

DVDs this week

By Michael Giltz

Star Trek: The Next Generation: Season 1 (\$139.99; Paramount)

Like most sci-fi buffs, I hold the original "Star Trek" closer to my heart. But there's no question the sequel starring Patrick Stewart ultimately proved more sophisticated and daring. Not that you'd know it here — the first season and a half were shaky, with too many episodes tying into events from the original show. Paramount listened to the complaints about its dreadful packaging of "Star Trek" and follows the "X-Files" plan here by putting a whole season in one boxed set. More will come every two months, though at about \$100 on sale, fans may actually wish they spaced them out a little more just to give those credit cards a break.



STEWART

Life as a House (\$24.98; New Line)



KLINE

A woefully bad drama about a father (Kevin Kline) dying of cancer who reaches out to his disaffected son (Hayden Christensen) via carpentry. The presence of two female neighbors (a mother and daughter) and a buddy who wants to pimp Christensen means that everyone sleeps with everyone until the shameless finale. Kline almost slips by unscathed on his mellow charm but poor Christensen looks more like a kid playing dress-up for Halloween than an angry young goth. Sad, but not in the way you'd expect.

Slap Shot/Slap Shot 2: Breaking the Ice (\$26.98 each; Universal)

Slap Shot is Paul Newman's hilarious comedy about a down-on-its-luck minor league hockey team that brings in those goons the Hanson Brothers to wreak havoc on the competition. Priceless, ranking with *Bull Durham* as one of the all-time great sports movies. A sequel starring Stephen Baldwin, Gary Busey and the Hansons is rather inaccurately described as "the hotly anticipated sequel."



NEWMAN

Peter Gunn Sets 1 and 2 (\$39.95 each; A&E)

I don't know if this is actually noir — Peter Gunn as played by Craig Stevens seems a little too wholesome for my taste. But he was quick with a gun and had a dish of a girlfriend who sang smokey jazz numbers and pined for the marriage that would never come, so maybe I'm wrong. Blake Edwards oversaw this tough-minded series, with that classic theme by Henry Mancini. Best of all, they've loaded each set with 16 episodes, a generous amount for a low price.

Rashomon (\$39.95; Criterion)

An atypical Akira Kurosawa movie for those of us who treasure most the sweeping samurai epics. Toshiro Mifune stars in this look at a murder and rape seen from four different perspectives. Countless movies try to show a scene twice from two different perspectives or retell the same incident with new twists — and it almost never works. That makes Kurosawa's achievement here all the more remarkable. Worthy extras from Criterion.

Donnie Darko (\$29.98; Fox)

This gem almost slipped by me. It ranks with *Heathers* as a classic of high school miserableness. Donnie Darko (a terrific Jake Gyllenhaal) is a truly unhappy kid — floundering in therapy, swallowing medication by the fistful and still having to deal with visitations by a creepy 6 foot tall rabbit who compels him to do drastic deeds and prepare for the end of the world. Midnight movie. Cult classic. Call it what you will — writer/director Richard Kelly is clearly one to watch and so is this film.

The Atomic Café (\$24.95; Docurama)

This acclaimed movie uses old educational footage and clips from the Fifties to give a jaundiced view of the Cold War and U.S. preparations to deal with the nuclear threat. The kiddie song "Duck and Cover" is the comic highlight, but most of this movie is far more sober (and, frankly, less entertaining).