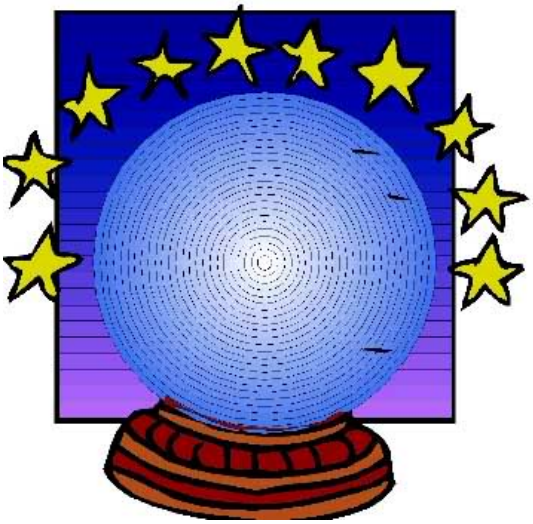
It grows in popularity each week ... it's the "Crystal Ball", a Friday night staple here on The Blurbs. Per usual, Mitch previews the weeks theater releases - led by "Rocky Balboa", "We Are Marshall", and "The Good Shepard". In the rumors section, Mitch talks about a new Star Trek movie, set to star Matt Damon. And also hits on the week's DVD releases, which feature "The Black Dahlia" and "Jackass 2". Enjoy.



Huge weekend for releases that actually kicked off on Wednesday with Rocky Balboa, and will continue on through Monday.

News & Rumors:

~ Tom Cruise is planning to do a movie based upon some of the writings of Scientology founder/fruit cake L. Ron Hubbard…starring Victoria Beckham (Posh Spice). And after all, doing this sort of homage to their cult leader worked out soooo well for John Travolta when he made “Battlefield Earth”.

~ There has been a confirmation of sorts that the new Star Trek movie will indeed focus on the young Kirk, Spock, McCoy, and Scott. Matt Damon is still considered the top choice for the iconic role. I’m wishing they would have made a full length movie out of the Saturday Night Live segment with John Belushi as Kirk and Chevy Chase as Spock, running from a 1968 Ford driven by NBC studio exec Elliot Gould.

~ We actually have a superhero movie that ISN'T based on a comic book. Will Smith will star in "Tonight, He Comes", playing a depressed and bored superhero who is recently more interested in boozing, women, and fame than he is in saving people. After crash-landing in a small town, he befriends a 12 year old boy and begins an affair with a married housewife. I guess they didn't learn their lesson with "My Super Ex-Girlfriend".

~ Work will begin next year on Steven Spielberg's latest directorial blockbuster, "Lincoln". The master story teller will put his spin on the life of America's most iconic president, with Liam Neeson playing the title role and Marcia Gay Harden as Mary Todd Lincoln. Look for it to be the early favorite for the 2008 Oscar chase.

~ This would be perfect. Rosie O'Donnell; the next US ambassador to the UN. "You with the funny accent and stupid hat!?! SHUT UP!!!!" I'd Tivo C-Span for that.

This week's new releases:

Slow week in the news and rumors, thanks to the holidays. But that gives me more room to fit in all the new releases.

Title: **Rocky Balboa** (Released Wednesday)

Starring: Sylvester Stallone, Burt Young, Milo Ventimiglia (Peter Petrocelli in "Heroes")

Plot: Inspired by a “what-if?” computerized video segment on ESPN pitting boxers from different generations, the widowed Rocky trains for an exhibition bout against the reigning champion.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Different setup this time…it’s hard to tell you the buzz about something when I’ve already seen it. Check out the review here.

Title: **We Are Marshall**

Starring: Mathew McConaughey, Matthew Fox, David Strathairn, Ian McShane.

