

**Heart Disease: Prevention** ★★☆☆1/2

(2006) 2 discs. 132 min. DVD: \$69.95. Apogee Communications Group. PPR. Color cover.

Over 70 million Americans have some form of heart disease, the leading cause of death in the U.S., with 11-30% percent of them having no known risk factors or exhibiting any symptoms. Although everyone is familiar with the term "heart attack," heart disease comprises a wide array of ailments and conditions, including clogged arteries, angina (or chest pain), congestive heart failure (a weakening of the heart muscle), and electrical heart disease (resulting in extra or skipped beats). In the first volume of this two-disc set, the primary risk factors—and their effects—are covered in detail, such as smoking, high cholesterol, diabetes, being overweight or sedentary, and a family history of heart disease. The second volume focuses on prevention, emphasizing both the widespread availability of current health information and the responsibility of taking good care of oneself. In addition, the program features sound advice in the areas of diet (including information on food choices and portion sizes) and exercise, with suggestions for instilling healthy habits early in life to help fight the child obesity epidemic (one doctor here equates the negative health effects of a Happy Meal as being equal to giving a youngster three cigarettes). Also newly available is *Heart Disease: Detection*, priced at \$49.95. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Block)

**Himalaya's Yoga for Young Bodies**

★★★

(2004) 90 min. DVD: \$14.99. Acacia (avail. from most distributors). Color cover. ISBN: 1-56938-861-X.

First, let me say that if you purchased a title called *Himalaya Behl's Yoga for Young Bodies* a couple of years ago, this new release appears to be a re-packaged duplicate. Second, I saw nothing in the "young bodies" part of the title that couldn't also be applied to this fifty-something reviewer's body. Having said that, this well produced and nicely paced program mixes two separate workouts—a "Chakra Shaker" focusing on invigorating standing poses, and a "Chill Vibe" featuring yoga floor exercises—both with modifications for either beginner or advanced practice. In addition, the program features a quick 10-minute stress recess and a section called "Chi for 2" involving seven interesting and challenging poses performed in tandem with a partner. Behl is a charming instructor, who joins classical yoga with graceful and subtle dance moves for a refreshing and fun workout. DVD extras include audio options for music or instruction only, and the (rather unnecessary) choice of

selecting a background for the instructor and her two assistants (one a blue sky, the other a sunset-y orange). Recommended, overall. Aud: P. (N. Plympton)

**A Life Without Pain** ★★☆☆1/2

(2006) 73 min. DVD: \$34.99: individuals; \$104.99: public libraries & high schools; \$204.99: colleges & universities. Frozen Feet Films. PPR. Color cover.

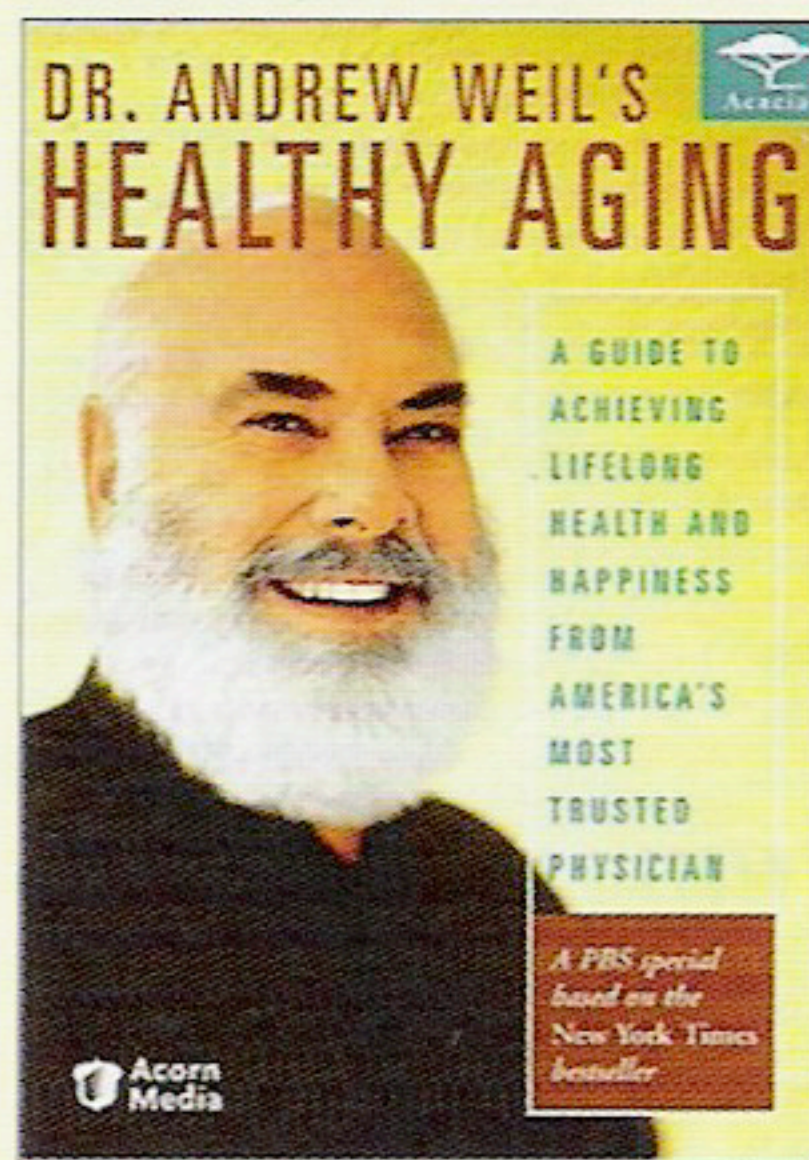
An absorbing, affecting documentary about three young girls who suffer from a rare neurological condition making them incapable of feeling pain—a circumstance that might seem a blessing, but proves to be a terrible obstacle to a normal life—director Melody Gilbert's *A Life Without Pain* offers moving portraits of Gabby, a rambunctious three-year-old Minnesota tyke; Miriam, a seven-year-old Norwegian tomboy; and 10-year-old Jamilah from Germany. Combining interviews with the children and their parents together with day-to-day footage, the film illustrates how the families cope with the fact that the girls can at any time do themselves grave harm without even realizing it. Viewers are not likely to forget Gabby's surgery or her cancelled appearance on *The Montel Williams Show*; or the concern of Miriam's mom and dad as she ventures out into the snow; or the way in which Jamilah solemnly recalls how a classmate tried to test her supposed imperviousness to injury. What's remarkable about the film is that it is both informative and touching without descending into mawkishness. Which is not to say that *A Life Without Pain* lacks passion; rather, it's inspiring without ever straining to

