

Questions &amp; Comments

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New reviews of other videos not in the print version of Video Librarian.

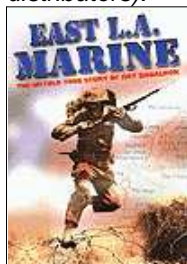
Rating system: ★ = poor, ★★ = fair, ★★★ = good, ★★★★ = excellent

K = Preschool-Kindergarten	E = Elementary (grades 1-3)
I = Intermediate (grades 4-6)	J = Jr. High (grades 7-8)
H = High School (grades 9-12)	C = Colleges & Universities
P = Public Libraries	

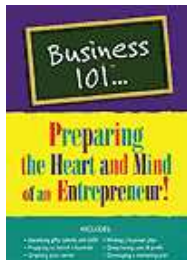
Updated June 24, 2008

**East L.A. Marine: The Untold True Story of Guy Gabaldon ★★★**

(2006) 86 min. DVD: \$14.95. Arts Alliance America (avail. from most distributors).



Steven Jay Rubin's documentary celebrates the extraordinary wartime record of Guy Gabaldon, a five-foot-three dynamo from East Los Angeles credited with single-handedly capturing 1,500 Japanese troops during World War II. The so-called "Pied Piper of Saipan" came to the war with a strong understanding of the Japanese culture and language, as many of his childhood friends were Americans of Japanese heritage. Gabaldon's wartime bravery occasionally flew in the face of official orders (such as never travel alone into enemy territory), but the incredible results of his actions were impossible to ignore. Even so, championing a Hispanic as an American hero seemed to bother some people: the Hollywood biopic *Hell to Eternity* cast non-Hispanic Jeffrey Hunter as Gabaldon, while the U.S. Marine Corps refused to consider him for the Congressional Medal of Honor (Gabaldon received the Navy Cross instead, an upgrade from an earlier Silver Star Medal). This film—which suffers only from bland narration by Freddie Prinze Jr.—represents part of an effort to secure a posthumous presentation of the Congressional Medal of Honor for Gabaldon (who died in 2006, following a postwar life that was rich in business, political, and literary endeavors). DVD extras include a bonus featurette with interviews of Gabaldon. Recommended. (P. Hall)

**Business 101...Preparing the Heart and Mind of an Entrepreneur! ★★★**(2007) 23 min. DVD: \$19.95. Production 101 (dist. by Big Kids Productions, tel: 800-477-7811; web: [www.bigkidsvideo.com](http://www.bigkidsvideo.com)). PPR. ISBN: 978-0-9767765-3-7.

Whether a young person's potential business enterprise is a neighborhood lemonade stand or a pet-sitting service, this extremely practical video will help any self-motivated kid turn his or her ideas into an organized plan of action. Hosted by Julie Hunt—an entrepreneurial mom herself—*Business 101* walks viewers through the various steps required to create a successful business. Hunt discusses relevant character traits, the pros and cons of running a business, cataloging one's skills and interests in order to find a viable business idea, and how to transform that idea into a workable business plan—from juggling finances to marketing. Interspersed throughout are interviews with young adults who talk about their own career paths and experiences. While the program is meant to be used in conjunction with a separately available workbook (priced at \$5), the solid information in this affordable DVD makes it worthwhile even in its standalone form. Recommended.[Note: also

newly available at the same price is *Healthy Habits 101: Teaching Kids to Stay Healthy for Life!*] Aud: I, J, P. (E. Gieschen)

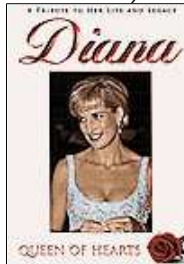
### Changing Identities ★★★

(2007) 57 min. DVD: \$229, VHS: \$199. Fanlight Productions (tel: 800-343-5540; web: [www.fanlight.com](http://www.fanlight.com)). PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-57295-902-9 (dvd).

A heartfelt and instructive documentary, Daniel Labatto's *Changing Identities*—narrated by Meryl Streep—focuses on an innovative art program that offers hope and a sense of personal accomplishment to people who have suffered the debilitating effects of traumatic brain and spinal cord injury or stroke. At the Art Studio, founded at a special care center in upstate New York in 1999, the goal is therapeutic only in the broadest sense (and not strictly educational either, as aides offer advice and assistance, but are not teachers *per se*). Instead, individuals whose lives have been altered by devastating physiological events are simply afforded the opportunity to express themselves through painting, with some even forging new identities as practicing artists. Founder Bill Richards and various staffers explain the philosophy behind the Art Studio in interview excerpts, but the real focus is on the individual participants, who overcome physical disabilities to create and then proudly exhibit their work—watching these people and hearing their own testimony regarding the efficacy of the program is what lends *Changing Identities* its emotional power. An engaging and uplifting documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Diana: Queen of Hearts ★★1/2

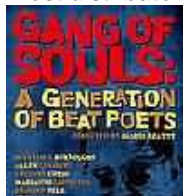
(1998) 89 min. DVD: \$19.98. Genius Products (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-5944-4726-8.



