

imprisonment, torture, and death. Because Aguiló interviewed dozens of her peers, she ends up presenting a balanced perspective on events, free from either bitterness or rosy-hued delusion. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Grand Coulee Dam ★★★

(2012) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-656-7.

In the early 20th century, Grand Coulee Dam boosters envisioned a huge dam being built on the mighty Columbia River, an edifice that would not only control and divert water for electricity, but also irrigate the arid Columbia River basin, and promote development and agriculture in central Washington state. However, it wasn't until the Great Depression that FDR's New Deal stimulus seized on the languishing project to create jobs and bring hope to an economically ravaged region. Directed by Stephen Ives and narrated by Michael Murphy, this entry from the PBS-aired *American Experience* series tells the story of this "monument to noble ideals and unintended consequences." The goal of the dam was to make a huge reservoir, produce a reliable source of energy, and usher in a "planned promised land" of small towns, orchards, and farms near the dam. *Grand Coulee Dam* details the building of the dam, describes how it worked, and relates the attendant political controversies, along with the government's need to offset criticism of the "white elephant in the desert" by showing that the country could still do great things. The project wound up flooding Native American tribal lands and burial grounds, and destroying fertile spawning routes for salmon, ultimately undermining a long tradition and important local industry.

These drawbacks were dismissed as the price of progress when the Grand Coulee Dam helped fuel the WWII effort by powering the aluminum industry and supplying cold water for vital parts of the Manhattan Project, and even Woody Guthrie was recruited to celebrate the dam's contributions in song. Combining archival footage with interviews of historians and workers, this is an informative look at a modern American monument. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

The Manuscripts of Timbuktu ★★★

(2009) 52 min. In French & Arabic w/English subtitles. DVD: \$49.95: public libraries & high schools; \$195: colleges & universities. California Newsreel. PPR.

Zola Maseko's documentary opens with a historical sketch of the city of Timbuktu, portraying it as a flourishing trade emporium from the 11th-18th century—a hub for caravans from the east and south and merchants from the north. But the film demonstrates that Timbuktu was also a cultural and intellectual center where education and scholarship thrived—reflected in the production of thousands of manuscripts. The focus here is on Ahmed Baba (1556-1627), a noted teacher and writer who continued his work as a detainee in Morocco, which had occupied Western Sudan, before being freed to return to Timbuktu. *The Manuscripts of Timbuktu* combines narration, dramatic re-creations (with actor Eriq Ebouaney portraying Baba), artwork, and commentary from local historians and religious leaders to trace Baba's career and influence. Maseko's primary purpose is to celebrate Baba's legacy (along with that of other scholars of Timbuktu) through the founding of the Ahmed Baba Institute, a public library and research facility where many manuscripts have been collected for study. The production closes with the 2009

celebration of the Institute's establishment as a joint venture between the governments of Mali and South Africa. One can't help but wonder about the library's fate, however, since the March 2012 coup in Mali—which deposed President Amadou Toumani Touré (prominent in the footage of inaugural festivities)—has left Timbuktu under the control of Ansar Dine, an extremist Islamic group known to have desecrated other sites in the city. A fine testimony to Timbuktu's rich past and the wider African culture it represents, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Murdoch's Scandal ★★★

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-702-1.

In contrast to the commonly accepted image of the British as being reserved and dignified, some of their most popular newspapers are tabloid affairs with "screaming headlines and dirty deeds," serving up celebrity exposés and gossip. These papers turned out to be a perfect fit for Australian tycoon Rupert Murdoch, and for decades Murdoch's empire reported sex scandals while buying influence with police and high level politicians. Hosted by Lowell Bergman, this PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary examines the slow unraveling of the Murdoch family dominion, revealing a sordid pattern of phone hacking, payola, and an intricate web of reward and punishment for anyone who crossed their path. Murdoch's organization tried to claim that the excesses were the result of a rogue reporter, but while people were intimidated by Murdoch's reach and power, outrage grew when it was revealed in 2011 that a missing teen named Milly Dowler had her phone hacked and messages deleted, leading to false hopes that the murdered girl was still alive. Later reports also showed that Murdoch's people targeted the phones of dead soldiers, terrorists, and other crime victims. Murdoch's paper *News of the World* was eventually shut down and business expansion plans and new acquisitions were scrapped. *Murdoch's Scandal* also notes the implications for America, where Murdoch owns the Fox film studio, the controversial Fox News Channel, and the *Wall Street Journal*. While the 81-year-old Murdoch is still very much in business, the mogul's power has been diminished. A depressing episode—albeit with a few examples of heroism on the part of crusading competitive newspapers—this is also a cautionary tale of arrogance and abuse by the powerful elite. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

13 Families: Life After Columbine ★★★1/2

(2011) 66 min. DVD: \$24.98. Osiris Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). PPR.

