

DVDs this week 12/23/01 By Michael Giltz

Evolution (\$26.99; DreamWorks)

What's the worst movie of the year? Some would say Tom Green's "Freddy Got Fingered." But was anybody actually expecting that comedy to be anything but wretched? No, of course not. But the worst movie of the year - given the talent involved - has to be *Evolution*, a dispirited comedy about an alien invasion and the loner scientist who must stop them. It was directed by Ivan Reitman, who made the classic "Ghostbusters" and recently branched out into relatively adult fare like "Dave." It stars David Duchovny, who has great taste in women (he's married to Tea Leoni) and terrible taste in movies. It costars Julianne Moore, who inexplicably made this movie despite a script that must have been as painful to read as it is to see performed. As far as cinema is concerned, *De-Evolution* is more like it.

Mannequin (\$14.95; MGM)

I can still remember reviewing "Mannequin" for my college newspaper. I was sitting in a darkened theater on opening weekend (we rarely got to see movies in advance), somewhat dreading this Andrew McCarthy comedy about a mannequin that comes to life. Within the first 30 seconds - a flashback to ancient Egypt that looked like a very bad outtake from "I Dream of Jeannie" - I had the sinking feeling that this movie was going to be excruciatingly awful. It was. It was also enough of a hit to spawn (the right word) a sequel.



Alan Rickman: Thief

Truly, Madly, Deeply (\$19.98; MGM)

What a year for Alan Rickman. He's starring in a triumphant revival of "Private Lives" in the West End and getting laughs with virtually every line. (It should come to Broadway in the fall if his schedule can be worked out.) He also steals every scene of "Harry Potter" as the nasty Professor Snape. ("Mr Potter. Our new . . . celebrity," he drawls menacingly.) I became charmed by him in "Sense and Sensibility," but most people fell in love with Rickman during this haunting romantic comedy, which gives a clever modern spin to that old dilemma of the dead lover who can't say goodbye.

The Russia House (\$14.95; MGM)

Michelle Pfeiffer had her own breakthrough with this John Le Carre drama costarring the ageless Sean Connery. (Dick Clark is preserved; Connery is ageless. Which would you prefer?) She's a stunning beauty of course, but her Russian accent (convincing to me, at least, who only knows Russian accents via "Rocky and Bullwinkle") and marvelous performance was a revelation. "The Fabulous Baker Boys" and other numerous triumphs since then have proven beauty and talent can happily coexist.

Breathless (\$24.98; Fox Lorber)

One of the pleasures of a new format like DVD is getting reintroduced to old favorites. (I can't wait for Errol Flynn's "The Adventures of Robin Hood" to come out; when it finally debuts on DVD it will seem like the world premiere.) Suddenly, Fox Lorber has offered up a clutch of Godard. First and foremost is *Breathless*, his classic reimagining of American gangster flicks through the lense of strikingly handsome and laidback Jean-Paul Belmondo. For those who want to dig further, they've also put out "La Petit Soldat" and "Les Carabiniers."

Come Undone (\$29.95; Wolfe) and Nico and Dani (\$29.95; New Yorker)

Two of the best gay films of the year are out now: the French drama *Come Undone* is about a teenager spending the summer at the beach who falls in love with another young man. It rivals the current *Fat Girl* for sexual explicitness but is most notable for its ambitious structure telling the story in flashback after our hero has had a breakdown. Much sweeter is the Spanish romantic drama "Nico and Dani." It has a classic setup: one person who is desperately in love with another, who just wants to be friends, though of course in this case they're two boys instead of a boy and a girl. Also worth checking out in the same genre is *PlanetOut.com Short Movie Awards Highlights* (\$24.95; Picture This) with a clutch of shorts. DVDs are ideal for collecting shorts, since like with videos you can jump to your favorites after one viewing. Most compilations have just gay or lesbian titles, but this one has a bunch of both, with one of the best being Jason Gould (son of Streisand) delivering a witty semi-autobiographical tale.