

DVDs this week

By Michael Giltz

Dinotopia (\$19.98; Artisan)

This miniseries — which also served as the most expensive pilot in TV history — is coming out at a commendably low price just in time to promote the series launch Thursdays at 8 on ABC in the fall. (Opposite "Friends" and "Survivor"? Dinosaurs will probably be extinct again sooner than they wish.) The setup is the same — young men who look like models are stranded on an island where dinosaurs and humans live in harmony. But don't get too attached to any of the actors. While I found Wentworth Miller perfectly watchable in a square-jawed, soap-opera sort of way, he and almost everyone else have been replaced for the show. That's no big deal, since the real stars are the dinosaurs; this may be lacking in the drama department, but the effects here are top-notch.

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

NBC's sitcom "Scrubs" is in exactly the same position "M*A*S*H" was in 1973. Both are critically acclaimed shows with low ratings, an unusual mix of comedy and pathos that keep viewers off balance and have uncertain futures. In its second season, "M*A*S*H," starring Alan Alda, was moved to Saturday nights right behind the smash hit "All in the Family." Its humor no longer shocks the way that classic still can, but they certainly didn't pull any punches. The accidental shelling of a village followed by a cover-up; Amerasian babies; a soldier beaten to a pulp by his buddies because they think he's gay — "M*A*S*H" certainly wore its (bleeding) heart on its sleeve. They wisely crafted the first episode of the season to serve as a second pilot that reintroduced the characters to all the new viewers that would be tuning in to the 4077th for the first time. Undoubtedly, "Scrubs" will do the same now that it's being moved to Thursdays at 8:30 right behind "Friends."



ALDA

Tokyo Olympiad/Hearts & Minds/General Idi Amin Dada (both \$39.95/Dada \$29.95; Criterion)

The Olympics are such a natural source for spectacle and drama, it's surprising that there are just two classic documentary films arising from the Games. There's Leni Riefenstahl's utterly brilliant *Olympia* from 1936 and *Tokyo Olympiad* from the '64 Games. Riefenstahl's movie showed a nation evoking mythic greatness in preparation for war, while Kon Ichikawa's movie showed a post-war Japan ready to take its place on the world stage as a major player. There's a banal U.S. version of this movie that was cut in half and given all-new, disastrously awkward narration. This is the original three-hour epic in all its glory. It's the latest documentary from the DVD standard bearer Criterion, which also has put out the devastating look at Vietnam *Hearts & Minds* and the brutally effective Idi Amin profile by Barbet Schroeder.

UFO (\$79.95; A&E)/Complete Thunderbirds Megaset (\$179.95; A&E)

Fans of the addictive Supermarionation series "Thunderbirds" will be delighted to hear a feature film is the works (Jonathan Frakes of "Star Trek: The Next Generation" will direct . . . that is, until they hear the classic puppets will be replaced by live actors. That seems a dreadful decision, especially when you watch series like "Space: 1999" or "UFO," the live-action shows created by Gerry Anderson in the wake of "Thunderbirds'" success. The puppets invariably seem more lively than the humans and the hand-made special effects make more sense. Ah well, at least it won't be animated. That would be the final insult.

Made & Swingers Double Feature (\$26.98; Artisan)

I wasn't a huge fan of *Swingers* (after the fifth or sixth reference to someone being "money" I felt I was trapped in a Rat Pack remake). But it launched the career of two actors and director Doug Liman, who went on to helm the underrated *Go* and the pretty good *Bourne Identity*. Jon Favreau (the writer) and Vince Vaughn reteamed on *Made*, which took me completely by surprise and made my list of the best films of last year. They're low-level hoods, given the chance to move up in the organization but thwarted by Vaughn's complete inability to do anything but antagonize and annoy every person they come in contact with. Vaughn plays self-important jerks very well and the escalating sense of danger perfectly complements his increasingly out-of-control performance.