

AVDVDs

Family Stone is a sly dramedy

It's Christmas in the spring, thanks to the arrival of *The Family Stone* on DVD.

Normally, I find it weird when studios bring holiday-themed movies out on DVD a few months later, out of kilter with the season. But, in the case of writer-director Thomas Bezucha's tragicomic family drama, it doesn't matter.

While the primary setting is Christmas, the plot dynamics and character development are timeless.

This saga could take place during any holiday or even on a regular weekend when families congregate.

The story chronicles the chaos, angst and comic confusion that erupts when Dermot Mulroney brings home a prissy new girlfriend, played by Sarah Jessica Parker, to meet the eccentric Stones, a matriarchal clan under Diane Keaton. The Stones all hate Parker, with one exception. Craig T. Nelson plays dad, Rachel McAdams and Luke Wilson are among the offspring and Clare Danes is Parker's sexy sister, the wild card in a romantic upheaval. The film mixes genres. There are extremes from slapstick to tragedy.

The DVD, available in separate full and widescreen editions, is strong.

The bonus materials include a joint commentary by Parker and Mulroney and a second one with Bezucha and three key crew members. There are six deleted scenes,

with optional commentaries, a gag reel and a silly recipe for that hideous dish that Parker will eventually wear in a mishap.

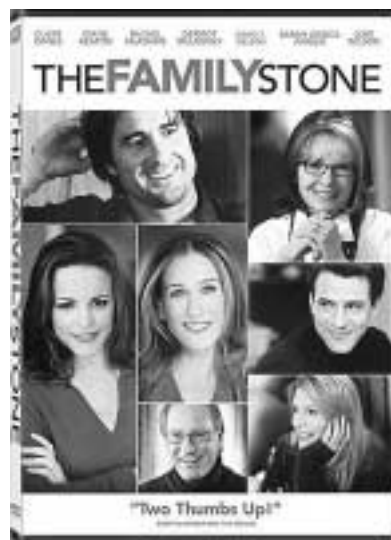
The highlights are found in the featurettes, including one that demonstrates how difficult it is to make a movie like this — real human behaviour presented with intelligence — in

cautious Hollywood.

Casting was crucial. "I've never seen a happier set," Parker enthuses. "We loved this job, we loved this script and we loved this filmmaker. It was our collective desire to make his dream come true." As for her uptight Meredith, Parker says she was "a wonderful wreck of a human being."

BACK IN BILKING BIZ

This is a slow week for major Hollywood releases, so that gives me the freedom to return to childhood. In this case, I'm referring to a nostalgic reverie inspired by the three-disc box set *Sgt. Bilko: The Phil Silvers Show, 50th Anniversary Edition*, in stores Tuesday. The late



funnyman Silvers was a TV superstar in the 1950s. He played a gold-bricking yet essentially charming rapsallion who turned the U.S. Army into comedy central. While hardcore fans will wish Paramount had started with full-season sets, this initial box set selects 18 "classic episodes" from the debut of creator

Nat Hiken's sitcom on Sept. 20, 1955, through 1959. This may be a smart strategy, given that it is an education process to convince those who are not hip to Silvers' brilliance

that he is still funny today. And he is, partly because the exaggerated situations are simple to understand, because Silvers' pace is electric with few lags even with the laugh tracks and because people should be laughing again at and with the U.S. military today. It's healthier. As Bilko schemed to win money at cards, dice or horses and mocked discipline and figured out ways to avoid his duties and his duty to God and country, Silvers cleverly made him a lovable goof, too. The box set is amazingly well appointed with extras, especially for a show this old. They include intros by Silvers' sidekick Allan Melvin, as well as a 1955 Bogie roast, a 1959 Pontiac commercial and a priceless skit on *The Ed Sullivan Show* that introduced the character days before the series.



YES, SIR!

If the U.S. military gets royally skewered in *Sgt. Bilko*, it is given its dignity in a sterling box set called *American Heroes Collection*. The box

set, out Tuesday, is comprised of *In Harm's Way*, Otto Preminger's 1965 version of the Pearl Harbor tragedy with John Wayne and Kirk Douglas; *Hell is For Heroes*, Don Siegel's 1962 Second World War drama with Steve McQueen, James Coburn and Bobby Darin; and *The Bridges At Toko-Ri*, Mark Robson's 1955 version of the James A. Michener war novel starring William Holden, Grace Kelly, Fredric March and Mickey Rooney (it is the only fullscreen film here). For fans of war movies, this set is a must, although only *In Harm's Way* has significant extras.



BRUCE KIRKLAND

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MUSIC DVD



Andrew W.K.

Who Knows?

R. Jayne | MVD

White-clad pop-metal party animal Andrew Wilkes-Krier doesn't do anything halfway. So naturally, his DVD *Who Knows?* isn't just a bunch of videos or your standard concert film. It's an ambitiously over-the-top 80-minute hybrid of way-too-much-info autobiography ("My father was born in Wisconsin in 1939"), performances over several years, tour bus footage, and even some *Blair Witchy* home movies — all hyper-edited to within an inch of its life and strung into some weird feature attraction for short-attention-span theatre. In other words, it's about as manic and untamed as one of his albums. And not halfway bad, either.

★★★1/2



Bernie Tormé

Stratocaster Gypsy

Angel Air | MVD

No, he's not related to that Tormé. Musically or otherwise. Irishman Bernie Tormé is a Hendrix-inspired guitar hero who scored several hits in the U.K. in the '80s but could never get past cult stardom on this side of the pond. Fans who still have their import copies of *Turn Out the Lights* may want to add *Stratocaster Gypsy* to their shelf. It's got an hour of clips and live fare — mostly grainy footage from gigs during Tormé's hair-metal mid-'80s glory days — along with a recent hour-long interview and photos. Those who prefer Mel, though, will want to take a pass.

★★★

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