

DVDs this week

By Michael Giltz

The Scorpion King (\$26.98; Universal)/ Brotherhood of the Wolf (\$26.98; Universal)

The Scorpion King — a vehicle for The Rock — was shot on the cheap at the same time as *The Mummy Returns* and it shows: with production values akin to TV, you keep waiting for Xena to wander in from the next lot. *Brotherhood* is high budget all the way, a French action flick about an aristocrat with a noble savage sidekick who tracks down an evil monster. It proves they can do glossy big budget summer movies just as obvious and lowbrow as our own.

The Thin Man/The Shop Around the Corner (\$19.98 each; Warner Bros.)

Two reasons for being grateful you're alive. *The Thin Man* is a superior mystery-comedy, with the emphasis on the comedy. William Powell and Myrna Loy as the detectives Nick and Nora make marriage seem the sexiest, most marvelous experience imaginable — which would be more convincing if they weren't tozzled the entire movie. Jimmy Stewart and Margaret Sullavan work wonders in *The Shop Around the Corner*, one of the most delightful romantic comedies ever made. It isn't perfect (the ending is slightly abrupt), but few movies are this ideal.

Heartbreak Ridge/Firefox/A Perfect World (\$19.98 each; Warner Bros.)

Clint Eastwood is a serious director, but there's something sad about a military film that must climax with Grenada. *Firefox*, a silly action film about stealing a top-secret Soviet plane (as if the Soviets ever outpaced us in the air), at least offers trim entertainment. But *A Perfect World* is of another class. A third of this drama about an escaped con with a young hostage is forced comedy with Eastwood chewing up the screen. But the bulk of the film is Kevin Costner as the criminal; his scenes with the kid are subtly creepy and unforgettable. Imperfect, but hard to shake.



Clint Eastwood

Heavenly Creatures (\$19.99; Miramax)

Some said director Peter Jackson proved he was ready to make *The Lord of the Rings* by helming the Michael J. Fox dud *The Frighteners*, which had Hollywood-quality special effects done at his WETA shop in New Zealand. Pish! Anyone paying attention knew Jackson had the skills after seeing this earlier film, a worldwide critical hit about two schoolgirls who become very close indeed. He turned Kate Winslet into a star and the stunning, eerie fantasy sequences hinted at the glories to come in *LOTR*.

Spellbound/Ratcatcher (\$39.95/\$29.95; Criterion)

Not every Hitchcock film is a classic and *Spellbound* — thanks to its fascination with the new science of psychiatry — is quite dated. But it's given the top-notch treatment any film by Hitch deserves. Even better is Lynne Ramsay's *Ratcatcher*. I found it more admirable than actually enjoyable, but this dour Glasgow drama is skillful and Ramsay has proven herself with the follow-up *Morvern Callar*, a hit at Cannes. Criterion provides a full run-down on this burgeoning talent, including three early shorts and a video interview.

The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby (\$79.95; A&E)

Here's a bittersweet arrival. I was 14 when the RSC brought its epic adaptation of this Dickens novel to Broadway. I tried desperately to convince my parents I should travel alone to New York (where I'd never been), stay with a friend of the family and pay the unheard of sum of \$100 to watch this play. No dice. I've regretted it ever since and this document of that production — it's not a movie, just a fine recording of their play done for TV — proves my parents were wrong. But aren't parents usually wrong, especially when you're 14?

The Young Ones — Every Stupid Episode (\$59.98; BBC)

Aren't Britcoms supposed to be intelligent? This vulgar, decidedly silly show from Margaret Thatcher's England was aggressively stupid, even if it was willing to pause for asides from talking rats or other bits of nonsense that would make Monty Python proud. Like all such hearty fare, it gets funnier and funnier the more you watch it.