

1980s, the present) provide context for the many profundities we encounter about the purpose and value of our lives, without really explaining how Coelho's beliefs evolved. Viewers see the struggle but not the epiphanies, nor how he disciplined his reckless impulses into his long-held ambition to write. **VERDICT** Fine performances and lovely cinematography can't overcome some narrative incoherence. An optional purchase.—**John Hiett, formerly with Iowa City P.L.**

★**Harlem Street Singer: The Guitar Gospel of Reverend Gary Davis. color & b/w.**

77+ min. Trevor Laurence & Simeon Hutner, Acoustic Traditions Films, dist. by Emphasis Entertainment, www.emphasisentertainment.com c/o Amazon.com. 2015. DVD UPC 040232196782. \$25.98. MUSIC

This is the definitive portrait of the Rev. Gary Davis (1896–1972), one of our most influential blues guitar players. Born blind in Laurens, SC, Davis struggled as a street musician and preacher for most of his life, finally achieving the recognition he deserved in the last decade of his life. Comprising the perfect blend of interviews (Woody Mann, Happy Traum, Jorma Kaukonen, David Bromberg, Stefan Grossman, Bob Weir, and others), concert film (including a particularly gripping date at the Newport Folk Festival), and studio work by the Empire Roots Band, this film is never less than fascinating. No one sang the line “If I had my way” from Davis’s “Samson and Delilah” like Davis himself. If this reviewer had his way, all music biographies would be just like this one. Extras include additional rare footage. **VERDICT** This documentary gets it absolutely right, a perfect mix of biography, interviews, and performance.—**Bill Baars, Lake Oswego P.L., OR**

Van Morrison: Another Glorious Decade; Under Review 1977–1987. color & b/w. 91 min. Prism Films & Sexy Intellectual Prod., dist. by MVDvisual, www.mvdh2b.com. 2015. DVD UPC 823564542997. \$19.95. MUSIC

This unauthorized documentary follow-up to Prism Films’ *Van Morrison: A Glorious Decade; Under Review 1964–1974* covers the Irish singer-songwriter’s second decade in the spotlight following a three-year hiatus triggered by the poor reception to his *Veedon Fleece* album. After his self-imposed exile, Morrison (b. 1945) returned to the pop music scene with a string of recordings showcasing a greater variety of musical styles and a new lyrical emphasis on spirituality and mysticism. This prolific ten-year period ended with the commercial and critical hit album *Poetic Champions Compose*. A host of music journalists and critics analyze and summarize this eclectic and lyrically and

musically adventurous time in Morrison’s long career. Luckily, it’s not all just talking head commentary, as the filmmakers pepper the movie with well-preserved televised live performances and interview clips. Thomas Arnold’s dry but informative narration ties the various pieces into a cohesive whole.

VERDICT Valuable info, astute analysis, and, best of all, an abundance of entertaining live footage. While too narrowly focused for casual viewers, this film is recommended to serious pop music fans and Morrison aficionados. [See Trailers, *LJ* 8/15].—**Douglas King, Univ. of South Carolina Lib., Columbia**

★**American Experience: Walt Disney; He Made Believe. color & b/w. 240 min. Sarah Colt, Sarah Colt Prods., dist. by PBS, shoppbs.org. 2015. DVD ISBN 9781627894166. \$24.99.**

Closed-captioned. PERFORMING ARTS
Through sheer force of will, talent, creativity, and a deep belief in himself, Walt Disney (1901–66) created some of the 20th century’s most beloved films, while redefining American leisure with Disneyland and the later Disney World, all while creating a brand that still touches us today. Disney returned from World War I service determined to make a name for himself. A talented cartoonist, he quickly saw the potential in animation, and, with the help and financial guidance of his older brother Roy, he eventually created the character of Mickey Mouse, which became an overnight sensation. Never satisfied, he then set his sights on the first feature-length cartoon, *Snow White* (1938). Next up were *Dumbo*, *Bambi*, *Pinocchio*, and *Fantasia*, which proved to be box office disappointments. The documentary also covers the bitter labor disputes with his animators (his “boys”); they went on strike during the production of *Dumbo* (1941). This four-part PBS documentary, narrated by Oliver Platt, reviews Disney’s eventful life, using his home movies and photographs, plus commentary from his studio workers and cultural historians. The video covers Disney’s groundbreaking merchandising efforts, his forays into television (most memorably the *Mickey Mouse Club* and *Davy Crockett*), and the theme parks, his attempt to create “living animation.” **VERDICT** This production gives equal time to Disney’s critics but credits the man with being the “master of dreams and hopes.” Highly recommended.—**Stephen Rees, formerly with Levittown Lib., PA**

Richard Pryor: Omit the Logic; The True Story of an American Icon. color & b/w. 83+ min. Marina Zenovich, Fresh One Prods. & Tarnished Angel, dist. by Magnolia Pictures Home Entertainment, www.magnolpictures.com. 2015. DVD UPC 876964008051. \$26.98;

Blu-ray UPC 876964008068. \$29.98.

Rated: R. PERFORMING ARTS

Comedian Richard Pryor (1940–2005) transcended mere humor, taking in the pain, absurdity, and occasional joys of modern life and then fearlessly, truthfully reflecting them back to his audience. This documentary was made with the cooperation of Pryor’s estate, but it doesn’t dodge dark subjects such as his predilections for drugs, womanizing, and self-destruction, or his turbulent youth—he was raised in a brothel, largely by its fearsome madam, his grandmother. Director Zenovich uses an expected mélange of interviews, still photos, and news and archival footage to trace Pryor’s beginnings as a Bill Cosby clone through to the development of his uniquely incendiary style, which flowered in the 1970s and early 1980s, and his descent via drug addiction, lackluster film roles, and multiple sclerosis. Bonus features include extended interviews with comedic legends such as Mel Brooks and David Steinberg. **VERDICT** Profanity, racially charged language, and sexual and drug-related content; suitable for older teens and up. A fair, compelling look at a remarkable yet tragic life. Highly recommended for general audiences; essential for comedy buffs.—**J. Osicki, Saint John Free P.L., NB**

Through a Lens Darkly: Black Photographers and the Emergence of a People. color & b/w. 92+ min. Thomas Allen Harris, Independent Television Svc., dist. by First Run Features, 800-229-8575; www.firstrunfeatures.com. 2015. DVD UPC 720229916387. \$27.95. PHOTOG/HIST

This powerful documentary, broadcast earlier this year on PBS, is in many ways a film companion to coproducer Deborah Willis’s important 2000 book *Reflections in Black*. Harris offers what he calls a “family memoir” via historical images of African Americans initially through popular and disturbing stereotypes such as those portrayed in D.W. Griffith’s classic 1915 film *Birth of a Nation* to more realistic and poignant photographs. Using a series of narrative images offered by African American photographic artists including Anthony Barboza, Hank Willis Thomas, Lorna Simpson, and Gordon Parks, among others, Harris sheds light on a seldom-told aspect of our culture. Photographs of Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, and Booker T. Washington offer a fascinating alternative perspective to other traditional images of African Americans. **VERDICT** This compelling film will be a welcome addition to library collections that focus on photography and African American and American cultural studies.—**Herbert Shapiro, Lifelong Learning Soc., Florida Atlantic Univ., Boca Raton**