

# DVDs this week

## Snatch (\$27.95; Columbia TriStar)

Maybe Brad Pitt really is a character actor. That's always the claim of pretty movie stars who fret that they don't get to play varied characters. But Pitt has proven that when he dirties himself up for a quirky supporting role, he can score. He did it in *Twelve Monkeys* (where Pitt played a bug-eyed freak) and he does it here in Guy Ritchie's gangster flick *Snatch*. This time, Pitt plays a boxing gypsy with an almost indecipherable accent. His



Brad Pitt: Say what?

rapid-fire, impenetrable dialogue is the cleverest thing in the movie, which seems like a pale spin on Ritchie's debut *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels*, which itself seemed like a pale spin on Tarantino. This time, tough guys with colorful monikers are murdering one another to get their hands on some jewels. The plot is convoluted, the dialogue is more punch-drunk than punchy and what you'll remember in the end is Pitt's snarky, hilarious supporting turn. Here's hoping he takes more small roles.

## All That Heaven Allows (\$39.95; Criterion)

The movies of director Douglas Sirk were dismissed in their day as melodrama, rediscovered as camp (thanks to numerous star turns from Rock Hudson, who seemed incapable of making a movie in the '50s that didn't have some unintentionally hilarious gay subtext), and are now perhaps a little too well-respected as social commentary. *All That Heaven Allows* is a perfect example. Jane Wyman plays a rather matronly widow who falls for her bunky gardener, much to the consternation of her friends and college-aged children. Wyman worries about what others will think while the soft-spoken Hudson knows that all they need is each other. Hudson almost literally never speaks above a hushed, purring whisper — except when he's falling off a cliff while trying to hail his true love. Criterion also has put out *Written on the Wind* and if these movies don't live up to their newly minted status as classics, the DVD does make clear how beautifully crafted they are — the score is intriguingly low-key, the production design is striking and scene after scene is gorgeously lit. It's like an afternoon soap opera produced with consummate taste.

## Jeeves & Wooster Seasons One and Two (\$39.95 each; A&E)

Let's give credit where credit is due. Many DVDs containing TV shows are distressingly sparse, doling out episodes when there's a wealth of material. That sticks it to fans and discourages the casual viewer from renting or buying. A&E is as guilty of this as anyone. But they certainly got it right with these two collections from the British comedy "Jeeves & Wooster." Based on the droll novels by P.G. Wodehouse, these hilarious hour-long shows detail the travails of the clueless upper cruster Bernie Wooster and his impeccable, irreplaceable gentleman's gentleman Jeeves. Hugh Laurie is marvelous as the silly Bernie but Stephen Fry has the role of a lifetime as Jeeves. He squeezes out every imaginable bit of humor from dialogue like "Very good, sir," letting this seemingly innocuous line imply everything from censure to amusement to indifference. And with five episodes in the first box and six in the second, it's even a reasonable bargain.

## Ultraviolet (\$34.95; Palm Pictures)

Writer-director Joe Ahearne created a sensation with his '96 British drama "This Life," though I don't think it ever aired in the U.S. and it certainly isn't available on DVD. We're getting a better look at his talents with Ahearne's second series, called "Ultraviolet." Airing on the Sci-Fi Channel, "Ultraviolet" is a paranoid drama about a secret government agency, CIB, that is dedicated to thwarting the aims of vampires. (In this show, everyone knows vampires exist.) But while the bloodsuckers pretend to be harmless creatures, the Church condemns them as evil and the government believes the vampires want to take over the world before stupid humans destroy the planet and dry up their blood supply. You can't help comparing it to "The X-Files" and why even try? "Ultraviolet" isn't on that level, but it intelligently wrestles with the morality of killing someone who is "different" and the distinctions between varying morals and "right and wrong." (Try arguing for moral equivalency when a vampire is feasting on your neck.) Jack Davenport — who also starred in "This Life" — is compelling as the newest recruit to CIB, bringing a certain Gabriel Byrne intensity to the whole affair that keeps this serious drama grounded in reality.

— Michael Giltz