

Each episode runs 48 minutes and three are consigned to a platter, accompanied by episode trailers. The picture is in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. Darker sequences are a little murky and smeary, with some grain, but otherwise, the picture transfer looks fine. The stereo sound has a basic dimensionality and there is no captioning.

Robson Green stars as an investment lawyer whose family has moved into a McMansion after his marriage has gone through a rough period because of his wife's infidelity. What they discover, however, is that many of their neighbors are swingers, and they sort of back into the lifestyle as a way to repair their still deteriorating marriage. Eventually, there is a murder or two—or three—but most of the story is about the characters coping with their emotions and sexuality, and it is told with the same kind of sharp-witted truth that the scene with the father exemplified. It also leaves a lasting impression, not so much because of the mild twists to the story's conclusion, but because of the time it has to explore the motivations and consequences of extra-marital intimacy.

Raft experiment

The 1951 documentary Oscar winner, **Kon-Tiki**, available from Janson and Image Entertainment (UPC#014381978124, \$20), is essentially a silent travelog, but one embellished by a scientific prerogative, a beguiling voiceover narration and appropriate sound effects. In the days before DNA sampling, archeological theorist Thor Heyerdahl attempted to prove that some of the islands in the South Pacific had been inhabited by people journeying west from South America rather than east from Asia (from what we know today, they probably did make the trip, but just as visitors, not pioneers), doing so by constructing a low-tech raft and setting off from the coast of Peru with only the wind and ocean currents to carry the vessel forward. He also packed a smaller raft and a long rope, so a cameraman could float far enough away to catch shots of the craft in total, bobbing about on the sea swells. Running 58 minutes, it is the crew's encounters with various sea life and the challenges of seamanship that give the film much of its entertainment and excitement, and the successful completion of the journey that cements its last act. While its scientific foundation may have become shaky, the film's sense of adventure and its value as a naturalist's document have made it an enduring and enjoyable motion picture classic.

The full screen black-and-white picture has the naturally rough condition of its source material and looks a little soft and battered, but not to the point where the quality of the image distracts from the entertainment. The monophonic sound is adequate and there is no captioning.

Go axe your mother

A band of heartless, bloodthirsty gangsters holds up in a remote farmhouse where a psychotic lass turns the tables on them in **Axe**, a Something Weird Video release (UPC#014381079623, \$15). The 1985 feature, also known as *Lisa, Lisa* and *The Virgin Slaughter* (the DVD contains trailers for all three title variations), runs 68 minutes, so it gets down to business fairly quickly. There is no elegance to any of its staging, but its basic concepts of violence and slovenly behavior are conveyed with an adequate clarity and an underlying sense of amusement.

The DVD also features a 1977 film running 86 minutes entitled *The Electric Chair*, about an adulterous romance shown in flashback, the eventual murder of the lovers, a lengthy trial with more flashbacks and some violence of its own, and the fate of the convicted murderer. The performances are unpolished and the editing is at times desperate, but the show is a viable example of what you can do with very little money and a few starstruck amateurs. The story is reasonably coherent and the movie, like the top-billed film, finds a comfortable parallel between its own atmosphere and the atmosphere under which it was created.

Both full screen programs are in color, with workable fleshtones and reasonably bright hues. *Electric Chair* is the more battered of the two. On both, the recording quality of the monophonic sound leaves something to be desired, but no further impediments have been added. There is no captioning. Also featured are eleven trailers, a 7-minute montage of exploitation film materials and drive-in theater advertisements accompanied by some good exploitation film radio ads, a 4-minute undated black-and-white silent short about a sword swallower doing a chaste striptease entitled *Maria Cortez "We Still Don't Believe It"*, and a terrific 12-minute black-and-white Encyclopedia Britannica educational film from 1952 entitled *Mental Health (Keeping Mentally Fit)*.

Hooray for Dixie

An interesting chronicle of the efforts by the nominally country-western female singing group, the Dixie Chicks, to recover their fan base after their lead singer had the cojones to say what no male country-western singer would, at the time, have expressed in public—essentially that her nation's leader was woefully not living up to her expectations of leadership—**Dixie Chicks Shut Up & Sing**, has been released by The Weinstein Company Home Entertainment (UPC#7960119799294, \$29). The 2006 documentary has music clips and a few complete songs, but its focus is on the outcry and gradual sympathy that followed the 2003 incident, and despite that focus, the film makes a fine analogy to the tears the war in Iraq has caused in the social fabric throughout the country. Additionally, it is a fascinating portrait of how

an individual, thrust into a spotlight, copes with and consciously develops a previously subconscious moral stance. It is also one of those films that can make your blood boil regardless of which side of the issue you stand, and since the impulse of most broadcast journalism is towards non-contentious homogeneity, the 93-minute documentary is a refreshing splash of genuine emotional opinion.

