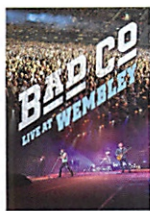


Bad Company: Live at Wembley ★★ ★ 1/2

(2010) 90 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Except for Raymond "Boz" Burrell, who died of a heart attack in 2006, *Bad Company: Live at Wembley* features the rest of the original lineup for the '70s British rockers—Paul Rodgers (vocals, guitar, piano), Mick Ralphs (guitar), and Simon Kirke (drums)—backed by Lynn Sorensen (bass) and Heart's Howard Leese (guitar). Filmed live at London's Wembley Arena in April 2010, *Bad Company* serves up a 16-song classic rock set, mixing anthem hits such as "Can't Get Enough," "Feel Like Makin' Love," "Rock and Roll Fantasy," and "Ready For Love," with power ballads including "Shooting Star" and "Simple Man." Never hailed for their subtle or insightful lyrics—note the number of sexual "love" songs (here the amount of young blood testosterone is somewhat contradicted by the gray—or dyed—hair crowning the heads of these 60-something rockers)—the band always excelled at creating catchy blues-based rock. Nearly 50 years after their heyday, lead singer Rodgers can not only still skillfully twirl a mic stand into the air but his voice remains surprisingly strong. The concert has a couple of missteps: Rodgers has a habit of pointing the mic towards the audience for choruses that don't quite materialize ("Shooting Star"—one of the best '70s self-destructive artist songs—is simply ruined by this insistence on audience interaction), and the band meanders through a bloated seven-minute rendition of "Ready For Love." Still, this is a rousing concert, overall: by the time *Bad Company* wraps with a scorching "Deal with the Preacher," you may not be ready for love, but you will feel like you've stepped into the wayback machine for a refreshing return to the pre-disco '70s. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include an interview with the band, and a booklet. Recommended. (R. Pitman)

Benvenuto Cellini

★★★

(2007) 164 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$45.98. Unitel Classica (dist. by Naxos of America).



Like many other contemporary productions, this 2007 Salzburg Festival staging of Hector Berlioz's rarely performed 1838 French grand opera is both eye-popping and controversial. Musically, *Benvenuto Cellini* shines, with Valery Gergiev and the Vienna Philharmonic deftly bringing out all of the orchestral pyrotechnics in the

extravagantly dramatic score in a reading that is rich, propulsive, and appropriately bombastic. Burkhard Fritz provides a ringing tenor as the titular Renaissance sculptor whose plan to run off with the daughter of the papal treasurer is threatened by both her father's opposition and an uncompleted commission. As his lover Teresa, soprano Maija Kovalevska is even better, tossing off her demanding arias with amazing agility and powerful tone. The drawback is director-designer Philipp Stölzl's distracting production choices, which transports the piece to a futuristic urban setting and glitzes it up with laser lights, garish costumes, and such accoutrements as helicopters, a red popemobile, and an assortment of tacky-looking robots (Cellini's friend Ascanio is even turned into a C-3PO-like automaton, with Kate Aldrich singing the character's big number as a disembodied head while her "torso" dances around her). Presented in DTS 5.0 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is the sole video version of *Benvenuto Cellini* available, so despite the awkward production, it is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Der Fliegende Holländer

★★★ 1/2

(2010) 167 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



In this 1843 opera, Richard Wagner expressed for the first time the thematic obsession that would color all his mature work: redemption through love—in this case, the decision of the beautiful Senta to sacrifice herself in order to free the Dutchman, who is cursed to sail the seas endlessly until saved by a faithful woman. In this outstanding 2010 production from the Netherlands Opera, conductor Hartmut Haenchen elicits glorious playing from the Netherlands Philharmonic to match the towering performances by both Juha Uusitalo as the Dutchman and Catherine Naglestad as Senta. Equally fine are Marco Jentsch as Senta's lover, Erik, and Oliver Ringelhahn as the Steersman, while veteran Robert Lloyd remains in amazingly strong voice as Senta's father, Daland. As with many European stagings nowadays, *Der Fliegende Holländer* is not presented in period form: the modernist set here includes glass doors and a swimming pool, while the costumes are mostly contemporary, with some choristers wearing garish wigs. But the effect isn't disastrous, because the work is fairly abstract and the updating is relatively subdued. The excellent camera-work—which during the extensive orchestral interludes offers effective black-and-white close-ups of the conductor and individual players as well as ocean shots—is backed by superb audio, with DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo options on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray. Extras include a cast

gallery and a behind-the-scenes featurette with comments from Haenchen, the singers, and stage director Martin Kušej. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Die Walküre ★★ ★

