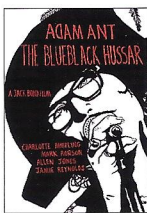


Adam Ant: The Blueblack Hussar ★★

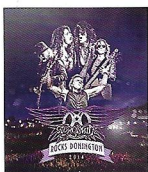
(2015) 99 min. DVD: \$24.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



Many with long memories of the New Romantics period of British pop music in the 1980s—or of the early days of music videos on MTV—may recall the swaggering, playful presence of Adam Ant (“Goody Two Shoes”), whose personal story turns out to be rather horrific. He was “sectioned” (i.e., detained under England’s Mental Health Act) three times for bipolar disorder, derailing his career, and costing him some 15 years. Veteran filmmaker Jack Bond’s documentary centers on the artist’s return from the wilderness a few years ago, as he goes on a tour of small venues in the U.K., reacquaints himself with audiences, gives interviews, and connects with various random celebrities (including actress Charlotte Rampling, and producer-musician Mark Ronson). Sadly, however, most of the film is deadly dull, a fly-on-the-wall look at not much at all besides Adam Ant holding forth about life and music while wearing a hat well-suited for a 19th-century British naval officer. Little is revealed here except that the 58-year-old musician has many opinions, and a sense of humor, and the sparse footage of him in performance is hampered by poor-quality audio. Presented in stereo, extras include bonus live performances (including one with Boy George) and a Q&A with Bond and journalist John Robb. Antmusic fanatics may appreciate, but for most this is an optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

Aerosmith Rocks Donington 2014 ★★

(2014) 105 min. DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98 (two audio CDs included). Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors)

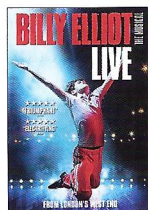


With the exception of touring keyboard player Buck Johnson, the original Aerosmith members are well into their 60s, but they rock as hard as ever in this 2014 concert at the Download Festival in Leicestershire’s Donington Park. If anything, the band plays as if it has something to prove, possibly because the festival attracted a younger demographic. Consequently, instead of opening with the 1970s hits that made their reputation, the band jumps ahead to songs from their 1980s resurgence, such as “Love in an Elevator.” On the down side, “Dude (Looks Like a Lady)” has not aged well, especially in light of the strides LGBT people have made since the song’s release (what might have been intended as a jokey update on the Kinks’ “Lola” now seems particularly insensitive). On the plus side, however, lead singer Steven Tyler continues to look and sound ageless, although it’s too bad that he resorts to lame

croch grabs and sexist commentary (adding insult to injury, the program also features clips of the band preparing for the show, including a groupie-filled sequence with Tyler). Those quibbles aside, the band’s 20-song set includes many fan favorites, such as “Walk This Way,” “Sweet Emotion,” “I Don’t Want to Miss a Thing,” and “Dream On.” And guitarist Joe Perry even gets the chance to sing on “Freedom Fighter” from 2012’s *Rock from Another Dimension*. Bundled with two audio CDs, this is presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray. Sure to be popular, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Billy Elliot: The Musical Live ★★★½

(2014) 170 min. DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$26.98. Universal Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

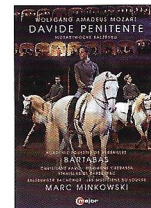


Mounted by the same team that created the hit 2000 film *Billy Elliot*—including writer Lee Hall and director Stephen Daldry—*Billy Elliot: The Musical Live*, winner of 10 Tony awards (including Best Musical) and now celebrating the 10th year of its run, is presented in this 2014 performance from London’s Victoria Palace Theatre. Set in 1984-85 during the British coal miner’s strike that pitted U.K. prime minister Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government against the National Union of Mine Workers, the musical centers on one boy who trades boxing gloves for ballet shoes, suffering the scorn of his older brother and his father, both coal miners, while being encouraged by the ghost of his deceased mother. In what is likely the most physically demanding role for a child in contemporary theatre, 11-year-old Elliott Hanna is astonishing as Billy, dancing up a kinetic storm in a variety of styles, including tap, modern, and ballet, while also turning in a compelling, heartfelt performance. Hanna is ably backed by Ruthie Henshall as the small-town ballet class instructor who sees Billy’s potential; Deka Walmsley as Billy’s tortured dad, who ultimately wants the best for his son; Ann Emery as Billy’s senile Grandma; and Zach Atkinson as Billy’s best friend, Michael. Featuring the music of Elton John (with lyrics by Hall), the show boasts a number of fine songs, including the beautiful “The Stars Look Down,” the stirring anthem “Solidarity,” the touching “Grandma’s Song,” the caustic “Merry Christmas, Maggie Thatcher,” and the comic cross-dressing number “Expressing Yourself.” A special treat here is the appearance of Liam Mower (the first stage Billy) in a dance scene with Hanna as the latter imagines his future graceful self (a rousing encore also features two dozen past and present Billys). Although some might balk at the profanity spouted by pre-teens in the show—much of it played

for laughs—*Billy Elliot* is ultimately a big-hearted, spirit-lifting musical. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on Blu-ray, extras include an introduction and set tour by Hanna, and a behind-the-scenes featurette with cast and crew. Highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

Davide Penitente ★★★

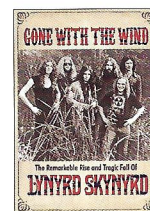
(2015) 73 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).



