

# DVDs this week

By Michael Giltz

## Best Of "The Muppet Show" (\$24.95 each; Columbia TriStar)/Kermit's Swamp Years (\$27.96; Columbia TriStar)

What a shame the stars of today don't get to appear on "The Muppet Show." I'd love to see P Diddy or Matt Damon or Roseanne interacting with Kermit, Miss Piggy, et al. Celebrities like Elton John, Mark Hamill, Julie Andrews and Gene Kelly rarely seemed more appealing. And what a great variety show mix: Pigs in Space, the two grumpy old men in the balcony, the Swedish Chef, Kermit raving a la Ed Sullivan about each and every guest, excellent musical interludes, and so on. It's a shame Jim Henson's most entertaining work has been presented so very poorly. Overpriced and under-stuffed, each \$25 DVD contains only three episodes (and no John Denver!), where most compilations of classic TV shows now give us an entire season for about \$40. With about 120 shows in the can, they'll have to release 40 DVDs at a total cost of \$1,000.



KERMIT, OZZY O.

## CQ (\$26.98; MGM)

When and where you see a movie can often be as crucial to appreciating it as the talent of the people behind it. Roman Coppola's movie wasn't helped by debuting amid the giddy expectations of Cannes and now seems stuck in the shadow of his sister's debut *The Virgin Suicides*. But Jeremy Davies (always appealing) is very good as the American movie hopeful shoved into helming a silly sci-fi flick a la *Barberella* in 1969. The film echoes that flick along with Fellini's *8 1/2* and countless others, proving Coppola has a fine gift for nostalgia over an era he never saw. Late at night, in a generous mood, it was rather amusing, with the crazy sets alone worth checking out. *The Chronicles of Narnia* (\$69.95; Home Vision Entertainment) — Like *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, this is a tremendously faithful adaptation of a children's classic.

## The Count of Monte Cristo (\$29.99; Touchstone)

You might call this an unnecessary remake of the classic Dumas tale. But actually there's no reason why you shouldn't retell that compelling story of a man wrongly imprisoned who vows revenge. But with so many superior versions available, you just better do a darn good job. This one doesn't, though director Kevin Reynolds is on firmer ground than he has been for years. And Luis Guzman (of *Boogie Nights*) is unintentionally hilarious: no actor has seemed this wildly anachronistic in a period film since Harvey Keitel stumbled through *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

## The Complete "Are You Being Served?" Collection Series 1-5 (\$119.98; BBC Video)

Some shows are timely (like the '70s drama "Family"). Some shows are timeless. (Like "I Love Lucy"). And some shows exist out of time, like this middlebrow Britcom about the employees of a struggling department store. A staple in the '70s featuring the stuffy Captain Peacock, the sexy Miss Brahms, the fey Mr. Humphries and more, it's aired on PBS ever since. Watch any episode from the run of the show. Apart from one character being replaced or the pilot being shot in black and white, I defy you to tell me where it falls chronologically. Absolutely nothing ever changes — except for the color of Mrs. Slocombe's hair — and that's a comfort for some.

## The Red Curtain Trilogy Box Set (\$69.98; Fox)

Watch, if you dare, as a young Australian director hits the jackpot with *Strictly Ballroom*, an amusing comedy! See him push the envelope on cinematic silliness by adapting *Romeo and Juliet* with indiscriminate, vaguely foolish pop-cultural references! Gasp in horror as his stunningly frenetic editing reaches manic, monstrous, inhuman proportions with the Bollywood-gone-Hollywood musical *Moulin Rouge*! Resist if you dare his upcoming Broadway mounting of the opera *La Boheme* or the movie about Alexander the Great sans the naughty bits! Peek behind the Red Curtain to discover within three hours of extras that he has very good reasons for everything he did that begin to make a bizarre, unnatural sense the longer you listen until suddenly you are *lost, lost LOST!!!*