Plot: After the tragic plane crash that killed 75 players, coaches, and fans in 1970, Jack Lengyel faces the daunting task of rebuilding the team.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: The buzz on this is that it is a moving, faithful, inspiring telling of the road to

recovery for an entire university, and indeed the entire Huntington, WV area. My review will be posted next week. I'm making sure my wife has plenty of tissues when we go. I might need one or two for myself.

Title: **The Good Shepherd**

Starring: Matt Damon, Angelina Jolie, Robert De Niro

Plot: Depiction of the creation of the CIA and its early Cold War years.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: A labor of love for director/star De Niro…and that's not always a good thing. My early guess is that if you liked the type of biographical epic the Scorsese gave us in 2004 with "The Aviator", you'll probably like this one. If you hated it; then avoid it. And if your ass gets easily tired, you may want to wait until this one comes out on DVD, as it clocks in at almost three hours.

Title: **Night at the Museum**

Starring: Ben Stiller, Robin Williams, Owen Wilson

Plot: The new watchman at a museum learns that all the exhibits come alive at night

The BeerBuzz: It has Ben Stiller, arguably the worst actor in the world, and Robin Williams, whose every non-drama over the past 15 years has sucked. One of those movies that looks pretty funny when you watch the trailer…but you get the feeling that every funny scene in the movie is shown in the trailer, and there isn't anything more to it than that (see also, Man of the Year).

Title: **Dreamgirls** (December 25th)

Starring: Beyonce Knowles, Jamie Foxx, Eddie Murphy, Jennifer Hudson

Plot: Three friends form a singing group, and then deal with fame and betrayal as they rocket to the top.

View Trailers

The BeerBuzz: If you loved "Chicago", you'll probably enjoy this fictionalized version take-off of Diana Ross and the Supremes, with Beyonce playing the less talented diva that gets pushed to the forefront due to her looks instead of the vocally gifted but heftier Jennifer Hudson. Eddie Murphy as a jackassed egotistical James Brown type singer and Hudson are getting lots of buzz about possible best supporting actor nominations. I'll review this one later as well, but I'm getting an early feeling that this will be 2007's version of "Brokeback Mountain"…the one movie everyone will be pushing for Best Picture so hard that I'll get sick of hearing it, and push for

anything else (like perhaps…"The Departed"?)

Title: **Black Christmas** (December 25th)

Starring: Some actors, directors, and studio executives you are probably going to be hit by lightning for making this film.

Plot: Co-ed's stranded in their sorority house over Christmas are terrorized and butchered…along with some male friends just to keep things fair.

View Trailer? You want a trailer for this piece of crap, you sicko? Go find it yourself!

The BeerBuzz: Last year it was Bill O'Reilly going nuts over "the attack on Christmas", and now this year the far out fundamentalists have something new to bitch at…a horror flick concerning Christmas. Get over yourselves…if you ever looked, there are rotten slasher films released every stinking week. All you busybodies are doing is giving the makers of this dreck free publicity, and they are laughing all the way to the bank about your indignation.

To be released in limited areas (check local listings…I'll be previewing them in greater depth on the weekend of their nation wide releases): *Letters from Iwo Jima, Notes on a Scandal, The Good German*, and *Children of Men*

New DVD Releases on Tuesday, December 26th

If your movie was so bad that the studios decide to release it to DVD the day AFTER Christmas…you know you were in a bomb.

The Black Dahlia – Brian DePalma still showing that he totally lost all his directing mojo after making mega-bomb "The Bonfires of the Vanities". Unbelievable…two boring movies this year with Scarlett Johansson…I keep telling you that Josh Hartnett is the black hole of Hollywood. No matter how big the other stars are in one of his movies, he will sink it (and Hugh Jackman isn't far behind at this point).

The Descent – Pretty much "Black Christmas" with the hot chicks being killed underground and not on Christmas. This time it's by mutant creatures in the Appalachians. All of them are wearing Pittsburgh Steelers' gear.

Jackass Number Two – If you liked the first time you saw stupid people doing stupid stunts, you will probably like this one as well. I'm just always reminded of the joke, "What are the last words of a Redneck?...'Hey, y'all, watch THIS!'"