The title of this poignant documentary refers to the parents, siblings, and extended families of the 12 students and one teacher who were killed during the 1999 shootings at Colorado's Columbine High School. Filmmakers Nicole Corbin, Mark David Katchur, and Steve LuKanic employ a mix of home videos, photographs, and numerous interviews to offer insights into the personalities, achievements, and struggles of the Columbine victims' families. News footage from the incident and its aftermath (coupled with rarely seen school surveillance video of the panic created by the gunmen) revisit the fatal rampage, while mothers and fathers recall receiving the tragic news that their children were among those killed, and one young survivor notes how vicious racial slurs uttered by the perpetrators were the last words heard by Isaiah Shoels, the sole African American among the dead. *13 Families* also details how the relatives of the slain sought to memorialize and honor their loved ones—some entered the fray of government-mandated gun control efforts, while others rallied for a formal monument, which was later dedicated at a special ceremony featuring former President Bill Clinton. A heartbreaking, beautiful tribute, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)



No Job For a Woman: The Women Who Fought to Report WWII ★★★1/2

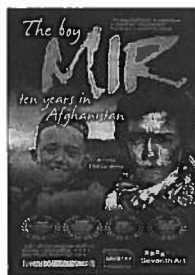
(2011) 61 min. DVD: \$89: public libraries & high schools; \$295: colleges & universities. Women Make Movies. PPR.

Filmmaker Michèle Midori Fillion's documentary explores how women broke through

The Boy Mir: Ten Years in Afghanistan ★★½

(2011) 90 min. DVD: \$25 (\$125 w/PPR). Microcinema International.

British filmmaker Phil Grabsky's 2004 documentary *The Boy Who Plays on the Buddhas of Bamiyan* focused on an eight-year-old named Mir whose family lived in caves in a cliff that once held massive Buddha stone sculptures that were destroyed by the Taliban in March 2001. *The Boy Mir* picks up with Mir's life, following Mir and his family over a 10-year stretch, concluding in 2011 when he reaches the age of 18. As the documentary begins, Mir is both a typically playful boy and an uncommonly articulate symbol of Afghanistan's woes—voluntarily putting his education on hold to help his family with farming, since being fed takes priority over being schooled. In his teen years, Mir turns more serious, working at a coal mine and saving money (along with a supportive older half-brother) to buy a bicycle and then a motorcycle. Mir, his family, and his neighbors also engage in a universal passion for the first time when a newly purchased electric generator allows for the introduction of television viewing to the Bamiyan community. While the military conflict is a constant threat—U.S. helicopters fly by throughout the film, and a military unit drives through briefly—Grabsky keeps his focus on the daily local struggles faced by Mir and those around him. An intelligent and deeply moving film that pays respectful attention to the people of Afghanistan, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)



the gender barriers of wartime journalism during World War II. Before the 1940s, the thought of a woman reporting on any large-scale conflict was beyond comprehension. But there were some who had worked their way up through the journalistic ranks and weren't just ready but also willing and eager to go. Although winning initial approval, these women were then informed that they wouldn't be allowed to report from the frontlines. Fed up with writing articles focused on makeup tips, a few women broke the rules to get the story they wanted, and in the process changed the way we look at combat. Narrated by Julianna Margulies, *No Job For a Woman* focuses on wire service reporter Ruth Cowan, magazine journalist (and wife of Ernest Hemingway) Martha Gellhorn, and photographer Dickey Chapelle. Three actors read from the written words of the main characters, while historians and women working the war beat today offer perspective. The documentary boasts impressive archival footage, including photos by Chapelle, who went on to the frontlines in Vietnam, where she was killed by a landmine. Gellhorn and Cowan are both recognized for seeing what most of their male counterparts didn't: namely, that the true cost of war isn't measured in a body count, but in all of the lives destroyed and disrupted in the wake of battle. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (H. Seggel)

StoryCorps: Animated Shorts ★★½

(2012) 30 min. DVD: \$14.99 (\$34.95 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-60883-680-2.

