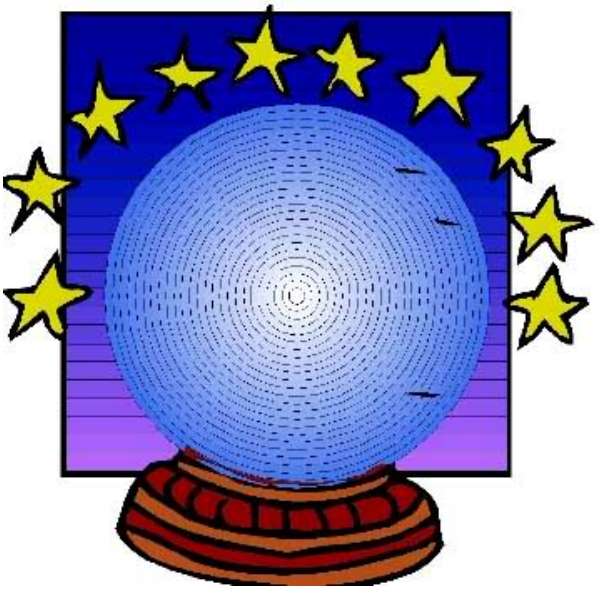
The last mega-movie of the summer is coming out this week (apologies to "The Simpsons Movie" and "Bourne Ultimatum"), so expect long lines of costume wearing geeks at a multi-plex near you to see "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix". Mitch is here to look at the new releases, plus review a weak crop of upcoming DVDs. He also gives us the latest movie/TV news and rumors and a unique look at the impact of overseas box office results. Happy Friday the 13th from The Ball.



The Crystal Ball - July 13th Releases

Some of you might have been wondering if I was talking out of both sides of my posterior after reading the statement prior to the review of the latest Harry Potter movie when it was said I expected it to take in more money than any other film this year.

Rewind tape to the week before, when I said that "Transformers" would be the box office champ of 2007.

A contradiction? Not really.

I think "Transformers" will be the "champ" of 2007, but that refers to the US Box Office. But when you consider the world wide box office, the Harry Potter franchise has been a money printing machine,

with all four previous episodes in the Top 20 all time worldwide, having raked in a total of over three and a half BILLION dollars for the first four films.

Now this may still turn out to be a Bold Prediction (copyright GreenMountainDawg, used entirely without his permission or any concern thereof), as "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End" is currently sitting at #5 overall, having taken in almost a billion dollars so far just by itself...despite the fact that it may end up as low as #5 this year in the US following "Transformers", "Spider-Man 3", "Harry Potter", and "Shrek 3".

In other words, as important as the US market is to movie-makers...quite often the success or failure of a movie comes from its performance overseas. The classic example would be 2004's "Troy". With a budget of $175 million, the Wolfgang Petersen/Brad Pitt epic was seen as a flop for only taking in $133 million.
But that was only in the US.

Overseas, it was a hit, raking in $348 million, placing it in the Top 50 All-Time list for non-USA box office.

That seems a bit strange...but I'll give the rest of the world credit for having also turned "thumbs down" to "Lady in the Water" and "All the King's Men".

***News & Rumors**:*

~ This will top Swerb's list for best news story, as it features two of his favorite current actors: Naomi Watts will appear with Clive Owen in "The International". It will be an action thriller with Owen as an obsessive Interpol agent investigating a high profile banking institute on charges of arms brokering, corruption, and murder.

Watts will play a Manhattan assistant district attorney helping him out.

~ Not a good sign. Fox has reportedly already scrapped the entire script for next season's "24", rejecting plans for costly location shoots in Africa. If only they had thrown out the entire script from last season, we might have enjoyed ourselves a lot more.

~ More Political thrillers coming out, with Don Cheadle and Guy Pearce filming "Traitor". Cheadle will be a CIA operative working undercover with a terrorist group who becomes a suspect himself.

Pearce ("LA Confidential", "Memento") will play the FBI agent investigating Cheadle.

~ Sadly, the rumors are true...there will be a remake of the movie "Footloose", with "High School Musical" star Zac Efron playing the Ren McCormack, the role made famous by the legendary Kevin Bacon. Why?

~ This has either "Shipwreck", or "Welcome back!" written all over it. Dennis Hopper, Nathan Lane, Kelsey Grammer, Stanley Tucci, and George Lopez will join Kevin Costner in the comedy "Swing Vote". Costner will play an apathetic working-class

single parent who is vaulted into the national spotlight when the presidential election comes down to a single vote: his. H opper and Grammer will play the two presidential candidates.

My early intuition is on "Shipwreck".

~ I came up with a great line regarding the movie "Transformers", in my not-so-humble-opinion, that I wish I had thought of before posting my review. The movie is like watching a top dollar Las Vegas stripper...beautiful to look at, but dumb as a box of rocks.

~ All Las Vegas strippers with PhDs may feel free to rebut that last comment. Please include high resolution pictures along with the scanned copy of your advanced degree in any emails to me.

~ The baseball All-Star Game got lower ratings than NBC's "The Singing Bee". "Why are we in this hand basket, and where are we going?" - Bud Selig.

