

DVDs this week

By Michael Giltz

Ed Sullivan's Rock 'n' Roll Classics (\$169.99; Rhino)/A Hard Day's Night (\$29.99; Miramax)

A disappointment. You can't fault the typically impeccable packaging and presentation by Rhino. They've broken up dozens of clips by superstars like the Doors and Sly & the Family Stone (who look like they've arrived from outer space) into mini-documentaries. But three discs in this nine disc set are only 45 minutes long, and the rest barely more than an hour. (Maybe the cost of licensing these performances was so great, they felt only nine discs could justify the hefty price?) Even more unfathomable was the decision to repeat certain songs by Elvis, the Supremes and others throughout the set. A joy to watch, but bungled. No complaints about *A Hard Day's Night* — the greatest rock 'n' film with a slew of new extras. Essential.

The Mary Tyler Moore Show — Season One (\$49.98; Fox)

Toss your hat up in the air! It's finally arrived: the first season of the best sitcom of all time. Mr. Grant, aka Ed Asner, has overseen this boxed set and here's hoping he's in charge of all seven sets. Mind you, it's hard to do a bad job with such great material. If you want to argue for any other show as the best half hour comedy of all, you can. But you'd be wrong.

Monsoon Wedding (\$32.98; Universal)

Everyone who liked *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* should watch this superior but equally accessible Indian film by Mira Nair. A large Indian family is thrown into the usual chaos by the wedding of their lovely daughter. It's all charmingly familiar — isn't it remarkable how similar family dynamics are the world over? — yet bracingly done with an excellent cast and Nair's sure touch.

Grease (\$19.95; Paramount)

How many different reactions can one person have to a film? I kind of liked *Grease* in an embarrassed way when it first came out. (But I loved the songs.) I was astonished by how cheap and tacky it looked when the movie was shown on TV in a cropped video version. (But I still loved the songs.) I was blown away by how magnetic and sexy John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John were when it was re-released theatrically. (And the songs were great!) Now, with nieces and nephews who know every word of dialogue, every joke, (and every song), I know it's going to be around forever. And thanks to the DVD, I even know why they're running around with Saran Wrap during that one number.



Magnetic: Greasers Travolta and Olivia.

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy (\$69.99; Acorn)/The Alec Guinness Collection (\$69.98; Anchor Bay)

Fans of the late Alec Guinness (who was an excellent memoirist as well as actor) can relish these releases. The Alec Guinness Collection gathers some of his signal Ealing Comedy triumphs: the creaky *The Man in the White Suit*, the silly but fun *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, and the incomparable *Lavender Hill Mob* and *The Ladykillers*. Buy the whole box and you also get *Captain's Paradise*, with Guinness as a bigamist. It's the wife who does the cheating in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, the miniseries based on the John Le Carre book, with Guinness impeccable as George Smiley in an almost shockingly intelligent adaptation. To buy this DVD go to www.acornonline.com.

Amadeus/Unforgiven/One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest/Singin' in the Rain Special Editions (\$26.99 each; Warner Bros.)

Amadeus is a Director's Cut and while I wholeheartedly disapprove of not including the original theatrical version (it did after all win Oscars and do smashingly at the box office), I'm darned if I can tell where the extra 20 minutes were inserted in this genuine classic. *Unforgiven* was an immediate classic in most minds, but not mine (though I enjoy it a great deal). *Cuckoo's Nest* — which is much better than the rather ham-fisted book it's taken from — has the best extras. And don't tell Woody Allen this, but I've always been puzzled by the rapture most people feel for *Singin' in the Rain*. The story's humor is rather forced and most of the songs bring the action to a dead halt instead of advancing the plot or the characters.