

MOVIES THIS WEEK

By Michael Giltz



"WHITE OLEANDER" "MOONLIGHT MILE"

You can tell a lot about a good actor by how they fare in bad movies. **Michelle Pfeiffer** actually had people talking Oscar at one point about her performance in the domestic drama "White Oleander" (\$27.95, Warner Bros.), despite the universal bad reviews. And the intriguing **Jake Gyllenhaal** continues to build up good will even if his movies since "Donnie Darko" and "October Sky" have been unworthy. Presumably he took on the maudlin "Moonlight Mile" (\$29.99, Touchstone) so he could work with **Dustin Hoffman** and **Susan Sarandon**. And who could blame him?

"MY LIFE AS A DOG"

Lasse, go home! Before coming to Hollywood, **Lasse Hallstrom** delivered one of the warmest, most perceptive films about children. "My Life as a Dog" (\$39.95, Criterion) scored on every level. Maybe we should have seen the stirrings of shameless heart-tugging that would flourish with big budget horrors like "Once Around," "Chocolat" and "The Cider House Rules," but here his weak-kneed sappiness seemed in check.

"ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13" "BELOW"

Maybe **John Carpenter** should go home too — home to low budget flicks like the clever spin on "Rio Bravo" that is his exciting second flick "Assault on Precinct 13" (\$19.99, Image). For some reason, it actually isn't Precinct 13 being attacked, but nothing needs to make sense when a bloodthirsty gang is terrorizing a lone police station in a stand-off this thrilling. Hungry for other solid B-movies? Look no further than the great fun of "Below" (\$29.99, Dimension), a World War II movie about a submarine that may be haunted. Taut, trim and no nonsense, it's further proof that director **David Twohy** ("The Arrival," "Pitch Black") can deliver the goods.

"8 WOMEN"

BOXED SET: "GIGI," "MY FAIR LADY," "AMERICAN IN PARIS"

Yes, the musical is back. But the best proof of that isn't "Chicago," it's the goofy fun of "8 Women" (\$29.98, Universal), a silly bauble of a film that gathers top French actresses (**Catherine Deneuve**, **Emmanuelle Beart**, **Isabelle Huppert** and others) in a murder mystery that breaks into song every once in a while. If it's classic musicals you want, an Oscar-winning collection with "Gigi," "An American in Paris" and "My Fair Lady" is a bargain (\$49.98, Warner Bros.).

"FOYLE'S WAR": BOXED SET

This four-part PBS "Masterpiece Theater" series came and went without garnering much attention. But it's a strong new addition to the endless Brit detectives featured there and stars journeyman actor **Michael Kitchen** ("Enchanted April," "Out of Africa," and about a million other movies and shows) in the best role he'll ever get (\$59.95, Acorn Media). Kitchen plays a middle-aged detective stuck in the countryside in 1940. He'd rather be fighting the Nazis, but he's stuck at home solving murders in what is for us the fascinating milieu of the early days of the war. Written and created by **Anthony Horowitz** (who worked on "Poirot") it's unusual in that it's a made-for-television series rather than being based on a book and unusually intelligent.

"THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL"

Robert Wise's sci-fi classic about aliens coming to Earth and telling us to behave ourselves (\$19.98, Fox) may not have been intended as a Christ-like allegory, but it certainly works that well. When things seem tense and out of control, the *deus ex machina* of **Klaatu** still seems awfully appealing. Also just out is **Jean-Jacques Annaud's** "Quest for Fire," a story of primitives searching for a new fire to save their tribe. Wordless and fun, it should be laughable, but like most of his bold movies ("The Bear") it's unique and memorable (\$14.98, Fox).