

The Crystal Ball - May 16 Releases

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It's official. Our first bomb of 2008, as "Speed Racer" crashed into the wall on turn one. Stories are out that it will end up costing the studios between \$250 - 300 million to make and promote that mess, and it ended up only taking in \$18 million at the box office last week. Mitch hits on that, some intriguing new film projects in the works, and this weekend's one big theater release in his Friday night column for us, "The Crystal Ball";



That sound you heard were the squealing tires right before "Speed Racer" crashed right into the wall on Turn 1 (week 1), becoming the first, and possibly the biggest Bomb of 2008. Now some are calling it a "flop";, but that's just not a strong enough word. Stories are out that it will end up costing the studios between \$250 - 300 million to make and promote this mess, and it ended up only taking in \$18 million at the box office last week.

In fact, the studio even did a little creative accounting on Sunday to make things look better. The first weekend numbers that come out have the actuals from Friday and Saturday, and the estimates from Sunday. So the execs fudged a bit on the estimates, making it so that Speed made \$20.2 million, ending up in 2nd for the weekend. When the truth came out, it was third behind the insipid "What Happens In Vegas";, and it's looking like this will be a disaster in the same line as "Kingdom of Heaven"; and "Poseidon";

What Happens In Hollywood is that some heads are going to roll over this mess. Don't expect the Wachowski Brothers to be given the keys to

any big budget films in the near future.

News and Rumors

~ Several weeks ago, I wrote of Rob Marshall's new musical film "Nine", based upon the works that inspired Fellini's "8 1/2". Javier Bardem was to star in it, but he dropped out, citing exhaustion. So replacing him will be none other than Daniel Day-Lewis, to play the character of a famous director trying to balance his work and all the women in his life. Still on board are Penelope Cruz, Nicole Kidman, Marion Cotillard, Sophia Loren, and Dame Judi Dench.

~ George Clooney, still somewhat smarting after the flop of his latest film "Leatherheads", is set to step in front of the cameras again in "Stare at Goats", and adaptation of a true story regarding a U.S. Army battalion charged with using paranormal powers, starting in 1979. See kids, this is why all that drug use in the 70s was a **bad** thing.

~ I guess the flops (bombs) that we've seen recently from television shows being adapted to the big screen doesn't seem to phase those in la la land. Next up? "21 Jump Street: The Movie". Don't expect Johnny Depp to have any

involvement in this.

~ "Point Break 2". In this case, the news that the sequel to the 1991 film is being written by the same guy that wrote the original isn't exactly inspiring me.

~ We knew after "Juno" that young director Jason Reitman was about to get some very serious projects thrown his way. Next up for him will be "Up in the Air", a story following a constantly traveling human resources exec whose life is falling apart...so he responds by being totally obsessed with notching his millionth frequent flyer mile. He's also working again with "Juno" writer Diablo Cody in the cheerleader comedy-thriller "Jennifer's Body", starring Megan Fox ("Transformers" hottie).

~ Nicolas Cage is set to star in an updated version of the 1992 film "Bad Lieutenant", which starred Harvey Keitel as a drug-addled, lowlife cop in NYC. There are so many lines I could write here...but some setups are just too easy to take advantage of.

~ I've also written before about Steven Spielberg directing the movie "Lincoln", starring Liam Neeson as the iconic

president. It's now been reported that filming will begin next year, with an anticipated release in late 2010. The screenplay will be from Tony Kushner, who did such a magnificent job with the screenplay for another Spielberg masterpiece: "Munich".

This week's new movie releases:

Only one film being released this week, and it will have a first week take to rival "Iron Man".

The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian

Starring: Ben Barnes, Skandar Keynes, Georgie Henley

Plot: The Pevensie children return to Narnia one year after their first adventure to find that 1,300 years have passed there, and all is not well since an evil king ascended to the throne.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: Liam Neeson is also back as the voice of Aslan, but no sign of Tilda Swinton in this one, so it looks like the White Witch will be just CGI when she appears, and it will be voiced by an impersonator. In any case, there is very positive buzz on this one. The film is said by many to be better than the first, which surprised me with it's quality when I finally saw it on DVD. Darker and more fore brooding than the first, it is still able to strike a good balance by being entertaining for adults, but not too intense for kids (although some are warning that the battle scenes may be too intense for the under 8 set). I'll let you know.

