

Spin Master

Sam Raimi outdid himself with *Spider-Man 2*. Now he's done it again with the DVD release

In Tobey Maguire's world, Sam Raimi did not just trump himself by making *Spider-Man 2* better than the original.

"He whopped the first one's ass," says Maguire, who plays the dual role of Peter Parker/Spider-Man in the two movies. A "whopping" is an exaggeration, because the original was a great comic book caper, too. But the sequel does have more heart, more emotion and one of movieland's great villains in Alfred Molina's Doc Ock. Maguire's mischievous comment pops up in the behind-the-scenes materials on the new *Spider-Man 2* DVDs, which were released this week.

Spider-Man 2 comes in a basic wide or fullscreen *Special Edition*. One disc offers the movie itself (pick the widescreen version for such a visual spectacle!). There are extras here, including the *Spidey Sense 2* option (factoids pop up while you watch), a genuinely funny *Blooper Reel*, the brief *Web-I-Sodes* fans saw on the Internet, a music video and two commentaries. One features Raimi, Maguire and producers, the other the tech experts, including the self-amused guys behind Doc Ock.

On the outstanding second disc — the real treasure trove for bonus materials in this set — documentary

producer-director Charles de Laurizika offers a 12-part, 126-minute film that breaks down the *Spider-Man* legend and lore, as well as the two movies, into component parts. This is intelligent insight, not just unabashed hype. And that's welcome.

In addition, a 22-minute featurette, *Ock-umentary: 8 Arms to Hold You*, puts actor Alfred Molina and Marvel Comics artists-writers Stan Lee, John Romita and Joe Quesada to work analyzing the villainy of Doc Ock. The featurette *Hero in Crisis* examines the evolution of Spider-Man as a conflicted character, while *Interwoven: The Women of Spider-Man* chronicles how his world is given depth through women's influences.

The *Gallery* section shows off Alex Ross' 17 original paintings for the opening credits of *Spider-Man 2*, while *Enter the Web* lets viewers witness the making of a scene. Other materials are available in the DVD-ROM option.

The widescreen version of the *Special Edition* also makes up part of the more expensive but possibly desirable *Spider-Man 2 Gift Set*. Columbia TriStar Home Video did



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not make this set available to reviewers in advance, so I cannot vouch for its quality.

Another option is the *Superbit Collection* version of *Spider-Man 2* in which a superior transfer improves picture and sound quality for high-end cinephiles. But that, of course, eliminates room for all the bonus materials.



IN ANOTHER UNIVERSE, FAR, FAR AWAY

Chinese master Zhang Yimou's *Hero* — the story of an ancient warrior rebel and his complex relationship with a king aspiring to be the first emperor of a united China — is one of the great films of the year, and one of the most visually stunning movies ever made. Out this week is a widescreen-only DVD that shows off the movie's lush brilliance to advantage.

I prefer this version to the pirate DVD available for the past two years. This one comes with English language or subtitled extras — unlike the pirate copy, in which only the movie was subtitled. In the 24-minute doc *Hero Defined* we learn how Zhang's interest in the wu xia tradition of martial arts literature and film propelled him into this project. In the 14-minute doc *Inside the Action*, Asian film fan Quentin Tarantino interviews *Hero* star Jet Li, who helps give even more depth to the film. Through this DVD, *Hero* becomes even more of a major work of art, not just a martial arts action film.



ANOTHER MAN'S GOD

Eric Till's biopic *Luther* tells the story of a modest, devout but stubborn German monk named Martin Luther, who fomented a revolution that split apart the Catholic Church during the medieval era.

The DVD offers a handsome widescreen transfer plus very limited extras. The treat is getting to see the late Sir Peter Ustinov in what must be one of his last recorded interview sessions.

MUSIC DVDS

Bruce Springsteen In Concert: MTV Unplugged Columbia / Sony

The Boss's 1992 *Unplugged* set gets a rewind, along with three tunes that weren't in the original broadcast and one left off the VHS version. Too bad it's all played by a band of faceless hired guns instead of the E Streeters.

★★★★ out of ★★★★★



NRBQ One in a Million Creem / MVD

Captured at the height of their powers and with their finest lineup, the world's best bar band rock the house in this spirited 1989 gig in Montreal. Sure, it's only 40 minutes long. But with a set list that includes *I Got a Rocket in My Pocket*, *It's a Wild Weekend* and *Shake, Rattle and Roll*, it's guaranteed to get repeated viewings.

★★★★



The Blues Masters Various Artists Sanctuary / EMI

A dozen vintage live performances by Muddy Waters, Otis Spann, Willie Dixon, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, taped in glorious black-and-white in a Toronto TV studio in the mid-'60s. Superb — as long as you skip over the bit where host Colin James injects himself into video with Willie and Sunnyland Slim.

★★★★1/2

— Darryl Sterdan

Winnipeg
in Bloom



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