

DVDs this week

By Michael Giltz

Shrek (\$26.99; DreamWorks)

Almost everyone liked *Shrek* much much more than I did. I thought the storyline was too slight — even by animation standards — and that Princess Fiona looked too photo-realistic for comfort. But I'm clearly wrong and you probably laughed and laughed. So by all means snap up this DVD. Though DreamWorks knew they had a blockbuster sell-through item with what amounts to the biggest hit of the year (until *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings* come out), it spared no expense with the extras. I particularly enjoyed Fairy Tale Bowling, one of many games. But the real winner is a DVD-Rom extra that lets you record your own voice for one of the characters!

DreamWorks spared no expense with the extras for its big green guy.



Rocco & His Brothers (\$29.99; Criterion)

Madonna hasn't always had luck in picking movie roles, but no one can fault her taste in other people's films. This Visconti classic is reportedly her favorite and she named her son Rocco after the title character, played by the remarkably handsome Alain Delon. A loud boisterous family from the country tries to survive in the big city of Milan, falling to temptation, arguing loudly, brawling at the drop of a hat and generally creating every stereotype of the Italian family that you can imagine. A faultless print from Criterion.

The Andrew Lloyd Webber Collection (\$89.98; Universal)

Andrew Lloyd Webber is back on Broadway with *By Jeeves*, a minor but charming entry from the most successful musical composer of our time. This four DVD set is a testament to his ability to turn out at least one or two memorable songs with every show. Unfortunately, it's also a testament to bad timing. *Jesus Christ Superstar* is a record of the awful revival, not the original cast of one of his more hummable musicals. *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* features Donny Osmond. He's fine, but this commercially successful revival is too pumped up, overshadowing the modest sweetness of Lloyd Webber's first effort. *Cats* fares best, though it's strange to watch the show without being surrounded by tourists. The live concert features some of the stars he helped create belting out his biggest hits, with a little too much emphasis on then-current West End musical *Written on the Wind*.

Judy Garland Show: Just Judy (\$19.98; Pioneer)

Judy Garland's short-lived TV series is often considered her greatest triumph. The boxed set of every show is compelling viewing, but in honesty it certainly has dry patches when guest stars take solo turns or they engage in tomfoolery. This collection of solo highlights is ideal for the casual fan (and will convert those who think they aren't fans). Garland roars through 28 songs here, culled from the entire run of the show, including "Over the Rainbow," "All Alone," "The Man That Got Away" and so on. Indispensable.

Halloween Roundup

Everyone knows about *Frankenstein*. But if you want old-school horror that's off the beaten track, two-for-one gems like *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman/House of Frankenstein* (\$29.98; Universal), which prove even that studio's B-movies are well-worth seeking out. For more current chills, get the spruced up *An American Werewolf in London* (\$26.98; Universal). Director John Landis has an odd gift for combining horror and humor and this is his best work. Prefer to laugh instead of shriek? MGM's *Midnite Movies* series is exemplary, with the goofy *Strange Invaders* and *Empire of the Ants* (\$14.95 each) both great fun. Real buffs should get *The Hammer House of Horror* (\$69.95; A&E), an obscure 13 episode series with premiere British actors like Denholm Elliot in one hour stories that are enjoyable creepy. Finally, anything with Vincent Price is ideal, but why not sample one of his last great triumphs, schlockmeister Roger Corman's surprisingly good adaptations of Edgar Allan Poe, highlighted by *The Pit and the Pendulum* (\$14.95; MGM).

— Michael Giltz