The picture is presented in full screen format only. The source material varies in quality, but the image is sharp and the colors are accurate. The stereo sound has a strong dimensionality during the music sequences. There are optional English and Spanish subtitles, and a trailer.

Triple double bass

Three double bass players take turns exploring the depths on **Live in Vienna Egilsson, Perdersen, Darling**, an MVD release (UPC#02289168-3490, \$20). Jazz at its most contemplative, the 52-minute 2005 concert turns a satisfying amount of attention to an instrument that is often sitting quietly in the back of most combos setting the pace and counterpoint for others. The three musicians do occasionally harmonize their instruments, but most of the show features their individual performances, supported by drums and a piano, as they explore the relative elasticity and potential of their instruments as an expression of ever-present spirit. You have to have really good speakers to replicate the sound, which is centered, without at least a hint of distortion since, once again, it is utilizing portions of a range that are usually not given so much attention. The picture is presented in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and no 16:9 enhancement. The color transfer is crisp. There is a 4-minute interview with the musicians and a text profile of the musicians.

Classy Warwick

Running 102 minutes, Dionne Warwick fits a lot of hits into her classy 2005 stage show depicted on the Warner Music Vision Image Entertainment release, **Dionne Warwick Live in Concert** (UPC#0143813-8642, \$25). She performs a good two-dozen numbers, and while we can live without her having the audience sing *What the World Needs Now* (answer: less audience participation), most of the songs are presented with a fair semblance of their original vocals and are delivered calmly and graciously.

The stage lighting emphasizes blues and purples, but it is crisply transcribed. The picture is in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a full dimensionality, and there is no captioning.

King concert

A 62-minute 1990 concert is presented on **B.B. King: Standing Room Only**, a S'More Entertainment, Inc. release (UPC#089353700225, \$15). The full screen picture is exceptionally vivid. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound (unnoted on the jacket) favors the center and is a little subdued but workable. The fluidity of King's guitar performance is mesmerizing, and is counterbalanced deliciously by his sometimes gravely, devil-may-care vocals. Even when the members of his backup band are soloing, he can't seem to stop wiggling on the side and you're more apt to watch him than the musician in the spotlight. Also featured is a text profile of King and a passable 7-minute radio interview accompanied by a montage of stills.

Collins wails

Joined by Southside Johnny, blues guitarist Albert Collins wails away on his guitar for 55 minutes in a 1985 performance captured on **Albert Collins & The Icebreakers in Concert**, an *Ohne Filter Musik Pur* Inakustik release (UPC#707787634098, \$20). The energetic set has plenty of close-ups on the instruments, so you can marvel at the dexterity of the musicians, as well as plenty of establishing shots, so you can revel in the emotions of their collaborations. The full screen picture is a touch soft, but workable, and colors are bright. The 5.1-channel Dolby Sound has plenty of power and a solid dimensionality. There is a text profile of Collins and the standard interview segment with the *Ohne Filter* producer.

England swings like a pendulum do

Those who find London of the Sixties to be irresistible may want to have a fling with **Cool It Carol**, a British softcore feature from 1970 that has been released as a *Jezebel* title by Salvation (UPC#01438109028, \$15). The 102-minute program is about a young man and a young woman who have yet to reach their twenties, leaving their homes in the sticks and traveling to the big city in hopes of making a life for themselves. The girl has some initial success as a model, which leads to topless gigs, prostitution and porn films. The drama is lightweight and the performances aren't much better, but the location shots are wonderful and the general atmosphere and attitude of the film is as good a time capsule as any, while, perhaps inadvertently, the film shows how the free-spirited idealism and licentious excitement of the era had begun to crumble and implode.

The picture is presented in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The color transfer is super. The cinematography is not always perfectly lit, but the image is fresh, fleshtones are finely detailed and when the lighting does score, hues have the pop intensities the era was famous for. The monophonic sound is passable and the musical score is a perfect mixture of hip and not hip. There is no captioning.