

# Reviews & Previews



HOME VIDEO  
BY CATHERINE APPLEFELD OLSON

## MICHAEL CRAWFORD IN CONCERT

Warner Home Video  
60 minutes, \$19.98  
Tony Award winner Michael Crawford once again proves he doesn't need to be on a Broadway stage to capture an audience. Los Angeles' Cerritos Center provides an elegant setting for this multifaceted concert, which runs the gamut, including show tunes like "Gethsemane" and "Music Of The Night," which he performs in a duet with Dale Christian, who plays Christine in the Broadway production of "Phantom Of The Opera." Pop songs such as "When I Fall In Love" and traditional numbers such as "I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen" are included, and Crawford also showcases a few songs from his new album, "On Eagle's Wings." Aside from the music, this tape has a treat for those who have only seen Crawford in disguise as the Phantom. Crawford, who got his start in the BBC-TV comedy "Some Mothers Do 'Ave Em," has an excellent sense of humor and a real talent for storytelling, both of which he weaves into his performance.

## KEIKO MATSUI: LIGHT ABOVE THE TREES

Fox Lorber Home Entertainment  
60 minutes, \$19.98  
The impassioned artistry of Keiko Matsui is probably not familiar to most fans of contemporary jazz. But this video, which captures the composer/keyboardist during a fantastic concert held recently in San Francisco, has the potential to expose Matsui to a much broader audience. This program was initially aired on public TV, but the tape includes six additional songs, plus some behind-the-scenes footage of Matsui discussing her craft and an appearance on a Bay Area morning program just before her concert. Backed by a very capable jazz band, the classically trained pianist lights up the theater with a joyous string of selections. Even more dramatic, however, is the small parcel of footage included in the video of Matsui performing solo piano interpretations on the 1,200-year-old, open-air Itsukushima Shrine on Japan's Miyajima Island. Framed by lights shining on the water and complemented by an authentic Kyogen dancer, she shines brilliantly.

## BLUE'S CLUES: STORY TIME

Paramount Home Video  
50 minutes, \$9.95  
Nick Jr.'s animated, puzzle-solving dog has millions of preschoolers feeling "Blue" and loving it. Sales of this tape, which contains a new-to-video episode, should be no mystery to retailers. The show's host, Steve, is a real-life guy who lives in an animated storybook world where he must constantly figure out what his puppy pal Blue has on her mind. The pup helps him out by leaving her trademark blue paw print on all the clues, but it's the viewers' help that Steve needs most of all. In this tape, Steve and the kids at home have to piece together what is Blue's favorite story and which character she wants to imitate. The show is an excellent example of interactive programming on good old-fashioned TV. Children are encouraged to get out pencil and paper and draw the clues along with Steve, which develops problem-solving, early reading and comprehension, and other basic skills. "Story Time" is one of two new "Blue's Clues" videos from Paramount. The other, "Arts And Crafts," finds Steve on a mission to decipher just what craft Blue wants to make today.

## WHAT IS YOGA?

Mystic Fire Video  
56 minutes, \$14.98  
In the spirit of its subject matter, this program presents a fairly free-form conversation about yoga with a variety of practitioners, including the founders of New York's Jivamukti Yoga Center, actor Willem Dafoe, devotional singer Bhagavan Das, and some people-next-door types. They pore over a smattering of statements regarding the discipline and culture of yoga, leaving viewers to pick and choose which ones, if any, make the most sense to them. A kaleidoscope of footage ranging from yoga classes to the streets of New York, coupled with strong production values and an excellent background soundtrack, makes this program a terrific keepsake for everyone from the casual yoga user to devoted followers. Contact: 800-292-9001.

## MYSTIC ORIGINS OF THE MARTIAL ARTS

A&E Home Video  
100 minutes, \$19.98  
Through the centuries, the martial arts disciplines have segued from highly guarded secrets of a few masters to a

class most people can take at their neighborhood gym. But many of those who practice some version of martial arts today don't know its genesis or the important role it continues to play in other cultures. This comprehensive program answers just about every question hobbyists may have about the martial arts. From the origins of this marriage of physical and philosophical strengths more than 3,000 years ago in China to the spread of various disciplines to other countries, the tape delves into all aspects of the spiritual art form through archival materials and interviews with current martial artists. There's also a segment that reveals the differences among the various disciplines, from *hurango* to tae kwan do to karate to judo, as well as an elaborate kung fu demonstration.

