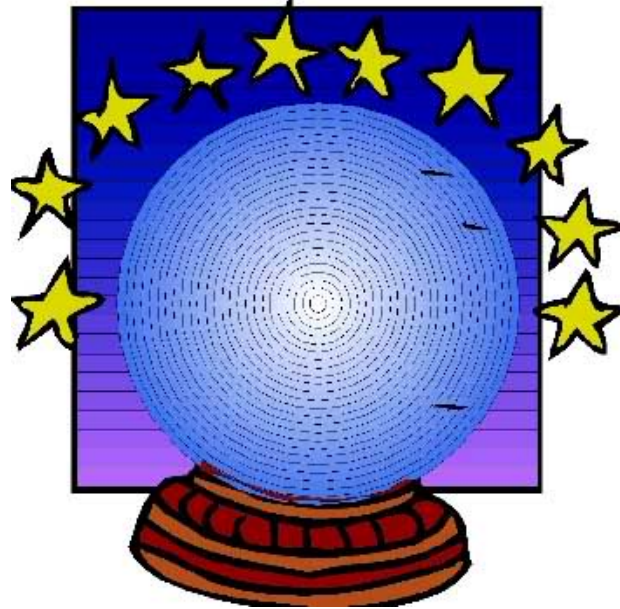


The Crystal Ball - Sept 28 Releases

Written by {ga=mitch}

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Friday night means it's Crystal Ball time here at The Cleveland Fan, and this week's column is chock full of good info on the film industry. In the rumors section, Mitch talks about the latest "Terminator" and "Justice League" films and also Spielberg's latest project. There's also a series of interesting theater releases this week, and "1408" and the latest "Fantastic Four" film come out on DVD. Mitch breaks it all down for us in this week's column ...



Last week, I was asked why I didn't include any reality shows in my television previews.

Simple. In my not-so-humble opinion, reality shows are not entertainment at all, and can cause mental retardation, curvature of the spine, and the decline of the dollar against the yen.

I used to be a fan of "Survivor"...until I realized that it was the exact same show every stinking time. Now I was tempted for a second to tune into the season premier...and then I heard a football game calling my name, and I quickly got over that feeling.

Dancing with the Stars? Big Brother? America's Got Talent? You couldn't get me to watch any of those at gunpoint.

But on the good (great) side of TV... "Dexter" starts its second season Sunday night, as America's favorite serial killer gets ready for another year of fun and games. "Dexter" coming back also means that Showtime has the two best shows currently running as "Californication" is not only the best new show for this year, it's the best comedy on television.

News and Rumors

~ Last week I made comments about how great I thought the new Terminator series "The Sarah Conner Chronicles" would be...and evidently several of you agreed based upon the forums and emails from people that saw the preview. Now comes a follow up on an earlier blurb about the next Terminator movie. It will be made by the same people who are making "Sarah Conner" and will be the first film in a new trilogy, focusing on John Conner and Kate Brewster in a post-apocalyptic war between man and machines. Also, it supposedly will NOT focus on John Conner, but will instead feature a new hero that is inspired by John.

~ Some early spoilers about the new "Justice League" movie planned for release in 2009. If you really want to wait two more years to hear this...skip to the next tilda. For those still here, the lineup will include Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, The Flash, and Martian Manhunter. Aquaman will not be included. One of the "heroes" will turn bad. The Flash is the youngest member, and has a crush on Wonder Woman. There will be an "Empire Strikes Back" type plot twist. Latest rumors have Jessica Biel possibly playing Wonder Woman, and Tyrese Gibson or Common in consideration for Green Lantern.

~ New information on the previously reports of Frank Miller helmed screenplay of the comic book adaptation of "The Spirit". Gabriel Macht will play the cop who comes back from the dead to fight evil. Samuel L. Jackson will play the villainous Octobus, with Eva Mendes and Scarlett Johansson playing villains as well. Sign me up for the Bad Guy team.

~ Don't they ever learn? Another "Punisher" movie will be coming out. "Punisher: War Zone" will have Ray Stevenson (Titus Pullo in "Rome") as the vigilante, along with Dominic West ("The Wire"), Doug Hutchinson, and Wayne Knight (Newman on "Seinfeld"). This is going to suck in a major way.

