

The Crystal Ball - Dec 14 Releases

Written by {ga=mitch}

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All kinds of good stuff in this week's Crystal Ball. Mitch starts this weeks piece by talking about a film producer in LA, a big fan of the site, that emailed Mitch with details on a sports movie he's working on, with help from the Indians. Also, Mitch previews the week's film release, headed by "l Am Legend", starring Will Smith and a man made virus that wipes out the world's entire population except him. Also, "The Simpsons Movie", hits DVD this week as well, which Mitch hits on.



Cleveland fans are indeed everywhere. If I didn't know that before, I was certainly re-educated this week when I received an email from a Cleveland fan in Los Angeles. His name is Doug Peterson, a Cuyahoga Falls native, and he is a producer with a small movie company called Mad Rabbit Films.

From his email, I learned not only that he had extraordinary taste in what web sites to visit to satisfy his Cleveland sports jones, but also that he is in the process of making a film that will definitely be of interest to those of us with sports ties to northeast Ohio.

"[Fastpitch](#) " will begin filming in a few months (with luck), and will be a family oriented independent film about a high school girl who loses her position on the boys varsity team to a newly transferred phenom. Her brother, a Major Leaguer rehabilitating an injury, convinces her to try out for the girls softball team,

despite her dislike of the sport for being "too girlie".

The film is about family, relationships, and lessons in dealing with life's setbacks, and on paper, it looks to be a good concept. Major League Baseball is on board for its support, especially in the form of the Cleveland Indians. Former Indians third baseman Matt Williams will serve as the film's baseball consultant, and Don Fauntleroy has been hired as the director. Fauntleroy has directed the last two films of the "Anoconda" series, along with serving as cinematographer for such films as "Into the Sun" and the excellent TV remake of "Helter Skelter".

No cast has been announced yet, but Kristen Stewart, John Goodman, and Kay Panabaker have been approached for lead roles.

I look forward to seeing how this project proceeds, and I'll be keeping you all up to date.

News and Rumors

~ Fox has delayed the release of James Cameron's next mega project [Avatar](#) to Christmas of 2009. The action/sci-fi thriller with Sigouorney Weaver, Zoe Saldana, and Giovanni Ribisi will be Cameron's first full length motion picture since "Titanic" in 1997 (not counting his Vincent Chase film "Aquaman"...for those of us that are addicted to "Entourage"). The budget of this could probably fund the country of Belgium for three years.

~ Some people claim on places like Fox News that Hollywood is "anti-American". In truth, Hollywood is about as capitalistic as it comes, and realizes that most of the money to be made in a film comes from overseas box offices. Another case in point concerns "The Golden Compass", a movie given a lukewarm 2 footballs from me. A huge disappointment at the U.S. box office with only \$25.8 million in its first week, the film nonetheless will probably be a money maker as it raked in over \$51 million in its first weekend of foreign debuts.

~ Another from the "why bother?" category. A remake of the 1927 classic silent sci-fi film "Metropolis". The original Fritz Lang movie was considered to be one of the most expensive ever filmed at the time, featuring a society in the year 2026 where people were divided into two classes; workers and thinkers. When one of the skyscraper dwelling thinkers sneaks out and visits the underground world of the workers, he is surprised at what he sees.

I have only three words to say about this: STOP REMAKING CLASSICS!!!!

~ Paul Reubens is wanting Johnny Depp to play Pee Wee Herman in an upcoming film about the goofy little twerp. Just say "no", Johnny!

~ This season's final episode of "Dexter" airs Sunday at 9 PM on Showtime. Bar none, this is the best series on television today, and if you've never had a chance to watch the most beloved serial killer

of all time, make it a point to catch the first season on DVD. You'll thank me later (I know Swerb has...I raved about this show for months last year, so he finally took a chance on it, and now he's totally addicted).

