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DVDs this week

By Micheal Giltz

The Princess Bride (\$29.98; MGM)



WRIGHT

Director Rob Reiner had an incredible run of movies in the '80s: He helmed the classic mockumentary *This is Spinal Tap*, a charming update of road movies called *The Sure Thing*, the best adaptation yet of Stephen King with *Stand By Me* and this absolute gem of a fairy tale. (Still to come was *When Harry Met Sally*.) Cary Elwes is a marvelous romantic lead, clearly set to follow in the footsteps of Errol Flynn (though his subsequent taste in Hollywood movies has let him down). And Robin Wright is delightful as Princess Buttercup. Bursting with funny supporting

roles, including Wallace Shawn ("Inconceivable!"), Andre the Giant and Mandy Patinkin.

Memento (\$24.95; Columbia TriStar)

In a dim year for movies, the \$25 million box office for this smart, challenging thriller is good news indeed. Of course, that \$25 million might very well have come from a hardy ten or twelve fans who kept going to see the movie again and again just to puzzle out the plot. It's famously told backwards, with every scene jigsawing into the one that came before and the one that follows. Guy Pearce - hot off *LA Confidential* - is tremendous as the lead. But it's writer-director Christopher Nolan's show all the way. Made for repeated viewing, so you'll save lots of money by buying rather than renting. And, yes, I've figured the thing out.

The French Lieutenant's Woman (\$19.98; MGM)



STREEP

Okay, you couldn't bring yourself to sleep overnight in Central Park just to get tickets to Meryl Streep in *The Seagull*. Now that plans to transfer it to Broadway have fallen through, you're truly despondent. Console yourself with one of her greatest screen performances. Here, Streep and Jeremy Irons play an actor and actress having an affair while making a movie about doomed Victorian lovers. The story-within-a-story structure is complicated, but watching Streep slip in and out of character (from the actress playing the role to the role itself) is

breathhtaking. Now where's *Sophie's Choice* on DVD?

Gandhi (\$24.95; Columbia TriStar)

Here's another acting tour de force. Ben Kingsley's magisterial work in *Gandhi* is still stunning and the DVD's many extras - including newsreel footage of the real Gandhi - only emphasize that. But the movie surrounding him seems clunkier than ever. (Richard Attenborough seems a charming man and played a marvelous Santa Claus in *Miracle on 34th Street*, but a gifted director he's not.) Surely this is one of the worst Oscar winners for Best Picture in the last 20 years. But it's still a must-see thanks to Kingsley. One sign of our changing world: the DVD contains a link to "The Official Mahatma Gandhi Website!"



KINGSLEY

Grey Gardens (\$39.95; Criterion)



JACKIE O.

Here's a little-seen classic that lives up to your every expectation. This gothic documentary by the Maysles is hilarious, bizarre, and compulsively watchable. It offers a peek into the decaying world of Big and Little Edie Beale, a mother and daughter act estranged from high society and ensconced in a run-down mansion in the East Hamptons, a home littered with raccoons, cats, skunks and bitter memories. Released in 1975, their faded glory is given even more luster because they're relatives of Jackie O. Essential viewing.

Randy Travis: Live (\$24.99; Image)

Travis has a classic country voice - one of the best since George Jones - and this recent show is fine for fans, though perhaps a little too play-it-safe to convert the uninitiated. Highlights include the expected hits like "Forever and Ever, Amen."

- Michael Giltz