

DVDs this week

By Michael Gitz

Life With Judy Garland: Me & My Shadows (\$22.99; Miramax) 1/20/02 M Gitz

Biopics about legendary superstars are a terrible idea. Finding an actor who can inhabit Brando is hard enough; giving new life to scenes from *A Streetcar Named Desire* while mimicking him is nigh-on-impossible. All of which makes this TV movie about Garland all the more remarkable. Certainly Judy Davis and Tammy Blanchard (Emmy winners both) shine brightest in personal moments. But if we didn't buy Blanchard in scenes from *The Wizard of Oz* or Davis singing in concert, this movie would be dead in the water. It's a triumph for Lorna Luft, who watched her bestseller score huge ratings and critical acclaim while managing to kiss and make up with her sister. Now, a Liza Minelli biopic, that would be a challenge. Who would ever believe her marriage to Peter Allen?



DAVIS

Children of Paradise (\$39.95; Criterion)

The great French classic about 19th century theatrical performers. A sumptuous and beautiful movie, which makes the fact that it was filmed in Occupied France during the privations of the war all the more incredible. Indeed, the story of the making of the film rivals the film itself - and that's saying something, since Marcel Carne's masterpiece is lodged firmly among the best films of all time. But a leading actress who was despised for sleeping with a Nazi officer? Extras who are lured away by Gestapo agents who claim their loved ones are critically injured and about to die? The stories never end, detailed in an atypically involved booklet and two audio commentaries from scholars. Terry Gilliam offers a passionate introduction, but nothing can prepare you for that abrupt, frustrating, and perfect ending.

You Light Up My Life (\$24.95; Columbia TriStar)/Glitter (\$27.96; Columbia TriStar)



CAREY

Some things never change. Young women try to make it big in the entertainment industry and conniving men try to take advantage of them. That's the story of Mariah Carey's *Glitter* and that was the story almost 25 years ago in *You Light Up My Life*. Carey's pipsqueak presence and ample breasts are a lot more fun to watch than Didi Conn's frumpy clothing and earnest demeanor. *Glitter* is a lot more fun, too. (Entertainment Weekly was right to peg it as perhaps the most entertaining good/bad movie since *Showgirls*.) Maybe *You Light Up My Life* is so stiff be-

cause of that song. Debby Boone wrote her blockbuster number to be about God as much as about true love. Obviously, it's hard to create trashy fun when your star is reaching out to the Almighty.

Los Super Seven — No Borders: Canto (\$24.99; Image)

The timing isn't very good. This concert film/documentary about the world music super group Los Super Seven is coming out almost a year after the album it's promoting. But since the music is timeless, perhaps it won't matter. The band is a constellation of stars including members of Los Lobos, Raul Malo, Caetano Veloso, Susana Baca and others. The songs are standards re-imagined and given new life with brilliant arrangements and passionate singing. This DVD is standard fare, with a dorky voice-over narrator who sounds like he's doing an infomercial. But when someone steps to the mike and starts singing, the director knows enough to leave the camera on them, avoid any foolish quick-cutting, and get out of the way of the magic.

Purple Noon (\$32.99; Miramax)

The Talented Mr. Ripley was, of course, based on the Patricia Highsmith novel. But it also served as a remake of this stylish earlier version from 1960. A French thriller, it is one of the most gorgeous looking films imaginable, helped in no small part by the star Alain Delon, an impossibly beautiful actor who makes James Dean and Leonardo DiCaprio seem coarse in comparison. While it's a peerless entertainment, Delon's stunning looks keep him from getting to the heart of Mr. Ripley. The underrated Matt Damon slipped into the anonymous guise of Ripley — who sucks up the personalities of anyone he's around — far more convincingly. Really, how could Delon ever be anything but the center of attention?