

DVDs this week

By Michael Giltz

Atlantis - The Lost Empire (Collector's Edition) (\$39.99; Disney)

In the last two years, Disney has turned out two trim, entertaining, traditional little movies: *The Emperor's New Groove* and *Atlantis*. Both of them grossed \$160 million worldwide. But with the high cost of making animated flicks — and competitors grossing twice as much with computer generated flair — that \$160 million counts as a double and a double isn't good enough. The sad part is these two pretty good movies have the undeserved taint of failure. *Groove* got better reviews, but *Atlantis* is also fine, thanks to a sterling voice cast. It's a treat to hear Michael J. Fox sounding as winning as ever while playing a turn-of-the-century lad determined to find the lost city of Atlantis. Also strong are James Garner and gravel-voiced Florence Stanley, who steals every scene she's in. Since Stanley's most famous role before this was playing Mrs. Fish on "Barney Miller," I guess it's only appropriate she shines in this underwater adventure.

Groundhog Day - Special Edition (\$24.95; Columbia TriStar)

This romantic comedy about a guy doomed to repeat the same day over and over until he gets it right got great reviews when it came out and made clear once and for all what a talent Bill Murray is. (It also gave Andie McDowell — who lost points by seeming so awkward in the light-footed comedy *Four Weddings and a Funeral* — her best role since *sex, lies and videotape*.) Smart folk named it one of the best movies of 1993, but surely now it deserves to be called one of the best films of the '90s. The pride of everyone involved is nicely displayed in the new extras. But why couldn't co-writer/director Harold Ramis repeat his success?



MURRAY

The Curse of the Jade Scorpion (\$32.99; DreamWorks)

Painful. This period piece about an insurance investigator (Woody Allen) spins on the premise that a hypnotist could get Allen to do whatever he commands and then erase the schmuck's memory. You might feel you've been hypnotized, too, for minutes after watching this undistinguished trifle (and even trifle implies a slight charm this movie doesn't have) it's hard to remember anything about it. Helen Hunt is the romantic foil and at least the hypnotism partially explains why she'd fall for a man so much older than her. Allen should relegate himself to supporting roles.

Beverly Hills Cop (\$24.99; Paramount)



MURPHY

Eddie Murphy's career-defining role is more violent and less funny than I remember — by which I mean there isn't a lot of humor there, though what is there certainly works. He has charm to spare, but boy did Murphy fall hard for a while. The box office tells the tale — this movie grossed \$230 million, the hyper-violent and unwatchable sequel scored a quick \$150 million and the forgettable third entry couldn't get arrested, pulling in only \$42 million. Still, never count out a star who has so much natural charisma and talent.

Breaking Away and My Bodyguard (\$19.98 each; Fox)

The cable channel American Movie Classics is desperate for programming. Older movies are bid on by a raft of competitors, so they've been showing more recent flicks. But it just seems wrong when AMC shows color movies from the late Seventies and Eighties. Even if the films are good, they clash with the spirit and mood of those black and white classics from the '30s, '40s, and '50s. Not so with *Breaking Away*. This gentle charmer about a young man obsessed with European bicycle racing had the feel of an instant winner when it came out in 1979. And it fits in just fine on AMC, where the movie has been popping up recently. It's a classic in the best, old-fashioned sense of the word. It has a lot in common with *My Bodyguard*, a drama about a student who befriends a hulking older kid to protect him at school. Both movies failed to make stars out of their leads, but launched supporting actors into long, healthy careers. Look for Dennis Quaid as a buddy in *Breaking Away* and Matt Dillon as the bully in *Bodyguard*.