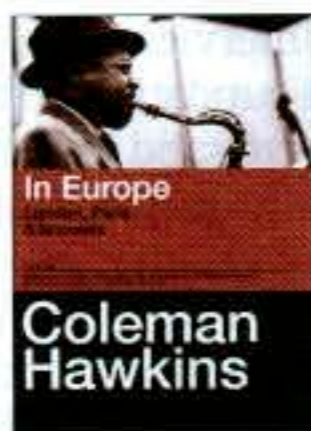


ful gig, recorded at New Orleans' historic Tipitina's nightclub in 2008. Essentially a visual companion to their *Down in New Orleans* CD, this concert highlights the group's novel, if not quite unique, hybrid of traditional gospel and the strutting funk of New Orleans-Dixieland jazz (imagine a cross between the Neville Brothers and the Staple Singers and you'll get the general idea). To that end, the joyously infectious Blind Boys are joined by N'Awlins vets such as pianists Dr. John and Henry Butler, the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, and singer Marva Wright (singer-guitarist Susan Tedeschi also sits in) as they perform a 16-song set that includes gospel tunes like "I'll Fly Away" and "Down by the Riverside" and Crescent City standards such as "Bourbon Street Parade." Arguably the best part of the show, however, is the opening, when the Blind Boys (who have three terrific lead singers in Jimmy Carter, Billy Bowers, and Ben Moore) sing four "crossover" numbers: "Amazing Grace" (set to the tune and changes of "House of the Rising Sun"), Norman Greenbaum's '60s "Jesus rock" hit "Spirit in the Sky," Tom Waits' "Down in the Hole," and Curtis Mayfield's "People Get Ready." Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1, DVD extras include a BET-aired "making-of" on *Down in New Orleans* and the music video for "Free at Last." Highly recommended. Aud: P. (S. Graham)

Coleman Hawkins—In Europe: London, Paris & Brussels ★★1/2

(2009) 136 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Born in 1904, Coleman Hawkins was one of the most influential musicians in the history of 20th-century jazz. Commonly acknowledged as the first really significant jazz tenor saxophonist, Hawkins recorded a version of "Body and Soul" in 1939 boasting astonishingly fluid, extended improvisation that made it one of the immortal jazz recordings. Oddly, the best evidence of Hawkins' greatness is found not in the four early-to-mid 1960s separate filmed concert performances here, but rather in "After Hours," a 26-minute bonus feature: introduced by hipster DJ William B. Williams, this New York jam session pairs Hawkins with players like pianist Johnny Guarnieri, trumpeter Roy Eldridge, and drummer Cozy Cole, while showing off the saxophonist's bold tone and aggressive style to excellent effect. In the main program, the gigs in London (in 1964 with trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison and drummer Jo Jones, and in 1966 with Benny Carter on alto sax and the virtuoso Louie Bellson on skins), Paris (a single tune from 1962, with Oscar Peterson on piano), and Brussels (an informal '62 session taped in a TV studio) deliver plenty of great tunes and fine playing—with

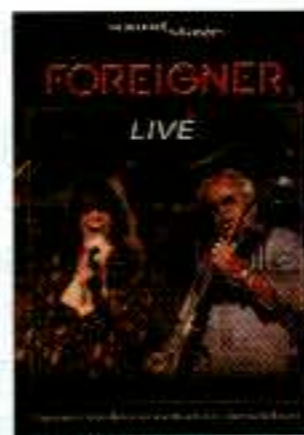


technical quality ranging from good to awful—but nothing as scintillating as that New York session in the DVD extras. Still, given the general dearth of Hawkins performances on DVD, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (S. Graham)

Foreigner: Live ★★1/2

(2008) 105 min. DVD: \$19.99. E1 Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4172-3212-9.

