

The Crystal Ball - Feb 15 Releases

Written by {ga=mitch}

Thursday, February 14 2008 7:00 PM -

It's Oscar Week next week, and as we do every year, we're going to run movie reviews from Mitch on each of the five contenders for Best Picture of 2007, one a day from Sunday to Thursday. In this week's Crystal Ball, Mitch has got all kinds of good info for us, including info on a couple great DVD releases in "Michael Clayton" and "American Gangster". Also, in the News & Rumors section, Mitch lets us know when Jack Bauer and the latest season of "24"; will return to TV now that the writers strike is over.



One week until Oscars.

Which means you'll be sick of seeing my name at the top of the boards for the next several days.

News and Rumors

~ We had heard rumors of this for awhile, but it has sadly been changed over to the "news" column. "24" will not return until 2009, a victim of the writers' strike. So those commie writers have made the world less safe by keeping Jack Bauer in limbo. He's gonna be one pissed off mofo when he gets back.

~ In another delay until 2009, the J.J. Abrams "Star Trek" movie has been shifted from Christmas 2008 to May of 2009, coming out a week after Hugh Jackman stars one again as the high strung mutant in "X-Men Origins: Wolverine"

~ If you haven't heard, the new [Indiana Jones trailer](#) is out. Saw it on the big screen last night, and I am officially pumped.

~ New Line Cinema, the once nearly dead company that was resurrected by the then controversial decision to finance "Lord of the Rings" as a three parter shot back to back to back, is going to die again. Time Warner executives are considering folding the company into its Warner Bros. division or perhaps keeping the name alive and reduced to just producing low-budget films.

~ R.I.P. Roy Scheider. Heaven is going to need a bigger boat.

This week's new movie releases:

All of these were released yesterday as part of the "Valentine's Day Holiday". Whatever that means.

Jumper

Starring: Hayden Christensen, Samuel L. Jackson, Jamie Bell

Plot: Teleporters reek some havoc, and cause a shadowy organization to try to track them down and kill them.

The BeerBuzz: I for one will be so glad as to not see the trailers for this film 20 times on every sporting event any more. It has already been described as one of the most boring sci-fi/superhero movies ever made...which should surprise no one given the fact that Hollywood's least talented "actor" Hayden Christensen, has the lead role. Someone, PLEASE find Samuel L. Jackson a good script!

My Estimated Rating: Mike Phipps (1/2 football)

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Definitely, Maybe

Starring: Ryan Reynolds, Isla Fisher, Abigail Breslin

Plot: A father explains the complexities of his pending divorce to his young daughter, opening up about the three women he has been closest to.

The BeerBuzz: Saw this one last night for Valentine's Day, in a tradition started last year with my wife where we watch a Romantic Comedy on that day, and that I agree NOT to view it as a critic. (she owes me, now). And in that context, it's a pretty good movie. Produced by the same people that gave us "Love, Actually", "Notting Hill", and "Bridget Jones Diary" and "High Fidelity", it fits in pretty well with that lineup as far as being a more intelligent than average Romantic Comedy.

My Rating: Frank Ryan (3 footballs).

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The Spiderwick Chronicles

Starring: Freddie Highmore, Sarah Bolger, David Strathairn

Plot: After moving to the run-down Spiderwick Estate twin brothers and their sister find themselves pulled into an alternate world full of faeries and other creatures.

The BeerBuzz: Sitting around 80% positive on the Rottentomatoes.com

scale is this latest bit of British Fantasy for children. This looks to be the first big Family Picture of the year.

My Estimated Rating: Frank Ryan (3 footballs).

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Step Up 2 the Streets

Starring: Robert Hoffman, Briana Evigan, Cassie

Plot: At a Maryland School for the Arts, some students look for some additional self-esteem by entering an underground street dancing competition.

The BeerBuzz: This is for all ten of you who couldn't get enough of this in the first "Step Up" movie. The only thing I find of note for this is that the leading lady is the daughter of Greg Evigan, the man mostly known for his half of the great "B.J. and the Bear" TV show.

My Estimated Rating: Jeff Garcia (1 football).

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New DVD Releases for Tuesday, February 19th

MAJOR week for releases.

[Michael Clayton](#) - How about that? You get a chance to watch this one at home right before the Oscars? Still my pick for the best movie of the year, although it's not as much of a clear-cut case as was last year with "The Departed", as it's not that good. Still, this is a great film for

George Clooney as a "fixer" at a law firm who is in over his head as his mentor goes off his meds, threatening to derail a billion dollar lawsuit.

American Gangster - The shine is definitely off this movie as it has been recently revealed that when they say that it is "Based upon real events"...they only mean about 10% of it. In any case, it is still a very good film, as Ridley Scott rarely makes bad films (OK...other than "A Good Year" and "Kingdom of Heaven"), and Denzel Washington is at his best as the Harlem Drugking Frank Lucas.

In the Valley of Elah - Tommy Lee Jones' Oscar nominated role as a career officer who works with a police detective (Charlize Theron!) to uncover the truth behind his son's disappearance following his return from a tour of duty in Iraq. By all

accounts an excellent film, and one that does NOT take a political agenda stand about the War in Iraq.

30 Days of Night - Vampires in Alaska! Pretty cool concept, as the blood suckers have 30 days to pillage without worrying about that pesky Sol. Josh Hartnett sucks much less than he normally does in this.

Rendition - Over the top political preaching about a controversial subject with this Reese Witherspoon film about her Egyptian born husband being kidnapped and tortured by the CIA. Is it a subject worth telling? Probably...but not in this heavy handed manner.

Margot at the Wedding - Another attempt at making an "awards worthy" film that

backfired, with Nicole Kidman as an uber-bitch making the lives of her sister and her son miserable.

Redacted- Brian DePalma used to be one of the most respected directors in the world. Now, he teams up with self promoting jerk Mark Cuban to make a disgusting film about events in the Iraq War that would even make the most liberal in the U.S. blush with shame. Of course, it didn't help things that Pompous Blowhard Bill O'Reilly made it his personal mission to censor the movie and accuse De Palma and Cuban of treason. I think the three of them deserve each other.

Lust, Caution - Ang Lee's tale of seduction and betrayal set in WWII-era Shanghai. NC-17 for some pretty explicit sex, and banned in China.

Calendar Watch

Next week: *Charlie Bartlett*, [Vantage Point](#), *Witless Protection*, *Be Kind - Rewind*

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

[*The Other Boleyn Girl*](#) - February 29th - 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.

[Pride and Glory](#) - March 14th - Ed Norton and Colin Farrell in a tale of a multi-generational family of NYPD officers and an investigation of corruption that could tear the family apart.

[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 campy 1960s Japanese anime.

The Chronicles of Narnia:

Prince Caspian - May 16th -

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 23rd -

Spielberg and Ford team up one more time, with Cate Blanchett as the romantic interest, and Shia LaBeouf

("Transformers"
;) as Indy's son.

[Sex and the City](#) - May
30th -

The movie version of the HBO series hits the big screen. Can we guys get our share of this pie and have a movie version of

"Deadwood"?

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 20th -
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.

[Wall-E](#) - June 27th -

Pixar's next masterpiece, about a garbage cleaning

robot who dreams of
the stars.

Wanted - June 27th -
Look for this to make
a box office star out
of James McAvoy
("The Last King

of Scotland", "Atonement") 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.