This week's new movie releases:

I Am Legend

Starring: Will Smith, a German Shepherd, and a bunch of zombies

Plot: A man made virus wipes out the world's entire population except for the one man who was immune, who now spends his days in abandoned New York looking for other survivors, and his nights trying to survive zombie attacks.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: This remake of the Charlton Heston cult-classic "The Omega Man" is going to make a bazzilion

dollars. Smith is said to be excellent in the role, and the action and scares will be enough for even the biggest adrenaline junkie. However, there are lots of complaints by people that fell in love with the original Richard Matheson novel, saying that the movie is too much of a horror flick and not the social commentary envisioned by the author.

I'll let you know what I think early next week. I do know one thing: Being a huge dog lover, if they end up killing of that beautiful German Shepherd he's with, I am going to skewer them in my review.

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Alvin and the Chipmunks

Starring: Jason Lee, David Cross, and some animated furrballs.

Plot: Singing Chipmunks. Who needs a plot?

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: Just when you thought nothing could be dumber than "Underdog", they come out with this, possibly the worst movie of the decade that doesn't feature Adam Sandler or Ben Stiller. Justin Long provides the voice of Alvin. Ben Roethlisberger provided the inspiration for Theodore.

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The Perfect Holiday

Starring: Gabriel Union, Morris Chestnut, Queen Latifah

Plot: A young girl turns to a department store Santa in hope that he will help find a new husband for her divorced mother.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: This was released on Wednesday to horrible reviews and empty theaters. Completely bland, and completely overshadowed by the other urban Christmastime film out now, the well received "This Christmas".

New DVD Releases on Tuesday, December 18th

[The Simpsons Movie](#) - Unlike other long running television shows that go to the big screen, the makers of "The Simpsons" didn't try to go grandiose on their film, they just made a longer version of what you see every week. And it works! Another Homer screw-up leaves the city of Springfield quarantined by a giant glass dome, and it's up to Bart to spur his dad into action. Even if you haven't watched the series in years (like me), rent this film.

Once - This is the only other film, in my opinion, worth renting this week. It's an Irish modern day musical about a busker and the relationship he strikes up with an immigrant to Dublin from the

Czech Republic. The financial hit of the year, a film made for about \$100,000 that charmed critics and made off with \$10 million in the U.S. alone.

Stardust - Major misfire of a fantasy film, with Claire Danes in the role of a fallen star in human form, pursued by an evil witch, played by Michelle Pfeiffer. Robert De Niro, Peter O'Toole, Sienna Miller, and Rupert Everett also appear in a movie that was hurt by being a little too aimed at the younger set, not catching on with older teens and adults hankering for another "Chronicles of Narnia";.

The Last Legion - Speaking of dumb ideas, whoever thought Colin Firth ("Bridget Jones' Diary", "What a Girl Wants", "Love, Actually") would make a good action hero needs to have his head examined. Lame movie about the fall of the Roman Empire,

and a legion of Roman soldiers still trying to retain glory in Britain.

Halloween (Unrated Director's Cut) - This Ron Zombie homage to the original John Carpenter scare-fest probably is better than all of the other sequels to the original Michael Myers. But that's like saying that Billy Baldwin is the most talented of the Baldwin Brothers after Alec.

Underdog - I really wanted this to be good, as the trailers seemed to be really cute...but the movie itself was awful. Two remakes of kids cartoons that suck in one year involving Jason Lee. He better hopes "My Name is Earl" keeps up the high ratings.

Balls of Fury - The final really, really rotten movie coming out in DVD this week. Not even

Christopher Walken can save this idiotic tale of an underground ping pong tournament.

Blade Runner: 4 disc Collector's Version and 5 disc Ultimate Collector's Version - Ridley Scott's true vision of one of the greatest Sci-fi films of all time. Will definitely be purchased by me.

