

DVDs this week



Close Encounters of the Third Kind (Columbia TriStar; \$27.95)

For some reason, Steven Spielberg never embraced laser disc and is going slow with DVD (this title was delayed for a long time at his request). Even now, this DVD doesn't include a director's commentary (practically a given for even minor hacks). But everything else about this title is top-notch. One of Spielberg's most personal films (he wrote the screenplay), it features a terrific print of the film, a substantial 100 minute documentary and 11 deleted scenes. This edition is about his fourth or fifth crack at a definitive cut of the captivating drama about ordinary people swept up in an encounter with aliens. It's as powerful as ever and certainly better than the misjudged "special edition" that came out in theaters.



Marilyn: Nicely packaged

Marilyn Monroe: The Diamond Collection (Fox; \$99.98)

Last week brought *Some Like It Hot* and now comes this boxed set with most of the other important Marilyn Monroe films any fan could want. Nicely packaged, it includes the iconic but woefully dated *Seven Year Itch* and the so-so *There's No Business Like Show Business*. Everything else is good to great: *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* via Howard Hawks, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* with Lauren Bacall typically no nonsense and hilariously droll, and Monroe's triumph in *Bus Stop*. Finally, there's a solid AMC documentary that includes about 40 minutes from her last, aborted film *Something's Got to Give*.

Traffic (USA Films;

\$26.98)

Erin Brockovich was better and this can't hold a candle to the British miniseries that inspired it. That said, this is an excitingly directed look at the drug trade, with all the fun coming in the minor roles, especially Topher Grace of "That '70s Show" snarkily going one-on-one with Michael Douglas after getting his daughter to do crack so he can get her in bed. And if it makes Benicio Del Toro a bankable star, *Traffic* will be worth every self-important news story it inspired and that unearned optimistic ending.

Tootsie (Columbia TriStar; \$24.95)

It grossed \$177 million at the box office and earned nine Academy Award nominations, but we still think this cross-dressing comedy about an out-of-work actor is underrated. It's quite simply one of the two or three best comedies of all time. It's certainly the wisest. A career peak for everyone involved - from Teri Garr and Bill Murray in supporting roles to Sydney Pollack and of course Dustin Hoffman, who will never be better because how can you top perfection? Brilliantly structured, it both gently mocks and adores struggling actors, soap operas, and the eternal battle of the sexes. And what a wrap-up - perhaps the funniest finale in film history. Next year is its 20th anniversary and they'd be smart to rerelease this in theaters - it would gross another \$30 million or so and put every other comedy to shame. The DVD has no extras to speak of, but who needs 'em when a movie is this good?

The Celluloid Closet (Columbia TriStar; \$29.95)

Documentaries can be instructive, engrossing, shattering and even moving. But rarely are they fun. Happily, this clip-fest about the depiction of gays and lesbians in the movies is a rare exception. Scenes from classics like *Wings*, *Rebel Without a Cause*, *The Maltese Falcon* and *Queen Christina* abound, along with narration from Lily Tomlin (who was key in getting the project made and finally came out herself recently). This special edition includes almost an hour of outtakes and audio commentary from the filmmakers and the late Vito Russo.

— by Michael Giltz