

Sitar concert

Sitting in the center of the stage with a several backup musicians, Ravi Shankar supplies a transcendent 91 minutes of sitar improvisations on the A&E release, **Ravi Shankar The Concert for World Peace Live at Royal Albert Hall** (UPC#733961101331, \$25). The camera calmly glides, zooms or dissolves from one angle to the next, but it doesn't seem to matter whether it is set in the back of the hall or jammed up close to Shankar's fingers. The music encourages you to stare at whatever images appear on the screen, and whether you ponder the details of Shankar's technique or just weigh the blends of reds and yellows in the musicians' outfits, the music calms your heart and focuses your spirit.

The 1993 program is presented in full screen format and the image is crisp, with accurate hues. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a compelling dimensionality and clear details. There is no captioning. Also included is a rewarding 21-minute interview with Shankar, who talks about the music and performing.

Lake pleasant

It might just be because Keith Emerson isn't there, but the Classic Pictures Image Entertainment release, **Greg Lake Live** (UPC#01438-1395525, \$25), is quite a pleasant concert. Shot in 2005, the show is an amalgam from a tour and appears on the first platter of the two-platter set. Running 105 minutes, all of Lake's familiar numbers are performed, but without the overbearing instrumental component that would tend to swallow up the numbers in the past. Lake's vocals are articulate and reasonably melodious, and even when the music flares into Aaron Copland or Modest Mussorgsky, it is more subdued and easier to digest. The 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound, and especially the crisper DTS track, also adds to the program's appeal, presenting every component of the sound with a smooth and clearly-defined delivery.

The picture is presented in letterboxed format only, with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback, and the color transfer is as sharp as the sound. There are optional English, Spanish and Italian subtitles, covering the stage patter in between the songs. The second platter features a 46-minute production documentary about the tour, 20 minutes of interviews with various band members, and a 5-minute performance clip at a very large cathedral.

Less than smooth

Uneven volume levels and distorted recordings mar the supposed relaxation a viewer is intended to experience with **Smooth Jazz and Art**, a PFF Music Company release (UPC#094922725493, \$26). The kind of music you tend to hear in a dentist's office—and indeed, you half expect John Tesh to cut in with advice about toothpaste—the music is the sort of bland jazz that serves effectively as background entertainment. It has only a slight stereo dimensionality, and would be tolerable except there are times when it sounds as if the studio engineer fell asleep while the DVD was being produced and pushed the knob way past the red zone, not just making the music loud, but distorting the sound to the point of irritation. The montage of nature images on the 94-minute program are mostly still photos, manipulated with zooms and pans, although there is some video footage, as well. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback.

Some things never change

Everybody in **Teenage Cavegirl**, from Retromedia (UPC#01438-1266429, \$15), is in their mid-twenties at the very least. The 2004 softcore feature depicts a man and a woman in animal skins, running away from dinosaurs. They step through a clearly delineated time porthole and then proceed to have extended periods of hanky-panky with a group of eager contemporary individuals. The 74-minute program does deliver a relatively clever punchline at the end, but the emphasis throughout the film is on gyrating flesh, not dinosaurs, comedy, action, or, for that matter, narrative. The full screen picture is in adequate condition and the monophonic sound is passable. There is no captioning, and the show is accompanied by a 2-minute montage of production photos.

DVD Letters

To the Editor:

I enjoyed reading your review of the three-disc set of **The Jazz Singer**. Since I know a little bit about what was on disc three, I thought I might pass along FYI a few items. First, the inclusion of the ballet from the *Rogue Song* was a mistake of haste, i.e. grabbing the wrong reel as the deadline for release was rapidly approaching. Further, I assume that the reason for the lack of descriptive material on disc three was the same.

Concerning the shorts themselves, they were all made between 1927 and 1929. On specific shorts, the men in police uniforms were actually members of the Los Angeles Police Department. Adele Rowland appeared on Broadway annually between 1900 and 1920 and began appearing in vaudeville around 1915. The irritating female singer in the Dick Rich short is his wife. In the Gus Arnheim short, the violinist with the white cloth on the end of the violin who also sings is Russ Columbo, the first of the real crooners. Also in the Arnheim short is a slightly balding trumpet player who is second trumpet whose name is Roy Fox. Fox became a very successful bandleader in England in the 1930s. In the Paul Tremaine short, the first song they do is *I've Been Working On The Railroad*. This is followed by a

truncated version of *On The Road To Mandalay*. The Band finishes with a medley, the centerpiece of which is *Mississippi Mud* written by Harry Barris and Bing Crosby while they were with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, which recorded the tune.

