

DVDs this week

By Michael Giltz

The Mummy Returns (\$26.98; Universal)



Brendan Fraser

The Mummy, starring the affable Brendan Fraser, was a pleasant surprise in 1999. It wasn't up to the standards of Raiders, but it would do until Harrison Ford and Steven Spielberg got off their duffs and made a new one. This sequel isn't quite as good, but because our expectations were raised to expect something decent, it seems very disappointing. The biggest con seemed The Scorpion King, played by wrestler The Rock — his role amounted to a glorified cameo. So the real surprise is that Universal is making a prequel about The Scorpion King — this edition has a DVD-ROM peek at the plans for it.

Fiddler on the Roof (\$19.98; MGM)

Director Norman Jewison is on a roll with the Oscar nominated drama "The Hurricane" and the HBO film "Dinner With Friends" (which should be remembered come Emmy time in 2002). So Jewison can look back at one of his biggest triumphs — from 30 years ago, no less — with the pride of a working filmmaker, instead of the pain of someone who peaked long ago. It rarely works out this way: a smash hit musical, a stage actor repeating his legendary performance, a big budget, and it all works beautifully. Pauline Kael called it vulgar and that was a compliment. The DVD includes a fine documentary from '71 and commentary from the director and star.

The Simpsons — The Complete First Season (\$39.98; Fox)

Obviously, "The Simpsons" is one of the best sitcoms — animated or otherwise — of all time. Though I can't help wishing it had ended about four or five years ago, it's still consistently amusing and far more respectable in its old age than the disastrous final years of other great shows like "All in the Family" and "M*A*S*H." They're doing this right: no repackaged slamming together of the Halloween episodes or volumes devoted to Krusty the Clown, etc. This is simply a chance to watch the show develop and grow season by season. Every episode has a commentary track — jump to the final one (number 13) for the best stories about how the show looked like a disaster once the "finished" product came back from Korea six months after they were written and directed. Now Fox should release another season every quarter and keep the price under \$60.



Bart

The Terminator — Special Edition (\$26.98; MGM)



Big Arnie

T2 is one of the biggest blockbusters of all time and is constantly packaged and repackaged. It's a terrific action film, but in many ways my heart belongs to the scruffy, low-budget flick that spawned it. This film — which rightly launched director James Cameron into the upper ranks — gets by purely on smarts, a clever script, and a dominating performance by Arnold Schwarzenegger. Among the many extras are some new bells and whistles, including a spiffed up soundtrack (remixed for home theaters 5.1 sound systems) and a new documentary.

Pink Flamingos/Female Trouble (\$29.95; New Line)

Hmm, how best to compliment the King of Trash director John Waters? How about this: "Pink Flamingos" is so disgusting I had to look away from the screen more times than any movie since "Armageddon" (another stomach-churning film). "Female Trouble" is so subversive I wish local boards still passed ratings on movies so it could be banned. Divine should have been arrested — no one is so good an actor that they can convincingly mimic such depravity. And Waters himself is Public Enemy Number One, a menace to society and himself! By all that is decent and good, I beg of you: do not watch this filth!

— Michael Giltz