Produced shortly after Princess Diana's tragic and untimely death in 1997, this 1998 made-for-TV documentary isn't just a love letter to "the people's princess," but practically advocates for her deification. Narrated by her close friend Sir Richard Attenborough, and chock full of talking-head reminiscences delivered by family, friends, and world leaders, *Diana: Queen of Hearts* celebrates the late Princess of Wales, concentrating on her good works, which included tireless efforts to alleviate hunger and poverty, as well as fighting to have dangerous land mines removed. Written and directed by Jenny De Yong, the documentary is adulatory practically from first frame to last, which is understandable, given that it was produced so close to Diana's death, but 10 years later it's all but impossible to watch this without being reminded of some of the less flattering aspects of Diana's life that have come to light during the intervening years. Perhaps it's time to let the myth of this "fairy-tale princess" pass into legend, or at the very least wait for a more dispassionate up-to-date biography. Optional. Aud: P. (E. Hulse)

### Gang of Souls: A Generation of Beat Poets ★★

(1989) 60 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



Maria Beatty's 1989 *Gang of Souls* brings together the surviving (at the time) Beat poets—Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, Gregory Corso, and Diane di Prima—along with a number of other poets and performers inspired by those 1950s-era iconoclasts, including Jim Carroll, Marianne Faithfull,

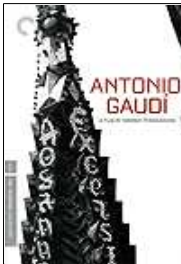


Lydia Lunch, and a surprisingly boyish Henry Rollins. The result, however, is anything but poetic, in this slice-and-dice mix of talking head commentary on subjects such as the importance of Ginsberg's 1956 landmark poem "Howl," the liberating lyricism of the Beat writer, the challenges of creating poetry, the struggle to attract contemporary audiences, etc. There's relatively little in the way of genuine poetry here, unless you count John Giorno's painfully hammy (and mercifully brief) spoken word performances. *Gang of Souls* suffers from the format, as each guest writer spends anywhere from five seconds to two minutes to convey their thoughts before the camera cuts to another poet for more sound bites. A few writers, particularly the punk-rambunctious Lunch, use their snippets of screen time with self-indulgent gusto, but most—especially Burroughs and Ginsberg—seem politely but conspicuously bored. DVD extras include updated text bios on the poets. Not a necessary purchase. Aud: C, P. (*P. Hall*)

Updated June 10, 2008

### Antonio Gaudí ★★★½

(1984) 2 discs. 72 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$39.95. *The Criterion Collection* (avail. from most distributors).



Although it might seem odd that idiosyncratic Japanese director Hiroshi Teshigahara (1927-2001) would make a film about equally idiosyncratic Catalan architect Gaudí (1852-1926), Teshigahara was a formally trained artist himself (whose father was an acknowledged master of the art of *ikebana* or floral arrangement). During a 1959 trip with his father to Barcelona, the director first encountered the work of Gaudí, whose strangely contorted modernist style, patterned after natural phenomena (particularly the complex structure of trees), had been dismissed by mainstream architectural experts but would be later enthusiastically rediscovered (especially in Japan) in the 1960s. Teshigahara returned to Spain in 1984 to make this largely wordless documentary celebration of Gaudí's creations, during which the camera tours Barcelona, lovingly capturing the exterior curves and spirals (as well as the equally striking interiors) of his spectacular architecture—from private homes to the unfinished masterpiece of the Sagrada Familia Cathedral—backed by a haunting synthesizer-and-glass-harmonica score. Given the dearth of commentary, *Antonio Gaudí* isn't so much a conventional documentary as a visual poem, one that has a hypnotic effect on the viewer. Criterion, which earlier released a boxed set of the director's fiction features (*Three Films by Hiroshi Teshigahara*, reviewed in *VL Online*-10/07), once again has done an impressive job, offering a superb restored digital transfer, together with a second disc of bonus features, including a 1959 short featuring Teshigahara's original footage of Gaudí's buildings in Barcelona, an interview with architect Arata Isozaki (also Teshigahara's art director), two TV documentaries on the architect (one directed by British filmmaker Ken Russell), a short film by Teshigahara on his father's sculptures, and a lavishly illustrated 36-page booklet. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (*F. Swietek*)

### Art is an Attitude: The Art of Drawing the Figure ★★★

(2007) 90 min. DVD: \$34.95. *Art is Poetry Productions* (tel: 941-993-9391, web: [www.billbuchman.com](http://www.billbuchman.com)).



