

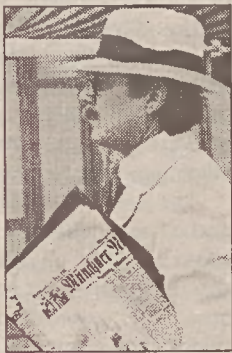
Out on dvd

New spate of DVDs includes vintage 'Death in Venice' and first season of 'Star Trek Voyager'

by Lawrence Ferber

"Death in Venice"
(Warner Brothers)

Woe was home video and its heinous pan-and-scanning of artful widescreen compositions before DVDs came along. Lucino Visconti's 1971 cinematic adaptation of Thomas Mann's classic homoerotic 1930 novel was amongst the casualties, but here it's finally presented in a glorious, very clean cinemascope transfer. The story: tightly-wound composer Aschenbach (Dirk Bogarde) retreats to Venice for a holiday, during which he becomes smitten by a pubescent boy, Tadzio (Bjorn Andresen). Let the leering and longing begin! Unfortunately, the DVD extras are slim: an ancient promo, "Visconti's Venice," which boasts an



Gay actor Dirk Bogarde in a scene from 'Death in Venice.'

absurdly portentous voiceover; a photo gallery; and the theatrical trailer. They must've forgotten to ask Michael Jackson to record a commentary track.

(Now available.)

"Kids in The Hall: Season 1"
(A&E)

Gay marriage. Legalized pot. Canada just keeps bringing us great things, including this twisted Toronto comedy troupe. Discovered by "Saturday Night Live's" Lorne Michaels, the "Kids" sketch comedy TV series ran five seasons (1989-1994). This hysterical, features-packed four-disc set contains the entire 20-episode first season, selections from the HBO pilot episode, a very funny and revealing "Oral History" with all-new interviews from the Kids and Michaels, and early performances from their no-frills Rivoli Theater days. You'll also find the first appearances of Scott Thompson's lip-pursing, cocktail-swilling lounge raconteur Buddy Cole, who shares gut-splitting diatribes. On the pilot's lively commentary, Thompson reveals that the character was based on an erstwhile affair, and he culled Cole's name from an SCTV sketch. (Available April 27.)

"Kill Bill Vol. 1"
(Miramax)

She slices, she dices, and she wears yellow sneakers! Queer fave Uma Thurman gets bloody vengeance — well, half of it — in the first volume of Quentin Tarantino's ultragory, high-octane grind-house paean. This one's a testament to fierce ladies, with insane kicking, shooting, sword-slinging and screaming from Daryl

Hannah, Lucy Liu and Vivica Fox. No lesbian kissing, though! Extras include a "Making Of" that's more like a "fun facts"; a performance by Japanese surf rockers The 5, 6, 7, 8s; and trailers, including a bootleg "Kill Bill" preview from back when the two volumes were envisioned as a singular movie. The feature, in DTS 5.1 audio, is a popcorn must, but lack of commentary and deleted scenes seem to promise a special edition in the future. (Now available.)

"Magdalene Sisters"
(Miramax)

Those wacky uptight Catholics — can't they take more cues from the Canadians? Ireland's Magdalene Asylums were Catholic institutions for "morally wayward" girls run by tyrannical self-righteous nuns. Peter Mullan's dramatic feature takes place during the 1960s at one such asylum where the girls go insane, attempt suicide, are sexually abused by visiting priests and try to escape. In real life, lesbian affairs took place at the Asylums, but no such inclusion here. Still, it's a thoroughly compelling, powerful, brilliantly acted piece of work, all the more scary/poignant in light of the fundamentalist religious line Bush and his ilk tow. Animated shorts by facetheissue.com on the topics of domestic violence, alcoholism, anorexia, and self-esteem (narrated by Halle Berry, Nicole Kidman, Julianne Moore and Jennifer Lopez) open the DVD, while the 1998 UK Channel 4 documentary, "Sex in A Cold Climate" (one of the filmmakers' research sources), entails the sole — yet extremely worthwhile — extra. (Now available.)

"The Matrix: Revolutions"
(Warner Brothers)

Neo, Trinity, and a mostly sidelined Morpheus must save the last remaining human city from the invading robot armies. The climax to the Matrix trilogy is a home entertainment must, if for nothing other than repeating the cool upside-down coatroom battle and Merovingian scenes over and over. Like the other Matrix releases, deleted or alternate scenes are frustratingly absent. However, there's a bundle of behind-the-scenes pieces — Agent Smith's gleeful self-love is taken to a gay height when two clones playfully smooch in the "Revolutions Recalibrated" section. (Now available.)

"Star Trek Voyager: Season One"
(Paramount)



Kate Mulgrew as Captain Janeway in 'Star Trek Voyager.'

While criticized for its lack of outwardly gay characters and plots, was Voyager's starship captain, Kathryn Janeway, a dykeon? Hecks yes! In addition to the first 15 episodes of this enjoyable grows-on-you Trek series, there's a bevy of extras including footage of Genevieve Bujold, who was originally cast as Janeway but resigned mere days into shooting, necessitating Kate Mulgrew's stepping into the uniform. Drool, gay geeks, drool! (Now available.)

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