This week's new releases:

Two new films this week. Something excellent...something totally disgusting.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

Starring: Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson, Rupert Grint, Michael Gambon

Plot: Harry and Dumbledore find themselves ostracized as the Ministry of Magic refuses to believe in the return of Lord Voldemort. To thwart a Ministry lackey bent on de-fanging Hogwarts, some students turn to Harry to teach them defenses against the Dark Lord.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: As you can tell from my review , I thought this was an incredible movie, and that Daniel Radcliffe is rapidly becoming a top actor.

Very dark and disturbing, and certainly not for anyone unfamiliar with the previous films.

For those that are, this is one of the best in the series.

Captivity

Starring: Elisha Cuthbert, Daniel Gillies, Pruitt Taylor Vince

Plot: Supermodel gets kidnapped and tortured by sicko.

The BeerBuzz: This movie has already been one huge trainwreck. To start with, billboard advertisements placed in LA and NY were removed after protests to the gross torture scenes being depicted on them.

Further protests to the sickness of the film called for the removal of the movie's rating, which would stop it from being shown in theaters.

Numerous edits were then made to get it down to an "R" rating, but the studio itself has already washed its collective hands of this mess.

It might do more business than "DOA: Dead or Alive", but not much more.

All and all, this is just one sick piece of exploitative crap.

If you're into torture horror, wait a couple of more months for "Saw IV".

New DVD Releases on Tuesday, July 17th

Not a whole lot this week as well. Hang in there, it'll get better by the end of the month.

The Hills Have Eyes 2 - And those eyes should divert themselves away from watching another one of these disgusting "mutants eat people" bore-fests.

Premonition - As if "The Lake House" wasn't bad enough, Sandra Bullock has to go through another rotten movie that has time travel/seeing into the future as the focal point. If Sandra could really time travel or see into the future, she would have passed on this.

Factory Girl - Another film that was supposed to be an awards contender, but ended up on the scrap heap, never being released nationwide.

Sienna Miller stars as Andy Warhol's muse, Holly Golightly.

The only really good thing that came out of this film was Miller's notorious slam against the city of Pittsburgh.

Calendar Watch

Next week; *Hairspray* , *I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry* , *Sunshine*

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

The Simpsons Movie - July 27th - ummmm...beeeerrrrrr. Too bad the opening of the movie conflicts with the opening of the Browns' Training

Camp. But I'll check it out as soon as I get back (minus several hundreds of thousands of brain cells).

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

Underdog - August 3rd - Combination of animation and live action. Let's hope it's more "George of the Jungle" than "Scooby-Doo".

Rush Hour 3 - August 10th - More of the same...this time in Paris.

The Invasion - August 17th - Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig in an adaptation of the sci-fi classic "Invasion of the Body Snatchers"

Shoot ‘em Up - September 7th - Clive Owen and Monica Bellucci protecting a baby from sinister Paul Giamatti.

I was so there anyway, and then I found out that in one scene Owen and Bullucci are having sex while in a shoot out.

Check out the trailer, as it is one of the best I have seen.

The Brave One - September 14th - Jodie Foster going all Charles

Bronson-DeathWish on some thugs.

Eastern Promises - September 14th (limited) - Naomi Watts as a London midwife drawn into the Russian Mob, headed by Viggo Mortensen.

The Kingdom - September 28th - 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.

3:12 to Yuma - October 5th - 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.

Michael Clayton - October 5th - George Clooney as a top law firm's "fixer" (the type of person played by Jodie Foster in "Inside Man"...IOW, a shady power broker/dirty tricks expert).

Hitman - October 12th - Deadwood's Timothy Oliphant follows up his portrayal as the chief villain in "Live Free or Die Hard" in this action/adventure film where he play...what else...a hitman.

Look for it to be in the same vein as "The Transporter", and a hit (heh...I kill me).

The Golden Age - October 12th - Cate Blanchett and Clive Owen in a follow

up of the award winning "Elizabeth".

Rendition - October 12th - Reese Witherspoon, Jake Gyllenhaal, Meryl Streep and Alan Arkin in a political thriller with Gyllenhaal as a CIA agent troubled by witnessing questionable interrogations.

American Gangster - November 2nd - 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.

Bee Movie - November 2nd - Animated flick with Jerry Seinfeld as a bee who files a lawsuit against mankind for eating honey.

Lions for Lambs - November 9th - Robert Redford directs himself, Tom Cruise (yeck) and Meryl Streep in this political thriller.

Fred Claus - November 9th - Vince Vaughn as Santa's embittered little brother. With Paul Giamatti. Another slightly naughty Christmas fairy tale that will make a bundle of cash.

Beowulf - November 16th - Robert Zemeckis gets all medieval on us with a motion capture (like "Polar Express") adaptation of the epic poem. Crispen Glover as the monster Grendel and Angelina Jolie as Grendel's mother? I'm there.

The Golden Compass - December 7th - Major, major push from the studios for this big budget fantasy...designed to be the first of a franchise.

Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig star (their second collaboration this year), along with Sam Elliot and Eva Green.

I Am Legend - December 14th - Will Smith in what is basically a remake of the Chuck Heston apocalyptic film "The Omega Man".

National Treasure: Book of Secrets - December 21st - Follow-up to the hugely popular guilty pleasure "National Treasure" with Nick Cage back at his wacky best.

Charlie Wilson's War - December 25th - Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts, and Philip Seymour Hoffman in an Oscar contender about the charismatic and eccentric Texas Congressman who orchestrated the funding of the Afghans against the Soviet Union in the early 80s.