

Reviews of recent and upcoming DVD releases

By Billy O'Keefe

**McClatchy-Tribune News Service
(MCT)**

'Inside Man' (R, 2006, Universal/Imagine)

Dalton Russell (Clive Owen) will say this only once, but he's masterminded the perfect bank robbery. The only caveat: Det. Keith Frazier (Denzel Washington) is on his case, but so is a power broker (Jodie Foster) with an equally powerful client (Christopher Plummer) who desperately needs something that's locked up inside one of the bank's safe deposit boxes. What's in there? Is Russell after it? And who has his ear, the law or the money? For two acts, "Inside Man" resembles a smart, exciting bank heist film, complete with buildup, the usual injections of tension and a thrilling climax. And yet it's the third act _ parts of which are sprinkled in from the start _ that legitimizes the film's greatness. Come for the firepower, but stay for the brainpower. It does not disappoint.

Extras: Commentary with director Spike Lee, deleted scenes, Lee/Washington collaboration feature, making-of feature.

'The Wire: The Complete Third Season' (NR, 2004, HBO)

'Prison Break: Season One' (NR, 2005, Fox)

If you scoffed at the concept or gave up on it early on, here's your second chance to check out the best new network shows of last season. "Prison Break's" concept is a hard sell _ how does one brother (Wentworth Miller) breaking another (Dominic Purcell) out of jail translate into a multi-season show? _ and the first few episodes fell on the slower side as the puzzle pieces fell into place. But the show picks up speed by the episode, gradually bubbling into a frenzy while providing no shortage of quick-fix thrills on the side. Still, with all that said, "Break" isn't even the best TV show to hit DVD this week. That honor goes to "The Wire," which, in addition to rivaling "The Shield" as the best police drama on TV today, is very possibly the smartest, most underrated show HBO's ever made. Season three takes the water from the previous two years and heats it to a boil, and the only reason not to dive in is if you need to check those seasons out first.

"Prison Break" contents: 22 episodes (six with commentary), plus three behind-the-scenes features, alternate/deleted scenes and a "Making a Scene" episode.

"The Wire" contents: 12 episodes (five with commentary), plus David Simon (creator) interview and crew Q&A.

'God or the Girl' (NR, 2006, A&E)

Four young men _ Dan, Mike, Steve and Joe _ have arrived at one heck of a crossroads: Do they pursue the lives they're living, girlfriends/potential girlfriends and all, or do they give it up and start a march toward the Catholic priesthood? It's an impossible decision for each of them, and as this five-part reality miniseries unfolds, the time for them to decide is ticking down. "God and the Girl" unfolds like so many other cable reality shows _ cameras rolling, contrivances and filmmaker biases held to a

minimum _ and that's no small feat given the heat pretty much any show about religion tends to generate in 2006. Your preconceived notions may dictate how organized religion is portrayed in the show: What looks celebratory to one person may be wholly unflattering to another. "G&TG," to its credit, stays out of the debate and smartly keeps its focus on the boys, who provide more than enough drama with the bellyaching they endure and the choices they ultimately make.

Contents: Five episodes, bonus mini-episode with a new would-be priest, deleted scenes, priestly wisdom.

`Somersault' (NR, 2004, Magnolia)

Sixteen-year-old Heidi's (Abbie Cornish) decision to make a pass at her mother's boyfriend wasn't one of her best, but it merely provided the opening push in what looks to snowball into one bumpy tumble into adulthood. "Somersault" finds Heidi on the verge of figuring out the difference between sexual maturity and whatever the heck it is that's causing her to take a self-destructive turn every time she reaches a crossroads. Matters aren't helped when the people she meets are either looking to take advantage of or just as confounded by her as she is. "Somersault" itself can be confounding: Heidi is sweetly innocent one moment, dark beyond her years the next, a total wreck the next. But that's Heidi's problem and not that of the film, which, despite the messiness, never strays from believability.

Extras: Deleted scenes (with commentary), making-of feature, crew interview.

`Gilles' Wife' (NR, 2005, Koch Lorber)

Gilles' wife Elisa (Emmanuelle Devos) may be devoted, but she isn't delusional. Just as we see the way her husband (Clovis Cornillac) eyes her younger sister Victorine (Laura Smet), so does she. But despite what she suspects, Elisa remains determined to keep her marriage together _ even if it means coaxing them along in hopes of the flame dying out. (OK, maybe she's just a little delusional.) "Gilles' Wife" is not a film to watch in a comfy recliner at night: It's never boring, but it is perilously quiet, often going minutes and sometimes scenes without a word spoken. The bulk of the performance is unspoken or non-verbal _ a look here, a fret there, a good cry for good measure. If that sounds like a nightmare to you, it probably will be, but that's not a knock against "Wife's" quality. What it sets out to do, it does exceptionally and powerfully well. In French with English subtitles.

