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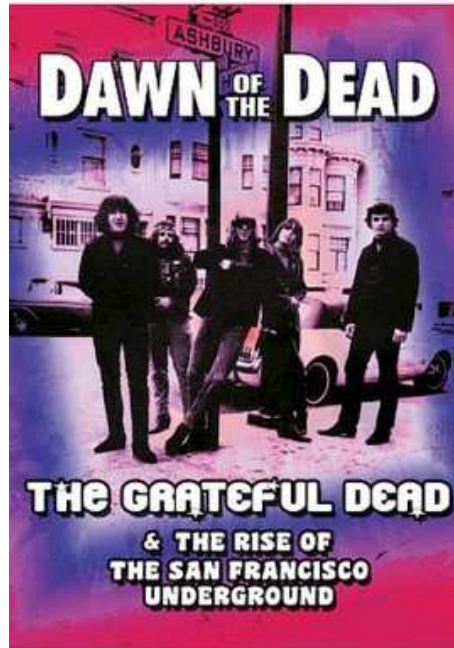
Here is a round of music titles that turned out to be better than I expected.

First we have the slightly confusingly titled **Dawn Of The Dead: The Grateful Dead & The Rise Of The San Francisco Underground** from the ever-impressive documentary series from Chrome Dreams handled in the U.S. by Music Video Distributors. Running well over two hours and having nothing to do with zombie films, the program discusses the history behind the rise of psychedelic music, the epicenter of the scene in San Francisco and how the various bands that came out of it made up its culture, but The Grateful Dead is at the forefront.

They were also its purest survivor, though the coverage ends abruptly in the early 1970s, meaning we may see follow-up chapters. Interviews include friends and members of the band, including archival footage, several scholars on music doing a great job of explaining things (including Anthony De Curtis and Robert Christgau) and the usual plethora of archival footage that includes poor clips from the Rockumentary **Fillmore** (1972, looking better on a recent DVD quietly issued by Rhino in an oddly shorter version than the theatrical film) when it comes to showing Bill Graham as the driving force of the movement commercially.

Footage of **Gimme Shelter** (reviewed on Criterion Blu-ray elsewhere on this site) also surfaces and there is frankly more overlap with other programs on the subject, including some we already covered. However, better that and the makers be thorough than miss anything. Dead fans and music fans will be impressed enough, but it does seem to stop somewhat short. Text on the participants and a bonus newly recorded music performance are the only extras.

The first of our two concert entries is features an amazing pianist. **Menaheim Pressler: In Recital at Cite de la Musique, Paris** has the remarkable artist play pieces of Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy and Schubert with ease in this new Blu-ray release by Ideale Audience and Naxos, recorded on 3/23/11. Recorded well and shot in a standard-but-good form, it is one of many piano concerts we have seen as practically a cycle on



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(1977/Uncut/Kino/Redemption Blu-ray)/Miracle Of Marcellino (1991/VCI Blu-ray)/Naughty Teen (1978/One 7 DVD)/The Organizer (1963/Criterion Blu-ray)/Plot Of Fear (1976/Rare Vid)
 > The Strange Case Of Alice Cooper Live 1979: The Madhouse Rock Tour (Shout! Factory DVD)

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 > Shock Labyrinth 3D (2009/Well Go USA Blu-ray 3D/2D w/DVD)
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 > Torchwood: Miracle Day - The Complete Fourth Season (2011/BBC Blu-ray Set)
 > The Witches Of Oz (2011/Image Entertainment Blu-ray)
 > Ganja & Hess (1973/Kino Classics Blu-ray)/Shame (2011/Fox Blu-ray w/DVD)
 > Mystery Science Theater 3000 XXIII (Shout! Factory DVD Box Set)

Blu-ray and that is a good thing. This runs a smooth 90 minutes. Four trailers and a booklet on the program and artist are the only extras.

As a matter of fact, the cycle is so prominent, that we are even getting the occasional documentary on the subject. The latest is **Pianomania** (2010), issued by First Run Features and set in Vienna where world class pianists including Lang Lang, Alfred Brendel and Pierre-Laurent Aimard are going to play and even record the classics with the help of Stefan Knupfer, Steinway & Sons' big Master Tuner and Chief Technician there, working at their various locales and concert halls.

Running about 90 minutes, it starts out interesting and stays that way throughout, showing us the immense trouble of making great music with very talented people and how you have to be very specific and very, very thorough on everything involved. Fine tuning the piano alone takes so much time, work, knowledge and the Steinway is the last piano in the world made by hand, so no two sound alike and they need remarkable work to get them to work a certain way.

I really enjoyed this and found this to be both a big surprise and a fine flipside to the outstanding documentary **Note By Note: The Making Of Steinway L1037: Deluxe Edition** (2007) which we reviewed at this link:

<http://www.fulvuedrive-in.com/review/9022/Note+By+Note+%E2%80%93+The+M>

A Director Q&A is the only extra.

Finally we have **The Strange Case Of Alice Cooper Live 1979: The Madhouse Rock Tour** which we can best describe as late vintage Cooper. Disco had arrived and though Cooper later admitted he enjoyed the likes of The Bee Gees, he was not participating in the genre and sticking with the hits that at one point in the earlier 1970s made him the #1 concert act for a time. Shot on 16mm film and finished on analog video, this show has him in pretty good form still doing his wild stage routine (the kind he just recreated circa 1972 for Tim Burton's humorous take on **Dark Shadows**) that put him on the map.

This includes people on stage acting wacky who are not part of the band and Cooper acting as crazy as he can. *School's Out*, *I'm Eighteen* and *No More Mr. Nice Guy* are among the 18 tracks and Cooper has some interview clips inserted between some performances. It is a good show that deserves to be on DVD and though some other Cooper material, old and new, is already out there in both formats, this is not bad in comparison. An all-new concert-length audio commentary by Cooper is the only extra.

The 1.33 X 1 image on **Dead** is a little weaker than usual for a Chrome Dreams release, but some of the footage is simply in bad shape (fading color new footage, second-generation clip sources, pan & scan **Fillmore** footage where it should be 2.35 X 1, etc.) but other clips look good as do the new interviews, while the same framing on Cooper is better overall though I wish the film footage were transferred more directly to an HD source. Color is good for the most part too.

The 1080i 1.78 X 1 digital High Definition image transfer on **Pressler** is easily the best performer here being the only Blu-ray here, though image can be slight off and the anamorphically enhanced 1.78 X 1 image in **Pianomania** is pretty much an all new HD shoot looking good, but with some softness and flaws throughout.

Lossy Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo on **Dead** (with its share of new stereo interviews, old monophonic audio that can be rough and solid stereo transfer of recorded music) and **Cooper** are good for their age, as expected, but I wish **Cooper** had a 5.1 option like **Pianomania** does. However, that only helps it so much and it is not as dynamic or as well recorded as the DTS-HD MA (Master Audio) 5.0 lossless mix on the **Pressler** Blu, though the sound not as enveloping as expected, it still has enough of a soundfield throughout to enjoy. The PCM 2.0 Stereo is also fine, but still not as good as the DTS-MA.

- Nicholas Sheffo