

DVDs THIS WEEK

By Michael Giltz



"Six Feet Under": The Complete First Season

Alan Ball's series about a family that runs a funeral home was deservedly acclaimed for its first season (\$99.98, HBO). It has a great cast — anchored by the under-appreciated **Frances Conroy** as the mother who beautifully starts to assert herself after her husband's death — and this nicely designed boxed set has all the extras you'd expect. So what's the problem? At only 13 episodes, this is way over-priced at \$100. HBO has made a killing off of premium-priced boxed sets of "The Sopranos." But even with quality shows like this, they can't expect consumers to roll over and play dead anymore when series like "24" and "Once & Again" are available for much less.

"Sweet Home Alabama"

Reese Witherspoon is forging the career everyone expected **Alicia Silverstone** to have. Both broke out in smart comedies — Silverstone with the delightful "Clueless" and Witherspoon with "Election." But Silverstone's projects since then have been flops while Witherspoon has made one hit after the other. Too bad it's been in minor fluff like this forgettable romantic comedy set mostly down South (\$29.99, Touchstone). Witherspoon is a fashion designer on the rise in New York and all set to marry the mayor's son (a charming **Patrick Dempsey**). All she has to do is get her estranged husband (**Josh Lucas** — who looks disturbingly like **Matthew McConaughey**) to finally sign those divorce papers.

"Thelma & Louise" "Mildred Pierce"

Ridley Scott showed how much fun feminism can be when the gals are locked and loaded and ready to party with a strapping **Brad Pitt** (\$24.98, MGM). This deluxe edition has all the extras and that glorious ride into the sunset. A tough gal from an earlier era is Joan Crawford's "Mildred Pierce" (\$19.98, Warner Bros.). You'd think Crawford was so scary that anyone would be too frightened to cross her. But watching Pierce bow and scrape for her ungrateful daughter can't help but break your heart.

"An Affair to Remember" "Driving Miss Daisy"

Two dated dramas that were once beloved. "An Affair to Remember" starring **Cary Grant** and **Deborah Kerr** seemed a little silly even when it came out (\$19.98, Fox), though those two stars gave this weepie a little dignity. But no wonder **Warren Beatty's** remake was a stilted flop. "Sleepless in Seattle" uses its iconic status nicely and will probably last longer. The politics of "Driving Miss Daisy" (\$19.98, Warner Bros.) are well-intentioned, just like "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" and other socially conscious Hollywood offerings that seem holier than thou. **Jessica Tandy** won the Oscar but **Morgan Freeman** takes an almost impossible role and makes it seem real.

"The Gathering Storm"

This delightful movie starring **Albert Finney** and **Vanessa Redgrave** is one of the most acclaimed HBO movies in years (\$26.95, HBO). It shows **Winston Churchill** between the wars, chomping at the bit to take on Hitler but out of power and unable to do anything but bark at the complacency in Parliament. Finney and Redgrave give this modest enterprise real charm and the first-rate supporting cast doesn't hurt either. A winner.

"Igby Goes Down" "Citizen Ruth"

Two odd ducks that never quite turn into swans. "Igby" (\$26.98, MGM) is about a Holden Caulfield wanna-be (**Kieran Culkin**) saddled with a bunch of phonies, led by his dying mom and arch older brother. A good cast (**Susan Sarandon**, **Ryan Phillippe**) can't shake the air of familiarity, but Culkin and **Claire Danes** have some nice moments. Those who think "About Schmidt" is a winner should check out **Alexander Payne's** better, earlier works, like "Election" and the caustic "Citizen Ruth" (\$19.99, Touchstone), which makes hay out of abortion politics, thanks to a great performance by **Laura Dern** and a hilarious script worthy of **Preston Sturges**.