Extras: Deleted scenes (with commentary), making-of feature.

`Noah's Arc: The Complete First Season' (NR, 2005, Logo/MTV)

Rare is a TV show with an all-black and Hispanic cast. Even rarer is a show with an all-gay male cast. And a show featuring almost nothing but gay black and Hispanic characters? That blood-curdling scream you hear is Ned Flanders dashing for the hills. What's more, as basic cable shows go, "Noah's Arc" doesn't hide its true colors: If the love scene in "Brokeback Mountain" was too much for you, you're better off in the hills with Ned than near a DVD player with this inside. But for all the ground that's broken, "Arc" doesn't really present itself as a force with which to be reckoned. The half-hour format, exaggerated personalities and almost single-minded focus on relationship issues brings to mind "Sex and the City" more than "Queer as Folk" or "The L Word." That, plus the fact that quite a few cast members are dangerously green in the acting department, makes this light entertainment first and social commentary a distant second.

Contents: Nine episodes (available in original or extended, uncensored cuts), plus deleted scenes, the pilot episode and audition footage.

'Brick' (R, 2005, Universal)

Two days ago, the estranged love (Emilie de Ravin) of loner Brendan's (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) life was alive and seemingly scared for her life. Now she's dead, and Brendan is determined to clear away the cobwebs and unlock the conspiracy that led to her death. Sounds like your typical film noir premise, and "Brick" certainly talks the part. Thing is, it's a film noir starring a bunch of high school kids, including one (Lukas Haas) who operates his elaborate network from the basement of his mom's house. All the slang and fast talk would work unbelievably well were "Brick's" tongue nestled in its cheek, but that's not the case: This is as straight-faced as film gets. And if you can't buy an otherwise smart film making its young cast do their best Robert Mitchum and Bette Davis impressions, prepare to roll your eyes all the way into the back of your head and out again.

Extras: Cast/crew commentary, deleted/extended scenes, casting feature.

'Chappelle's Show: The Lost Episodes: Uncensored' (NR, 2006, Comedy Central)

Review copies of the "Chappelle's Show: The Lost Episodes: Uncensored" DVD arrived tucked inside wooden crates with "South Africa" stamped on them. Ouch. That little bit of not-so goodwill, combined with the fact that these episodes even aired and are now available for sale, pretty much nails the coffin shut on one of the funniest sketch shows in television history. Not surprisingly, this touchy send-off _ hosted by Charlie Murphy and Donnell Rawlings and cobbled from material Chappelle taped before bolting _ is of mixed quality. Some sketches go on too long, and too much is made of Dave's \$50 million payday. And the controversial "white pixie" sketch in episode two is followed by a bizarre half-show consisting of audience members commenting on the sketch. Ha ha ha? Oh well. Rent it to see the "MTV Cribs" sketch, which is hysterical. One viewing is enough for the rest.

Contents: Three episodes (commentary on all three), plus unaired sketches, bloopers, deleted scenes, making-of feature and bonus music performances.

MORE FUNNY FOR YOUR MONEY

_ "Beavis and Butt-Head: The Mike Judge Collection: Volume 3" (NR, 1993-97, MTV): By the time this set of "hand-picked" collections has ended its run, Mike Judge will have hand-picked pretty much every "Beavis and Butt-Head" cartoon in existence. But fans wouldn't have it any other way, so ignore the cynicism. 42 cartoons, plus 15 music videos, more B&B special appearances, an uncut version of "Frog Baseball" and part three of the "Journey of Beavis and Butt-Head" retrospective.

_ "Frat Boy Collection" (PG-13-R, 1981-94, Fox): Because even brains need a break sometimes. Included in this set: "PCU" (David Spade, Jeremy Piven), "Bachelor Party" (Tom Hanks, Tawny Kitaen) and "Porky's" (Kim Cattrall, the dad from "Webster"). Extras are thin, with interviews on "Party" and commentary, a behind-the-scenes feature and a music video on "PCU."

(Billy O'Keefe writes video game and DVD reviews for McClatchy-Tribune News Service.)

© 2006, McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.

