

DVDs this week



The X-Files: The Complete Third Season (Fox; \$149.98)

This is the season when "The X-Files" grew into a truly great series. It would continue at this high level of quality for two more years before the show ran out of steam (you can only ratchet up the paranoia for so long). David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson are brilliant here, switching from droll to deadly serious with aplomb and the episodes range from hilarious stand-alone entries to compelling additions to the central conspiracy tale. This is a beautifully packaged collection of all 24 shows, with numerous extras. Still, it's a bit expensive - even for a show that easily matches the level of a feature film in production values. Why not fit it onto five discs instead of seven and keep the price below \$100? So buy it while it's on sale.



Yi-Yi (Fox Lorber; \$24.98)

A generous spirit pervades Edward Yang's latest brilliant slice of life. It's the engrossing story of a middle class Taiwanese family: the father bumps into an old flame, the mother joins a religious cult, the daughter falls for the obsessive boyfriend of her classmate, and grandmother is in a coma. If this sounds like a soap, it's handled so beautifully you'll never question even the dramatic plot twist at the end. Above all, there's the remarkable little boy at the center of the film: his character is a convincing cross between Beaver Cleaver and the Buddha, wise beyond his years and utterly delightful. Don't miss it.



The Magnificent Seven (MGM; \$19.98)

Hollywood often re-makes foreign classics, but rarely do they do it so winningly as director John Sturges did with this Western spin on Kurosawa's epic *The Seven Samurai*.

Seven gunslingers are hired to defend a tiny village from bandits and find that it becomes much more than another job. The original is a humorous, thrilling classic, where this is more of an entertaining, sentimental romp. But what a cast: Yul Brynner, Charles Bronson, James Coburn, Robert Vaughn, and Steve McQueen, who apparently had only seven lines of dialogue (how appropriate) but dominates his scenes. A gem, given the deluxe treatment.

Louis Prima: The Wildest (Image; \$24.99)

A romp through the life of musician Louis Prima, who scored with swinging numbers like "Jump, Jive an' Wail" and as the voice of King Louie in Disney's *The Jungle Book*. Wisely, this entertaining documentary gets out of the way and includes Prima's manic performances whenever possible. Image even throws in some songs as audio extras like "Robin Hood" and the typically silly "Please No Squeeze Da Banana." His equally hep wife Keely Smith is still swingin': she just released a CD tribute to Sinatra.

Queer as Folk: Series 1 and 2 (C1TV; \$69.95 and \$29.95)

This is the very fun British series that Showtime has put an American spin on. The differences are interesting: Showtime's series is much more sexually explicit (the Brits usually settle for one bit of naughtiness an episode). And the cynical characters are never softened - here Stuart (Aidan Gillen) remains magnetically self-centered, while the American Stuart has already reunited the estranged lesbian couple and seems ready to settle down with his underage toy Nathan. At ten hours total (compared to Showtime's 22, with plans for more seasons), this QAF obviously has the benefit of a clear finish line. But the casting is far superior and the writing spot-on. It's the difference between a drama and a soap.

Also out:

The Gene Autry Show (Image; \$14.99), pristine prints of the singing cowboy's TV show with clever extras; **What Women Want (Paramount; \$29.99)**, Mel Gibson and Helen Hunt's comedic bit of fluff about mind games; **The Dominici Affair (Image; \$19.99)**, one of Orson Welles' more compelling scraps of a project.

— By Michael Giltz