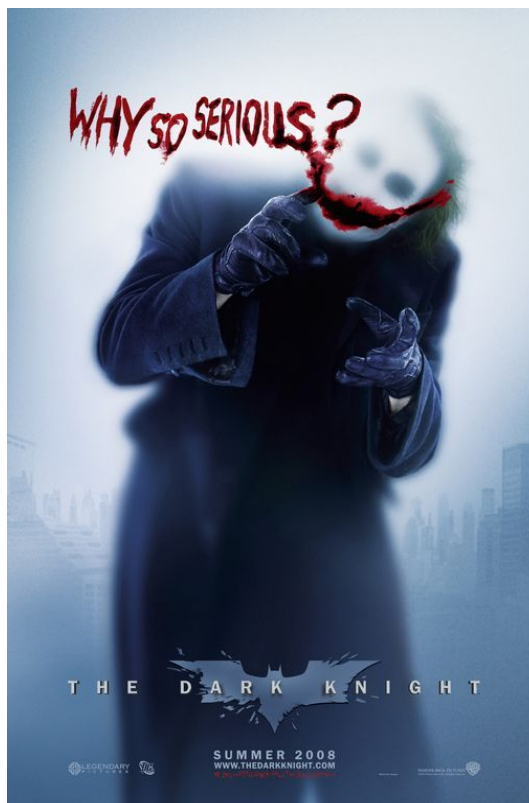


The Best & Worst Movies Of 2008

Written by {ga=mitch}

Thursday, January 01 2009 7:00 PM -

It wasn't a good year for the Indians. It most certainly wasn't a good year for the Browns. And if you've been reading Mitch's excellent film reviews on The Cleveland Fan all year, you also know it wasn't a great year for movies. But even in the worst of years, we have some great ones. And in his year end recap, Mitch gives us his ten best and worst movies of 2008 and also hands out some awards for the year in movies.



As we draw to the end of another year at The Cleveland Fan, what better time to look back on the past year...and then gag when we realize that the Year in Movies wasn't necessarily any better than the Year of the Indians or the Year of the Browns.

So without further ado, let's all hold our noses and take a retrospective view of the last twelve months.

For the box office, it wasn't much of a step down from 2007. 24 films made over \$100 million, down just slightly from the record 28 films in 2007.

Additionally, 2008 saw the release of the film that trails only "Titanic" now, as "The Dark Knight" made over \$500 million domestically, and will soon be only the fourth film to make over a billion world-wide.

However, don't fall to the incorrect assumption that quantity (of dollars) equals quality.

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For my list, as with last year, I'm only listing movies that were released in 2008 that I actually saw for my "Best" and "Worst". Just like last year, I fully expect the Top Ten list to change once I finally get around to see "Frost/Nixon", "Slumdog Millionaire", "Revolutionary Road", "Gran Torino", and "Defiance".

As a matter of fact, five of my final Top 10 from 2007 was seen in January or February ("Juno", "Once", "The Lives of Others", "No Country for Old Men" and "There Will Be Blood").

This year was so bad, that I must expand upon my usual Bottom Five list, as the movies that were No. 6 - 10 on my Rotten list were probably worse than at least eight of the flicks from the Bottom Five of 2006 and 2007.

Top Ten movies of 2008:

1. Wall-E. Even though the film isn't as great once the robots reach the ship containing the remainders of the human race, the first 40 near-silent minutes of this film is pure gold, a combination of Charlie Chaplin's "City Lights" and "2001: A Space Odyssey". Pixar always makes the best animated films. Here, they made the best film, period.

2. The Curious Case of Benjamin Button. The last time Dave Fincher and Brad Pitt teamed up, they had a film you may have heard of..."Fight Club".

This time, they've put together a wonderful tale that reminds one of Forrest Gump...without the campiness.

My review will be out in the next day or two.

3. Batman: The Dark Knight. No...it's not as good as "The Godfather" or "The Departed" (sorry fanbois), but what it IS, is the best comic book adaptation ever put to film...which puts it pretty high this year. Heath Ledger's performance has gathered most of the news, but credit goes to the script and Chris Nolan's expert direction as well.

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4. Iron Man. Nowhere as serious as "The Dark Knight", this movie still works because they took a very minor character in the SuperHero pantheon, and created an great film...due mostly to the inspired decision to cast Robert Downey Jr. as the first over-40 hero, and he had the courage to use his own former addictions and problems to bring the boozing, womanizing Tony Stark to repentant life.

5. Marley & Me. I'll probably get ripped for putting such a tear jerker up this high, but I can't help myself. The movie just works for me, due to the fact that the filmmakers actually show a family in a true light without excessive glamorization or overdramatic problems.

Plus they finally show a dog as a dog...not as a human in fur.

6. The Bank Job. This year's highest rating for a movie that I didn't catch at the theater. I blame the PR department, as they advertised this as another Jason Statham action comedy.

It's not.

It's an excellent caper thriller that is based off from a true story.

7. Burn After Reading. The Coen Brothers follow up their overly serious "No Country for Old Men" by going back to a black comedy...and do they nail it with this one.

There is not one character in this film that you can root for, they are all that selfish and/or stupid...but it's still a riot to watch them.

