

AVDVDs

Brought to you by the letter V

Vfor *Vendetta* is a stylish future-shock action film written by the eccentric Wachowski

Brothers of *Matrix* fame. It is also a lightning rod for controversy in the U.S. Some critics and commentators are outraged that *V* appears, on its glossy, bloody surface, to glorify terrorism.

The film's excellent cast is led by Natalie Portman, who plays the reluctant heroine who aligns herself with a terrorist. Hugo Weaving is the vengeful man in the Guy Fawkes mask, campaigning against a fascist government in a near-future Britain.

With these forces converging in a twisted 1984-meets-*A Clockwork Orange* manner, *V for Vendetta* is both slick fictional entertainment and relevant for its willingness to raise thorny ethical issues.

The DVD is out this week in several editions. For a stripped-down, basic offering, there is the single-disc DVD, available in full or widescreen versions. There is also a two-disc *Special Edition* that is special enough to warrant the label.

Key components include the kind of making-of, on-set documentary material you would expect. And if you are intrigued by the issues raised by the film, the documentary on the real Fawkes (who is a symbol in *V*, not a character) sets the doomed Fawkes in an historical context.

Anyone who thinks *V for Vendetta* foments anti-American propaganda or pro-terrorist sentiment needs to see a bigger picture. And the *Special*

Edition allows that to happen; it encourages a debate that is inspired by dark sci-fi fiction.

HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

William Shakespeare could not have known 400 years ago he was writing some cool stuff for teen comedies in our era. But here is another one that works: Andy Fickman's clever, charming *She's the Man*. Released on DVD earlier this month, the sports-themed romantic comedy is now in the Top 10. Inspired by The Bard's gender-bending comedy *Twelfth Night*,

She's the Man stars Amanda Bynes as Viola, a tomboy who poses as her brother Sebastian to make his high school soccer team. The DVD, available in full and widescreen editions, offers lightweight extras, but they are in keeping with the tone of the movie. Bonuses include a pop-up trivia option, a gag reel and a commentary on which Fickman teams with Bynes and other cast members.

HEARTBREAK

The British-South African drama *Tsotsi* won several film fest accolades, including the People's Choice Award at the 2005 Toronto festival. A best foreign language film Oscar for



2005, it's based on the only novel by one of the great 20th century playwrights, South African writer and human rights activists Athol Fugard. Now it is on DVD, a powerful tragedy about a lost soul in the slums of Johannesburg. Played brilliantly by Presley Chweneyagae, the title character is a thug who must go to extremes to find even a glimmer of humanity and redemption. The beautiful widescreen DVD, released earlier this month, includes strong, intelligent extras befitting a film of this quality.

Among them is director Gavin Hood's earlier 22-minute short *The Storekeeper*, about the toll of violence. The two alternate endings are also worth exploring, especially with Hood's optional commentary as he explains the difficulty of deciding the character Tsotsi's fate. Personally, I think the layered horrors of the first alternate endings is the best, superior to the ambiguous one on the film itself, although it can be passionately debated.



BRUCE KIRKLAND
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MUSIC DVDS

Gram Parsons Fallen Angel Rhino | Warner

Truth really is stranger than fiction — especially if you're talking about country-rock pioneer Gram Parsons. The scion of a Florida orange-grove dynasty, Parsons was raised in wealth by drunks straight out of a Tennessee Williams tale. He attended Harvard but dropped out to be a rock star. And he quickly became one, countrying The Byrds before forming the Flying Burrito Brothers, partying with the Stones and discovering Emmylou Harris. Trouble is, along with a trust fund, he inherited the family's self-destructive gene and, by 1973, the 26-year-old was dead of an overdose. But the tale doesn't end there — his road manager stole his body and burned it in the desert in a misguided bid to honour Parsons' wishes. As a novel, it would seem far-fetched. But as a documentary — the BBC biography *Fallen Angel* — it's transfixing. Candid interviews



with Parsons' family, friends, former bandmates (like Chris Hillman) and famous pals (like Keith Richards) ground the tale in reality, while a dash of live footage gives you an all-too-brief look at a man whose meteoric career and life remain as influential as they are unforgettable.

★★★★

Look at All the Love We Found: Live Various Artists MVD

It has been 10 years since Sublime singer-guitarist Brad Nowell ODed on heroin in a San Francisco hotel room. To celebrate his life and legacy, a slate of artists put together a tribute album and concert last fall. This DVD has a dozen tunes from the L.A. show, which included Los Lobos (strolling through *Pawn Shop*), Fishbone (skanking up *Date Rape*) and Ozomatli, along with jam sessions and support acts with the surviving Sublimers. Too bad it doesn't include the set by Rancid's Tim Armstrong, No Doubt's Tony Kanal, Fishbone's Angelo Moore and The Aggrolites. But as compensation, you get a bonus CD with some live tunes from the show and new studio cuts by Bedouin Soundclash and Chuck D.



★★★★

> DARRYL STERDAN

"THE FUNNIEST MOVIE OF THE YEAR!"
-ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY-

WILL FERRELL
TALLADega NIGHTS
THE BALLAD OF BUSTY BART

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MIAMI VICE

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Two's company. Dupree's a crowd.

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