

# DVDs this week

8/19/01

## Hannibal (\$29.98; MGM)

The trouble starts right at the beginning: the FBI is trying to nab a dangerous criminal when an underling defies direct orders from Clarice Starling (Julianne Moore) and sets off a massive gun battle. At great risk to herself, Starling saves a small child and nails the killer. Every other agent clearly witnessed the subordinate's shocking refusal to follow orders, but instead of being cheered Starling is in disgrace. That bizarre lack of logic is standard for this resolutely comic if beautiful follow-up to *The Silence of the Lambs*. Director Ridley Scott claims he positioned this as a very different movie — not a sequel — which may have been his way of admitting he couldn't match that Oscar winner. Packed with extras.



HANNIBAL

## Batman: The Movie (\$19.98; Fox)

The four recent overblown *Batman* movies combined can't match the silly fun provided by this spin-off from the jokey hit sitcom. The dialogue is genuinely — and intentionally — hilarious, whether it's Batman's clipped, dismissive manner at a press conference (he could teach the Mayor a few things) or Robin's endless stream of "Holy [fill in the blank]!" Fine Bat extras, including an entertainingly droll commentary track from Adam West and Burt Ward. What's the difference between those big budget disasters and this cardboard cutout? This *Batman* knows how silly it is and laughs at itself before you can.

## Waiting for Guffman (\$19.98; Warner Bros.)



POSEY

Christopher Guest has turned the mockumentary style of *This is Spinal Tap* into a cottage industry. But while that movie tackled the unlikely subject of heavy metal bands, his targets have seemed more obvious since then. *Best in Show* (his most recent movie) skewered the finicky, odd people who compete at dog shows. Others thought it was hilarious, but it seemed a little obvious to me. Far better — and practically the equal in laughs to *Spinal Tap* — is *Waiting for Guffman*, which teases out laughs from community theater. Sure, it's another cheap target, but the laughs, somehow, aren't mean-spirited. And believe me, there are plenty of them — from Guest's Corky St. Clair (the beleaguered, misunderstood genius) to the hilarious turns by Parker Posey, Eugene Levy, Fred Willard (the saving grace in *Best in Show*), Catherine O'Hara and many others. A real gem.

## Polyster/Desperate Living (\$29.95; New Line)

Every movie John Waters has ever even considered making deserves to be preserved in deluxe DVD editions. Certainly these two seminal works are no exception. *Desperate Living* is the last gasp of Waters' "shocking" period, with Mink Stole and Jean Hill as bandit queens who escape to the kingdom of Mortville and try and take over the throne. The more disciplined *Polyester* points the way to the future for Waters: it features Tab Hunter in a prominent role; skewers middle-class values with a silly story about a pornographer, his go-go dancing daughter and glue-sniffing son; showcases Divine beautifully; and — best of all — introduces the silly gimmick of Odorama scratch-and-sniff cards! And, yes, one is included with every box.



WATERS

## Live Nude Girls Unite! (\$29.95; First Run Features)

It sounds like a B movie from the fifties, but this earnest documentary about the first strip club in the country to unionize will get the UAW a lot more worked up than people hoping for a little bump and grind. Co-director and exotic dancer Julia Query does a good job of showing their unpleasant working conditions (which include no sick leave, unfair demotions, racial discrimination but not — of course — the sleazy men they must endure). But it's the personal stories of the dancers that stick with you — especially Query's coming-out as a stripper to her activist mom. Not naughty, but nice. Also out this week: *The Goonies*, *Gremlins*, *Dirty Dancing: Special Edition*, *Jacob's Ladder*, *Open Your Eyes*, and *The Ninth Gate*.

— Michael Giltz