A rarely performed Mozart piece is showcased in this unusual 2015 Mozart-week (Mozart Week) presentation from Salzburg. The work itself is a cantata composed in 1785 for the Vienna Society of Musicians, while the text is derived from an Italian translation of the Psalms attributed to King David. But except for two elaborate new arias, the music simply recycles the eight sections of the two completed portions—the Kyrie and Gloria—of Mozart’s otherwise unfinished *Mass in C minor*. Although the placement of performers on different levels at the rear of the stage leads to some slight coordination problems, the cantata is beautifully performed by three excellent soloists—soprano Christiane Karg, mezzo-soprano Marianne Crebassa, and tenor Stanislas de Barbeyrac. And the Salzburger Bachchor, accompanied by the original-instrument group Les Musiciens du Louvre, play with great finesse under conductor Marc Minkowski. What sets this performance apart is the locale: the Salzburg Felsenreitschule (Riding School)—a stonewall structure previously used for opera productions, but here reverting to its original purpose as members of the Académie équestre de Versailles, under their leader Bartabas, ride their steeds in varied formations across the sand-covered stage in tandem with the music. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, extras include Minkowski’s reading of Mozart’s *Adagio and Fugue in C minor*. A one-of-a-kind production that should appeal to fanciers of horsemanship and/or Mozart rarities, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Gone with the Wind: The Remarkable Rise and Tragic Fall of Lynyrd Skynyrd ★★★

(2015) 163 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

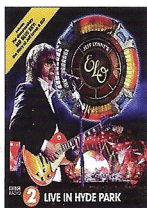


Tom O’Dell’s documentary about Lynyrd Skynyrd begins with a look at front man Ronnie Van Zant, who grew up in rural Florida and considered a career in sports until he caught a concert by the Rolling Stones, which inspired him to form a band with high

school friends (other influences included the blues-based bands Free and Hour Glass, the latter a precursor to the Allman Brothers). Drummer Bob Burns remembers practicing 12 hours a day before the band made a name for themselves, first as the One Percent, then as Lynyrd Skynyrd. After securing a manager and a recording date at Muscle Shoals, the group should have been on their way, but nine record labels would turn them down. Their fortunes changed, however, when they met Al Kooper, who produced their eponymous 1973 debut, which included the now classic rock anthem "Free Bird." Although Kooper was impressed with their talent, he found it odd that the band never improvised. As critic Robert Christgau puts it, "The Allman Brothers are a jam band and Lynyrd Skynyrd are a song band. Ronnie was a great songwriter." By the time of their 1974 follow-up, *Second Helping*, the group had started to use a Confederate flag as a backdrop, causing controversy that continues to this day. With a new manager onboard, the band toured and drank more than ever, leading to departures for Burns and guitarist Ed King, but they rallied with new additions Artimus Pyle, Steve Gaines, and three backup singers. Sadly, a 1977 plane crash that took the lives of Van Zant and Gaines would bring that lineup to an end. Offering a worthy tribute to the band's first and best incarnation, this is recommended. (K. Femmessy)

Jeff Lynne's ELO: Live in Hyde Park ★★★

(2014) 167 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



The name of the band, Jeff Lynne's ELO, indicates that the entire Electric Light Orchestra wasn't present at this 2014 concert, but fans aren't likely to feel too disappointed. Playing before 50,000 people at London's Hyde Park, the frontman is accompanied by Richard Tandy on piano and keyboards (as Lynne notes, the pair have been playing together for 42 years). The rest of the band includes eight hired hands plus the BBC Concert Orchestra, who add the necessary grandeur on symphonic pop songs such as "Telephone Line." All told, the group serves up 15 tracks from the ELO catalog—including "Strange Magic," "Can't Get It Out of My Head," and "Livin' Thing"—as well as one Traveling Wilburys number, the George Harrison-penned "Handle with Care." Along with the concert, this release also features the documentary *Mr. Blue Sky: The Story of Jeff Lynne & ELO*, which traces Lynne's career from the 1960s to today. Lynne talks about earlier bands The Move and The Idle Race (the latter would become ELO, although Monty Python Eric Idle jokes here that Lynne should have kept the original name), as well as his efforts as a

producer (working with Roy Orbison, Tom Petty, and Harrison). Other speakers include Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr with whom Lynne collaborated on the John Lennon song "Free as a Bird." Also featuring an interview with Lynne, this is presented in Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray. Recommended. (K. Femmessy)

Les Contes d'Hoffmann ★★

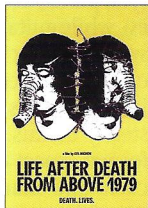
(2014) 193 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Bel Air Classiques (dist. by Naxos of America).



