n as the look of the film, the music
rocess of adapting the novel to the
se interviews provide an insightful
e creation process of this superb
one who considers him or herself a
nema can do no better than to pick
ceptional DVD of this exceptional
Cartagena)

Who's the Boss?: The Complete First Season
Columbia TriStar

the pinnacle of the 1980s sitcom —and this writer's vote for best series of all time—*Who's the Boss?* was equal parts yuck-yuck humor, sexual chemistry and surprisingly adept gender subversion. Tony Danza, the cock of the block, an ex-ballplayer with a rigorous Italian attitude (and probable libido to match)? A housekeeper. Judith Light, the bombshell with a master's degree, an advertising firm president with one eye on the prize and the other on domestic harmony? The one who wears the pants, so to speak (many might say *she's* the boss). The long and the short of it is that there are dozens of epic poems one could ut the cheesy goodness of *Who's* out unfortunately, this three-disc ion doesn't do the show's legacy e transfers are dirt-poor and there as to speak of (where the *hell* is a y commentary, people?), so while n my writer's spirit gives this DVD highest possible recommendation, our sights too high. But seriously this DVD was recorded in the out enough light, how can mere ssibly resist "Samantha's Grow- n which lil' Alyssa Milano gets a? We as Americans—as human on't deserve television this good. taino)

The Code (La Mentale)
Columbia TriStar

one of the more (if not the most) words in *The Code*, a French in which a group of crooks have series of confrontations with other scene after scene, one of the gang brandishes a gun and shrieks, "Let's waste him!" Or "I'm gonna waste you!" But these lovable thugs don't "waste" just anyone, of course, only those who violate "the code." What is this titular code? Only kill—er, waste—someone who has overstepped his "turf" (another of the film's more frequent terms). This explanation comes about 10 minutes into the movie and is a good indicator of how much imagination and the rest of the film has to offer. ? After a stint in prison, Dris e Bihan) dutifully follows the rules of ex-cons by working a imum wage job. Then his old ny Naceri) shows up to tempt offers of... I could go on, but r? You've seen this film before, er familiarity is only one of its s. *The Code* isn't an unwatchable crushingly banal one. What a entin Dunne)

though—including a fantastic Jon Voight portraying sportscaster Howard Cosell as more won-over friend than semi-contentious "sweet science" colleague—are a bit chintzy. Still, while it's hard to imagine anyone being able to get into a movie with this many high-brow grace notes in between car commercials and pitches for Glade Plug-Ins, Mann and star Will Smith's collaboration remains an artful if not wholly satisfying examination of one of sports' true larger-than-life figures. This cut of the film adds roughly seven or eight minutes to the theatrical version, expanding the running time to two hours and 45 minutes. Also included is a cultured, intellectual audio commentary with Mann, revised scenes and extra footage and a documentary on the making of the film. (BS)

Northern Exposure: The Complete First Season
Universal

The orange, zippered, novelty life vest that encases the two-disc, packaged first season of the Emmy-winning *Northern Exposure* is a bright, immediate indicator of the difference of the series within. Before *Fear Factor*, *The O.C.*, *North Shore* or any other trashy-delightful summer launch, there was the 1990s' *Northern Exposure*, the Alaska-set story of a cocky young New Yorker—Rob Morrow's Dr. Joel Fleischman—and his fish-out-of-water fumblings in a tiny backwater burgh full of off-center locals. It used its limited, nine-episode run to carve out a word-of-mouth audience ready for something fresh. More genial, and thus more palatable, then its karmic cousin and predecessor *Twin Peaks*, the series would in later campaigns devolve into a more willfully eccentric exercise, a case of being different simply to be different. But for a brief, shining moment—and that would be this inclusive of this season—*Northern Exposure* ruled the airwaves with refreshing characters, original settings and crisp writing. Extras here include over an hour of deleted scenes, plus a nice array of outtakes. A few interviews of fond remembrance would have been welcome inclusions too, but oh well... part of the series was about Joel learning that he couldn't always get his way. (BS)

Exposure's packaging matches its eccentricities

Punky Brewster: Season One
Shout!

Granted, yes, it was a show for kids, but the precociousness proves absolutely choking upon revisiting NBC's mid-'80s sitcom *Punky Brewster*; the staging and direction are awful and even more grating is the acting, all cutesy, emotional panhandling. That Soleil Moon Frye, as the titular little orphan with an indomitable spirit who brings first consternation and then light and laughter into the life of a grumpy old avuncular photographer (George Gaynes), has a certain preternatural talent isn't in question. Yet neither is the notion that her handlers—dolling her up in mismatched socks and multi-layered, leotard-and-jean-jacket ensembles (the less slutty version of Madonna's fashion revolution)—were giving us a pony-tailed, idealized version of pre-adolescence that in hindsight seems

trip back in time. If you do, beware: you'll likely feel *Punk'd*. (Jonah Fule)

