



"Buffy the Vampire Slayer": Season 3 "Oz": The Complete Second Season

Anyone who dismisses "Buffy" (and apparently there are still some out there) simply wasn't watching the third season. This terrific bargain (\$59.98, Fox) is bursting with great stories, from the return of Angel, the arrival of Faith (who enjoys slaying a little too much) and the season-long machinations of the Mayor, one of the most deliciously droll villains in TV history. And it all climaxes brilliantly with the prom (the most amusingly touching moment in the entire series) and graduation. A classic.

"Oz" is also in its element during the second season (\$64.98, HBO), when the endless brutality still seemed shocking instead of a mere plot twist — one reason the show is wise to call it a day after the final batch of shows currently airing.

"Signs"

M. Night Shyamalan certainly deserves credit for knowing how to sell a movie. From the posters and enigmatic trailer to the well-stuffed DVD (\$29.99, Touchstone), he knows how to push buttons and turn his movies into events. This story of aliens is, in retrospect, rather routine. (And what if it rains?) But he creates a sense of unease smoothly and efficiently. I'd say he's two for three (really, "Unbreakable" doesn't bear watching again) and truly distinctive — something most filmmakers can never claim.

"A Little Romance" "Dogfight"

The DVD release of "A Little Romance" (\$19.98, Warner Bros.) is timely in ways both happy and sad. Diane Lane debuted as an American in Paris who has her first kiss with a charming French boy, all of it engineered by the remarkably hammy Laurence Olivier as an old con man. Lane made the transition to adult star and is on the short list of Oscar hopefuls for "Unfaithful." The sad timeliness is because director George Roy Hill just died. What better tribute than to watch one of his gems — you could watch this one with your grandmother — and both enjoy it.

A far more complicated romance takes place between River Phoenix (never better) and Lili Taylor in the indelible drama "Dogfight" (\$19.98, Warner Bros.) via director Nancy Savoca. What a loss Phoenix's death was.

"Cadfael": Set IV

Who would have imagined Derek Jacobi enjoying a franchise role like the medieval sleuth Cadfael? But that's the beauty of Great Britain, where legendary stage actors get plum treatment on television. This set includes three more TV movies, all good fun (\$49.95, Acorn). The great Gambon (a.k.a. Michael Gambon) seems an even less likely TV star, but he embodied Georges Simenon's Maigret nicely in the twelve puzzles of "The Maigret Collection" (\$99.98, Wellspring). The latest and perhaps last Rumpole collection of stories has just been published. If you fear he will never return, take solace in Leo McKern's grumpy joy at playing "Rumpole of the Bailey" (\$69.98, HBO).

"The Good Girl"

Falling for Jake Gyllenhaal is hardly a demanding role, but Jennifer Aniston received strong notices for her (relatively) dowdy role as a bored wife who falls for a younger co-worker at the Retail Rodeo where she slaves away (\$27.98, Fox). At one point, she seemed poised for an Oscar nod. That's less likely now, if only because it's been such a strong year for women. But if momentum was still building, would she have signed on for another year of "Friends"?

"Girls! Girls! Girls!" "Fun in Acapulco"

I don't care what sort of demonic hold the Colonel had on Elvis — the King should have known better. This latest batch of flicks from the '60s — which also includes "Paradise, Hawaiian Style" and "Easy Come, Easy Go" (\$19.99 each, Paramount) — will not add fuel to the Elvis revival begun by his greatest hits collection and "Lilo & Stitch." The song titles say it all: "I Don't Want to Be Tied," "Bossa Nova Baby," "Marguerita," "Drums of the Islands," "Paradise, Hawaiian Style," "The Love Machine," and, brace yourselves, "Yoga Is As Yoga Does." Oy.