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New DVD Releases for Tuesday, May 20th

National Treasure 2: Book of Secrets - Nicolas Cage in "Sell Out, Part 2"! OK...I saw it at the theater, but chose not to review it since my wife liked it so much...and she hates it when she likes a campy movie and then I trash it in a review. This one? Stupid (like the first), but entertaining (like the first). Overall, it's worth watching, especially if you found the first one amusing, as it's not much different, but not a re-hash either.

Strange Wilderness - Speaking of stupid...that would be this idiotic film about a bunch of Crocodile Hunter wannabees. When Steve Zahn headlines a film, you know you are in trouble.

George Romero's Diary of the Dead - More flesh eating Zombies from the Zombie King himself! I think I'll just see if I can catch a repeat of "Shaun of the Dead";.

Calendar Watch

Next week; [*Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*](#) (starts on

Thursday, May 22

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

[*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"?

[You Don't Mess with the Zohan](#) -

June 6

th

- Adam Sandler as a former Mossad agent setting up shop as a hairdresser in New York City.

[Kung Fu Panda](#) - June 6th - Jack Black as the voice of a reluctant panda bear recruited by a team of Kung Fu masters.

[The Incredible Hulk](#) - June 13th -

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

[The Happening](#) - June 13th -

Latest M. Night Shyamalan thriller, starring Mark Wahlberg in a tale about a family on the run after natural disasters threaten the entire planet.

[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.

[The Love Guru](#) - June 20th - Mike Myers already catching as much hell from India as Sacha Baron Cohen did from Kazakhstan for making fun of

cultures that don't seem to have a sense of humor.

[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.

Hancock - July 4th - Will Smith as a hard-living superhero needing the use of a public relations professional (Jason Bateman) to repair his image.

Hellboy II: The Golden Army - July

11

th _

The big red cigar
chomping demon with a
bad attitude is back for
more butt kicking.

The Dark Knight - July

19

th _

Batman is back, and

this time he's tracking the Joker, played by Heath Ledger. Most likely the box office champion of 2008.

Mamma Mia! - July 19^t

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- Something for the

ladies to attend while the guys are busy watching Batman kick the Joker's ass. A musical featuring the songs of ABBA. And my wife wants us to go see it. Sigh.

X-Files 2 - July 25th -
Little is known yet
about these further
adventures of Scully
and Fox...not even
the title.

Tropic Thunder -

August 15

th

- A group of actors shooting a big budget war movie are forced to become the soldiers they are portraying in the film. Stars Ben Stiller, Jack Black,

and Robert Downey Jr, playing a white actor donning black make-up to "fit the part".

The International -
August 15

th

- Clive Owen and Naomi Watts in a thriller about an Interpol agent's attempts to break up an international arms dealing ring financed by a high

profile bank. (What can Wachovia do for you?)

Righteous Kill -

September 12

th

- Robert De Niro
and Al Pacino
together again as
NY detectives
working on a case
that may be related
to both a serial
killer and a man
they might have

wrongly imprisoned
years before.

Eagle Eye -
September 26
th
- Shia LaBeouf

and Michelle
Monaghan as a
mother and son
who become
unwitting members
of a terrorist cell
plotting a political
assassination.

Body of Lies -

October 10

th

- Russell Crowe

and Leonardo

DiCaprio in Ridley

Scott's spy tale of

intrigue in the

Middle East.

RocknRolla -

October 31

st

- Guy Ritchie

hopefully back in
form for another
tale of London
gangsters.

Gerard Butler,

Thandie Newton,

Tom Wilkenson,

and Jeremy

Frackin' Piven
star.

