

DVDs this week



O Brother, Where Art Thou (Touchstone; \$29.99)



Clooney and Co.

Like so many of the Coen Brother movies since *Miller's Crossing*, this is more enjoyable for its parts than as a whole. But what parts: George Clooney obsessing over his hair gel, Holly Hunter snapping at Clooney that her new man is "bona fide," and best of all the wall to wall mountain music (especially the classic "I am a Man of Constant Sorrow").

It's no surprise the terrific soundtrack compiled by T Bone Burnett is a left field hit. But why this idiosyncratic spin on Homer's "The Odyssey" should become their top-grossing movie (at \$60 million and counting) is a puzzle. But more power to them.

The Coen Brothers make exactly the movies they want to make with no need to kowtow to the box office. They may not be artistically successful, but they're always distinctive.

Cast Away (Fox; \$29.98)

This Robert Zemeckis movie about a FedEx employee stranded alone on a desert island is unique in two ways. First, it's one of the few movies in the last several years I actually wish had been longer. Though already substantially over two hours, I felt the island sequence was slightly rushed and wouldn't have minded another 20 minutes or so to really let the sense of isolation sink in.

Second, it's a remarkable demonstration of star power. Not because Tom Hanks is alone on screen for so long (that section is the best part of the movie and quite entertaining). No, it's because *Cast Away* made a massive amount of money — \$420 million worldwide. No hype a la *Gladiator*, no pop cultural phenomenon a la *Forrest Gump*; it just did its job with a minimum of fuss. Now that's a movie star. The DVD has a second disc brimming with extras, including the amusing featurette called "Wilson: The Life & Death of a Hollywood Extra."

The Stanley Kubrick Collection (Warner Bros.; \$199.92)

After Stanley Kubrick died, Warner Bros. rushed out single editions of some of his classic movies. It was a sloppy, shameful job — especially given the perfectionist care Kubrick always took with his films. The movies were poorly mastered and some — such as *Barry Lyndon* — were littered with "artifacts," (Artifacts are flaws in the DVD that range from odd little distortions that appear briefly to serious snafus that actually freeze the film and force you to use the remote to skip over them.)

Now, just two years later, Warner Bros. is making amends with this boxed set containing carefully remastered, much-improved new editions of his eight central masterpieces: *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Shining*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Barry Lyndon*, *Lolita*, *Eyes Wide Shut* and *Dr. Strangelove*. There's even a fine, 140-minute authorized documentary by longtime collaborator Jan Harlan that naturally focuses on Kubrick's professional career without glossing over his more well-known idiosyncracies.

Comparing the titles to the previous DVDs, it's clear much more care was put into this reissue. Anyone — like myself — who bought all those movies will simply have to buy them again. Warner Bros. insists that *Full Metal Jacket* and *The Shining* — which are presented in a full frame version instead of being letterboxed — are being shown the way Kubrick preferred. That would make them — I believe — the only contemporary movies other than James Cameron's *The Abyss* in which the director prefers a full frame image on DVD and video to the way the movie was originally seen in the theaters. That aside, their one clear mistake was to include the R rated *Eyes Wide Shut* instead of an unrated cut that would show the movie exactly as Kubrick intended and indeed how it was seen all over the world. Instead, we're still stuck with those silly digitally created spectators who block our view during certain moments of the "orgy."

Like all his movies, it will probably take another five or 10 years for us to truly appreciate the movie he made — as opposed to the movie we expected him to make — but already the first half of *Eyes Wide Shut* seems hypnotically charged and the ending line surely is one of the greatest cappers since *Some Like It Hot*.

— Michael Giltz



Stanley Kubrick