she has two sons. Love turns to hatred, however, when she discovers that Pollione has taken up with Adalgisa, another priestess, and out of jealousy she incites a war with the Romans that (spoiler alert!) leads to their death together on a funeral pyre. This 2015 production from Barcelona's Gran Teatro del Liceu is notable for Sondra Radvanovsky, who brings a ravishing tone to the role of Norma, especially in her duets with Adalgisa, sung in similarly lovely voice by Ekaterina Gubanova. Pollione is played by American tenor Gregory Kunde, who provides both amplitude and nuance, while nicely partnering with Radvanovsky and Gubanova. The staging by Kevin Newbury is unfortunately rather bland, with a single pedestrian set and unremarkable costuming—delivering an overall sense of ennui that also seems to affect the conducting of Renato Palumbo, resulting in tempi that seem fractionally too slow for comfort. Still, this *Norma* features considerable vocal and orchestral beauty, which is after all the essence of *bel canto*. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Nutcracker ★★★1/2

(2011) 100 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).

George Balanchine's version of Tchaikovsky's Christmas perennial has been a staple of the New York City Ballet since its premiere in 1954. The company's