~ Steven Spielberg is looking to do an Abraham Lincoln biography for a possible 2009 release. Sally Field is reported to be on board as Mary Todd Lincoln, while Liam Neeson is considering taking the role of Honest Abe. I smell Oscar-bait.

This week's new movie releases:

The Kingdom

Starring: Jamie Foxx, Chris Cooper, and Jennifer Garner

Plot: An FBI team is dispatched to the Middle East to find those responsible for a bombing that claimed the lives of American workers in Riyadh.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: CSI: Riyadh. Not good buzz on this as far as being a great "serious" movie. But if you're looking for a good action movie, director Peter Berg and Foxx have shown themselves quite adept in the genre. Chris Cooper makes any movie he's in worthy of an extra half point or so in it's final rating.

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## **The Game Plan**

Starring: The Rock, Kyra Sedgwick, Madison Pettis

Plot: A star quarterback trying to get his team into the playoffs is sidetracked when he learns he has a seven year old daughter

from a previous relationship.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: Disney making a family film about a pro football player and his too-cute-for-words little girl, and the upheaval she puts into his life. Now if that might have included the little tyke walking in on daddy's dog fighting ring...or him in bed with three women...or shooting up HGH...then I might have been interested. But no, this is a Family Film...and I am so overjoyed that I don't have young children, because as a football fan, it would be painful to watch something so stupid.

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Feast of Love

Starring: Morgan Freeman, Greg Kinnear, Radha Mitchell, and Jane Alexander

Plot: Interlaced tales of a group of friends in Oregon and the

disruption of their lives after the appearance of a free spirited young woman.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: More dramatic romance drivel in an attempt to transpose "The Big Chill" to The Great North-wet. Based by a book from a former Michigan professor...so maybe they all sit around crying about big, bad Jim Tressel.

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## **In the Valley of Elah**

Starring: Tommy Lee Jones, Charlize Theron, Susan Sarandon, James Franco

Plot: A career military officer and a his wife work with a police detective to uncover the truth behind their son's disappearance following his return from a tour of duty in Iraq.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: Coming out this week in wider release, this film from Paul Haggis has been getting all kinds of kudos and props for the award season. Very anti-war in its content, look for Haggis to receive just as much controversy for this film as he got for his Oscar winning &quot;Crash&quot;. The difference might be that you cannot argue with the talents of Jones and Theron, making this a &quot;must-see&quot; for me.

***New DVD Releases on Tuesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>***

**1408** - In a summer when pretty much every horror flick tanked, this Stephen King adaptation thrived. That fact can be attributed extensively to the performance of John Cusack as a debunker of paranormal phenomenon that is trapped in a reportedly haunted room where 58 people have supposedly died.

**Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer** - Two for two in misses on this franchise. I liked the give and take between the Thing and the Human Torch on this one, as Michael Chiklis and Chris Evans almost are able to save this special effects Super Bore, with Galactus being portrayed not as a giant humanoid creature but as a giant version of the "Smoke Monster" seen on TV's "Lost". But Ioan Gruffudd and Jessica Alba as Mr. & Mrs. Fantastic were god-awful.

## ***Calendar Watch***

Next week: *The Heartbreak Kid*, *The Seeker: The Dark is Rising*, *Feel the Noise*, *The Jane Austen Book Club*

Upcoming Biggies (click on the hyperlink to view the available trailers).

[Michael Clayton](#) - October 12<sup>th</sup> - George Clooney as a top law firm's "fixer" (the type of person played by Jodie Foster in "Inside Man"...IOW, a shady power broker/dirty tricks expert).

[The Golden Age](#) - October 12<sup>th</sup> - Cate Blanchett and Clive Owen in a follow up of the award winning "Elizabeth"...this one looks to be better than the first, with much more action as it focuses on England's defeat of the Spanish Armada, and Elizabeth's flirtation with Sir Walter Raleigh, played by

Owen.

[We Own the Night](#) - October 12<sup>th</sup> -  
Joaquin Phoenix, Mark Wahlberg, and  
Eva Mendes in a story of a nightclub  
owner (Phoenix), his police officer  
brother (Wahlberg), and the conflict  
with the mobsters who run Phoenix's  
nightclub.