Jacques Offenbach's grand opera—unfinished at his death—identifies itself as "fantastique," but Christoph Marthaler's 2014 production at Madrid's Teatro Real might better be described as bizarre. The action is updated to what appears to be a 1940s club that is also an art studio populated by nude live models. Nicklausse, the young companion of Hoffmann—whose three disastrous past loves form the substance of the subsequent acts—is transformed into a querulous, drunken old lady (she and other characters onstage are usually shown either sitting around zombified or engaging in jerky fits across the stage). The original climaxes of the three acts are largely ignored here in favor of enigmatic endings, leading to general incoherence. Despite mostly solid vocalism—Eric Cutler is a decent if unmemorable Hoffmann, Anne Sofie von Otter does her best with Nicklausse, Vito Priante is fine as the various Mephistophelean characters, and the women in Hoffmann's life are all adequate—conductor Sylvain Cambreling's reserved reading of the score often lacks the required zest. A major miscalculation also mars the epilogue, as Cambreling literally stops the action in order to have Stella (Altea Garrido) recite an excerpt from a poem by Fernando Pessoa while everyone else stands like statues as they listen. It's a moment that accurately reflects the deadening effect of this misguided take on what should have been a scintillating opera. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

Life After Death from Above 1979 ★★★

(2014) 73 min. DVD: \$19.99. Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

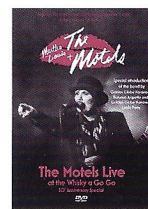


The Canadian noise-rock duo Death from Above 1979 recounts their history—from the beginning to the end to the new beginning—in Eva Michon's engaging documentary. Singer and drummer Sebastian Grainger recalls his roots in the Toronto group Femme Fatale, which led to a friend-

ship with singer and bassist Jesse F. Keeler. The pair hit it off, recording several singles and EPs, which led to local gigs that brought them to the attention of other bands, such as Metric, and labels, like Last Gang, which released their 2004 debut, *You're a Woman, I'm a Machine*. After that, the duo played 546 shows between 2001 and 2005. During that time, Grainger says that they would ingest anything to stay awake, from energy drinks to ephedrine. But while touring with Nine Inch Nails and Queens of the Stone Age, the friendship soured, and in 2006, the band broke up. Keeler formed the electro-pop outfit MSTRKRFT and continued to drink and tour, while Grainger settled down and went solo. During the next five years, they both got married (director Michon is Grainger's wife), and one had a child, while the other bought a house. The documentary concludes with their 2011 reunion, which began with a surprise show at Austin's South by Southwest conference, where fans became so excited that they broke down the perimeter fence. Cops shut down the gig, but the band continued to tour for the next year, and in 2014 they finally released their long-awaited follow-up, *The Physical World*, although it remains to be seen whether more will follow. An interesting portrait of an oddball band, this is recommended. (K. Femmessy)

The Motels Live at the Whisky a Go Go: 50th Anniversary Special ★★1/2

(2014) 88 min. DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98. Vesuvio Entertainment (avail. from www.amazon.com).



Captured live in 2014 at L.A.'s Whisky a Go Go—a legendary venue celebrating its 50th anniversary—Martha Davis and the Motels deliver a 17-song set that draws heavily from the New Wave band's first four studio albums (released 1979-1983). Introduced by actress Rosanna Arquette and Grammy nominee Linda Perry, front woman Davis still has the sultry chops that informed The Motels' megahits "Only the Lonely" and "Suddenly Last Summer." Aside from Davis, the only original band member here is Marty Jourard on keyboards and sax (younger bucks fill out the roster on guitar, bass, and drums). Initially, Davis's vocals are somewhat overshadowed during the more instrument-heavy tunes, such as "Mission of Mercy," after which someone shouts something and Davis does a double-take, asking "Whoa, did somebody ask me to take off my top? Do you know what birthday this is?" (Davis is here celebrating her 63rd). I might have misheard, but I actually thought the guy yelled something along the lines of "Turn your mic up." Davis sounds better on quieter entries like "Celia," "Counting," and the lovely "Mr. Grey." Also featuring the hits "Take the L" (with the classic