be so. DVD extras include bonus footage of Gabby's fourth birthday party, and excerpts (featuring the director and Gabby's family) from a Q&A after a screening at the 2005 South by Southwest Film Festival. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

**Richard Simmons Supertonin': Totally Tonin'** ★★★

(2005) 25 min. DVD: \$19.99. Somerset Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Color cover.

With his sparkly glitter tank top and his striped short shorts atop a pair of what—surely—must be waxed legs, Richard Simmons here leads a half-hour-shy exercise shout out to 1980s disco. Simmons and nine of his various-sized, -shaped, and -aged friends, trade in the rubber workout mat for the dance floor and boogie to beefed-up versions of disco-era staples such as "Everlasting Love," "The Greatest Love of All," "Funkytown" (which I now can't get out of my head—thank you Richard!), "Physical," and finally "The Greatest American Hero" theme song. In addition to the five tunes, Simmons leads viewers through warm-up and cool-down routines, as well as an endurance training workout using lightweight dumbbells or a set of rubber toning rings (the latter are included in the box). Background exercisers demonstrate numerous modifications (such as sitting in a chair while doing the lat pull or triceps extension) throughout. While this is fairly short for a fitness program, Simmons' enthusiasm and dedication to helping plus-size folk get up and get moving is moving indeed. Three snaps up! Recommended. Aud: P. (N. Plympton)

**Dr. Andrew Weil's Healthy Aging** ★★★

(2006) 85 min. DVD: \$19.99. Acacia (avail. from most distributors). Color cover. Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-56938-829-6.

Whatever you call him—"integrative medicine pioneer" and "America's most trusted physician" are among the monikers used here—Andrew Weil knows whereof he speaks in this PBS-aired special, especially when it comes to the touchy topic of aging gracefully and healthily in a youth-obsessed culture such as ours. If wine, whiskey, cheese, trees, and antiques improve with age, he wonders, why can't people too? How can seniors thrive in an era when so many turn to hormone treatments, cosmetic surgery, and other miracles in their quixotic quest for the fountain of youth? It takes him a while to get specific, but Weil does eventually offer some practical steps to accomplish what he calls the "compression of morbidity." Some are obvious, including eliminating certain unhealthy (i.e., fast-digesting) fats, oils, and carbohydrates from one's diet, engaging in regular and age-appropriate physical activity, and sleeping well (complete darkness is key). Other suggestions are less obvious, such as the use of yoga-related breathing techniques to manage stress, and the suggestion that older people compose an "ethical will" with which to record their personal values, wisdom, and experience. Weil also makes some provocative assertions along the way, arguing that cancer, Alzheimer's, and cardiovascular disease aren't necessarily synonymous with aging. The presentation is static, as Weil basically stands before a rapt audience and talks for an hour and a half, but there's no denying that he's an engaging and articulate speaker. DVD extras include bonus footage. Recommended, overall. Aud: P. (S. Graham)