



## "HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS"

OK, the second Harry Potter movie is better than the first, but they both remain tiresomely faithful to the books in the worst sense of the word (\$29.95, Warner Bros.). Only an extremely strong cast (aided this time by an enjoyably smug **Kenneth Branagh**) keeps the movie from being truly dull. The extras strike a nice balance between games and such for kids (with the DVD-ROM offering printable trading cards and much more) and more informative tidbits for adults, like the interview with **J.K. Rowling** and screenwriter **Steve Kloves**.

## "THINGS BEHIND THE SUN"

Writer-director **Allison Anders** has always used music prominently in her movies, especially that valentine to the Brill Building "Grace of My Heart." But rock 'n' roll — provided in this case by Sonic Youth — has never seemed more essential or more life-saving than in her new drama (\$24.98, Showtime). Awkward but sincere, it shows a journalist interviewing a rising singer-songwriter about her traumatic rape, which is the basis for her hit single and something the reporter knows all too much about. A very good cast (including a sleazy **Eric Stoltz**), but Anders remains stronger at creating characters than knowing what to do with them.

## "HERE COMES PETER COTTONTAIL" "THE DAYDREAMER"

"Peter Cottontail" (1971) has never quite entered the pantheon of Rankin-Bass holiday classics, but I don't know why (\$12.98, Sony Wonder). Vincent Price is a delicious villain and the songs are up to snuff. It's backed by one of their animated shorts — "Puss in Boots" — but as anyone who's seen their version of "The Hobbit" knows, animation isn't their strong suit. Another lost charmer is 1966's "The Daydreamer" (\$14.98, Anchor Bay), which uses the life of a young Hans Christian Andersen to recount several classic tales like "The Little Mermaid" — and without the obligatory Disney happy endings. Quite nice.

## "WITHOUT LYING DOWN" "SUNRISE"

In Hollywood's early days, women dominated screenwriting and even made major contributions as directors. (It would be fun to see someone tackle how they were shunted aside.) But "Without Lying Down" focuses on the success of Francis Marion and her collaboration with the great actress Mary Pickford (\$29.99, Milestone). It's fine, but the "extra" — their 62 minute film "A Little Princess" (1917) — is so good you can't help thinking the documentary should have been the extra for that instead of the other way around! Fox has the classic F.W. Murnau Oscar-winner "Sunrise" (1927) available, but you can't buy it — instead, you have to purchase three Fox DVDs (such as "All About Eve") and send in coupons to get it for free.

## "CAUGHT IN THE DRAFT"/"GIVE ME A SAILOR" "LOUISIANA PURCHASE"/"NEVER SAY DIE"

Universal is celebrating **Bob Hope's** 100th birthday by re-promoting classics like his "Road" movies with Bing Crosby and a clutch of double features (\$14.98 Each, Universal). You have to love the cowardly Hope for putting out "Caught in the Draft" during WWII (1941 to be exact). The story of a hapless fella who would do anything to avoid combat must have been sweet balm to scared young guys being called into battle. Even the most timid could feel braver than Hope or at least gain comfort from knowing they weren't alone. The others are surprisingly good, too.

## "THE PETER SELLERS COLLECTION"

Everyone knows Peter Sellers was a genius, but we usually only talk about "Lolita," "Dr. Strangelove," "Being There" and, of course, the Pink Panther movies. This terrific boxed set covering little-seen British movies like "I'm All Right Jack" and "Cariton-Browne of the F.O." (both 1959) should change that (\$89.98, Anchor Bay). Unlike many such compilations, there isn't a weak one in the bunch, with 1960's clever "Two-Way Stretch" (in which con men rob a bank while in prison so they can have the perfect alibi) first among equals.