

**"Ice Age"**

The trailer for this smash hit (\$29.99, Fox) was absolutely brilliant. It showed the nervous squirrel Scrat causing a massive avalanche by trying to get hold of a wayward nut. Some three minutes long, it played like a long-lost Looney Tunes short, proved audiences are hungry for cartoons, and set this film up to be a blockbuster.

The movie itself is modestly amusing with almost nothing on its mind. There's a message, of course (something about friendship and loyalty, blah blah blah), but the main point is maintaining the silly tone and letting Ray Romano whine to his heart's delight.

"Men in Black II"

"MIB II" (\$28.96; Columbia TriStar) is a soulless affair and I might worry about offending the talent involved — Will Smith, Tommy Lee Jones, Barry Sonnenfeld — but their disdain for this empty, mechanical moneymaker is clearly as great as mine. Shame on them.

"Sunset Boulevard"**"Roman Holiday"**

Billy Wilder's freak show about an aging relic of the silent era is far from my favorite Wilder. (I'll take "The Apartment," "Ace in the Hole" and several others before this one). But "Sunset Boulevard" (\$24.99, Paramount) has a grotesque sort of appeal, and you can't help feeling sorry for Gloria Swanson, who was robbed of an Oscar by Judy Holliday's unstoppable triumph in "Born Yesterday" (a rare case where comedy beat out drama). There are lots of extras, including an astute commentary track from Wilder biographer Ed Sikov. Also just out is Audrey Hepburn's Oscar-winning debut — one of the best ever — in the romantic comedy "Roman Holiday" (\$24.99, Paramount).

"Eddie Izzard: Dress to Kill"

A straight man who does comedy while wearing a frock and high heels, Eddie Izzard is relatively unknown in the United States, despite several side-splittingly funny HBO comedy specials and a well-deserved Emmy win. This 1999 show (\$19.98, Koch) is a prime example of his wit. Seeming to riff at random, Izzard covers religion, history, politics and sex in a bracingly funny show that is actually carefully structured and builds to a brilliant finale when he speaks mostly in French for 10 minutes — but you can follow everything he's saying because it's been set up so well. Original and smart.

**"A History of Britain:
The Complete Collection"**

Another import, historian Simon Schama is a best-selling author ("Rembrandt's Eyes," "Citizen") and roughly equivalent to Ken Burns times 10. He's not the filmic innovator Burns is, but Schama is more than a popularizer: He's a genuine historian who commands wide audiences for his crude, penetrating works.

This 15-hour show (\$99.95, BBC) is classic Schama, offering tremendous stories from the nooks and crannies of history that make it all come alive, all the while presenting the rough outlines of the age through the lives of the major figures that dominated.

"Solaris"**"Captain Fracasse"**

A remake of Tarkovsky's "Solaris"? It sounds like a joke, since this nearly three-hour science-fiction film (\$39.95, Criterion) is so slow-moving and impenetrable, it makes "2001: A Space Odyssey" seem jaunty in comparison. The deluxe treatment from Criterion means lots of extras to help you puzzle out exactly what's going on here.

(Though nothing can explain what possessed director Steven Soderbergh to redo it. I like to think he was so out of control after the success of "Erin Brockovich" and "Traffic" that he decided to name the craziest project he could imagine just to get Hollywood off his back — and was thrown for a loop when they said OK.)

But a remake of "Captain Fracasse" would be welcome, since this nearly silent 1929 gem (\$24.99, Image) has sword fights and action to spare. Anyone longing for "The Adventures of Robin Hood" to come to DVD, or who loved the fencing scene in the new Bond, can look for similar fun here.