From their eponymous 1977 debut (with the breakout single "Feels Like the First Time") through their 1987 release *Inside Information* (featuring "Say You Will"), Foreigner was a dominant force on the rock arena scene, along with Journey, Bad Company, Styx, and REO Speedwagon. In this 2008 PBS-aided *Soundstage* performance, a very young-looking Foreigner plays a wide range of hits in a 16-song set that includes "Head Games," "Cold as Ice," "Waiting for a Girl Like You," "Double Vision," "Dirty White Boy," "Urgent," and "Hot Blooded." The fact that Brit guitarist Mick Jones is the sole original band member begs the obvious question of whether this is *really* Foreigner or just a tribute band. Jones' guitar is still the foundation of the group's signature sound, and he's backed here by a talented bunch that includes Dokken's Jeff Pilson on bass and Jason Bonham (son of legendary Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham) on drums. Lead singer Kelly Hansen—who looks like a Steven Tyler wannabe and talks like a Vegas lounge act ("so, we're gonna slow it down a bit")—does a slavishly faithful recreation of Lou Gramm's vocals, but the whole shebang doesn't quite gel, especially in this intimate setting (the small audience sing-along during the get-those-lighters-up monster power ballad "I Want to Know What Love Is" is a bit underwhelming). Still, fans will be tapping their feet big-time when the band launches into an extended version of "Juke Box Hero" (with a built-in excerpt from "Whole Lotta Love"). Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo, *Foreigner: Live* is a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (R. Pitman)



Idomeneo ★★★

(2008) 2 discs. 176 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$39.99 (booklet included). EuroArts (dist. by Naxos of America).

Idomeneo, Mozart's most notable opera seria, was first performed in Munich in 1781, but not seen in America until 1947. Set in 1,200 B.C. Crete, *Idomeneo* finds the titular king about to make his triumphant return from the Trojan wars. Although nearly lost at sea, Idomeneo was saved by Neptune...with the promise to sacrifice the first person he encounters in Crete as an

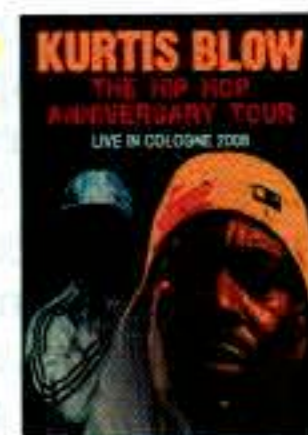


expression of gratitude. Unfortunately, that person turns out to be his son, Idamante, who is also caught in a romantic triangle with the captive Trojan princess Ilia and Princess Elettra. All eventually ends happily, with Idomeneo abdicating his throne and giving his blessing to Idamante and Ilia, but not before the requisite storms—both physical and psychological—finish playing out. A 2008 production mounted at the beautiful Cuvilliés Theatre in Munich, *Idomeneo* is ably performed by the cast, which includes John Mark Ainsley as Idomeneo, Pavol Breslik as Idamante, Juliane Banse as Ilia, and Annette Dasch as Elettra, while conductor Kent Nagano leads the Bayerisches Staatsorchester. Performed on a simple set with singers clad in a strange mixture of futuristic and peasant-style costumes, *Idomeneo* is presented with Dolby Digital 5.1, DTS, and PCM stereo options. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (J. Reed)

Kurtis Blow: The Hip Hop Anniversary Tour, Live in Cologne 2008 ★★1/2

(2008) 51 min. DVD: \$18.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

This eight-song release (including an introduction and scratch break) captures hip-hop pioneer Kurtis Blow live in Cologne, Germany in 2008. Clad in a white tracksuit and baseball cap, Blow begins the program with "Party Time," encouraging the crowd to sing along, after which he introduces himself through rhyme ("For those of you who do not know, my name is Kurtis Blow/Welcome to the show"), before performing hits like "The Breaks" and "If I Ruled the World" from 1985's *Krush Groove*. Blow's accompanists include DJ Temple Dynasty, co-rapper Kurtis Blow Jr., and a pair of breakdancers doing their thing in front of a slideshow featuring posters and other ephemera from throughout Blow's career. For the last two tracks, Blow invites B-boys and girls from the audience to join him for some hip-hop moves. Aside from his own accomplishments, Blow pays tribute to the Fat Boys and Run-DMC DJ Jam Master Jay. Although this hour-shy concert is a little short on music, the entertaining Blow proves he still has the rap goods. Presented in Dolby Digital stereo, this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (K. Fennessy)



Manon ★★★

(2001) 2 discs. 164 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America). ISBN: 978-3-939873-99-0.

Musically and visually, this recording of the Paris Opera's 2001 mounting of Jules Massenet's 1884 opera *Manon* is sumptuous. Although she may no longer be ideally

