



## **"The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Rings" Special extended edition**

This extended edition (\$39.99) — with 30 minutes of extra footage — is in every respect subtler, funnier, more moving and more successful. From substantial scenes — like the gift-giving ceremony of Galadriel and a formal goodbye at Rivendell with a sweet coda — to tiny beats added into pre-existing moments, director Peter Jackson has made the most of the extra time. Here's hoping New Line realizes that sometimes more is more and lets him give us the lengthiest cut he wants for December's installment. In all, a classic just got better.

## **"The Complete Monterey Pop Festival" "Elton John Live in Barcelona" "Simply Red Live in London"**

Documentary filmmaker DA Pennebaker was rock and roll's best friend when he followed up the brilliant Dylan movie "Don't Look Back" with the first great concert movie, "Monterey Pop Festival" (\$79.95). Blazing performances from Janis Joplin, The Who, Otis Redding and, of course, Jimi Hendrix, with tons of insightful extras from Criterion.

Elton John is enjoying a new creative resurgence, and this concert from '92 (\$24.99) captures his last peak, via "The One," and all the usual standards.

Simply Red was a one-hit wonder here (the plaintive "Holdin' Back the Years"), but the band is still huge in Europe. They're a bit middle-of-the-road, but this show (\$19.99) demonstrates why singer Mick Hucknall's blue-eyed soul can stir such excitement.

## **"Star Wars Episode II: The Attack of the Clones"**

If only I could report this dreadful film (\$29.98) was also dramatically improved on DVD, a la "The Lord of the Rings." Of course, that film started off well, while the best that can be said for this one is that it's slightly better than the even more miserable "Phantom Menace." When George Lucas imitates awful flicks like "The Fifth Element" (as in the look of the city at the beginning when young Skywalker leaps from flying car to car), you know you're in trouble. Lots of solid extras for people who want to avoid watching the whole thing again.

## **"Mapp & Lucia"**

Having just read the classic E.F. Benson novel it's based on, I can assure you this TV series (\$49.95) is the funniest look at small-town in-fighting and gossip as a contact sport since Clifton Webb starred in "Sitting Pretty." Tilling-on-the-Sea in the 1920s is not a place you'd want to live, but Miss Mapp (the frightening Prunella Scales, who played Sybil on "Fawlty Towers") and Lucia (Geraldine McEwan) make it awfully tempting — albeit dangerous — to visit.

## **"The Mystery Science Theater 3000 Collection Volume 1"**

For the casual fan, this DVD (\$59.95) is all you'll need to celebrate the funniest idea for a series (play old movies and make goofy jokes about them, just like people at home do) in a long time. You get classic episodes featuring enough groaners to keep even the lamest of comics ready for the next time friends come over to watch "Showgirls" or "Glitter."

## **"The End of St. Petersburg" and "Deserter" "Germany Year Zero"**

Pudovkin ranks with Eisenstein as one of the landmark directors in Russian cinema, and this compilation (\$24.99) collects two of his best: "The End of St. Petersburg" commemorates the Russian Revolution and "Deserter" shows a German worker becoming a supporter of communism after visiting the USSR.

The end of another war brought Rossellini's "Germany Year Zero" (\$24.99), a neorealist classic that shows devastated Berlin after the Germans paid a more formal visit to St. Petersburg that didn't turn out as well.

## **"The Importance of Being Earnest"**

Director Oliver Parker's hapless, painfully forced adaptation (\$29.99) of one of the funniest plays in history wastes a fine cast headed by Rupert Everett, Colin Firth and Reese Witherspoon. Spare yourself, and get the Criterion edition of the brilliant 1952 version starring Michael Redgrave.