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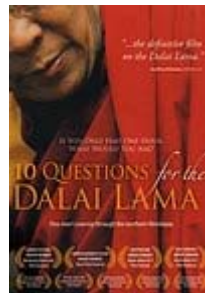
Questions & Comments
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Video Librarian 2007 Best Documentaries

The following list, selected and compiled by *Video Librarian* staff, honors the best new documentaries reviewed in the magazine and online during 2007. Unless otherwise noted, titles are available from most distributors.



9/12: From Chaos to Community (Eleventh Hour Films [www.912film.com], 56 min., DVD or VHS: \$19.99: individuals; \$99: high schools & public libraries; \$179: colleges & universities). Susanna Styron's *cinéma vérité*-style documentary tells the moving story of a group of unselfish volunteers who formed a unique community together with recovery workers after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. (VL-5/07)



10 Questions for the Dalai Lama (Monterey Video, 85 min., DVD: \$24.95). Part travelogue, part biography, and part historical overview, former *Video Librarian* contributor and writer-director-narrator Rick Ray's beautifully-lensed documentary weaves together contemporary footage of the filmmaker's travels in India and the Middle East together with clips from a private interview with the impish Nobel Prize-winning spiritual leader, His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama. (VL-11/07)



51 Birch Street (Image Entertainment, 88 min., DVD: \$19.99). When filmmaker Doug Block's mother died and his father shortly after married his one-time secretary, Block began to question the strength of his parents' 50-year marriage. Combining interviews, diary excerpts, home movies, archival stills, and newly-shot footage, this deeply personal and surprising film offers a profound look at family relationships. (VL-11/07)



After Innocence (New Yorker Video, 95 min., DVD: \$29.95). Focusing on both the efforts of the

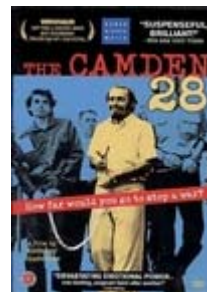
Innocence Project (to use DNA evidence to free wrongly convicted prisoners) and the Life After Exoneration program (which aims to integrate former inmates back into society), Jessica Sanders' documentary tells the incredible story of seven innocent men. (VL-1/07)



The Believers (Frameline Distribution [www.frameline.org], 80 min., DVD: \$100: public libraries; \$250: colleges & universities). Emmy-award winning director Todd Holland's documentary profiles San Francisco's Transcendence Gospel Choir, the world's first (and, to date, only) professional gospel choir comprised of transgendered singers. (VL-7/07)



The Boy Inside (Fanlight Productions [www.fanlight.com], 47 min., DVD: \$279, VHS: \$249). Filmmaker Marianne Kaplan's heartbreaking documentary chronicles her 12-year-old son Adam's struggles with Asperger syndrome (an autism-spectrum disorder) during his tumultuous seventh grade school year. (VL-1/07)



The Camden 28 (First Run Features, 83 min., DVD: \$24.95 [\$298 w/PPR from First Run/Icarus Films, www.frif.com]). Combining archival footage and stills, interviews, and on-location footage, Anthony Giacchino's thought-provoking documentary tells the story of a Vietnam War-era break-in at the Camden, NJ draft board offices by the titular group—consisting of four Catholic priests, a Lutheran minister, and several young men and women linked through the Catholic Church—and their eventual trial. (VL-9/07)

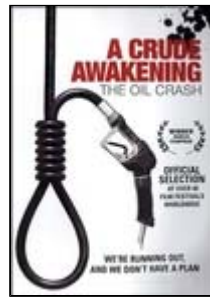


Crazy Love (Magnolia Pictures, 92 min., DVD: \$26.99). Director Dan Klores' aptly-titled documentary combines archival news footage and contemporary interviews to capture the weird tale of a wealthy lawyer named Burt Pugach, who became so obsessed with the beautiful young Linda Riss that he hired thugs to deface her with acid when she dumped him—and then he married her after serving time for the crime. (VL-9/07)

