

DVD REVIEWS

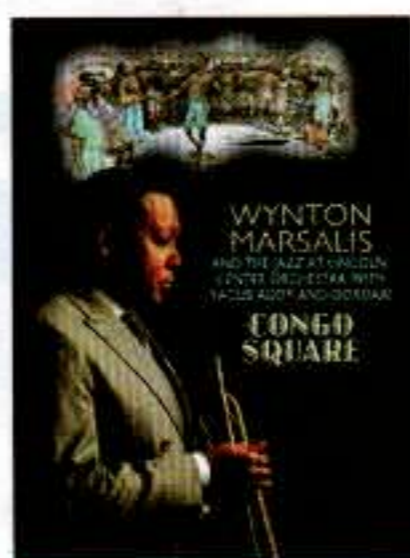


BUNNY LEE/BLACK ARK Reggae Nashville: Deep Roots Music 2

Screen Edge/MVD Visual

Originally shot in the early '80s and narrated by the incomparable Mikey Dread, the Deep Roots Music series caught the spirit of reggae through a hazy lens with informal interviews and rare studio performances. It's now a live-and-direct historical account that ripples with the campy irreverence of the surf cult classic *The Endless Summer*. The first segment here (which is actually Part 3 of the series) goes behind the scenes at King Tubby's studio with stellar sessions voiced by Delroy Wilson, Jackie Edwards and Johnny Clarke, and features Bunny Lee himself in a great interview with his parents, surrounded by his latest crop of musical talent. The Black Ark segment—fittingly prefaced with a righteous Nyabingi gathering up in the hills with Skully and Tommy McCook—looks at the sometimes deranged mind of Lee "Scratch" Perry, who makes it hard to tell if his madman persona is just filler for the camera. His live studio sessions consist of a long-playing ramble over a riddim that doesn't stop until the reel cuts out—even his wife and children take a crack at the business end of the microphone. Aside from the *3-2-1 Contact*-like editing and title sequences, Deep Roots Music plays like a visual encyclopedia that begs for a rewind.

—MATT SCHEINER



WYNTON MARSALIS AND THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA WITH YACUB ADDY AND ODADAA! Congo Square

Shanachie

Arguably the birthplace of jazz, Congo Square was the only corner in New Orleans where African slaves were allowed to perform their music. At the 2007 Montreal Jazz Festival, Wynton Marsalis teamed up with Yacub Addy to honor that hallowed spot (which survives to this day in Louis Armstrong Park in the French Quarter), delivering a two-hour performance that blended traditional and modern jazz, African beats and blues into one cohesive package. Marsalis begins the set with a trumpet solo while the other musicians quietly enter the stage, but as the band settles, he takes the mic to sing a scathing chant about the U.S. government's failure in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and then shifts the narrative focus to Congo Square. The African musicians of Odadaa! and the orchestra then take turns playing, often joining forces for some numbers. One of the movements, based entirely on elements from African percussion, finds Otey Thompson taking the lead on the balaphones, while Cynthia Gonzales sings beautifully on "Never Goes Away"—a bluesy spiritual that leads to the grand finale, which pays tribute to the Crescent City's famed marching bands. Even though there are no extras—an interview with Marsalis definitely would have enriched the experience—*Congo Square* is still an amazing ride.

—ERNEST BARTELDES



STEEL PULSE Door Of No Return

Wiseman Doctrine/MVD Visual

Hopping on the tour bus back in 1999 with preeminent reggae troupe Steel Pulse, director Michel Moreau had his work cut out for him. The band was criss-crossing the United States, logging energetic shows in Washington D.C., Virginia and New York City, before leaving for Senegal, where a benefit performance for Amnesty International's Human Rights Awareness campaign was planned in the capital of Dakar. The U.S. shows are juxtaposed with footage of the band's trip to Africa, which included a visit to Gorée Island, known historically for its House Of Slaves and the infamous Door Of No Return. It is said that more than 26,000 Africans passed through here before being torn away from the motherland forever—a revelation that clearly moves the members of Steel Pulse, who pay tribute in song. Moreau organizes in-depth interviews with frontman David Hinds, guitarist Basil Gabbidon and bassist Ronald McQueen, and trains the camera on Hinds during a visit to his old house in Birmingham, England, where the band was founded. The overall production and sound quality can be a little disappointing, and the material seems dated as well, but the scenery and the band's journey are still touching subjects.

—MATT SCHEINER



THREE SHEETS Season 2

Infinity Entertainment

American comedian Zane Lamprey seems to have landed his dream job. It starts with his obvious affinity for the inside of a bar, which he shares with a roving camera crew as they embark on pub crawls from Kentucky to Korea, Puerto Rico to the Philippines, Wales to... well, you get the point. Like the adventurous chefs on the Food Network, Lamprey mixes it up with the regulars on each half-hour segment of this Mojo Network show (*Season 2* boasts 10 episodes, plus bonus footage), fearlessly guzzling the local libations while also giving brief history lessons on the customs. His playful and edgy tone, which recalls Jon Stewart without the politics, reveals Lamprey as a guy who's priceless good fun for a night of drinks. And it's hilarious to watch how smashed he gets: for his hour-long New Year's Eve in New York City, he hits nine different bars for at least one beverage per stop, while his binge in Seoul finds him playing drinking games with a rowdy bunch of Korean businessmen. Whether he's streaking with his friend Steve in the heart of bourbon country, or dispelling the myth of hangover-safe saki (speaking of which, each episode ends with a local hangover cure—a true full-service show), Lamprey will give you hours of inebriated joy without ever leaving your couch.

—TAD HENDRICKSON