—Dudley Heer

To the Editor:

Your recent review of **Eyes Wide Shut** posits a criticism that: "the new release is softer and grainier."

When I rushed to see the film in the theater one of the immediate joys was its decisively grainy look. The print just swam with it, heightening a visceral sense of narrative as hallucination. The choice appeared to me intentional, bold and consistent with the boundary expanding history of its director. I also held the distinct suspicion that the effect would not survive a transfer to DVD where in the absence of Kubrick's participation it might be considered a commercial liability. I was horrified to see my suspicion pan out in the extreme. While the new transfer is not even close to the graininess of the theatrical print I consider it a huge step in the right direction, and I celebrate it.

—Jeff Preiss

New York NY

DVD News

TALES EXTRAS: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment's **Southland Tales** will have a featurette and an animated short. **Revolver** has a Guy Ritchie commentary, deleted scenes and a number of featurettes. **Sleuth** will have a commentary track with Michael Caine, Jude Law and Kenneth Branagh. **Jimmy Carter Man from Plains** will have a Jonathan Demme commentary. **Adventures of Baron Munchausen** will have two commentaries and a new retrospective documentary.

CLAYTON COMMENTARY: Warner Home Video's **Michael Clayton** will have a commentary track and deleted scenes. The collector's edition of **Twister** will have a commentary track, production documentaries, a tornado documentary and more. The **Bonnie and Clyde** collector's edition will have a number of documentaries.

WHITE EXTRAS: Universal's **Sydney White** will have deleted scenes and a number of featurettes.

EMPEROR PRONOUNCEMENTS: The Criterion Collection presentation of **The Last Emperor** will feature both the theatrical version and the longer version, which will be identified as the 'TV version.' Criterion reports Bernardo Bertolucci has specifically stated that he prefers the theatrical cut, even though in most everyone else's mind, the longer version is vastly superior. In any case, since both versions are in the set, there's no harm done.

BLU-RAY REPORT: The following titles have recently been released on Blu-Ray—Masters of Horror Season 1 V.4, Went to Coney Island on a Mission from God...Be Back by Five (Anchor Bay); Con Air, The Game Plan, High School Musical 2, Lost The Complete Third Season, Pirates of the Caribbean At World's End, The Rock, Underdog (Buena Vista); Queen Rock Montreal & Live Aid (Eagle Vision); Jin-Roh The Wolf Brigade, SOS! Tokyo Metro Explorers The Next (Geneon); Breaker Morant, Suburban Girl (Image); Good Luck Chuck, 3:10 to Yuma, Saw IV (Lionsgate); Mr. Woodcock, Pan's Labyrinth, Rush Hour 3, Shoot 'Em Up (New Line); Daddy Day Camp, Damages, Dragon Wars, The Legend of Zorro, Monty Python's Life of Brian, Resident Evil Extinction, Shakira The Oral Fixation Tour, Superbad (Sony); Cast Away, Man on Fire, Mr. & Mrs. Smith, The Simpsons Movie, Sunshine (Fox); Elton 60 Live at Madison Square Garden (Universal); Blade Runner The Final Cut, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, The Invasion, Led Zeppelin The Song Remains the Same, Rent, Terminator 3 Rise of the Machines, That's Entertainment The Complete Collection, 20 Million Miles to Earth (Warner); Dispatch: Zimbabwe Live at Madison Square Garden, King of California (WEA).

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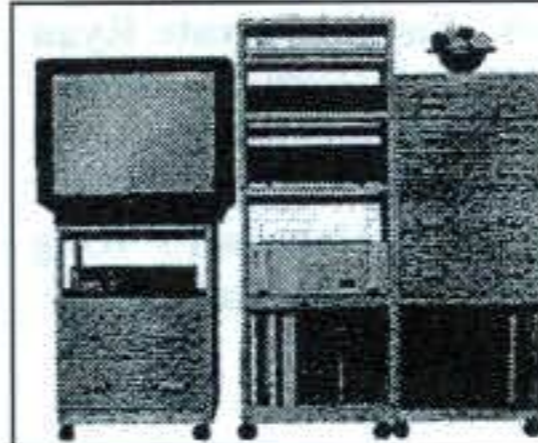
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