

# FEATURE

## Dickens story delights in claymation

NEW YORK (CNS) — The following are home videocassette reviews from the U.S. Catholic Conference Office for Film and Broadcasting. Each videocassette is available on VHS format. Theatrical movies on video have a U.S. Catholic Conference classification and Motion Picture Association of America rating. All reviews indicate the appropriate age group for the video audience.

### 'The Chimes'

Charmingly animated Charles Dickens tale of a lowly street messenger (voice of Ronald France) who almost loses hope after he and his kindly daughter take in a homeless man and little orphan, only to have his faith restored by church bells ringing in a new year. Narrated by Derek Jacobi and beautifully rendered in clay animation, writer-producer Frank Moynihan's short film captures the need for hope in hard times and love's power to defeat despair. The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-I — general patronage. Not rated by the Motion Picture Association of America. (Billy Budd Films, 212-755-3968)

### 'Gossip'

Mean-spirited drama about three college students who spread a malicious rumor as part of a contrived class assignment that two other students slept together, but the gossip takes a deadly turn and reveals a nasty secret about one of the three friends. Director Davis Guggenheim's idiotic film is filled with vile, unsympathetic characters, an inane story and a twisted ending that offers little satisfaction. Some sexual encounters, brief violence, heavy underage drinking and some rough language. The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-IV

— adults, with reservations. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted. (Warner Home Video)

### 'The Manchurian Candidate'

Fine political spine-tingler with Laurence Harvey playing a Korean War POW transformed by Red Chinese hypnosis into a deadly instrument of assassination before his return to the United States during a presidential campaign. By the time an ex-POW buddy (Frank Sinatra in a solid performance) figures out the reason for his strange behavior toward wife and family, a major manhunt and race with time are on. Director John Frankenheimer has fashioned a superior suspense movie with a growing intensity that adults and older teenagers may appreciate. The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13. (MGM)

### 'Mission: Impossible 2'

Diverting action sequel in which an American spy (Tom Cruise) and a cosmopolitan thief (Thandie Newton) set out to avoid an international crisis by preventing a secret-agent-turned-terrorist from releasing a deadly virus. Impressively shot on location in Australia, director John Woo's glossy film has a more streamlined plot than the 1996 original with editing that keeps the pace lively, but the razzle-dazzle action only partially veils what is essentially a lightweight thriller. Implied sexual encounters, periodic stylized violence and minimal crass language. The U.S. Catholic Conference clas-

sification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13. (Paramount)

### 'Return to Me'

Surprisingly delightful romantic comedy in which a widower (David Duchovny) falls in love with a donor recipient (Minnie Driver) who, unbeknownst to him, has received his late wife's heart. As directed by Bonnie Hunt, the lighthearted film offers an appealing look at romance and second chances with honest, funny dialogue and good performances, although a somewhat predictable, rambling plot diminishes its charm. Fleeting profanity and crass language. The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested. (MGM)


### 'Set Me Free'

Somewhat poignant coming-of-age story set in 1963 Montreal where a 13-year-old girl (Karine Vanasse) runs away from her selfish would-be poet dad (Miki Manojovic) after her overworked mother (Pascale Bussieres) attempts suicide, but a caring teacher (Nancy Huston) guides the troubled teen away from life on the streets. Writer-director Lea Pool slugishly explores a family torn by conflicts between the Jewish father and Catholic mother but is less insightful following the girl's friendship with another girl who is physically drawn to her as well as her older brother. Subtitled. Brief violence, sexual situations and an instance of profanity. The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. Not rated by the Motion Picture Association of America. (Home Vision)



Reuters/CNS

Actor Tom Cruise climbs a canyon wall as he reprises his role as agent Ethan Hunt in "Mission: Impossible 2."



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