The Last Kiss – Truly awful movie with Zach Braff as a whiny jerk cheating on his pregnant girlfriend. Either an unfunny comedy, or an unserious drama. Un-interesting is the better description.

Calendar Watch:

Next week: Absolutely NOTHING new to be released nation wide next weekend. So next week in this spot, I'll give you a rundown of the Best and Worst films I saw in 2006.

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

Children of Men –Futuristic Clive Owen and Julianna Moore film about a world where women can no longer get pregnant, dooming mankind (January?)

Notes on a Scandal – Oscar hopeful with Cate Blanchett and Judi Dench as a teacher involved in an affair with a young student, and the colleague who betrayed her. Limited release in December, no dates yet given for nation-wide release.

Home of the Brave – January 5th - Samuel L. Jackson, 50 Cent, and Jessical Biel in a tale about the aftermath of a failed mission in Iraq for the four soldiers who survived.

Miss Potter – January 12th – Renee Zellwegger as the children's author Beatrix Potter. Looks like a female version of 2004's "Finding Neverland".

Letters From Iwo Jima – January 19th – Nation wide release date for Clint Eastwood's companion piece to "Flags of Our Fathers", telling the Battle of Iwo Jima from the Japanese viewpoint.

The Good German – January 19th – Nation wide release of the latest Steven Soderbergh/George Clooney collaboration. The buzz coming about this one is not good.

Smokin' Aces – January 29th – Interesting concept…Jeremy Piven as a motor-mouthed Vegas stand up comedian who decides to rat on the mob, setting up competing hitmen vying for the bounty.

Hannibal Rising – February 9th - Tale of how the young Hannibal Lecture became the cretin we all know and love. As you know, February release dates normally indicate a bomb.

Ghost Rider – February 16th - Nicholas Cage turns into a motorcycle riding superhero with a flaming skeleton head. (February)

The Number 23 – February 23rd – Mystery/ Supernatural Thriller with Jim Carrey and Virginia Madsen. I'm hoping this is the exception to the "February Stinker" rule.

Zodiac – March 2nd - Jake Gyllenhaal and Robert Downey, Jr star in the tale of the Bay Area serial killer.

300 – March 9th - Frank Miller adaptation of the Frank Miller graphic novel about 300 Spartans defending Greece from the entire frickin' Persian Empire. Filmed in the same style as "Sin City".

Shooter – March 16th - Political thriller with Mark Wahlberg as a sniper trying to stop an assassination.

The Reaping – March 30th – Hilary Swank as a professor known for debunking miracles who goes to a small town suffering from what seems to be the 10 Biblical Plagues.

Reign Over Me – First major fictional piece dealing with the effects of 9/11 on the families, starring Adam Sandler (against type) and Don Cheadle (March)

Grind House – April 6th - Two one-hour short horror stories, one from Robert Rodriguez, the other from Quentin Tarantino. (April). I may hate slasher films, but this one looks too good to miss.

Spider-Man 3 – The webslinger versus Venom, Sandman, and Harry Osborne picking up his father's GoblinGear. (May)

Shrek the Third – Justin Timberlake as young King Arthur. Gulp (May)

Pirates of the Caribbean: At the World's End – Captain Jack goes for the hat trick (May)

Ocean's Thirteen – Will someone please stick a fork in this franchise? (June)

Fantastic Four: The Rise of the Silver Surfer – No way does this film get completed by this date (June)

Live Free or Die Hard – John McClane strikes again (probably with his walker) (June)

The Simpsons Movie – ummmm…beeeerrrrrr (July)

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix – My wife and daughter will be there the first day (July)

The Bourne Ultimatum – Superspy Jason Bourne (Matt Damon) is back and looking for his roots (August)

Beowulf – Robert Zemeckis gets all medieval on us with a motion capture (like “Polar Express”) adaptation of the epic poem (November)