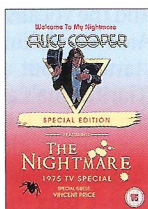


Alice Cooper—Welcome to My Nightmare: Special Edition ★★

(1975) 145 min. DVD: \$15.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



This archival release compiling two separate titles kicks off with “Welcome to My Nightmare,” a 1975 live concert from England’s Empire Pool (later Wembley) arena in which glam/shock rock legend Alice Cooper delivers a 15-song set featuring the entire titular 1975 concept album—Cooper’s debut solo effort—centering on a child named Steven who has bad dreams. The LP’s major hit was “Only Women Bleed” (a rather sensitive song that Cooper sings while violently tossing around a life-sized female puppet), and it included two minor *Billboard* chart entries: the title track and “Department of Youth.” But the other four songs here are far and away the best—“I’m Eighteen,” “School’s Out,” “No More Mr. Nice Guy,” and “Billion Dollar Babies”—although all suffer from muddy audio and murky video (and Cooper’s concerts are dark—visually, as well as thematically—to begin with), presented in a 4:3 aspect ratio. A little better is the accompanying 1975 TV special “The Nightmare,” with Vincent Price acting as a menacing figure encouraging Cooper to go deeper into his nightmare. But again it is not the *Nightmare* songs that impress, but rather the sole additional tune, the A.C. classic “Ballad of Dwight Fry.” Presented in Dolby Digital stereo, this is for diehard Cooper fans only, and optional for others. (R. Pitman)

Béatrice et Bénédict ★★1/2

(2016) 118 min. In French w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

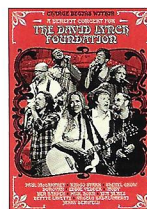


Hector Berlioz’s 1862 opera (his last) is an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* in which much of the original—except the central relationship between the initially squabbling titular couple and the contrasting romance of Claudio and Héro—has been jettisoned. And Berlioz invented a subplot of his own involving a pompous conductor called Somarone, who expends much energy composing festive music for Claudio and Héro’s wedding—an addition meant as a satirical swipe at Berlioz’s many critics. It would be nice to report that this 2016 Glyndebourne production reveals this long-neglected piece to be a forgotten gem, but this is not the case. Granted, Berlioz’s arias and duets are often lush and beautiful, and the singing of Stéphanie d’Oustrac (Béatrice), Paul Appleby (Bénédict), Sophie Karthäuser (Héro),

and Philippe Sly (Claudio) is impassioned and rich, while the London Philharmonic, conducted by Antonello Manacorda, revels in the sumptuous orchestration. But the material focusing on Somarone (Lionel Lhote) and the long stretches of spoken dialogue are tedious and lacking in humor. And none of it is enlivened by Laurent Pelly’s staging, which relies on a single metaphor: people living in boxes (characters climb in and out of boxes throughout). Although the sets and costumes (varying shades of cream and gray) are attractive, that’s not enough to overcome the production’s flaws. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray edition) and LPCM stereo, extras include a “making-of” featurette, and a cast gallery. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Change Begins Within: A Benefit Concert for the David Lynch Foundation ★★★

(2009) 110 min. DVD: \$15.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



The David Lynch Foundation isn’t about movies or music, but rather transcendental meditation (TM), the practice that fuels Lynch’s creative endeavors. The foundation’s goal, he explains, is “to teach one million kids transcendental meditation all around the world.” For this 2009 benefit concert at Radio City Music Hall, Lynch and Laura Dern, who most recently collaborated on *Twin Peaks: The Return*, serve as hosts. Bettye Lavette sings the rousing opener “Trouble So Hard/Natural Blues,” featuring Moby on guitar, a youth choir, and a full orchestra. Crowd-pleasing performances from Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr combine Beatles songs with solo hits such as “It Don’t Come Easy” and “Jet.” Other notable performances include Sheryl Crow’s version of George Harrison’s “My Sweet Lord” with Ben Harper on slide guitar, Donovan and My Morning Jacket singer Jim James on “Hurdy Gurdy Man,” and Eddie Vedder’s solo ukulele rendition of “Rise.” Vedder’s duet with Harper on David Bowie and Queen’s “Under Pressure” earns an enthusiastic response from the crowd, but it’s really hard to top the original. The one non-musical performer, Jerry Seinfeld, serves up a not especially funny routine about messy theaters, hands-free culture, and other concerns that don’t have much bearing on the cause at hand, although he does say that he’s been practicing TM for 37 years. For the finale of this 18-song concert, the performers—including Beach Boy Mike Love and flutist Paul Horn—sing McCartney’s “Cosmically Conscious.” Presented in Dolby Digital stereo, extras include a featurette in which Lynch interviews some of the artists about their musical backgrounds and connections to TM. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Die Zauberflöte ★★1/2

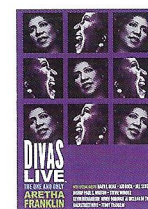
(2016) 173 min. In German w/ English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$34.99. C Major/Unitel (dist. by Naxos of America).



