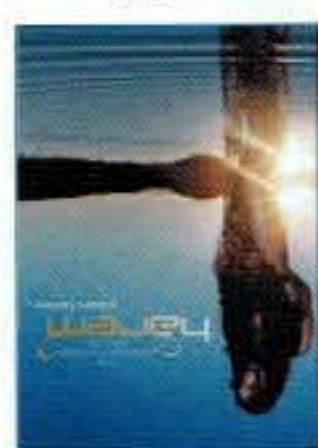


five even as the focus shifts to making *Bad* Jackson's former greatness. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)



Sarah Brightman: Harem ★★1/2
(2004) 52 min. DVD: \$24.98.
EMI Distribution (avail. from most distributors). Color cover.

This lavish counterpart to Sarah Brightman's 2003 CD classical crossover vocalist of world music goes heavy on sexual innuendo and Arab stereotypes and light on artistic illumination. The point of Brightman's album, *Harem*, was to marry rhythms of the Middle East to the diva's more ethereal pop vibe (as opposed to her big, operatic sound), and prominently features such collaborators as violin star Nigel Kennedy and Iraqi singer Kadim Al Sahir. The DVD, by contrast, is an exotic fantasia of fabled images of harems (where lust is tempered by silky decorum).



The Residents: Demons ★★1/2
(2004) 95 min. DVD: \$19.95.
Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors). Color cover.

There are undoubtedly bands out there who have managed to remain obscure for as long as the Residents, but few could match these San Francisco stalwarts who have never revealed their names or appeared onstage without various masks and disguises. But that could change: their music, once consistently remote to all but the most devoted, has taken a distinctly accessible turn; in fact, there are songs here (especially "Life Would Be Wonderful," which appears in various forms no less than three times, with the band abetted by a female vocalist) that you might actually end up humming. Could be, as the promo literature suggests, that the new music was influenced by the somber events of 9/11. Or maybe they've just gotten mellow in their old age. Whatever. This is a welcome change of pace; not a sellout—the lyrics are still pretty peculiar, and often humorous ("If we had that hit recording, we could be on *Oprah* too...")—but surprisingly, well, nice. Presented with a solid Dolby Digital 5.1 soundtrack, *The Residents: Demons* suffers from poor video quality; since the stage was so dark, the film was shot using infrared light and then digitally reprocessed, adding some effects along the way, and the result, while sort of interesting, eventually becomes pretty tiresome. Still, all in all, this is a pleasant surprise. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P.

Kinda like Hootie and the Blowfish—a thoroughly average, journeyman rock group that somehow broke through in a big, big way for a few minutes—Sister Hazel (who hail from Gainesville, Florida, the birthplace of Tom

Sister Hazel: A Life in the Day ★★
(2004) 189 min. DVD: \$19.99. Sixtman (avail. from most distributors). Color cover.

documentary and two bonus tracks. Optional extras include a 20-minute behind-the-scenes the MGS) just aren't very compelling. DVD exactly Otis Redding backed by Booker T. and Dylan's "Positively 4th Street"), the smooth rhythms and easy-listening vibe (this ain't Ray Vaughan, Trout sports a funky Stratocaster and favors loud, mean blues-rock, but he must can definitely play; much like the late Stevie show was recorded in Amsterdam). The guy a rabid following (including in Europe—this for three decades now, and they seem to have and his band, the Radicals, have been around *single solo*. Walter Trout is no exception. Trout notes as fast as possible on pretty much every disease: namely, a compulsion to play as many they all seem to be afflicted with the same, is a wondrous thing to behold. What's more, Halen, and whose general technical prowess cision than Hendrix and more speed than pre-rainforest, dudes who can play with more pre-ists possessed of enough chops to level a is littered with rock guitar-



Simply Red: Home Live in Sicily ★★1/2
(2004) 122 min. DVD: \$19.99.
Rhino Home Video (avail. from most distributors). Color cover.

So you're Mick Hucknall of Simply Red. You're the lead singer, the frontman, the band leader, the principal composer, the focal point of every appearance—simply put, you *are* Simply Red. And yet, when the band issues a new concert video, you still need to include a "Mick Cam" angle option, whereby viewers can watch you in close-up for the entire two-hour show, instead of merely, say, 90 percent of it? Get over yourself, dude. Clearly, this guy thinks he, his band, and what he calls their "British urban soul" music are the bee's knees. In fact, Hucknall is a good singer, sometimes really good, and he's still got considerable power and heart, especially in the upper register. But Simply Red simply isn't the stuff dreams are made of; heck, in the blue-eyed soul sweepstakes, they arguably fall short of the likes of Hall & Oates or Michael McDonald. Hucknall and company certainly haven't had as many hits; in America, they're still primarily known for "Holding Back the Years"—great tune, but what have you done for me lately? This 20-song set, recorded in 2003 (in a beautiful, open-air amphitheater in Taormina, Italy), looks and sounds good (in DTS and Dolby Digital 5.1 sound). But despite some interesting cover choices (the Stylistics' "You Make Me Feel Brand New," Bob Dylan's "Positively 4th Street"), the smooth rhythms and easy-listening vibe (this ain't exactly Otis Redding backed by Booker T. and the MGS) just aren't very compelling. DVD extras include a 20-minute behind-the-scenes documentary and two bonus tracks. Optional. Aud: P. (S. Graham)

Petty) has amassed a very loyal following and sold a bunch of records over their 10 years together, but has yet to break through on a Hootie-like scale. This mildly diverting disc includes both a feature-length documentary and a 17-song, 90-minute concert. The former is one of those on-the-road jobs in which we see the five fellas and their crew messing around in motels, at sound checks, on a cruise ship for an event called "Rock the Boat" (bringing together many bands to entertain a bunch of drunk, mostly young, predominantly white kids for four days), and...blah, blah, blah. Are we really interested in what the promo literature describes as "the band's thoughts on music and life"? Please. As for the music, well, hey, it's just fine: what used to be called "indie" or "alternative," i.e., unpretentious, straightforward rock with catchy choruses that the Hazelnuts (as their fans call themselves) can all sing along to. Ultimately, however, other than the choir they're preaching to, who really cares? An optional purchase at best. Aud: P. (S. Graham)



Walter Trout and the Radicals: Relentless—The Concert ★★
(2003) 165 min. DVD: \$19.95.
Ruf Records (avail. from most distributors). Color cover.

Today's musical landscape is littered with rock guitarists possessed of enough chops to level a rainforest, dudes who can play with more precision than Hendrix and more speed than Van Halen, and whose general technical prowess is a wondrous thing to behold. What's more, they all seem to be afflicted with the same disease: namely, a compulsion to play as many notes as fast as possible on pretty much every *single solo*. Walter Trout is no exception. Trout and his band, the Radicals, have been around for three decades now, and they seem to have a rabid following (including in Europe—this show was recorded in Amsterdam). The guy can definitely play; much like the late Stevie Ray Vaughan, Trout sports a funky Stratocaster and favors loud, mean blues-rock, but he must have listened to B.B. King, to name just one of the masters. Did he never learn that one long, soulfully held note can say more than an avalanche of repetitious speed riffs? Apparently not. Trout and company were recording a new CD on this May 2003 evening, and in fairness, some of his own songs (like "Cry If You Want To," a Stax-style ballad) are good, and he's a strong, soulful singer (yet, for me, the lingering image will be the bored look on his bass player's face as Trout launches into yet another interminable solo). Presented in Dolby Digital stereo, the disc features "backstage pass" footage, bonus tracks, and more. Optional. Aud: P. (S. Graham)

