

DVDs this week



Julia Roberts

Notting Hill Ultimate Edition (\$26.98; MPI)

No, *Notting Hill* can't match the sheer delight of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. But on its own (not compared to one of the wittiest comedies of the '90s), *Notting Hill* is good enough — a broad, amusing comedy with Julia Roberts playing the role of Julia Roberts (very convincingly) and Hugh Grant stammering his way through another role. Hopefully, he put that sh*tick to rest with his hilarious, reptilian turn in *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Stuffed with extras by Universal, *Notting Hill* is

the lead, two-disc set in yet another new premiere line of DVDs. Other titles include *Patch Adams* and *Meet Joe Black*, which daringly includes *Death Takes a Holiday*, the original Frederic March film it's based on. *Death* tells the same story in less than half the time (78 minutes) with twice the wit and emotion. *Meet Joe Black* suffers by comparison, but including the original film makes it a DVD well worth owning.

Jet Li's Once Upon a Time in China Trilogy (\$67.95; Columbia TriStar) and Bruce Lee: The Master Collection (\$79.98; Fox)

Okay, you've watched *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* five times on DVD and want to know where to turn next. The 1991 classic *Once Upon a Time in China* is a great place to start. It turned Jet Li into an Asian superstar by featuring him as the legendary folk hero Wong Fei Hung, a name that stirs thoughts of derring-do for Asians the way Robin Hood does for us. (The character has been featured in at least 100 different movies, including Jackie Chan's classic *Drunken Master*, which turned him into a star as well.) Even more brutally exciting are the movies of Bruce Lee, which have just been marked down as a boxed set and made available singly. Start with *The Chinese Connection* if you want the best movie or *Game of Death* if you want the best fights. The boxed set also contains a full-length documentary.

The Family Man (\$26.98; Universal)

When exactly was the talented, quirky actor Nicolas Cage (*Valley Girl*, *Birdy*, *Moonstruck*, *Raising Arizona*) replaced by his evil, robot twin? Most would say the switch occurred after he deservedly won the Oscar for *Leaving Las Vegas*. Since then, Cage has made absurdly bad but commercially successful product like *The Rock*, *Con Air* and *Gone in 60 Seconds* while flirting with the bizarre idea that he should play Superman. Even when he pretends to be the artist of old and works with good directors like Martin Scorsese (*Bringing Out the Dead*), John Madden (the overseas flop *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*) or the once-good Brian De Palma (*Snake Eyes*), the robot Cage manages to bring out the worst in them. *The Family Man* — a pallid spin on *It's a Wonderful Life* that features the delightful heir to Myrna Loy known as Tea Leoni — is perhaps a well-intentioned misfire, but that doesn't make it any more pleasant to sit through. Only John Woo was able to free the real Cage long enough to make the fun *Face/Off* and (hopefully) the upcoming *Windtalkers*. But most of the time, this talented actor is locked away in some dungeon while the evil, robot Cage continues to cash paycheck after paycheck and trash a once-promising career. Free Nicolas Cage!

Joan Jett Live (\$16.99; BMG), The Kinks (\$24.98; Pioneer), Bruce Hornsby (\$24.98; Pioneer), Jazz on a Summer's Day (\$29.95 New Yorker)

Music video never really caught on, but DVD is giving that genre new life. Compilations of videos are ideal (you can easily skip over the boring ones) and just as many releases are pure concert films, like these. Joan Jett is a pro, sporting a buzz cut worthy of her turn in *Rocky Horror on Broadway* while muscling her way through a recent greatest hits show. The Kinks are shown at a concert in 1979, which happily means less frenetic cutting than Jett suffers through. And Bruce Hornsby has always been a better, jazzier artist live than his albums have been able to capture. But *Jazz on a Summer's Day* puts them all to shame. A recent showing in Bryant Park and upcoming screenings at Anthology Film Archives would remind even the most tin-eared fan about the joys of jazz. (It features great performances by Louis Armstrong, Anita O'Day, Thelonius Monk and many, many others.) But even if jazz ain't your thing, the movie — filmed at Newport during the trials of the America's Cup — is one of the most beautiful ever made, capturing an innocently hep Eisenhower-era vibe that is priceless. These other music DVDs are for fans of the artist. *Jazz on a Summer's Day* is for fans of cinema. Essential.

— Michael Giltz