

# DVDs this week



## **Thirteen Days (\$26.98; New Line) and The Missiles of October (\$19.98; MPI)**

Kevin Costner's stolid but decently done drama about the Cuban missile crisis is an ideal movie for New Line's new "Infinifilm" deluxe editions. Unlike many movies, which are stuffed with extras about technical matters or obscure trivia, *Thirteen Days* can rightfully draw upon exciting archival footage and other period elements to flesh out the real events surrounding JFK's staredown with Khrushchev. That makes this DVD not just for fans — it's more interesting now than the movie alone was in the theaters. A better movie is the docudrama TV film *The Missiles of October*, with Martin Sheen playing his first Kennedy (Bobby) and getting a taste for the White House that he would indulge fully on "The West Wing."

## **Monkeybone (\$26.98; Fox)**

No, this Brendan Fraser romp about a cartoonist who gets caught in the world he created is not an overlooked gem. But it has a manic visual inventiveness that gets its due on this DVD. Director Henry Selick — who helmed the marvelous stop-motion musical *The Nightmare Before Christmas* — proves himself ready to follow the path of Tim Burton and make visually striking movies that are never quite as good as they promise. Lots of extras, for those who have a funny bone partial to this more juvenile *Roger Rabbit*.

## **Die Hard Ultimate Collection DVD Box Set (\$79.98 or \$29.98 each; Fox)**



"Hard" man Willis

I never realized how wonderfully formulaic those '70s disaster movies were until *Die Hard* came out and embraced each and every cliché: the noble hero with a troubled romance/marriage, the weasel among the trapped victims, the clueless innocent who doesn't realize they're trapped in a burning building/about to be slaughtered by hijackers or whatever and so on. Bruce Willis became a film star and made two sequels (*Die Hard 2* and *Die Hard with a Vengeance*) of diminishing but still reasonable returns. This latest repackaging includes one really fun feature — the chance to recut some key scenes with alternate effects

and music — along with all the standard stuff, which on *Die Hard* alone amounts to some ten hours of post-movie entertainment.

## **The Cotton Club (\$19.98; MGM)**

Here's a movie with one of the most exciting production histories since *Gone With the Wind* and yet the DVD is surprisingly sparse. It deserves a full-blown documentary, tons of extra scenes and commentary from producer Robert Evans (whose audio book biography is a Hollywood classic). Evans has often promised/threatened to create an expanded version of this gangster drama cum musical or even turn it into a TV miniseries. But Francis Coppola's version is splendid enough — including the charming friendship between tough guys Bob Hoskins and Fred Gwynne and one great musical moment after another, from Lonette McKee's brilliant "Ill Wind" to the stunning finale that combines Gregory Hines' tremendous tap-dancing with a violent murder and a wonderfully surreal Busby Berkeley fade-out.

## **The Saint (\$39.95; A&E), The Rifleman (\$14.98; MPI), Gormenghast (\$34.98; BBC)**

TV shows both old and new continue to come out on DVD with a rapidity that should warm the heart of any late-night channel surfer. (Mind you, owning the complete Monty Python TV series doesn't stop you from watching it when the show pops up on the television; trust me, I know.) "The Saint" is an enjoyable if slight spin on James Bond, which succeeds thanks to a certain international glamour (the episodes included venture from Monte Carlo to Venice and Scotland) and Moore's charming insouciance. A&E starts with the color episodes (as if fans of "The Saint" would be young enough to be put off by black and white). "The Rifleman" is from the heyday of the TV western. It's no classic, more like a TV version of *Billy Jack*. In this case, widower Lucas McCain (Chuck Connors) counsels his son to be patient and gentle, but ends every episode by blowing away the bad guys in a flurry of gunfire. And the recent TV version of Mervyn Peake's odd cult fantasy will not rescue it from the shadow of *The Lord of the Rings*. The books are singular (with *Titus Groan* and *Gormenghast* far more moody and powerful than the misfire *Titus Alone*) and strange. The miniseries is just strange and will be remembered more for its production design and cameo-heavy cast than the story itself.

— Michael Giltz