*Quantum of
Solace -*
November 13

th

- The next James Bond film, picking up shortly after the events ending "Casino Royale"

*Harry Potter and
the Half-Blood
Prince -*

November 21
st

- The sixth of
J.K. Rowling's
seven books,

setting the stage
for the two part
conclusion in
2010 and 2011.

Defiance -

December 19

th

- Daniel Craig

and Live

Schreiber as

Jewish brothers

in WWII

Russian,
leading a band
of refugees in
striking back at
the Germans. A
major early
Oscar

contender

Blockbusters on the Distant

Horizon (movies that would seem to be big hits...as soon as they get made).

X-Men Origins:

Wolverine - Ma

y 1

s

t

, 2009 - Hugh

Jackman goes

it alone as the

adamentium
enhanced
anti-hero. With
Live Schreiber
as Sabertooth,
and Ryan
Reynolds as

Deadpool.

Star Trek - Ma

y 8

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, 2009 - J.J.
Abrams and a
young cast
reboot the
franchise,
going back to
Kirk and

Spock's days at Starfleet Academy.

Angels and

Demons - May
15th,
2009 - Tom
Hanks and
Ron Howard
follow-up to
"The

DaVinci Code"

Terminator 4 -
May 22nd,

2009 -
Christian Bale
as John
Conner as the
franchise
moves into the
apocalyptic

future.

Transformers

2 - June 26th,

2009 - The

next chapter of Robots In Disguise!

Public Enemy

- July 1st,

2009 -

Johnny Depp

as John

Dillinger.

Co-starring
Christian
Bale, and
directed by
Michael
Mann

*The Taking
of Pelham*
123- August
7th,
2009 -
Denzel

Washington,
John
Travolta, and
James
Gandolfini in
a remake of

the classic
1974 film
about a
hijacked
subway car.

Shutter
Island - October, 2009 -
Martin
Scorsese
working once

again with
Leonardo
DiCaprio in
this mystery
set in 1954.

Nottingham -
November,
2009 - Ridley
Scot and
Russell
Crowe

together
again in a
retelling of
the Robin
Hood
legend, this

time through
the eyes of
the Sheriff of
Nottingham
(Crowe).

Avatar - Dec
ember 18
th

, 2009 -

James
Cameron's

sci-fi/CGI
extravaganza
a.

Iron Man 2 -
May, 2010 -
Right on the
heels of the
success of
the first one,

Marvel is
quick to get
Robert
Downey Jr.
back into his
titanium suit.

Thor - June 2010 -

Another
Marvel
superhero...
but the
Nordic God
is about as

bland
personality-
wise as
Superman,
so we'll see
how it goes.

Harry Potter
and the
Deathly
Hallows:
Part I - 2010
- The start of

the End for
the boy
wizard and
his battle
against
He-Who-Sha

Il-not-Be-Na
med

Lincoln - 201

0 - Steven
Spielberg
directs the
biographical
film of the 16
th

President (Liam Neeson)

The Hobbit -
2010 -
Guillermo
del Toro
directs and
Peter

Jackson will
produce the
prequel to
"Lord
of the
Rings"

. Ian
McKellen
will return as
Gandalf

Fantastic
Voyage -
2010 -
Roland
Emmerich
("The

Day After
Tomorrow &
quot;, ,
": 10,00
0
B.C. ":)

remakes the
classic 1967
movie about
a
miniaturized
sub and

crew
operating on
a scientist
from inside
his brain.

The
Avengers -
2011 - Iron
Man, Hulk,
Thor, and
Captain

America
open up a
can of
whoopass
on bad guys
everywhere.

*Harry Potter
and the*

Deathly
Hallows:
Part II -
2011 - The
end of the
line for what

will be
beyond
doubt the
most
profitable
series in the

history of film making.

The Hobbit

2 - 2011 -
del Toro and
Jackson
again, this
time
covering the

time

between the

end of

Tolkien's

book,

"The

Hobbit"
; and the
start of
LOTR.