

DVDs this week 1/6/02 By Michael Giltz

M*A*S*H Season One (\$39.98; Fox)

Here is the immediate standard bearer for sitcoms on DVD. Though "M*A*S*H" is one of the most successful shows of all time, they've squeezed eight episodes on each disc, providing an entire season of 24 shows on three discs. And the price? A terrific \$40. It's the steal of the year. Some would say that "M*A*S*H" is an old show they've made every possible penny on in syndication, so it's no big gamble to offer it cheaply. But it's really not that cheap. If you bought ten seasons of the show, it would add up to \$400, a heck of a lot of money for anyone. They're simply pricing it at a collectable level. It's harder for current dramas (which cost so much more and need more discs to present a full season) to match this level, but other sitcoms have no excuse. An entire season for \$40; anything more is unfair.

MASH — Five Star Collection (\$26.98; Fox)

No one wants to hear it, but Leonard Maltin insists that the film version title of *MASH* does not contain asterisks. This has always been a slightly problematic Robert Altman film for me. I grew up with the show — which is far less chaotic and bleak — long before I saw the movie, so it seemed slightly out of sync to me. I still appreciate *Nashville* and *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* much more, but I can finally enjoy this classic on its own terms. Certainly it's given worthy treatment, with a director commentary from Altman, a brief AMC documentary and two longer ones on a second disc.

Queer as Folk — Season One (\$119.98; Showtime)



"Queer" boys are oh-too-serious.

— in the best tradition of "Beverly Hills 90210" and other prime-time soaps - an exceptionally handsome man he flirts with outrageously. Imagine a series where the entire world - not just the gay ghetto - seems filled with hunky possibility and you can guess the direction it might have gone.) Instead, the show is terminally stern. My reaction has ranged from rejecting it as nowhere near as good as the British version to finding it unwatchable and, now, a minor guilty pleasure.

Jeepers Creepers (\$26.98; MGM)

How this movie grossed \$40 million is beyond me. A standard issue horror flick, it has a vaguely menacing introduction, but soon falls into one silly plot twist after another. They keep using the old song "Jeepers Creepers" to try and give it a clever air, but the tune just made me giggle. So did the silly looking evil creature when it finally appeared. But fans of this sort of thing disagree with me: the movie opened solidly and instead of dropping precipitously — as most horror flicks do — it held steady and played and played for weeks. Perhaps it's because *Jeepers Creepers* does deserve a footnote for its shockingly bleak ending. Usually, even if the villain is fated to come back a la Jason or Freddy, there is some sense of good conquering evil or at least keeping it at bay. Not here. Here's hoping they can build on that dour ingenuity for the inevitable sequel.

Best of 2001 DVDs II: Breathless (\$24.98; Winstar)

The small company Winstar put out a number of Godard films — including this masterpiece, a genial ode to American gangster flicks — as well as current offerings like Edward Yang's *Yi Yi* and a clutch of gems by Taiwan master Hou Hsiao-Hsien. (If you haven't seen *The Puppetmaster* or *Flowers of Shanghai*, don't complain that no one makes great movies anymore). All these films are essential and show the riches a nimble DVD maker can mine.

Best of 2001 DVDs III: The Man With the X-Ray Eyes (\$14.98; MGM)

The Lion might give the Mouse a run for its money when it comes to repackaging catalog. DVD has reenergized MGM and spurred them into pouring out titles like two-for-one horror double bills, and genre flicks bannered as drive-in classics and mid-night movies. This Ray Milland creeper about a doctor cursed with X-ray vision is hokey fun, just like I remembered. And what a finale!