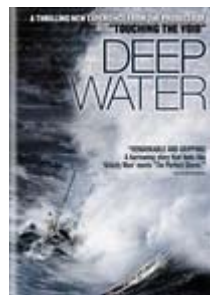


Crossing Arizona (The Cinema Guild [www.cinemaguild.com], 77 min., DVD or VHS: \$99.95: public libraries; \$350: colleges & universities). Filmed along the Arizona-Mexico border, Joseph Mathew and Daniel DeVivo's extraordinarily evenhanded documentary tackles the

hot-button issue of illegal immigration, featuring interviews with Mexicans and Central Americans trying to cross into the U.S, as well as official and unofficial border patrol guards, and American ranchers caught in the crossfire. (VL-7/07)



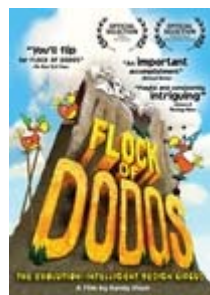
A Crude Awakening: The Oil Crash (Docurama, 85 min., DVD: \$26.95). Backed by a haunting soundtrack by Philip Glass, filmmakers Basil Gelpke and Ray McCormack's alarming documentary delivers a serious wakeup call about the impending oil crisis facing the world as nations move beyond peak production and start the precipitous slide toward inevitable depletion. (VL-11/07)



Deep Water (IFC Films, 92 min., DVD: \$24.95). Narrated by Golden Globe nominee Tilda Swinton, Louise Osmond and Jerry Rothwell's riveting documentary—which combines archival footage, audio recordings, dramatic recreations, and contemporary interviews—focuses on the story of an enthusiastic though troubled amateur sailor who entered an around-the-world solo yacht race in 1968. (VL Online-10/07)



Deliver Us from Evil (Lionsgate Entertainment, 103 min., DVD: \$19.98). Amy Berg's disturbing Oscar-nominated documentary examines the case of Father Oliver O'Grady, a priest in central California during the 1970s and '80s, who abused scores of youngsters of both sexes while being transferred from parish to parish by Roger Mahoney, now the L.A. Archbishop. (VL-5/07)



Flock of Dodos (Docurama, 85 min., DVD: \$26.95 [\$345 w/PPR from Documentary Educational Resources [www.der.org]). The debate between proponents of Darwinian evolution and adherents of what's come to be called "intelligent design" is depicted with remarkable balance and comic deftness in this documentary by filmmaker Randy Olson, which investigates a Kansas school board's attempt to mandate the teaching of intelligent design. (VL-3/07)

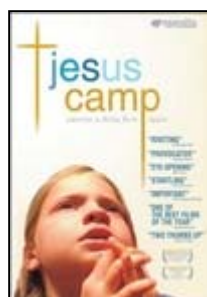


The Ground Truth (Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 78 min., DVD: \$14.98). Presenting a brutally honest look at the Iraq War from the perspective of returning American soldiers, Patricia Foulkrod's powerful documentary combines interviews with a number of veterans suffering from PTSD, together with graphic war footage that

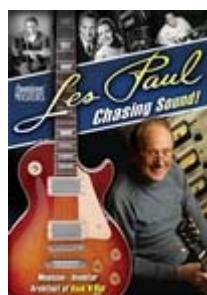
underscores the plights of innocent Iraqis. (VL-1/07)



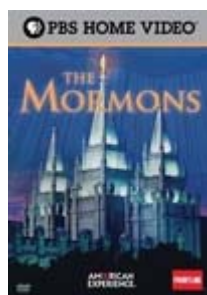
Hacking Democracy (Docurama, 81 min., DVD: \$26.95). Examining data from the presidential elections of 2000 and 2004, Simon Ardizzone and Russell Michaels' eye-opening HBO-aired documentary questions both the truthfulness and reliability of electronic voting machines, which currently count about 87% of the votes cast in the U.S. (VL-5/07)



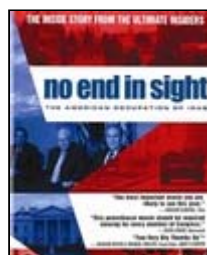
Jesus Camp (Magnolia Home Entertainment, 84 min., DVD: \$26.98). Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady's documentary spotlights Devil Lake, ND's evangelical "Kids on Fire" summer camp, run by preacher Becky Fischer, where youngsters are encouraged to speak in tongues, practice war dances, and pray before a life-sized cutout of George W. Bush. (VL Online-1/07)



