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## DVDs THIS WEEK

By Michael Giltz



Timon (left) and Pumbaa are the main characters in Disney's straight-to-video "The Lion King 1 1/2."

### "THE LION KING 1 1/2"

This straight-to-DVD piffle explains why Pixar and Disney, in the end, were not a good match. The creators behind some of the most successful recent animated films ("Toy Story," "Finding Nemo"), Pixar has made only one sequel to their blockbusters, while Disney churns out dreck, like this spinoff from "The Lion King" that shows what Timon and the flatulent Pumbaa were up to before the original began (\$29.99, Disney). Sure, it makes Disney a pretty penny, but it also cheapens the aura of their classics and trains its animators in how to settle for second-best — which is exactly what Pixar and Uncle Walt would never do.

### "IN THE CUT" "SYLVIA"

How many times can people be surprised by **Meg Ryan** playing against type? She's done it every third or fourth movie — from the brilliant, overlooked "Flesh and Bone" in 1993, to the less successful "When a Man Loves a Woman" in '94, then "Courage Under Fire" in '96, "Hurlyburly" in '98, and now with the dour crime drama "In the Cut" (\$26.96, Columbia TriStar) for director **Jane Campion**. The movie never cuts deep, but the messed-up Ryan and a compellingly base **Mark Ruffalo** as a cop do their best. **Gwyneth Paltrow** also strives to make sense out of the unhappy life of poet Sylvia Plath, but to little effect in "Sylvia" (\$26.98, Universal). Read her work — and the work of her oft-demonized husband Ted Hughes — instead.

### "XENA, WARRIOR PRINCESS": SEASON THREE "ANGEL": SEASON THREE

For a while, "Xena," the Sapphic spinoff to "Hercules," was even more popular thanks to the stalwart **Lucy Lawless** and a general air of silliness. Season Three (\$69.98, Anchor Bay) has one of their best cliffhangers, "Sacrifice I and II," and loads of extras. "Angel!" never came close to outshining "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," but its third season (\$59.98, Fox) finally established the show's own identity.

### "TATTOOED LIFE"

It's time to revel in overlooked genre flicks from overseas, like the Japanese Nikkatsu action movies of **Seijun Suzuki**, who turned out 1965's "Tattooed Life," about two brothers on the lam after one of them kills a yakuza. Also out is "Underworld Beauty" (1958), and 1963's "Kanto Wanderer" (\$19.95 each, HVE).

### Also out:

George Clooney shows comic aplomb in the Coen brothers' intriguing "Intolerable Cruelty" (\$26.98, Universal); Gerard Depardieu's grand performance in the romantic heartbreaker, "Cyrano De Bergerac" (\$19.98, MGM), from 1990; Val Kilmer plays porn star John Holmes in "Wonderland" (\$26.99, Lions Gate), with extras including actual crime scene footage; "Higher Ground: Voices of Contemporary Gospel Music" (\$19.99, Image) details how gospel legends like Mahalia Jackson and Kirk Franklin were considered rebels for setting religious music to secular rhythms, while spotlighting the current trend-setters like Mary Mary and Out of Eden; Paul Bettany plays a man who cheats on his wife (Olivia Williams) with her sister (Helena Bonham Carter) in "The Heart of Me" (\$26.99; Sundance).

### Out next week:

Michelangelo Antonioni's mod classic "Blow-Up," starring Vanessa Redgrave; "Stone Reader," the documentary about a man's obsession with an obscure novel; and Sid and Marty Krofft's trippy kiddie show "H.R. Pufnstuf."