ENTER \* ACTIVE  
BY DOUG REECE

## THE KNITTING FACTORY

www.knittingfactory.com  
World Wide Web surfers searching for the definitive online venue for avant-garde

music need look no further than New York City's famous Knitting Factory. The Manhattan-based club, founded in 1988, launched into the online world four years ago and continues to present cutting-edge material on its regularly updated site. Video and audio feeds from live club performances are accessible with the use of RealPlayer software, and visitors can purchase tickets to actual performances through the site. Also available is an online catalog of CDs produced by Knitting Factory Records, and the site features a Liquid Audio section through which users can purchase and download CD-quality singles. Other features include tour information and a comprehensive calendar. The combination of innovative content and slick design makes the Knitting Factory's site one of the best music venues on the Web.

## GEX: ENTER THE GECKO

Midway/Crystal Dynamics  
Sony PlayStation  
While a lot of games promise attitude, few deliver the kind of spunky, irreverent vibe found in this title. Crystal Dynamics' clever character depictions and environ-

ments parody plenty of pop culture references with a hammy protagonist to boot. And while the game play may not be as crisp as "Crash Bandicoot II" or as immersing as "Super Mario Bros.," it is passable thanks to Gex's many convoluted moves and defiant, kooky enemies. Gex's cheeky, smart-aleck comments, provided by comedian Dan Gould, add to the mischief.

## RASCAL

Psygnosis/Travellers' Tales  
Sony PlayStation  
Think of this as a sort of hyperactive child's version of "Resident Evil." Time-traveling Rascal moves through several different environments, where he must navigate a series of rooms. A barrage of spiders, sharks, rats, and dinosaurs, as well as several other stylized, deadlier enemies, keep players moving along from room to room. Players hustle through the rooms so fast that there's little chance to absorb the souped-up, ambient surroundings. But all the action is probably a bonus for the youth-oriented audience Psygnosis is courting here. A burnout-resistant, classy children's game.

## ON SCREEN

### KURT AND COURTNEY

Directed by Nick Broomfield  
Produced by Tine Van Den Brande, Michael D'Acosta  
Roxie Releasing  
95 minutes, in select cities

Loaded with controversy and mixed with a good dose of tabloid journalism, "Kurt And Courtney" is an entertaining but lame examination of the warped relationship between late Nirvana front man Kurt Cobain and Courtney Love, his volatile but ambitious rock widow.

Pulled from this year's Sundance Film Festival after Love threatened to sue director Nick Broomfield, the film has recently found distribution with San Francisco-based Roxie Releasing. The movie, though, isn't likely to hold much interest beyond curiosity seekers.

Documentary filmmaking is compelling when credible witnesses and investigative reporting unveil the truth about its subject. But here Broomfield relies on too many fringe players who either have an axe to grind or appear too stoned to put together a cohesive thought. Love refused to grant him an interview and forced him to pull a number of Nirvana songs that were originally to be in the film.

The first half of the movie attempts to shed some light on Cobain's life, which ended in April 1994, when he committed suicide.

As a child in Aberdeen, Wash., Cobain was kicked out of his home when his parents split up, and he ended up living with his school principal's family. Periodically, he lived under a bridge near the principal's home, which is now littered with graffiti messages to the dead rock icon.

The only credible witness Broomfield tracks down is Cobain's Aunt Mary, who let his band rehearse and record in a makeshift studio located in her home. "He always wanted to be the center of attention," she fondly recalls.

Aunt Mary also contributes a recording of a 2-year-old Cobain

singing a Beatles song, the only music in the movie featuring Cobain's voice.

There are also some interviews with an old girlfriend and other friends that offer little insight, other than that Cobain felt "embarrassed by the trappings of fame."

The film uncovers little about its subjects, except for Love's disdain for the press.

A phone message from Love to Vanity Fair writer Lynn Hirschberg illustrates the point. Using one profanity after another, Love threatens the writer repeatedly about her scathing article, which claimed the Hole singer used heroin while pregnant with Frances Bean. Broomfield also reveals that Love tried to attack Hirschberg at the Academy Awards using Quentin Tarantino's Oscar as a weapon.