Kwoon
Image/A55 Films

That'll teach me, I suppose. I make one little crack to my editor about how I'm really on a roll, getting to review one great video after another, and within days the guy gives me the assignment to write up *Kwoon*, a home-brewed martial arts saga whose self-proclaimed tagline is, "Bad acting, good kung fu." It could be worse: the DVD, which presents three episodes from an Internet-only series shot by a bunch of students at a northern California kung fu school, is a silly little hoot, suggesting what *Kill Bill* might have been had Tarantino's formative influences not been low-rent grindhouse flicks but rather old episodes of *The A-Team*. Watching nonprofessional actors spout off surprisingly well-crafted wisecracks while socking it to mobsters and mummies is amusing enough, even if you do feel like you knew guys in A/V club in high school who made movies in their backyard that were just as fun, but you get a weird sense as you watch of having something else to do. "Gosh, I really should take the trash out," you think somewhere around the five minute mark, or "I haven't called my college roommate in, like, a year," or "I've been meaning to try a new exercise routine, and maybe today's a good day to start." When it comes down to it, *Kwoon* is harmless and occasionally pretty entertaining, but take it from me when I say there are better DVDs out there for you to watch. (Steven Hanna)

Monroe gets the *Goddess* treatment

Dark Shadows, Collection 12
MPI

Before *Buffy*, *Angel* and other supernatural-themed series, there was *Dark Shadows*. The Gothic goings-on at the Collinwood estate spawned that rarest of shows, a simultaneous mainstream success and cult phenomenon. And not without good reason. The show was an artful blend of soap opera (affairs, betrayals and secrets) and horror (vampires, werewolves and witches). At the center of it all was Barnabus Collins (Jonathan Frid), the original tormented bloodsucker and a key inspiration in the advent of vampire chic. This collection features 40 complete episodes of Barnabus and Co., and even if it's occasionally a bit hokey—there are touches of undeniable hamminess—the shows remain almost defiantly involving. The intervening years have had a fortuitous effect: The dated quality of clothing, manner and speech actually add to the overall dream-like tone, as does the stagy quality of the sets. Meanwhile, moments such as a séance and a burst of maniacal laughter from beyond are imbued with a strangely touching innocence and directness in the wake of subsequent advances in such effects. And, oh yes, Abe Vigoda shows up for a turn. Special features include brief but informative interviews with Frid, cast member Denise Nickerson, and cameraman Stuart Goodman. An episode guide and collector's postcard are also included. (QD)

movies and knows of her brief marriage to baseball great Joe DiMaggio, but what about her troubled childhood and her days as an honest housewife prior to becoming a Hollywood star? Packed with interviews of those who knew her best (from first husband Joe Dougherty to girlie-mag head honcho Hugh Hefner), *The Mortal Goddess* examines Monroe's life from birth until her untimely death at the age of 36. The DVD contains countless scenes from her extensive repertoire of films, childhood pictures and a few clips from home videos. Respected by some and loathed by others, this documentary captures the fact that Marilyn Monroe is the closest thing to a mortal goddess this world will ever see. (Brandy Colbert)

UltraChrist!
Eclectic

I know what you're thinking: there are some stains that even Christ can't get out... and that's the time for the new UltraChrist! Alas, *UltraChrist!* isn't a desperately needed, new, holy laundry detergent, but instead a dig-vid, New York-birthed labor-of-love—directed and co-written by Kerry Douglas Dye—that follows Jesus (Jonathan Green) as he descends on the modern day Big Apple, befriends Celia Montgomery's seamstress Molly (hence the UltraChrist persona) and eventually does battle with Satan, who takes the form of the city's Parks Commissioner (Samuel Bruce Campbell). Along the way, God dispenses Archangel Ira (co-writer Jordan Hoffman), a former classmate of Jesus', to try to convince Jesus that spandex doesn't particularly suit him well. What the movie lacks in production value and strong structure it makes up for in twisted, well-read imagination. Its strongest point is its writing, where a variety of one-liners (among them: "Isn't spreading the gospel just a marketing issue?"; "The crucifix is a symbol of Christianity? But I hated the crucifix!"; and "It's not like Roman times — testicle grabbing is considered gauche") keep a wry smile on your face. Extras include an 18-minute retrospective with cast and crew one year after the filming, filmmaker audio commentary, the trailer and Web site info. (James Stanton)

The Frontline
Eclectic

British director Paul Hills' indie flick *The Frontline*—a hodge-podge of political corruption and seedy underbelly drama with not much in the way of new ideas and no flash-and-dazzle deliverance to make up for the grainy vehicle of delivery—is one of those sink-like-a-stone video releases that won't ever make anything but the most painstakingly complete regional film directory. I say this not to blast another aspiring filmmaker from across the Atlantic (I can tee off on plenty here if I need to merely work out some anger), but because it makes the accompanying interview with Hills—a reasoned, intelligent discussion of the film's life in development hell, his influences and ideas—all the more remarkable. This guy is intelligent and has some moxie; this just isn't the complete package he thinks or wants it to be. For those far more forgiving than I, ample extras include deleted scenes, an audio commentary track, stills photo library and more. (JF)