Although it is performed at Milan’s famed La Scala, this 2016 production of Mozart’s Masonic fairy-tale *Singspiel* is no starry international affair. While conductor Ádám Fischer is an established veteran who coaxes spirited playing from the orchestra, the soloists, chorus, and musicians are all students in the La Scala Academy, and only one of the singers—Fatma Said, as Pamina, the daughter of the Queen of the Night kidnapped by the enlightened priest Sarastro—is clearly ready for roles with major companies, exhibiting a soprano of refinement and grace. The other singers are good, but hardly remarkable: Yasmin Öskan’s coloratura lacks the flair required in the Queen, Martin Summer misses the secure low notes needed for Sarastro, Martin Piskorski’s tenor is a mite beefy and wild for Tamino (the prince whom the Queen enlists to rescue her daughter but who becomes Sarastro’s acolyte instead), and Till von Orłowsky is a genial but prosaic Papageno, the hedonistic bird-man dragooned into helping Tamino. Peter Stein’s staging, moreover, is controversial, sticking closely to the original libretto and defiantly excluding any alterations that might moderate the text’s sexist and racist elements: Sarastro’s evil henchman Monostatos, for example, is presented as a grotesque caricature, played by Sascha Emanuel Kramer covered in black body paint and wearing a grass skirt. While there is historical fidelity in this, some viewers will find it offensive, and most will prefer any of the fine fully professional alternatives available on disc. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this is an optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Divas Live: The One and Only Aretha Franklin ★★1/2

(2001) 59 min. DVD: \$19.99 (audio CD included). Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



Aretha Franklin, the Queen of Soul, gives a stirring performance in this *VH1 Divas Live* concert filmed at New York’s Radio City Music Hall in 2001, serving up a 13-song set designed both to showcase her genius and celebrate her legacy with guest stars. Franklin’s sizzling opener, “I Can’t Turn You Loose,” quickly evokes the ecstatic rhythms of a gospel church and reminds us that there is nothing mannered about this uncompromising artist’s vocal delivery (unlike other bestselling divas). A muscular “Chain of Fools” finds Franklin joined by three harmonious members of the Backstreet

Boys. Her solo on the delicate ballad "Ain't No Way" is gorgeous, although the excitement dips when the star cedes the stage to singer Jill Scott, whose take on "Natural Woman" lacks majesty and feels earthbound. Mary J. Blige does better with a sultry, cool version of "Day Dreaming," and sticks around for a feverish duet with Franklin on "Do Right Woman." The mood turns prayerful when Franklin collaborates with the New Jersey Mass Choir for a solemn but soaring "Precious Memories," and the concert winds up with blowout performances of "Respect" and "Freeway of Love," the latter featuring Stevie Wonder, among others. Presented in 5.1 surround sound, extras include a bonus audio CD. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

Don Carlo ★★1/2

(2016) 182 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. Blu-ray: \$39.99. Dynamic (dist. by Naxos of America).



Verdi's grand opera—set against a backdrop of rebellion and inquisitorial cruelty—centers on the titular Spanish prince, who falls afoul of his father Philip II after the king marries Elisabeth, whom Carlo loves. *Don Carlo* went through a bewildering array of permutations between its Paris premiere in 1867 and the composer's final five-act Italian version of 1886. This 2016 production from the Verdi Festival in Parma offers the intervening four-act Italian version, minus the opening Fontainebleau scene. The performance is good but not great, with Daniel Oren leading the Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini in a reading that is comparatively restrained but generates considerable cumulative power. José Bros's tenor is not ideally heroic for Carlo, nor does Michele Pertusi's bass have the dark heft that the role of Philip demands, but both use their limited instruments intelligently, as does Serena Farnocchia (Elisabeth), whose relatively light soprano lacks the ultimate degree of Verdian warmth. And baritone Vladimir Stoyanov sounds noble as Carlo's loyal friend Rodrigo. The sets are fairly pedestrian, although the somber costumes suit the narrative's tragic tone. And while the auto-da-fé sequence is decently depicted—with a procession of red-robed priests and a crowd of tortured souls pushing carts full of fellow victims across the stage—Ievgen Orlov's Grand Inquisitor fails to convey the requisite degree of religious mania. Ultimately, this Parma mounting is only a decent staging of one of Verdi's greatest operas. Presented in DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

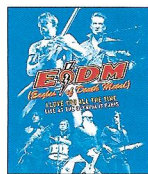
Eagles of Death Metal: I Love You All the Time—Live at the Olympia in Paris