The StoryCorps oral history project—for whom author Studs Terkel served as inspiration and guiding light—has archived more than 40,000 audio interviews with Americans for the Library of Congress. This compilation features 10 selections gleaned

from a recording booth in New York City and visualized via traditional hand-drawn line-art animation by brothers Tim and Mike Rauch. One of the speakers/cartoon figures is, in fact, Terkel, who offers a sort of statement-of-principles recitation. Other pieces—many touching on 9/11 reminiscences—include a dialogue between a mother and her son with Asperger's about their lives together; the blues of a middle-aged man who lost his sweetheart when the WTC complex fell; a WWII veteran who suffers belated but intense guilt over the young German soldier he shot and killed long ago; two Asian-Americans who extract scraps of personal history from their steely grandmother ("No more questions!"); a retired Bloomingdale's house detective; and an old married couple who look back on their lives as the husband faces terminal cancer (this segment—"Danny & Annie"—brought thousands of condolences from radio listeners after Danny's death was announced on NPR). This is a wonderful and poignant anthology about the human condition that limits itself only in two ways—first by being NYC-focused (the packaging suggests a national scope), and second by being too short—you just don't want it to end. DVD extras include lengthy interviews with the Rauch brothers and StoryCorps founder Dave Isay. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Tahrir: Liberation Square ★★½

(2011) 90 min. DVD: \$398. Icarus Films. PPR.

When the demonstrations that toppled Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak erupted in Cairo in 2011, filmmaker Stefano Savona went there to record the event. *Tahrir: Liberation Square* presents edited footage that Savona shot in Tahrir Square, capturing the mixture of anger, fear, and chaos that enveloped the crowd over the days and nights of revolution.

Heavy emphasis is placed on the massed chanting of the people, but periodically individuals offer their observations to the camera (sometimes in English, sometimes in subtitled Arabic) or harangue their fellow demonstrators. Savona also searches out groups of young activists who anxiously discuss how to proceed, often conversing with family members and like-minded classmates on their cell phones. The footage concludes with the announcement of Mubarak's resignation and the euphoria that gripped the demonstrators, although a brief postscript shows a young woman frantically urging people not to leave Tahrir because Mubarak had not yet departed the country and the proclamation might be nothing but a ruse to create a false sense of security. *Tahrir: Liberation Square* has a "you are there" quality that brings the Egyptian stage of the Arab Spring viscerally alive, and therefore will serve as a useful complement to more conventional documentaries about the uprising. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

This Is Civilization ★★½

(2007) 2 discs. 192 min. DVD: \$39.99. Athena (avail. from most distributors).

British art critic Matthew Collings's four-part documentary series recalls Kenneth Clark's famous 1969 BBC series *Civilisation* (the British spelling is also used here, although Americanized on the DVD cover), which offered an idiosyncratic history of Western art, architecture, and philosophy from the 6th century onward. By contrast, Collings's presentation, while also personal, is both more compact (a mere three-hours-plus) and more argumentative. Collings aims to reveal the essence of past epochs through the study of artworks, drawing comparisons between the characteristics found in artistic endeavors from different eras and cultures. For example, he links the geometric patterns of Islamic decoration—discussed in the first episode, which covers religious impulses in the art of the ancient Greeks as well as that of medieval Christians and Muslims—to modern abstract forms in the final segment that reflect contemporary fragmentation and uncertainty. In the intervening two lecture tours, which feature beautifully photographed location footage, Collings explores the move to rationalism during the Enlightenment, using David and Goya as symptomatic of very different views of human potential, and the effects of 19th-century industrialization, focusing on John Ruskin's call for art to save man's soul from technological sterility. Compared with Clark's straightforward narrative, *This Is Civilization* is more of a stimulating, lovingly illustrated argument of how art provides a transcendent experience—which is especially important in an increasingly secularized world. DVD extras include bios of featured artists and a viewer's guide. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)