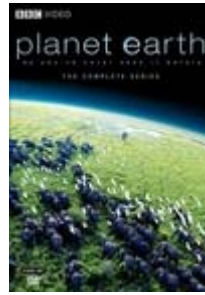
Les Paul: Chasing Sound (Koch Vision, 90 min., DVD: \$24.99). Nonagenarian Les Paul's six-string namesake guitar is just the tip of the iceberg of the man's contribution to music and recording, as evidenced in John Paulson's entertaining and illuminating biographical documentary, part of the PBS-aired *American Masters* series. (VL Online-11/07)



The Mormons (PBS Video, 240 min., DVD: \$24.99 [\$54.95 w/PPR]). A joint *American Experience*/*Frontline* production that aired on PBS, filmmaker Helen Whitney's fascinating documentary serves up a warts-and-all survey of the Mormon religion—told primarily by church historians and other LDS faithful—that combines insightful interviews, dramatic reenactments, and archival footage and stills to trace the Saints march from New York to Missouri to Illinois to Utah. (VL Online-9/07)



No End in Sight (Magnolia Home Entertainment, 102 min., DVD: \$26.98). Narrated by actor Campbell Scott, Charles Ferguson's Sundance Special Jury Prize-winning documentary combines archival news footage with insightful talking-head interviews to offer a clear and damning assessment of the American misadventure in Iraq. (VL Online-10/07)



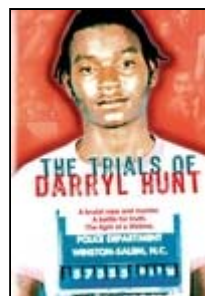
Planet Earth: The Complete Series (BBC Video, 5 discs, 550 min., DVD: \$79.98). Quite simply the most impressive nature/wildlife series ever produced, this astonishing 11-part BBC series—narrated by Sir David Attenborough, and filmed over five years in more than 200 locations—captures sights and sounds from around the globe (and is especially impressive in the HD DVD and Blu-ray versions). (VL-5/07)



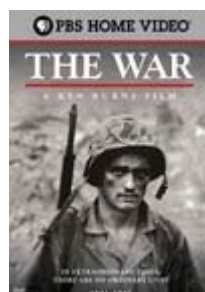
Sicko (The Weinstein Company, 123 min., DVD: \$29.95). Academy Award-winning filmmaker Michael Moore combines interviews and archival footage together with his own running commentary to take aim at HMOs, insurance companies, pharmaceutical corporations, callous hospitals, and governmental complicity in this scathing indictment of the American healthcare system. (VL-11/07)



Stagedoor (Docurama, 79 min., DVD: \$26.95). Following the stories of five participating kids, Alexandra Shiva's charming documentary takes a winsome look at the titular Catskill summer "theater camp" for teens aspiring to break into Broadway musicals. (VL-5/07)



The Trials of Darryl Hunt (THINKfilm, 107 min., DVD: \$27.98). Wrongly convicted of killing newspaper editor Deborah Sykes in North Carolina in 1984, Darryl Hunt spent 20 years in prison (10 of them after DNA evidence proved his innocence). Filmmakers Ricki Stern and Anne Sundberg's documentary tracks this travesty of criminal justice through a combination of archival news footage and interviews. (VL-9/07)



The War (PBS Video, 6 discs, 900 min., DVD: \$129.99 [\$159.95 w/PPR]). Filmmakers Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's seven-part, 14-hour documentary combines narration, interviews, and readings (by actors Tom Hanks, Josh Lucas, and Samuel L. Jackson, among others) to offer a cinematic window into the experiences of average Americans during WWII, both on the battlefield and at home. (VL-9/07)



White Light, Black Rain: The Destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (HBO Video, 85 min., DVD: \$24.98). Looking back at the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, filmmaker Steven Okazaki's documentary interviews over a dozen "hibakusha" (people exposed to the bomb), who offer first-person accounts of life during wartime and the horrors of surviving atomic destruction. (VL-11/07)



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