On some levels, the film is more about Broomfield's tug-of-war with Love than her relationship with Cobain, and viewers are constantly reminded of how uncooperative she was during the filming.

The only time Broomfield does talk to her is at an American Civil Liberties Union event in Los Angeles, where he publicly denounced the organization for inviting Love to attend the event.



The late Kurt Cobain and his relationship with Courtney Love are examined in the documentary "Kurt And Courtney."

When Love arrives for the event and before being rushed off the stage for the outburst, he manages to ask Love why she hates the press so much.

"It's not against the law to threaten journalists, especially if they lie," she answers, "but I don't want to talk about that because I'm so happy."

Through interviews with a former musician boyfriend and an assortment of unreliable subjects, the film paints Love as an ambitious lunatic who in her teens made a career "to do list" that included becoming friends with R.E.M. front man Michael Stipe.

A former nanny talks about Love's obsession with Cobain's will just weeks before his death.

Broomfield's search for the real story gets even more clouded when he hooks up with the late punk rocker El Duce, who claims Love offered him \$50,000 to "whack" Cobain.

"I might not be a reliable witness, but that's too bad," says El Duce, who then tells Broomfield that if he wants any more information he'll have to buy him a beer.

Continuing this preposterous conspiracy theory is Love's father, Hank Harrison, who by his own admission has barely spent any time with his daughter. But it didn't stop him from writing a book about this silly conspiracy theory implicating his daughter.

Another so-called witness to the conspiracy theory is private detective Tom Grant. Hired by Love to find Cobain after he abruptly left a Los Angeles rehab center, Grant theorizes that Cobain was too high on heroin to be able to operate the shotgun he used to kill himself. A doctor discredits Grant's conclusion, and at this point Broomfield admits that he doesn't buy the conspiracy theory.

There isn't much you can buy in "Kurt And Courtney," but like an episode of "The Jerry Springer Show," it's hard not to watch.

EILEEN FITZPATRICK

## AUDIO BOOKS BY TRUDI MILLER ROSENBLUM

### THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI

By Yuri Rasovsky  
Performed by a full cast  
Tangled Web Audio  
70 minutes (unabridged), \$9.95  
ISBN 1-896552-23-4

Perfect for listening on a dark rainy night, this excellent made-for-audio production features an intriguingly mysterious plot, marvelous acting, and a suspenseful, spooky atmosphere. A young man named Franz is plagued by feelings of doom, so his two friends, Karl and Anna, take him to a fair to cheer him up. At the fair, they witness a performance by the sinister Dr. Caligari, who claims to be able to bring a zombie back to life. He does, and the zombie foretells the death of Karl, who laughs off the premonition. Soon a string of murders ensues. Is the secretive Dr. Caligari the culprit or is Franz descending into madness? The cast, led by John de Lancie (Q on "Star Trek: The Next Generation") as Franz, is first-rate, and the tense atmosphere is leavened by the comic supporting characters of the innkeeper (Jane Carr) and the haughty sergeant (James Otis). Sound effects and music add to the enjoyment. For those who love a good old-fashioned scare, this is a treat.

### CAVEDWELLER

By Dorothy Allison  
Read by Dean Robertson  
Nova Audiobooks  
3 hours (abridged), \$17.95  
ISBN 1-55-57-47634-5

Ten years ago, Delia, a mother of two small girls, left her children and her husband to run off with a rock band. She became a successful singer and had a daughter with the band's leader. Now, however, she wants to return to Georgia to reclaim her girls. This is an interesting premise, but strangely, whenever the story approaches a climax, it leaps ahead, skipping it entirely. For example, when Delia arrives in town, she learns that her ex-husband's mother has custody of the girls, and she dreads facing the woman. We wait for the explosive meeting, but we are cheated of it. Instead, the listener is told that the grandmother did not want to give the girls back. A similar confrontation with Delia ex-husband's Clint is omitted, and the couple magically reconcile. Several other explosive incidents suffer the same fate. As a result, this is an extremely frustrating audio to listen to. Abridgement may be part of the problem, but not all of it. It's hard to believe that any abridger would purposely remove important scenes. The main fault must lie with the author. In addition, Robertson's reading is flat and uninvolved.