



"Band of Brothers"
"Star Trek: The Next Generation Season 5"
"The X Files Season Six"
"Babylon 5 Season One"

Tom Hanks' impressive, impassive WWII miniseries, "Band of Brothers" (\$119.99), plays even better on DVD. When the series was stretched out over weeks, it was easy to lose focus because of the diffuse storytelling. It's more stirring seen all at once.

"Star Trek: The Next Generation Season 5" (\$139.99) was a step down in quality for the series, but it was too early to tell at the time. Not so for "The X Files" (\$149.98), which was looking strained after six years of paranoia. David Duchovny was rightly looking for the door. All of these sets, however, are way overpriced.

Not so "Babylon 5," at \$99.98 for the first season of this subtly ambitious series that was really one long story in disguise. Settle in: The payoff doesn't come for five years.

"Once and Again Season One"
"Sports Night"
"Felicity Season One"

Here are three much more reasonably priced collections at \$79.99 each. They're by no means cheap, but at least you won't feel guilty picking them up.

"Felicity" was a glorified soap, but the first season had the initial crack at the whole Noel/Ben triangle, so it seems the freshest. Watching both seasons of "Sports Night," you realize creator Aaron Sorkin was intelligent and prone to speechifying from the get-go. How tiresome you find that depends on how passionate you are about the designated hitter as compared with, say, our foreign policy toward North Korea. "Once and Again" is the keeper: a great show with a truly great cast that started off terrific and got better. Enjoy.

"Wild Style"
"Scratch"

Back when rappers taunted each other with put-downs instead of ordering up hits, "Wild Style" (\$19.95, Rhino) took a snapshot of the South Bronx scene, using a flimsy story as an excuse to showcase Grand Master Flash, the Rock Steady Crew and a host of others in action. The engaging documentary "Scratch" (\$26.99, Palm Pictures) does the same for deejays from the '70s to the present, with some nifty extras. Happily, the focus is on the music, not the thug life.

"Hairspray"

Broadway's newest hit was already a stealth musical when John Waters pulled off his most daring feat by going mainstream. But you can't go wrong with Divine quoting Bob Dylan and Ricki Lake in a charming debut. And who got top billing? Sonny Bonol (Only in a John Waters film would that have been possible.) A delight at \$19.98 from New Line.

"Down by Law"
"The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp"

For a moment, it seemed director Jim Jarmusch might go mainstream. He certainly showed Jonathan Demme-like instincts in molding the off-kilter comedy "Down by Law" (\$39.95, Criterion), starring jailbirds Tom Waits, Rod Lurie and the then-unannoying Roberto Benigni. Also just out from Criterion is a caustic look at the military, courtesy of the legendary Powell-Pressburger team. I'd take this comic epic any day instead of their overrated "Red Shoes."

It's even more astonishing when you realize "Blimp" (also \$39.95) came out in 1943, smack dab in the middle of WWII. Martin Scorsese waxes eloquent, with Powell on a commentary track.

"Doctor Who: The Key to Time Boxed Set"

Tom Baker was the greatest Doctor in the long-running BBC series about a time-traveling adventurer. And "The Key to Time" (\$124.98) was his greatest moment. It was one long tale stretched out over an entire 26-episode season. That gave this rinky-dink charmer of a show a rare epic feel. (Was it, perhaps, inspiration for "Babylon 5?") For fans, this is heaven. For the uninitiated, it's the best place to start.