(2010) 259 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$45.98; Blu-ray: \$45.98. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



The star of this 2010 Bayreuth performance of the second opera in Richard Wagner's *Ring* cycle is undoubtedly conductor Christian Thielemann, who delivers a rich, propulsive reading of the score, which is played with commitment and passion by the Festival Orchestra. Unfortunately, however, the other elements of the production fall short. The best singing comes from tenor Johan Botha and soprano Edith Haller in demanding roles as the doomed sibling lovers, Siegmund and Sieglinde. But Albert Dohmen as the god Wotan is undernourished, while Linda Watson is variable as his Valkyrie daughter Brünnhilde, whose misguided intervention on Siegmund's behalf against Sieglinde's husband (Kwangchul Youn) leads Wotan to imprison her within the magic circle of fire. All of the vocalists, moreover, are hampered by Tankred Dorst's sets, which situate the action in modern ruins (and incorporate some contemporary figures in the background, presumably to link our imaginations to the world of the mythic gods), and Bernd Ernst Skodzig's costumes, which in the case of the warrior maidens consist of gaudy red kimonos (with wigs to match) and transparent plastic shields. With its outstanding orchestral work, this might have been a *Die Walküre* for the ages; as it is, the shortcomings make it only one of several solid contenders in a crowded field (a better choice would be Carlus Padrissa's 2007 staging—see review of *Das Rheingold* [VL-5/10]). Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on Blu-ray) and LPCM stereo, extras include a "making-of" featurette and a cast gallery. Recommended, overall. (F. Swietek)

Dizzy Gillespie in Redondo ★★ ★

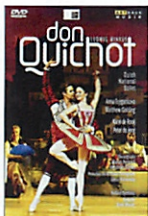
(1986) 60 min. DVD: \$14.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



The pleasure of hearing great jazz musicians in the intimate confines of a nightclub is evident in this performance by Dizzy Gillespie and band, recorded in 1986 at Concerts by the Sea in Redondo Beach, CA, one of several now-defunct jazz venues in the Los Angeles area. Approaching 70 at the time, the trumpet master was well past his prime, but his chops are in fine form

as he launches into set opener “Be Bop,” a Gillespie composition played at breakneck speed with a complex, angular melody that embodies the eponymous genre that he helped create decades earlier. The other players are no slouches either: the estimable Ray Brown on standup bass (oddly, the ensemble also features an electric bass player), fiery alto saxophonist Paquito D’Rivera, guitarist Ed Sherry, and pianist Valerie Capers. When Diz—always a jocular and entertaining host—announces that he’ll introduce the musicians, they all turn and shake hands with one another. The band plays just three more complete tunes, so everyone has a chance to stretch out, particularly on “Kush” (Gillespie was also a pioneer of Afro-Cuban jazz, a style hinted at here) and “Dizzy’s Made Up Blues” (exactly what the title says), while the bluesy, laidback “Birks Works” may be the most appealing tune of the set. A bit on the short side but skillfully and unobtrusively directed by Gary Keys, this engaging concert—presented in Dolby Digital stereo—is recommended. (S. Graham)

Don Quichot ★★★½
(2010) 122 min. DVD: \$33.98, Blu-ray: \$45.98. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



Although it hasn’t achieved the status of Tchaikovsky’s *The Nutcracker* or *Swan Lake*, Ludwig Minkus’ delightful 1869 ballet, very loosely based on Cervantes’ epic novel, has rightly become a second-tier repertory staple, especially in Russia. Backed by colorful sets and costumes, this fine 2010 performance filmed at the Amsterdam Music Theater features spirited dancing from the Dutch National Ballet, backed by the Holland Symfonia under the baton of Kevin Rhodes. Anna Tsygankova and Matthew Golding stand out as the heroine Kitri and the barber Basilio, whom Kitri runs off with against her father’s wishes; but the entire company excels in the ensembles of matadors, señoritas, ghostly apparitions, and traveling players. This distinctive mounting differs from earlier productions in some important respects. First, in devising a new performance, choreographer Alexei Ratmansky has incorporated Marius Petipa’s original choreography along with Alexander Gorsky’s later revisions. Second, instead of dancers in the roles of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Ratmansky has cast two comedians, Peter de Jong and Karel Rooij, who prove quite funny, helping to make this *Don Quichot* both charming and exuberant. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on Blu-ray) and PCM stereo, extras include cast interviews, as well as a behind-the-scenes featurette. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Doobie Brothers: Live at the Greek Theatre—1982 Farewell Tour ★★★