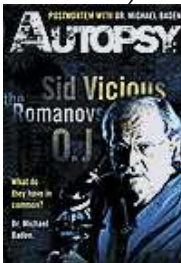
Professional artist Bill Buchman is the instructor for this guide to figure drawing (featuring a fully nude female model) that highlights 25 fundamental figure drawing techniques. Often filmed in real-time,



Buchman offers instruction and advice on using Conte crayons, brushes, and ink (and an ink wash and reed pen, Van Gogh-style), intersecting contours, the importance of line and mass, negative space and abstract shapes, his “Loop de Loop” technique of changing direction to sustain the fluidity of the lines, and creating various effects with pastels, acrylic, and watercolor. Much of the camerawork is angled over Buchman’s shoulder, offering viewers a clear view of his methods. DVD extras include a glossary of basic concepts, a materials list, and a weblink. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### **Autopsy: Postmortem with Dr. Michael Baden ★★1/2**

(2008) 57 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Video (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-4198-6587-0.



A familiar figure to viewers of cable chat shows covering gruesome crimes, former NYC Chief Medical Examiner and TV talking head Dr. Michael Baden is the host for this HBO-aired documentary series that takes a closer look at history’s most high-profile investigations. Going under the knife, so to speak, in this edition are the mysterious 1918 disappearance of Russia’s royal Romanov family, the 1963 assassination of John F. Kennedy, the double deaths of Sex Pistols musician Sid Vicious and his girlfriend Nancy Spungen, the 1994 double-murder case involving O.J. Simpson, and the wave of illnesses and deaths suffered by Ground Zero’s first responders as a result of exposure to toxic chemicals in the debris (though this last segment seems very much out of place here). Reexamining these cases, Baden reveals heretofore hidden facts (occasionally accompanied by graphic, never-before-seen footage). While somewhat uneven, *Autopsy* is likely to appeal to history buffs and fans of TV shows like *CSI*, but this is not for everybody, particularly the squeamish. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (E. Hulse)

### **People Give to People ★★★**

(2006) 23 min. DVD: \$89.95. FEPI (tel: 512-494-0338, web: [www.fepi.com](http://www.fepi.com)). PPR.

The first in a three-part series on “Building a Highly Successful Development Program” for nonprofit boards, this training program hosted by executive producer Rick Geyer features insights from four board members who speak candidly about building fundraising relationships. Practical and strategic tips and techniques for fundraising success are covered here, including the importance of patience, not taking rejection personally, focusing on the motivations of the “gift giver,” contributing yourself (paying your dues as an “asker”), cultivating supporters through charity circles and other recruiting approaches (including a well-produced website), defining your role (by choosing a savvy board, paying attention to details, and focusing on the group’s overall vision and goals), and avoiding pitfalls by being realistic, as well as learning to recognize possible donor fatigue. DVD extras include links to web resources. The other two programs in the series are: *A Board Primer* (\$79.95) and *Where to Start: 13 Essentials for a Healthy Development Program* (\$89.95), with all three programs available as a set for \$199. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

**The World Without US ★★**

(2008) 85 min. DVD: \$19.99. Deep Waters Productions (tel: 714-676-7128; web: [www.theworldwithoutus.com](http://www.theworldwithoutus.com)). PPR. Closed captioned.

Mitch Anderson's speculative pseudo-documentary *The World Without US* purports to raise serious questions about current U.S. foreign policy, but does so in such a simplistic fashion that it seems designed to justify the *status quo* rather than engender thoughtful debate. The film's stated intention is to test the argument that we should reconsider—in light of the nation's domestic needs—our huge commitments of money and military personnel to maintain peace and stability in diverse areas of the world. The narrative posits a fictional presidential candidate who's elected on what can only be termed a platform of old-fashioned isolationism, and then suggests that his withdrawal of U.S. forces from foreign locales will inevitably lead to destruction (here, a Chinese nuclear attack on Taiwan brought about by the removal of American bases in Japan). To buttress the claim, the film also follows a supposed Romanian refugee from Soviet tyranny who journeys to various international hot spots where U.S. soldiers are stationed, jovially demonstrating that in each case American withdrawal would cause chaos, while simultaneously implying that U.S. policy worldwide is based on the most altruistic of motives. As if his pronouncements weren't enough, controversial British author Niall Ferguson is on hand here to reinforce the point. Granted, the proper role of America in international affairs is certainly an issue that would benefit from honest discussion, but by framing the topic in all-or-nothing terms, *The World Without US* doesn't do it justice. Not recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

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