

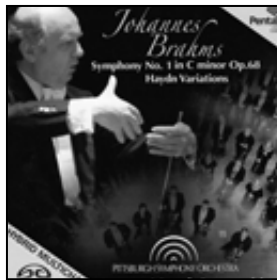
CLASSICAL CD REVIEWS

CHRIS MORGAN

This striking new recording of Johannes Brahms's Symphony No. 1 from the PentaTone Classics collection is a fine example of how improvements in digital music reproduction have enriched the listening experience. The expansive Romanticism of Brahms compositions, with their lush strings and orchestral arrangements, can easily be degraded by inferior recording mediums, which muddy the performances and stifle the intended range of the music. However, this hybrid

multi-channel super audio CD preserves the nuance and dynamic qualities of this symphony spectacularly, delivering a recording which is rousing, vital and engaging. A constellation of brilliant performances from the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra conveys music of an oceanic, dream-like quality, which washes easily over the listener, submerging them beneath waves of aural splendor. And just as the splendor threatens to smother, a solo instrument inevitably emerges from the massive sound, finding the air between each fastidiously placed note. From the moody opening strains of *Un poco sostenuto-Allegro* through the serenity of *Andante sostenuto* to the suitably regal resolution of the final movement, it is not hard to understand the depth of craftsmanship that went into this accomplishment, a task which took over a dozen years for Brahms to complete. Marek Janowski's conducting is undertaken with real vigor, audible in the viscerally passionate presentation of the material by the musicians. For fans of Brahms, this is a recording not to be missed, while others may simply want to purchase for the quality of the product.

BRAHMS - SYMPHONY NO. 1
MAREK JANOWSKI (CONDUCTOR),
PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
PENTATONE MUSIC, 2007



Pianist David Braid and Cellist Matt Brubeck have enviable musical pedigree. The duo responsible for the experimental jazz recording, *Twotet/Duextet*, are both teachers in Toronto, Brubeck at York University and Braid at the University of Toronto. Brubeck is the son of jazz great Dave Brubeck and Braid is a Juno-winning pianist well-established in the national jazz community. With such talent at their disposal, any collaboration between these two seasoned musicians is bound to produce a singularly distinctive sound. These compositions integrate elements of jazz, chamber music, and avant-garde motifs with a melodic pop sensibility which is unique and truly enjoyable. The optimism and upbeat *Huevos Verdes y Jamon* ("Green Eggs and Ham" in Spanish) is infectious, inviting the listener into soundscapes which never seem laboured or contrived. Staggered, jerky rhythms drive the pieces aided by tuneful percussive piano playing. The cello introduces an ingenious, quirky element to the arrangements, often providing a bass foundation for piano soloing when not carrying the melody. Glistening chromatic runs on the ivories distinguish *The Return of Dr. Spookulus*, a slow-burning jam which weaves an enigmatic mood of mystery, before returning to a catchy chorus figure. *Spirit Dance* soars on the winds of nostalgia, fortified by a pulsing, bass-like cello which anchors the entire piece. Nods to Latin and African rhythms abound, as do subtle references to various other indigenous musical traditions. In all, this recording is well-produced and performed with supreme confidence. But the most enduring quality of the music is its uncommon marriage of styles which are blended seamlessly in the masters' hands.

TWOTET/DEUXTET
BRUBECK BRAID
INDEPENDENT, 2007



BOOK REVIEWS

THEREFORE REPENT! : A POST-RAPTURE GRAPHIC NOVEL
By JIM MUNROE AND SALGOOD SAM
NO MEDIA KINGS, 2007



For those who have never heard of the Rapture, it refers to an event anticipated by the members of certain Christian sects where 144,000 of the faithful float up into the sky to join the Lord prior to or during the end of the world. As mythic and strange as this may sound, it is a cherished belief among many who claim that the Biblical prophecies of the Old and New Testaments will come to pass, perhaps in our time. This eschatological narrative has provided the inspiration for *Therefore Repent! : a post-Rapture*

graphic novel, an entertaining and provocative tale about a world not unlike our own where elect believers one day rose up and drifted off into space, ostensibly bound for heaven. After their departure, magic works, although it exacts a price on its practitioners, and angels clad in army fatigues arrive on Earth to purge humanity of its sins with the aid of automatic weapons.