(2010) 75 min. DVD: \$14.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



“We wanna welcome you to the very last Doobie Brothers concert,” guitarist Pat Simmons told a booing audience at the Greek Theatre in Berkeley, CA, in 1982. Although the Doobies would perform a reunion concert in 1987 and their latest album was released in 2010, Simmons is figuratively if not literally correct. The decade-long heyday of the band—from its country-blues-rock roots (1970-1975) to its blue-eyed-soul-pop years (1976-1980), with the divide corresponding exactly to the exit of founding member Tom Johnston and arrival of Michael McDonald in 1975—is nicely captured here in a 15-song set (“Listen to the Music” is both the opening and closing number) balanced between early Doobie staples (“Rockin’ Down the Highway,” “Jesus Is Just Alright,” “Long Train Runnin’,” “Black Water,” “China Grove”) and later hits when the Doobies were sometimes referred to as McDonald’s “backup band” (“You Belong to Me,” “Minute by Minute,” “What a Fool Believes,” “Takin’ It to the Streets”). Midway through the concert, “old” and “new” Doobie members Simmons and McDonald perform solo songs—many viewers will be unfamiliar with Simmons’ “Out on the Streets” (which all but lifts the chorus from “Jesus Is Just Alright”), but quite a few will recognize the soon-to-be-solo-megastar McDonald’s “I Keep Forgettin’.” A bittersweet concert featuring the best of the Doobies (with Johnston returning for a stirring performance on “China Grove”), this will appeal to fans of both of the band’s eras. While the standard format ‘80s shot-on-video image (with light flare trails occasionally appearing onscreen) won’t wow anybody, the sound—with DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo options—is solid. DVD extras include a McDonald-heavy bonus five-song set (featuring “Real Love”), band member interviews, and a booklet. Recommended. (R. Pitman)

James Brown: Body Heat, Live in Monterey

★★★½
(1979) 60 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



First issued in VHS format with the title *The Lost James Brown Tapes*, this 1979 performance—recorded in California in either Monterey (as indicated on the packaging) or Santa Cruz (according to other sources)—has been roundly panned by many viewers for both its technical presentation and creative con-

tent. It’s true that the visuals lack crispness and clarity, the sound is only marginally better, the lighting is dark, and the direction is unimaginative, with a surfeit of extreme close-ups of Brown’s sweaty face. And the performance? Well, it isn’t *Live at the Apollo* or the *T.A.M.I. Show*. But this is James Brown, y’all! We’re talking about the godfather of soul. And while Brown was certainly capable of putting on a bad show, this isn’t one of them. As always, the band is skintight, laying down some fierce, uncut funk. Powered by the rhythm guitarist (none of the musicians are identified, including an alto saxophonist who delivers a couple of scorching solos), the grooves are relentless (check out the epic version here of “Sex Machine”) in this hour-long set featuring a couple of ballads (“Try Me” and “Georgia on My Mind”), a swinging “Please Please Please,” and one of Brown’s signature tunes—performed in a fairly perfunctory fashion here—“Papa’s Got a Brand New Bag.” To be sure, plenty of better James Brown titles are available, but this one—presented in Dolby Digital stereo—is good enough to be considered a strong optional purchase. (S. Graham)

La Petite Danseuse de Degas ★★★

(2010) 112 min. DVD: \$33.98, Blu-ray: \$45.98. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



Just as Georges Seurat’s painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* inspired the Broadway musical *Sunday in the Park with George*, so Edgar Degas’ sculpture *Little Dancer of Fourteen Years* sparked this ballet, an imaginative retelling of the life of Marie van Goethem, a pupil at the Paris Opera Ballet School who served as Degas’ model. In this scenario, choreographed by Patrice Bart to a score by Denis Levaillant, Marie is encouraged by her mother to become an escort to wealthy men, but is arrested when she tries to rob one of them, ultimately ending her life as a laundress, although earning immortality due to the artist’s depiction of her younger self. The story allows Bart to construct a series of fine set pieces—exquisite solos, lovely duets, and elaborate ensembles—which are performed beautifully in this 2010 production from the Opéra National de Paris by Clairemarie Osta as Marie and Dorothee Gilbert as her ballerina idol, along with the other dancers. Levaillant’s music employs varied styles and unusual instrumentation, and although it lacks memorable melodies, the score does create an evocative sound and is sensitively performed here by the orchestra under Koen Kessels. Ezio Toffolutti’s simple but arresting sets and Sylvie Skinazi’s elegant costumes add to the entrancing effect. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on Blu-ray) and PCM stereo on DVD, extras include bonus cast