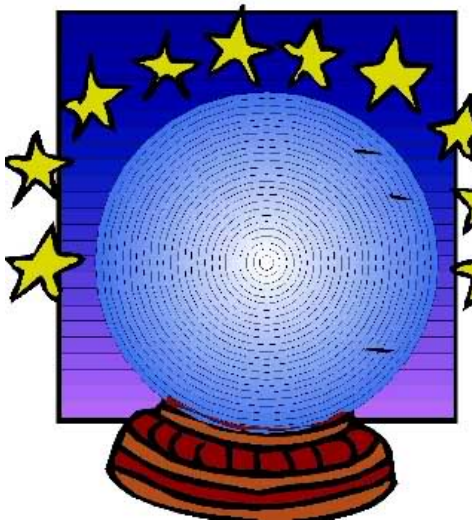
It's FRIDAY! Which makes it Crystal Ball time here at The Blurbs. Mitch takes a look at this week's two biggest theater releases, the horror film "The Messengers", and "Because I Said So" starring Diane Keaton. Also, Mitch previews the new releases on DVD, highlighted by "Flags Of Our Fathers". Mitch also supplies us with the latest Hollywood news and rumors, including confirmation of a sequel to the phenomenal 2006 film "The Departed".



Yes, this is that day that Punxsutawney Phil's cousin, Hollywood Harry, comes out of his condo. If he can see his own feet through the smog of L.A., then we're due six more weeks of crappy movies.

Last week I made references to the movie "Smokin' Aces" and how it was "*a type of movie that is going to get hammered by the critics, but may be pretty damn entertaining to watch...which is why we movie critics are held in such high esteem by the general public*
." So much for my attempt to cut a movie a little slack...as "Smokin' Aces" may just be the worst movie I've seen this decade, as I mentioned in my
review yesterday
.

I also noticed that "Epic Movie" may be even worse...not that I'm going to be stupid enough to find out for myself. Rottentomatoes.com has the movie right now at 3% "fresh" (meaning only 3 out of 100 critics give the movie a thumbs up).

And the doldrums of poor Winter releases continues...at least there is only two rotten movies coming out this week as opposed to the four stink-fests from last week. The hell with it...there's

a Super Bowl to watch this weekend, so nothing else really matters.

News & Rumors:

~ More info on what I reported last week regarding another film based upon “The Departed”. It’s now determined that it will be a sequel (a prequel was also discussed) and it will be based upon Mark Wahlberg’s character with Robert De Niro playing a major role. One trivia item; De Niro was first scheduled to play the role filled by Martin Sheen in “The Departed”, but his schedule with “The Good Shepherd” made it impossible. Had De Niro played it, the movie would have been scripted quite differently, with more give and take between De Niro and Nicholson, and consequently less screen time for Damon and DiCaprio.

~ Here’s news on an upcoming Samuel L. Jackson flick that looks like it has some potential. “The Cleaner” will star the ever hip Samuel L. as a former cop who specializes in cleaning up crime scenes. He discovers that he may have been set up to inadvertently removed evidence of another murder. Co-staring Eva Mendes and Ed Harris. NOT to be confused with the complete box office bomb “Code Name: The Cleaner”.

~ Sean Connery, who has pretty much said that he has retired from acting, states that he would probably come out of his self imposed exile to appear once again as Professor Henry Jones in Indiana Jones 4. Hell, lets make it perfect and have Brad Pitt play Indy, Jr, and Daniel Radcliffe play Harrison Ford’s grandson. Ya know...that was meant to be sarcastic, but looking at it, it would be pretty interesting to have a four generation action/adventure...but only if Sir Sean is in it.

~ “Harold and Kumar 2” is ON. I haven’t been this excited since the Indians announced their new clubhouse manager.

~ Telus, Canada's second largest phone company, has started selling porn videos for it's cell phones. Considering how Toronto drivers are already amongst the worst on the planet, this cannot be good for insurance rates.

This week's new releases:

Title: **The Messengers**

Starring: Dylan McDermott, Penelope Anne Miller, Kristen Stewart

Plot: An ominous darkness invades a North Dakota sunflower farm, targeting a young family.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: A sunflower farm in North Dakota? Please, SOMEONE come and kill me if I were to ever think that growing sunflowers in North Dakota would be a good personal and professional move. Death by evil creatures...or death by slowly being so frickin' bored that your brain turns to tapioca? Tough call.

Title: **Because I Said So**

Starring: Diane Keaton, Mandy Moore, Stephen Collins

Plot: A meddling mother and her two oldest daughters try to set up the baby of the family with the right man.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Remember last week when I was talking about the Estrogen Alert from “Catch and Release”? Well this makes “Catch and Release” look to be a Stallone/Ah-nuld double feature in comparison. Watching the trailer of it at the theater with my wife...she’s all “oh, isn’t this funny?”, and I’m looking to avoid hurling into my popcorn bag. I’m just hoping I can convince her to hold off on this one until it’s out on DVD...and I’m out of state on some golf trip.

New DVD Releases on Tuesday, February 6th

Flags of Our Fathers – Very good depiction of the Battle of Iwo Jima from the American perspective, following the three surviving men who were capture in the famous picture of the flag raising as they are paraded across America as heroes. Slightly uneven at times, but excellent when focusing on the battles themselves.

Hollywoodland – Much like “The Illusionist” was a lesser known but far superior film about turn of the century magicians than the lame “The Prestige”, “Hollywoodland” may appear similar to the other film noir mystery flick “The Black Dahlia”, but it is much better. Ben Affleck deservedly received a Golden Globe award for best supporting actor for his role as the doomed George Reeves. Saying “Ben Affleck” and “Award” in the same sentence...that just doesn’t seem right.

