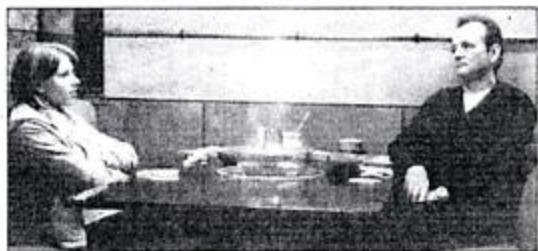


DVDs THIS WEEK

By Michael Giltz

Scarlett Johansson and Bill Murray star in "Lost in Translation."

"LOST IN TRANSLATION" "AMERICAN SPLENDOR"

Let's swim against the tide a bit. **Bill Murray** is lovely and **Sofia Coppola's** second film is a definite improvement over her debut. But "Lost in Translation" (\$26.98, Universal) is a modest little movie at best and its shaky humor (the lounge band; the mangled English of the Japanese) plays poorly at home. "American Splendor" is an awkward, unsuccessful blend of documentary and fiction just to tell the tale of office schlep **Harvey Pekar** (\$27.95, HBO). Still, **Paul Giamatti** and **Hope Davis** keep it honest.

"GILLIGAN'S ISLAND": THE COMPLETE FIRST SEASON

"Gilligan's Island" (\$39.98, Warner Bros.) indulges our love of slapstick comedy while detailing the Sisyphean struggle of the castaways, who repeatedly discover new ways of getting off the island only to find themselves right back where they started at the end of every show. Bleak, Brechtian... actually, it's just a very dumb comedy you loved as a kid but probably find unwatchable as an adult. The first season is best, if only because these 36 black-and-white episodes weren't played to death in repeats and seem fresher.

THE DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS COLLECTION

This six-movie set (\$99.95, Kino) will certainly rank as one of the DVD events of the year. True, Douglas Fairbanks wasn't as good-looking as that upstart Errol Flynn or even his own son. But he laughed and bounded through classic silent adventure films like his 1920 breakthrough "The Mark of Zorro," 1924's lavish "The Thief of Baghdad" and what was the definitive "Robin Hood," circa 1922 — till Technicolor and Flynn stole it away. Terrific extras, including home movies, outtakes, intros by Orson Welles, clips from other films and even text from a book Fairbanks wrote. Great fun.

"MRS. MINIVER"

There's no better movie for bucking up the spirits than that 1942 wartime classic "Mrs. Miniver," which has a finale so stirring you'll rush to enlist. It's just one of a clutch of genuine classics coming out, including Charles Laughton's memorable "Mutiny on the Bounty" from 1935; Robert Donat's sentimental "Goodbye Mr. Chips"; the grand "Grand Hotel" from 1932; and a new edition of the lovely "My Fair Lady," from 1964 (\$19.98 each, with "My Fair Lady" at \$26.99, Warner Bros.).

Also out:

Producer/on-screen interviewer **Roger Friedman's** labor of love about soul music, "Only the Strong Survive," (\$29.99, Miramax) has some great performances, especially by **Mary Wilson**; 1988's "Rain Man": Special Edition (\$19.98, MGM) proves **Tom Cruise** is better when not trying to be likable; anyone anticipating **Mel Gibson's** "The Passion of the Christ" should watch Robert Bresson's austere, moving "Diary of a Country Priest" (\$39.95, Criterion) from 1950 to see a revelatory look at spiritual faith; "The Gods Must Be Crazy" I & II (\$29.95, Columbia TriStar) includes the 1981 slapstick comedy, its 1989 sequel and, for Coke, one of the best product placements of all time; scandalous at the time, 1983's "The Thorn Birds" (\$29.98, Warner Bros.) seems almost happily old-fashioned as **Richard Chamberlain** struggles with temptation for **Rachel Ward**; Jim Henson's non-Muppet films never got the accolades they deserved, especially "Labyrinth" Collector's Edition (\$49.95; Columbia TriStar), a memorably off-beat fantasy starring **David Bowie** and **Jennifer Connelly** circa 1986; Hey, hey, hey, "What's Happening": First Season and "Good Times": Second Season (\$29.95 each, Columbia TriStar) are just out, along with the British sci-fi cult comedy "Red Dwarf" III and IV (\$34.98 each, BBC).

Out next week:

"The Lion King I 1/2" focuses on Timon and the frequently flatulent Pumbaa; Lucy Lawless kicks Sapphic butt in "Xena": Season Three; and **Ingmar Bergman** is happy (OK, less gloomy) thanks to the debut of "The Ingmar Bergman Collection."