★★★

(2016) 102 min. DVD: \$15.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

The show that Eagles of Death Metal played

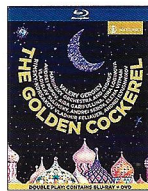
in Paris in 2016 comes with an unbelievably tragic backstory: when the Palm Desert, CA, sextet performed in the city's Bataclan theatre in 2015, terrorists killed 89 concertgoers. Co-directors Vincent Bordes and Julian Aivadian open with the audience cheering the band while singer and guitarist Jesse Hughes's eyes fill with tears. After a few minutes, he and his band mates—including bassist Matt McJunkins, guitarists Dave Catching and Eden Galindo, keyboard player Tuesday Cross, and drummer Josh Homme—launch into "I Only Want You" from their 2004 debut album. The rest of the 19-song set follows the same garage-meets-hard-rock template. After they play "So Easy," a fan tosses Hughes a t-shirt that reads, "I really wannabe in Paris," which the singer displays for all to see. Homme, who also fronts the band Queens of the Stone Age, has always been a fan of the cowbell, which adds a glam element to many songs, such as the profanity-laced "Whorehoppin' (Shit, Goddamn)." For most of the set, Julian Dorio joins him on the second drum kit, bringing a fuller sound to the material. In addition to original songs, the band covers Duran Duran's "Save a Prayer" with somewhat wobbly harmony vocals, and the Stealers Wheel hit "Stuck in the Middle with You," which sounds more like ZZ Top. There are definitely a few emotional moments here, but this is mostly a wash-your-cares-away concert for a city that really needed it. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and stereo, extras include three bonus songs from a 2015 concert in Los Angeles. Recommended. (K. Femnessy)



The Golden Cockerel

★★★

(2017) 119 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$42.99. Mariinsky (dist. by Naxos of America).



Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's final opera was completed in 1907, but due to objections by Tsarist censors was not performed until 1909, after the composer's death—and then only with substantial revisions. Based on a poem by Pushkin, *The Golden Cockerel* on the surface is a fairy tale about an elderly king who uses magic provided by a sorcerer to wage a war against his country's enemies, but is seduced by the beautiful queen whose realm he invades. The authorities read the opera as a satire on Russian government corruption and military incompetence and banned it until changes were made to the libretto. Although rarely performed since, this 2017 production from St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Opera (formerly the Kirov) is physically spectacular, with numerous visual effects and extravagant costumes by Anna Matson. The orchestra also shines under the baton of Valery Gergiev. But the stage movement often seems chaotic,

and the vocalism is variable, with only sultry Aida Garifullina as the Queen of Shemakha standing out amongst the large ensemble (Garifullina's aria may be overextended, but she delivers it with purity of tone and seamless legato). Although the fact that this is a Russian mounting is a point in its favor, the Paris Opera production conducted by Kent Nagano (as *Le Coq d'Or*, VL-11/04) is superior. Even so, this release—presented in PCM stereo—is still recommended. (F. Swietek)

Hamlet ★★1/2

(2016) 145 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99. C Major/Unitel (dist. by Naxos of America).



This *Hamlet*—or more properly, *Amleto*—is a long-lost opera by Franco Faccio, set to an Italian text by Arrigo Boito (also a composer, but better known as Verdi's frequent librettist) that was adapted from Shakespeare's play. After a successful 1865 premiere in Genoa, its second mounting at Milan's La Scala in 1871 was a disaster, and Faccio withdrew it, abandoning composing for a career as a conductor. The piece simply disappeared until a critical edition was recently prepared from surviving material, leading to this first fully professional revival staged at the 2016 Bregenz Festival. *Hamlet* proves to be an imposing and occasionally inspired work that is extraordinarily faithful to its source, and features powerful (if not always memorable) music marked by a hint of early *verismo*. Olivier Tambosi's staging is atmospheric and elegant, with fine costumes (except for the widespread presence of an odd eye symbol) and striking, simple sets. The singing is superlative across the board, with Pavel Cernoch (Amleto), Iulia Maria Dan (Ofelia), Claudio Sgura (Claudio) and Dshamilja Kaiser (Gertrude) outstanding in the ensemble, while conductor Paolo Carignani leads the Vienna Symphony in a rich, vibrant reading of the score. There have been many attempts to turn Shakespeare's classic tale of an indecisive prince wanting to avenge the murder of his father into an opera, but none have won a place in the repertory, although judging from this performance, Faccio's is one of the more notable. Presented in DTS 5.0 (DTS-HD 5.0 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this opera that has unjustly suffered obscurity for a century and a half is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Il Barbiere di Siviglia

★★★

(2016) 164 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



Rossini's ever-popular comic opera has always been a favorite at England's Glyndebourne