



"Barbershop"

Anyone calling "Barbershop" (\$26.98, MGM) a surprise hit doesn't know what they're talking about. Ice Cube has been starring in dependable genre flicks that turn a profit more regularly than McDonald's. His latest — about a day in the life of a small businessman trying to make a go of his dad's barbershop — is among his most successful simply because it's one of his warmest. Filled with fine performances, it was the center of a non-controversy when Rev. Jesse Jackson and others condemned a few quick jokes about Rosa Parks and Jackson himself that were very funny. It hasn't happened yet, but Cedric the Entertainer — who spouted those lines so hilariously — deserves end-of-the-year recognition from critics and an Oscar nod for best supporting actor.

"XXX"

We sure cut the James Bond flicks a lot of slack. The latest — "Die Another Day" — got solid reviews, a massive promotional push, and tons of press and is considered a grand success. Yet it will only gross about \$140 million, the same as the tepid knockoff "XXX" (\$27.96, Columbia TriStar) starring Vin Diesel. Meanwhile, other franchises like "X-Men" and "Spider-Man" far outpace it. Still, I'll take Bond over this mishmash, which has poorly staged, poorly shot stunts, and Diesel floundering desperately whenever he has to mouth more than one sentence at a time. It involves girls and guns and bad guys doing bad things, but you knew that already.

"Star Trek: The Next Generation" Seasons 6 and 7

The final two seasons of the most successful TV spin-off of all time (\$139.99 each, Paramount) are here. The show clearly peaked in the fourth season and these boxed sets now seem overpriced when other more recent shows like "Once and Again" and "24" come out on DVD for half the price. But for fans, these purchases are inevitable and satisfying right down to the farewell moment in "All Good Things." Better to remember this as the final goodbye than the god-awful "Star Trek: Nemesis" currently in theaters.

"Home"

Theater buffs have been salivating over the series of DVDs (\$24.95 each, Kultur) now being released featuring famous Broadway shows that were taped for broadcast on Channel 13/WNET. The latest batch includes Nancy Marchand in Eugene O'Neill's "A Touch of the Poet," Marc "Beastmaster" Singer (I) in "The Taming of the Shrew," and the luminous Blair Brown in Thornton Wilder's "The Skin of Our Teeth." But the highlight has to be those grand old hands John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson fencing beautifully in David Storey's "Home," a very funny work set in a mental institution and directed by Lindsay Anderson. Like all of them, it's a creaky glimpse into what the real production must have been like, but no less priceless for that.

"Stingray"

American viewers are still fairly in the dark about the compelling, strange world of Gerry Anderson, who turned out a series of classic British action-adventure shows heavy on violence and sci-fi effects and acted solely by puppets. Newcomers should start with his classic "Thunderbirds," but fans of that should go right to "Stingray: The Complete Series" (\$99.95, A&E). Set in 2065, and featuring the World Aquanaut Security Patrol at Marineville, it includes Anderson's convincingly detailed sets and a surprisingly adult tone for what's nominally a kid's show. You haven't lived until you've seen a puppet sweat and stammer during life-threatening moments and where else can you turn for that but here?

"The Thief of Baghdad"

Anyone enjoying the spectacles of "The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers" or "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets" doesn't have to wait till next December for their next fantasy fix. Check out "The Thief of Baghdad" (\$19.98, MGM) — this 1940 version has grand adventure and scenes that are still eye-poppingly gorgeous (you can't beat hand-crafted special effects). My only question: the dynamic Sabu plays the title role of Abu, so why didn't they just let him keep his real name?