Author Jim Munroe and artist Salgood Sam have succeeded in realizing a vision which captures both mundane believability and miraculous happenstance. The writing in this book is lucid, gritty and rarely ventures into metaphysical quicksand or new age cliché, preferring to explore the relationships of the story's main characters. Expressive figures populate every page and bold scenery invites the reader into this strange milieu, dynamically complimenting the plot with beautifully rendered black and white illustrations. Part sci-fi and part religious fiction, this book provides a unique inversion of Christian tradition, and a compelling re-imagining of a most pervasive spiritual parable. ~Chris Morgan

BLACK AND WHITE AND BLUE: ADULT CINEMA FROM THE VICTORIAN AGE TO THE VCR
By DAVE THOMPSON
ECW PRESS, 2007, 300 PAGES



Dave Thompson has written more than 100 books on music and film. With *Black and White and Blue*, he has turned his attention to a subject so stigmatized that it's been regarded as undeserving of any sort of scholarly attention: the porn movie. Stag films are as old as the moving picture camera itself. So why, Thompson writes, in an age where the most insignificant piece of ancient footage is pored over by historians, is the stag film almost always overlooked? He explores this curious phenomenon, tracing decades of stag film production until the advent of the VCR in the 70s. He joyfully breaks down the misconceptions and generalizations long held by anti-porn crusaders and maps out the first modern history on the subject.

Many people are aware of Eadweard Muybridge's embryonic motion picture of the galloping horse, but not of his hundreds of plates depicting people in various states of undress. The desire to record the most intimate aspects of human relations evolved from there. Thompson meticulously researched over 300 films from North and South America, France, Germany, and Great Britain and underscores many of them with insightful social commentary about the resulting prohibitions with disarming humour. Samples of 35mm stag filmstrips throughout the book will undoubtedly draw prospective readers in, but don't stop there. This exquisitely written book traces the fascinating history of the stag film from early screenings in rooms off back alleyways to the widespread acceptance of *Deep Throat* in 1972. An excellent primer on this taboo and much maligned subject. ~Amie Ronald-Morgan

COOK THE PERFECT...
By MARCUS WAREING
DORLING KINDERSLEY, 2007, 222 PAGES



"Cooking should be a pleasure, something you enjoy doing, whatever the food," writes London chef Marcus Wareing. But how many of us really, truly enjoy making beef stock and other meal staples? With the help of *Cook the Perfect...* this may now be entirely possible. Wareing's philosophy is simple: stripping recipes down to the basics and pointing out the how and why of each step will give anyone the confidence they need to create the perfect dish, whatever their skill level. He has gone about doing just that: Recipes for soups, fish, meat, vegetables, pasta/legumes/grains, eggs, desserts and baking are all laid out in easy-to-follow steps illustrated with photographs. His "keys to perfection," added on the page opposite each recipe, reveal the little secrets he's learned in his years of working the fine dining circuit. Tidbits such as "the onions must be cooked until soft, but not browned or the soup will be bitter" (French Onion Soup) give the home chef that added edge that is usually only afforded to professionals. Roast beef and chicken, mashed potatoes, roasted vegetables, omelettes, and pancakes are all covered, as well as many other favourites. But the "keys to perfection" are not relegated to meals – chocolate chip cookies, cheesecake, brownies, even pineapple upside-down cake are all given the same treatment.

Photos of Wareing with his two young sons, whom are learning the art of cooking from their father, are a nice touch. This is a cookbook you'll refer to again and again. It is definitely worth its \$30 price tag.

"Relax and be confident," Wareing recommends. "The food will taste better for it." ~Amie Ronald-Morgan