8. Appaloosa. Ed Harris should make more Westerns...he seems born for them. Viggo Mortensen also shines in this story of two men cleaning up a town terrorized by a land baron.

Could have been a top five classic were it not for the horrible miscasting of Renee Zellweger as the amoral romantic interest.

9. Tropic Thunder. A Ben Stiller film in my Top Ten? "Cats and dogs; living together!" Actually, Stiller is the weak link acting-wise in this satire, but his directing is excellent, as is the skewering script.

Robert Downey Jr, Jack Black, and yes...Tom Cruise...make this movie a riot.

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10. The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian. This one didn't do nearly as well as the first, probably because it has quickly evolved into a more adult tale.

Quite an impressive spectacle that faithfully treats C.S. Lewis's original material.

Bottom Ten Movies of 2008

10. Jumper. The world's worst actor, Hayden Christensen, starring as a superhero? A great premise ruined by a horrible actor and lame script.

9. Eagle Eye. Webster's Dictionary has just made an addition to it's definition of "preposterous" to reference this movie. Just when I thought it couldn't get any more ludicrous, two characters SWIM through liquid nitrogen (in street clothes), and only come out shivering a bit.

8. The Spirit. Frank Miller needed to be spending his time working on "Sin City 2" instead of making this completely boring, incoherent comic book.

7. Max Payne. Movies made from video games usually suck (see also, "Doom", "Hitman"). This mess kept the streak going.

6. Untraceable. How about "Unwatchable"? Not a bad premise, and Diane Lane is always great...but then they turned it into a second rate horror flick.

5. The Day the Earth Stood Still. Keanu Reeves as an unemotional alien...boy, that's a stretch. Way to take a sci-fi classic about the Cold War, and turn it into a boring "save the environment" snoozer.

4. The Other Boleyn Girl. You would think that with Natalie Portman, Scarlett Johansson, and Eric Bana, this would be a great film. It wasn't. Even the actors

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looked bored.

Or

maybe I was just spoiled by Showtime's exceptional series "The Tudors", which showed the whole Henry VIII/Anne Boleyn story in a far superior light.

3. Speed Racer. Hated the stupid cartoon, but I was hoping that the Wachowski Brothers could follow up on their excellent "V for Vendetta" with a new imaging of this.

They couldn't.

Cotton Candy Hot Wheels on Acid.

2. 10,000 B.C. Stupid, stupid film that screws up historical timelines, and gives us a dumb story with dumb actors making dumb decisions.

1. The Happening. M. Night Shyamalan just needs to go away. Last year, I stated that "Smokin Aces" may have been the worst film I've seen in the last 10 years.

I was wrong.

It's going to be hard for any movie to re-define the Spergon Wynn rating more than this dog.

Box Office Bombs of the Year

1. Meet Dave. Eddie Murphy still sucks when doing movies where he makes sure his mug is onscreen 90% of the time. This time the audiences finally figured this out, and the film made barely \$11 million.

2. X-Files: I Want to Believe. If you weren't a die-hard fan of the series, this film made no sense. It didn't make many cents, either.

3. The Love Guru. Mike Myers first live-action film in several years. He needs to just stick to making Shrek movies, as this one offended just about everyone.

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4. Body of Lies. Was supposed to be a big hit given the combination of director Ridley Scott and Leonardo DiCaprio and Russell Crowe. But somewhere, they forgot a little something called "a script";

5. Australia. Baz Luhrman says he loves Hollywood epics. He should stick to watching them instead of trying to make them.

Special Mention for "Delgo". The animated film that was made in 2003, but not released until just a few weeks ago set a record as the lowest grossing film ever released to over 2,000 theaters. It only made \$500,000 on the first weekend. In comparison, the second worst opening weekend was last year's "P2"...which made four times as much with over \$2,000,000.

Needless to say, "Delgo" disappeared from ALL theaters the next week.

Winner of the Year: Robert Downey Jr. First came the surprising bravura performance as the title role in "Iron Man", and then RDJ completed the return to the top of the heap by his ballsy role as an Aussie making himself "black" for the "movie within a movie" that was "Tropic Thunder", a role that might win him an Oscar nomination.

Loser of the Year: Mark Wahlberg. When you "star" in two of the worst movies of the year; "The Happening" and "Max Payne"...then this spot is reserved for you. At least he succeeded with a good season of "Entourage";

Guilty Pleasure of the Year: "RockNRolla". Nowhere near as good as Guy Ritchie's other London gangster films "Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels" and "Snatch", but still quite enjoyable with Gerard Butler playing the anti-Leonidas.

Over-rated Film of the Year: "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull". George Lucas and Steven Spielberg were so intent of touching all of the previous bases covered by the first three movies that they forgot to explore

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one inch of new material.

Upon Further Review: There were probably several movies later in the year that got at least a half football more than they should have, just because they were good in comparison to all the other crap that was being shown. Included in that list would be "The Express", "Quantum of Solace", "Get Smart", and "Leatherheads". I'm also still tempted to drop "The Dark Knight" from a Bernie Kosar to a Brian Sipe (from 4 footballs to 3 1/2).

Open a second viewing, it's easier to see a lot of places that could have been trimmed or tightened up in this very long movie which was also a little too full of melodrama to be ranked amongst the greatest ever.

Have a Happy New Year, and see ya' in the popcorn line next year!