



"Sunshine State"

Ho-hum, another brilliant film by writer-director John Sayles. Really, the indifference that greeted "Sunshine State" (\$24.95; Columbia TriStar) was truly shocking.

True, Sayles doesn't have the strongest of visual styles. But who else juggles so many actors so adroitly? This look at corporate development in Florida gives Edie Falco her best screen role since breaking out on "The Sopranos" (and pairs her with a newly revived Timothy Hutton in the process).

But even saying that is to shortchange the 10 or so other terrific performances from the likes of Angela Bassett, Mary Steenburgen, Jane Alexander, Mary Alice, and Alan King as a Greek (OK, Jewish) chorus. Subtle and smart, this is a classic. Oh well, Sayles will probably do it again next time. Will anyone care?

"Stuart Little 2"

This sequel about the little mouse that takes Manhattan by storm (\$27.95; Columbia TriStar) crashed and burned at the box office for some strange reason. It's virtually identical in tone and spirit to the original and just as satisfying in its way — assuming you haven't read the truly delightful book by E.B. White it is supposedly based on. For adults, hearing Michael J. Fox voice a character so spry and youthful remains a poignant note.

"Ciao! Manhattan"

This tiresome but fascinating fictionalized look at the life of Edie Sedgwick (\$24.95; Plexifilm) is exactly what cult films are all about. Plow through it and you'll find certain striking moments as a washed-up Edie (is that redundant?) recounts her moment in the spotlight with Andy Warhol.

"Mighty Saturns"

"Apollo 15: Complete Downlink Edition"

Do you find yourself transfixed by the NASA channel on cable TV — the network that spends hours showing you the view from, say, a space shuttle orbiting the earth? If so, a series of DVDs from Spacecraft Films is for you.

Ranging in price up to \$100 for deluxe editions, titles like "Apollo 14," "Apollo 15," "Mighty Saturns" and "STS-109" offer one, two or even six-disc sets showing launches of rockets from various angles and reams of unedited footage. It's like hanging out at Mission Control during an entire mission and geeky fun for those who thought the 12-hour miniseries "From the Earth to the Moon" was about 30 hours too short. Tom Hanks probably owns every one of these.

Holiday DVD Roundup

Since you've already seen the Alastair Sim version of "A Christmas Carol" about a hundred times, why not give the earlier British rendition Scrooge (\$24.99; Image) a try? It stars Sir Seymour Hicks, who'd done the role so many times he'd moved beyond acting Scrooge to simply embodying him. A great boxed set of TV specials includes five of the best, such as "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" (\$56.98; Classic Media).

If you haven't bought some of them already, it's a bargain. "Robbie the Reindeer" (\$14.98; BBC) is the original British version of the TV special airing on CBS. After a few years, it should sit quite nicely alongside any of them.

But if those all seem too secular for you, then the VeggieTales production "The Star of Christmas" (\$19.98; Big Idea) is just for you: Biblically based but (just) entertaining enough to keep the kids quiet.

The sequel may have been too little too late, but Tim Allen's "The Santa Clause: Special Edition" (\$29.99; Disney) deserves a spot alongside "A Christmas Story" and other modern additions.

I'm not a big fan of the short-sighted Mr. Magoo, but "Mr. Magoo's Christmas Carol" (\$14.98; Classic Media) does lay a claim to being the first animated holiday special made for TV.