

# DVDs this week

## By Michael Giltz

### Jerry Maguire — Special Edition (\$27.95; Columbia TriStar)

Cameron Crowe's best movie, so far, deserved all the success it achieved. The story of a sports agent trying to land a client and open his heart to a single mom, *Jerry Maguire* is nearly perfect. My only two caveats are that lengthy, over-the-top goodbye speech Tom Cruise delivers when he's fired and the idea that his employers would let Maguire stay in his office and try to work the phones to poach clients.



CRUISE

### Friends — The Complete First Season (\$69.98; Warner Bros.)



ANISTON

Must See TV on Thursdays was a lot more convincing when the lineup included "The Cosby Show," "Family Ties," "Cheers," "Night Court" and "Hill Street Blues." But "Friends" has endured and this collection of the first season shows how quickly it found its footing and how much the characters would evolve without betraying their essential natures. The idea of Season One Joey (Matt LeBlanc) falling in love with Rachel (Jennifer Aniston) is absurd. But his character hasn't been radically altered; he's just had seven more years to grow up.

### Ali (\$27.96; Columbia TriStar)



SMITH

I thought the drama *Six Degrees of Separation* had many problems but that its fatal flaw was Will Smith. He clearly didn't want to play a bisexual character ("Don't be kissing no man," Denzel Washington had reportedly warned him) and it showed. Beyond that obvious unease, I thought Smith was simply unsuited for anything but light comedy and action. I was wrong. Michael Mann's biopic of the great boxer is inert, but Smith gives a dynamic, full-bodied performance in one of the most difficult roles imaginable. Hopefully, Smith can forgive me for doubting the range of his acting ability. Now why doesn't someone give this guy a romantic comedy?

### The Avengers '68 — Sets 3 and 4 and Thunderbirds Sets 5 and 6 (\$39.95 each; A&E)

Somewhere in the world there must be someone who feels that dippy Linda Thorson as Tara King is (somehow) an improvement on the formidable Diana Rigg as Emma Peel. They'll be happy to see "The Avengers '68" sets, which mostly feature Thorson. I think you're better off wallowing in the addicting adventures of those daring marionettes the Thunderbirds.



RIGG (in 1999)

### The Cranes are Flying (\$29.95; Criterion)

It's hard enough to make a good movie in Hollywood — imagine trying to get ahead in the Soviet film industry. According to "The Film Encyclopedia" (\$30; HarperCollins), Mikhail Kalatozov triumphed first with 1930's *Salt for Svanetia*, a beautifully shot tale of peasants that was denounced by authorities for "negativism." His next film, *A Nail in the Boot*, was locked up and never released. Kalatozov finally got wise and made the completely apolitical and romantic *Cranes are Flying* in 1957. The story of doomed romance and fatal mistakes, it was a worldwide success and won the top prize at Cannes. It was also condemned by higher-ups for "formalism" and "naturalism."