

the diaphragm but from his, um, rectum. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Graham)

A Night of Ferocious Joy

★★★

(2002) 60 min. DVD: \$14.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors). Color cover.



"The greatest Americans have not been born yet," pronounces poet Saul Williams on *A Night of Ferocious Joy*, adding that "they are waiting patiently for the past to die." Taped on Mother's Day in 2002, this live event in Hollywood protesting America's "War on Terror" that followed the 9/11 attacks features a group of musicians, poets, and hip-hop artists, who gathered at the historic Palace Theater to denounce George W. Bush's then-evolving war strategy and the more repressive aspects of the Patriot Act. Performers include singer-rapper Mystic, whose "Not in Our Name" rallies the crowd; the aforementioned Williams; Ozomatli's powerful rock-and-rap, augmented by stirring bells; the admonishments of Blackalicious to "read between the lines and question authority"; The Great Voices of Ummaa, a jazz choral group who appeal to Jamaica for strength; and Hassan Hakmoun, whose hypnotic, African-inspired sound is unfortunately interrupted to accommodate backstage interviews. DVD extras here include a panel discussion revolving around freedoms in the U.S. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keagh)

The Nomi Song

★★★ 1/2
(2004) 96 min. DVD: \$19.98. Palm Pictures (avail. from most distributors). Color cover.

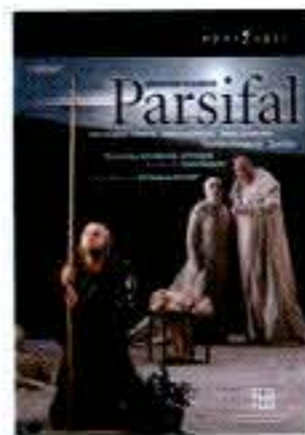


Seeing as it was Andy Warhol who originally made that quip about everyone having 15 minutes of fame, it's only appropriate that the embodiment of that prediction should be someone from Warhol's own orbit. And "orbit" is the right word, as Klaus Nomi really wanted us to believe that he was not of this world ("We came from outer space/To save the human race" was one of his lyrics). Actually, he was from Essen, Germany: born Klaus Sperber, Nomi was a clean-cut young man with a talent for pie-baking (really) who came to New York in the mid-1970s and cultivated the kind of outrageous look that was *de rigueur* in the Warhol-centered underground art crowd ("I was impressed with his level of androgyny," says one pal). Nomi also sang in a finely-honed falsetto that bore a striking resemblance to the operatic sopranos he'd listened to as a child, and combined elements of German expressionist decadence, '50s sci-fi, gay cabaret, and pop music (Lou Christie's "Lightning Strikes" was a perfect choice) in his act. Looking like an alien and singing like a diva—as the press re-

lease puts it—helped Nomi develop a cultish following. But the big breakthrough that was supposed to follow a gig as David Bowie's backup singer on *Saturday Night Live* didn't happen, and Nomi succumbed to AIDS in 1983. In the end, filmmaker Andrew Horn's *The Nomi Song* is most of all a sad if also slight tale of what happens in a world where image and appearance matter more than talent and content. DVD extras include a director's commentary track, deleted scenes, complete live performances, audio remixes, and more. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (S. Graham)

Parsifal

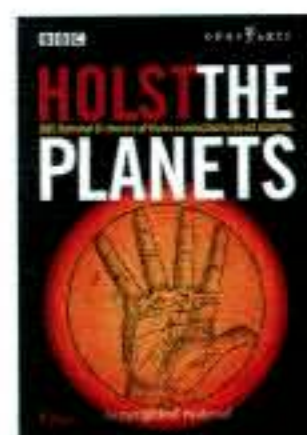
★★★ 1/2
(2005) 3 discs. 317 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$39.99 (booklet included). BBC Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America). Color cover.



Accurately described as a "Bühnenweihfestpiel" (stage dedication festival play), Wagner's monumental allegorical work, inspired by Wolfram von Eschenbach's epic medieval poem, proceeds at a reverential pace, propelled by various musical motifs. In a nutshell: Gurnemanz and other knights charged with guarding the Holy Grail and Holy Spear (which had pierced the side of Christ) watch over their king, Amfortas, who has fallen prey to the evil sorcerer Klingsor through the seductive wiles of the enchantress Kundry. Afflicted with a wound that does not heal, Amfortas can only be cured by "one who finds understanding through compassion," namely the untouched youth Parsifal, who perseveres over the king's enemies and ultimately retrieves the lost Holy Spear, with which Amfortas is healed. Filmed at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden in 2004, Nikolaus Lehnhoff's production has received wide critical acclaim, not only for the vocal work, but also for its innovative setting and interpretive slant. Nontraditional, but not over-the-top, this *Parsifal* depicts Christian rituals as outworn, with Kundry surviving and joining Parsifal and the knights to follow a light to a new world. Under the baton of Kent Nagano, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin shines, while the uniformly brilliant cast features Matti Salminen as Gurnemanz and Waltraud Meier as Kundry, who both set a high performance standard that is closely followed by Thomas Hampson as Amfortas, Christopher Ventris as Parsifal, and Tom Fox as Klingsor. Presented in DTS and LCPM stereo, DVD extras include a cast gallery, illustrated synopsis, and a mildly interesting background documentary. While the 1993 Metropolitan Opera production under James Levine with Meier and Kurt Moll is revered, this performance offers a refreshing new perspective. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (J. Reed)

The Planets

★★★ 1/2
(2004) 59 min. DVD: \$19.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America). Color cover.



Musical purists are likely to howl, but this BBC National Orchestra of Wales performance (under the baton of David Atherton) of Gustav Holst's orchestral suite *The Planets* (1918) is a bold, decidedly cinematic rendering. The heresy is evident from the opening salvo of the seven piece (eight, including Colin Matthews' 2000 tributary coda, "Pluto: The Renewer") tour of the solar system: as the familiar strains of "Mars: The Bringer of War" begin, we see and hear the war machine in action, from the pre-battle factory work and patriotic poses of soldiers to the post-bombing realities of death and destruction (filmed in 2004, the Iraq War tie-in is unmistakable). What separates this version of *The Planets* from others is the background noise—from bird cries and rolling oceans waves in "Venus: The Bringer of Peace" to the festival sounds in "Jupiter: The Bringer of Jollity"—which isn't muted but rather integrated into the soundtrack, bringing a refreshing sense of relevance to the music. In addition, the visuals are a knockout: the live action/animation mix on "Mercury: The Winged Messenger," looks like a Windows Media Player background on steroids, while the multi-varied skylines (including the Northern Lights) in "Uranus: The Magician" nicely match the majesty of the music. The only quibble I have is with the decision to incorporate clips from the Burning Man festival in "Jupiter" (the musical center of the suite, a glorious piece that has inspired a number of Hollywood soundtracks), which features brief nudity that—unfortunately—will remove this from consideration for many junior and senior high school collections. Still, for most audiences, this welcome marriage of sight and sound (man-made and natural), presented on an extra-less disc in LCPM stereo, is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (R. Pitman)

Pop Legends Live! The Association

★★★
(2005) 60 min. DVD: \$14.99. SRO (dist. by Kultur International Films). Color cover. ISBN: 0-7697-7803-8.



Long before *Grease*, the word was "Cherish," one of The Association's (1965-1973) string of hit pop songs built around infectious melodies and beautiful multipart harmonies. According to Larry Ramos, one of the two remaining early members of the band, many couples tell him that "Cherish" was their wedding song—which he finds a bit peculiar, since the lyrics are clearly about unrequited love. In this entry from the *Pop Legends Live!* series, Ramos is joined by founding member Russ Grigore