Calendar Watch

Next week: [*Charlie Wilson's War*](#), [*Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*](#)

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[*National Treasure: Book of Secrets*](#)

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[*P.S., I Love You*](#)

, [*Walk Hard: The Dewey Cox Story*](#),

Juno

(Dec 25

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), *Aliend Vs Predator-Requiem* (Dec 25

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), *The Great Debaters* (Dec 25

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), *The Water Horse: Legend of the Deep* (Dec
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Upcoming Biggies (click on the hyperlink to view the available trailers).

[The Bucket List](#) - January 11th - Jack Nicholson as a corporate billionaire and

Morgan Freeman as a mechanic. And odd couple, but they are both terminally ill men who escape from a cancer ward to take one last road trip.

[*Cloverfield*](#) - January 18th - You've seen the buzz generating hand held camera trailer during "Transformers", and wondered what it's all about. We don't know yet, but we're thinking it should be fun.

[*Rambo*](#) - January 25th - John Rambo and a group of mercenaries go to

Thailand. I was OK with the way Stallone handled "Rocky Balboa". I think all of that goodwill he build up gets burned in this mess. The January release date pretty much assures a stinker.

[Vantage Point](#) - February 22nd - Dennis Quaid, Forest Whitaker, and Matthew Fox in a political thriller/mystery showing five different points of view to an attempted assassination of the President.

The Other Boleyn Girl -

February 29

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- 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 "The Tudors" out of the English Channel...but since it's gotten pushed back to the waste-land of February releases, I don't have a good feeling about it.

[10,000 B.C.](#) - March 7th - Roland Emmerich, he of "The Day After Tomorrow" gets to unleash his big-budget vision of mammoth hunters in this film that is NOT a remake of "One Million Years B.C." Bummer. I was hoping of a really good visual update to Rachel Welch in that fur bikini.

[Horton Hears a Who](#) - March 14th -

Not content to have made Dr. Suess spin in his grave with "How the Grinch Stole Christmas", Jim Carrey now takes on the voice of Horton the Elephant in this animated tale.

21. - March 28th - Swerb's favorite upcoming movie,

the true tale of six MIT students that are trained by one of their professors (Kevin Spacey) in the art of card counting. They later take down Vegas casinos for millions.

Leatherheads - April 4th -
George Clooney and
Renee Zellweger in an old

fashioned screwball
comedy set in 1925 about
an aging football legend
and the college hotshot
he's drafted for his pro
team both fighting for the
heart of an intrepid
up-and-coming journalist.

[Iron Man](#) - May 2nd - The

latest mega-budgeted superhero flick. Looks very promising, and the casting of Robert Downey, Jr. as the alcoholic billionaire who designs a supersuit.

Speed Racer - May 9th -
Emile Hirsch, Matthew

Fox, and Christina Ricci as Speed, Racer X, and Trixie in the Wachowski Brothers' ("The Matrix" trilogy) adaptation of the really rotten 1960s Japanese anime.

The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian

- May 16

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- The same four kids from the first movie return to Narnia...1300 years after their last visit in that enchanted land's time frame, to help restore the throne

to the rightful heir.

*Indiana Jones and the
Kingdom of the
Crystal Skull - May 23^r
d*

- Spielberg and Ford
team up one more
time, with Cate

Blanchett as the
romantic interest, and
Shia LaBeouf
("Transformers&
quot;) as Indy's son.

The Incredible Hulk -
June 13

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- Looks to be much, much better than the Ang Lee stink-fest, with Edward Norton taking on the role of Bruce Banner.

Get Smart - June 20 th

- Steve Carell, Anne Hathaway, and Alan Arkin take on the roles of Maxwell Smart, Agent 99 and The Chief. As much as I hate movie adaptations of

television shows,
this one has
potential.

Wanted - June 27th
- Look for this to
make a star out of

James McAvoy
(“The Last
King of
Scotland”) as
he plays a young
man brought into a
secret society of
assassins by a hot,
hot looking

Angelina Jolie.
Morgan Freeman
plays their boss.

The Dark Knight -

July 19
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- Batman is back, and this time he's tracking the Joker, played by Heath Ledger. Most likely the box office champion of 2008.