

# TV Sunday

## DVDs that took over the world!

**D**VDs surpassed VHS in 2001 to become the quickest success story in home entertainment history.

They're just as cheap as video, they look and sound dramatically better and they're often loaded with extras at little or no cost. What's not to love?

Below are some of the best DVD releases of 2001, the year made famous by Stanley Kubrick as a signpost for the future. Today, that future looks shiny and bright and about five inches in diameter.

Here are the titles that made those silvery discs worth clutching to your chest.

**Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs** (\$29.99; Disney) Nobody repackages their catalog better than Disney but even they outdid themselves with this lavish, clever two disc platinum edition of their crown jewel. Best of all, the many extras don't overwhelm the witty, delightful 84-minute film. (I sometimes worry that in the future kids won't realize they can simply watch a movie without skipping to mini-documentaries or listening to a commentary track.)

**The Woody Allen Collection Set 3** (\$99.98; MGM). Here's the polar opposite of all those lavish sets loaded with extras: a collection of six Woody Allen films from his peak mid-Eighties period. No commentary track from Allen; no on-the-set documentaries or collections of stills and poster art. Just eight movies, seven of which are true gems. Who needs extras when you've got films like *Hannah and Her Sisters*, *Zelig*, *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, and *Radio Days*.

**Fawlty Towers: The Complete Collection** (\$59.98; BBC Video). All 12 brilliantly funny episodes of perhaps the best short-run sitcom of all time. John Cleese had already achieved his fair amount of immortality with *Monty Python*, but this hilarious farce about the worst hotel owner in history gave him immortality and bragging rights among fellow Python alumni (until Terry Gilliam made *Brazil*).

**Almost Famous Untitled: The Bootleg Cut** (\$34.99; Universal). Surely the most entertaining commentary track of the year came courtesy of Cameron Crowe and his mom, who bantered back and forth as only family members can while watching a movie that lovingly but unblinkingly presented their strange, happy relationship to the world. The extras didn't quite make me reappraise his very good film, but they're good to have, just like that boxed set of random Bob Dylan songs that never made it onto an album.

**The Godfather DVD Collection** (\$105.90; Paramount). It contains the first commentary track to be namechecked by a TV show (the characters on "Gilmore Girls" couldn't wait to hear Coppola defending the casing of his daughter Sofia in *Godfather III*). But the real pleasure of this set is of course the landmark first two films and the copious, intelligent extras. Pristine copies of these eminently rewatchable dramas are essential since you can't just watch them once. And since Coppola butchered them on video, getting them right once and for all on DVD is all the sweeter.

**Grey Gardens** (\$39.95; Criterion). It's always satisfying to finally see a classic and have it live up to your expectations. This painfully funny look at a mother and daughter ensconced (there's no other word for it) in a crumbling mansion in the East Hamptons is every bit as bizarre and compelling and quotable as I'd heard.

**Shrek** (\$26.99; DreamWorks). In rare cases, a second viewing can help you reappraise a film. Certainly the many fun extras on Shrek got me watching the movie again and grudgingly admit it's better than I remembered (though still not as good as most critics say). But with games like *Fairy Tale Bowling* and a great extra that lets you record your own voice over 12 scenes, who needs a movie?

Post critic **MICHAEL GILTZ** picks the discs that rock

**The Sopranos: The Complete Second Season** (\$99.98; HBO) and **The X-Files: The Complete Fourth Season** (\$149.98; Fox). Sure it's a little expensive, but this exemplary boxed set of the gangster drama does everything you want: it gives you an entire season of the show, useful extras like director commentary for certain episodes, and fits it all in a slim, attractive case. Clearly, they followed the example of "The X-Files," which has set the standard for TV shows on DVD and met them itself with the fourth (and best) season of the now pointless sci-fi series. It's marred only by being too pricey.

**Citizen Kane** (\$29.98; Warner Bros.). Anyone who wanted to say DVD hadn't come of age simply pointed out that this film wasn't out yet. Well, DVD has come of age and *Citizen Kane* is out on DVD. They made us wait, so they took care to make the wait worthwhile, doing an exemplary job of finding top-notch extras and getting a terrific commentary track from Roger Ebert (who should have to do at least three of four of these a year for classic films put out on DVD).

**The Bridge on the River Kwai** and **Law-**

**rence of Arabia** (\$39.95 each; Columbia TriStar). These David Lean classics are two great reasons to upgrade your TV to a big screen monster with surround sound. Brilliant films, strong extras if you've already seen them a hundred times. And the less said about the woefully dated *Doctor Zhivago* the better.

**Upstairs, Downstairs: The Complete First Season** (\$79.95; A&E) and **The Simpsons: The Complete First Season** (\$39.98; Fox). Have you noticed that TV shows are one of the funnest sources of programming on DVD? They never worked on video (just one season of a regular series takes up acres of shelf space). But on DVD, classic TV shows seem new again. *Upstairs, Downstairs* comes from A&E, which doesn't have the budget for snazzy packaging or lots of extras, but gets the job done with a generous four episodes per disc and fine taste in television. *The Simpsons* does have lots of extras and snazzy packaging, making the first season of 13 shows (far from its best) a great buy. Here's hoping they keep the price down when other seasons (which contain 24 episodes) come out.



### Bald guys rule

Separated at birth? The list of Best DVDs includes look-alike chrome domes Shrek, (above) Homer Simpson and mixed-up mobster Tony Soprano.



### ...even the dud flicks

**The Grinch** (\$26.98; Universal). I'm not going to simply make a list of all the bad movies of the year, but this DVD stands out for showing how ugly and cheap the sets looked for this film. How it ever got an Oscar nomination I'll never know.

**Apocalypse Now Redux** (\$29.99; Paramount). If Francis Ford Coppola wants to release a 10-hour version of his Vietnam flick, that's fine by me. (And I'll probably line up to watch it.) But what's disturbing about this release is that Coppola only includes his director's cut and is threatening to keep the original cut off the market forever.

**Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory** (\$24.98; Warner Bros). This has a happy ending. Warner Bros. put out *Willy Wonka* in a cropped version only on DVD. God knows how many oompa-loompas they cut off, but fans responded with a deluge of complaints and the studio quickly put out the widescreen version. One clear indication that even the days of bothering to include a cropped edition with the theatrical, widescreen cut are over. When people watch widescreen episodes of "The West Wing" and "ER," they're not going to blink over a movie being shown the way it was seen in theaters.