[Rendition](#) - October 19<sup>th</sup> - Reese  
Witherspoon, Jake Gyllenhaal, Meryl  
Streep and Alan Arkin in a political  
thriller with Gyllenhaal as a CIA  
agent troubled by witnessing

questionable interrogations.

[American Gangster](#) - November 2  
nd

- Denzel Washington as a heroin kingpin from the Vietnam War era (he smuggled it back in the body bags of dead soldiers) and Russell Crowe as the investigator on his trail.

[Bee Movie](#) - November 2<sup>nd</sup> -

Animated flick with Jerry Seinfeld as a bee who files a lawsuit against mankind for eating honey.

[Lions for Lambs](#) - November 9<sup>th</sup>

- Robert Redford directs himself, Tom Cruise (yeck) and Meryl Streep in this political thriller.

[Fred Claus](#) - November 9<sup>th</sup> -  
Vince Vaughn as Santa's embittered little brother. With Paul Giamatti. Another slightly naughty Christmas fairy tale that will make a bundle of cash.

[Beowulf](#) - November 16<sup>th</sup> -  
Robert Zemeckis gets all medieval on us with a motion capture (like

&quot;Polar Express&quot;)  
adaptation of the epic  
poem. Crispin Glover as  
the monster Grendel and  
Angelina Jolie as Grendel's  
mother? I'm there.

[Hitman](#) - November 21<sup>st</sup> -  
Deadwood's Timothy  
Oliphant follows up his  
portrayal as the chief

villain in "Live Free or Die Hard"; in this action/adventure film where he play...what else...a hitman. Look for it to be in the same vein as "The Transporter", and a hit (heh...I kill me).

# *The Golden Compass* -

## December 7

th

- Major, major push from the studios for this big budget fantasy...designed to be the first of a franchise. Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig star (their second collaboration this year, let's hope it's better

than &quot;The  
Invasion&quot;), along  
with Sam Elliot and Eva  
Green.

*Leatherheads* -

December 7

th

- George Clooney in an  
old fashioned screwball

comedy set in 1925.  
George is an aging  
football legend who now  
owns a pro team, and is  
competing for the  
affections of Renee  
Zellweger with his star  
player.

# *I Am Legend* -

December 14  
th

- Will Smith in what is basically a remake of the Chuck Heston apocalyptic film "The Omega Man".

*National Treasure:*

*Book of Secrets* -

December 21

st

- Follow-up to the  
hugely popular guilty  
pleasure

&quot;National

Treasure&quot; with

Nick Cage back at his

wacky best.

*P.S., I Love You -*

December 21

st

- Hillary Swank,

Gerard Butler, and

Harry Connick Jr. in

an award contender about a widow who discovers love letters written by her recently deceased husband (Butler) that are meant to help her begin the next chapter of her life.

*The Other Boleyn Girl* - December 21<sup>st</sup>  
- Natalie Portman as Anne Boleyn,  
Scarlett Johansson as her sister Mary,  
and Eric Bana as King Henry VIII. I expect this to blow the tepid Showtime

series &quot;The  
Tudors&quot; out of  
the English Channel.

*Charlie Wilson's*  
*War* - December 25<sup>t</sup>  
h

- Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts, and Philip Seymour Hoffman in an Oscar contender about the charismatic and eccentric Texas Congressman who

orchestrated the  
funding of the  
Afghans against the  
Soviet Union in the  
early 80s.

*Sweeny Todd: The*

*Demon Barber of  
Fleet Street -*  
Limited release in  
December - Tim  
Burton's adaptation  
of the macabre  
Steven Sondheim  
musical about a  
deranged barber

bent on revenge  
(Johnny Depp) and  
the meat pie baker  
that assists him  
(Helena Bonham  
Carter), who uses  
the bodies to make  
delicious snacks.

*Untitled J.J.*  
*Abrams Project* -

January 18

th

- You've seen the  
buzz generating  
hand held camera  
trailer during  
&quot;Transformer

s&quot;, and  
wondered what it's  
all about. We don't  
know yet, but we're  
thinking it should  
be fun.