The Grudge 2 – Another creepy movie with that creepy little kid, this time starring Amber

Tamblyn, who is pretty creepy in her own right. Speaking of creepy, maybe Scott Pollard and his Mohawk can star in The Grudge 3.

Flicka– Allison Lohman, who is nearing 40 years old, I think, once again plays a teenager in this remake of the “spunky girl and her horse” movie. Probably a pretty decent family movie, another one that proves that Tim McGraw did sell his soul to Satan...talented singer, actor, AND he gets to sleep with Faith Hill. Sigh.

Running With Scissors– Annette Bening independent film that was pushed to be an awards contender, but is really another depressing “feel sorry for the kid who has these loser parents” movie.

Calendar Watch:

Next week, *Hannibal Rising* , *Norbit*

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

Ghost Rider – February 16th - Nicholas Cage turns into a motorcycle riding superhero with a flaming skeleton head. The closer we get to the actual release on this one, the more I’m convinced it’s going to bomb big time.

Breach – February 16th – A young FBI agent starts spying on his mentor, who is suspected to be a traitor. Chris Cooper, Ryan Phillippe, Laura Linney, and Dennis Haysbert make this a very interesting cast.

The Astronaut Farmer – February 23rd – Billy Bob Thornton as a farmer who builds a rocket on his farm and intends to make a flight in it. The concept is completely goofy, but it looks like it might be something that works.

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, but I'm seeing in some places where they are calling this a "mystery comedy"...which doesn't sound good.

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

Wild Hogs – March 2nd - John Travolta, Tim Allen, Martin Lawrence and William H. Macy as four middle aged buddies take off for the open road on motorcycles, only to end up crossing paths with a Hell's Angels gang. Might be the Movie to Beat when it comes to next year's "Razzies" for "Worst Picture".

300 – March 9th - Frank Miller adaptation of the Frank Miller graphic novel about 300 Spartans defending their homeland from the entire frickin' Persian Empire. Filmed in the same style as "Sin City". Geeks everywhere can't wait.

Reign Over Me - March 9th – First major fictional piece dealing with the effects of 9/11 on the families, starring Adam Sandler in an impressive looking dramatic role (if you can believe it) and Don Cheadle.

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

Sunshine – March 16th – A team of eight scientists are sent off in a spaceship to try to re-ignite part of the dying sun. Saw a preview of it last week...and it could just be a really awesome movie visually at least.

Lucky You – March 16th – Long delayed film centered around the World Series of Poker with Eric Bana and Drew Barrymore.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles – March 23rd – They're baaaaccccckkkk. Supposedly a little more adult oriented than the campy films from the 80s.

Rescue Dawn – March 30th – Christian Bale as a pilot shot down in Laos in the early years of the Vietnam War, and his efforts to escape captivity.

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.

The Kingdom – April 20th – Jamie Foxx, Chris Cooper, and Jennifer Garner in a story about an American team sent into the Middle East to investigate a terrorist attack on Americans in Riyadh.

Spider-Man 3 – May 4th - The webslinger versus Venom, Sandman, and Harry Osborne picking up his father's GoblinGear.

Shrek the Third – May 13th – Shrek & Donkey…together again. This time with the jolly green Scottish ogre trying to push off the king's crown onto a young Arthur.

1408 – May 13th – John Cusack as a famed debunker of paranormal activities encountering real terror in this adaptation of a Steven King tale.

Pirates of the Caribbean: At the World's End – May 25th - Captain Jack goes for the hat trick.

Ocean's Thirteen – June 8th – Ellen Barkin replaces Julia Roberts and Catherine Zeta-Jones in this edition. Talk about a "Brian Giles for Ricardo Rincon" level trade. Will someone please stick a fork in this franchise?

Fantastic Four: The Rise of the Silver Surfer – June 15th – This time the quartet go up against the Silver Surfer and the return of Dr. Doom. Please be better than the first one! (the trailer does look awesome).

Evan Almighty – June 22nd – Steve Carell's Evan Baxter from "Bruce Almighty" is now a Congressman chosen by God (Morgan Freeman) to receive His powers. A reported budget of over $200 million on this will either make it this year's "DaVinci Code" (big budget, big box office) or this year's "Poseidon".

Live Free or Die Hard – June 29th - John McClane strikes again (probably with his walker).

Transformers – July 6th – Michael Bay (hack, spit) tries to spin a former children's cartoon into an "Independence Day" type Armageddon movie. As much as I hate to admit it…the teaser trailer looks good.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix – July 13th – These movies keep getting darker and better as they go. Voldemort (aka "relative of Art Modell") is back and targeting Harry and his friends for some nasty payback.

The Simpsons Movie – July 27th - ummmm…beeeerrrrrr

The Bourne Ultimatum – August 3rd - Superspy Jason Bourne (Matt Damon) is back and looking for his roots.

The Invasion – August 17th – Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig in a sci-fi flick about an alien epidemic.

3:12 to Yuma – October 12th – Russell Crowe and Christian Bale in a remake of a classic Western with Bale as a farmer volunteering to escort a criminal (Crowe) to Yuma by train, with a battle of wits ensuing.

American Gangster – November 8th – Denzel Washington as a heroin kingpin from the Vietnam War era (he smuggled it back in the body bags of dead soldiers) and Russell Crowe as the investigator on his trail.

Beowulf – November 16th - Robert Zemeckis gets all medieval on us with a motion capture (like “Polar Express”) adaptation of the epic poem.