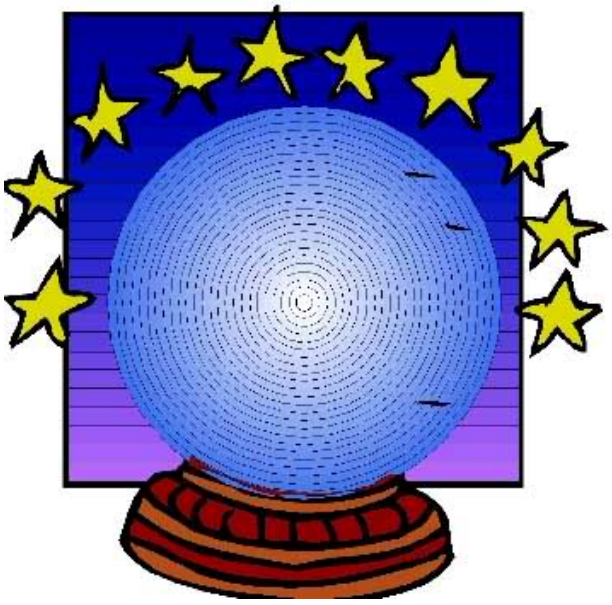
It's been the Summer of Sequels at the theaters this year, and in this week's Crystal Ball, Mitch does a quick recap of the '07 summer film season ... which included four films that made over 300 MILLION in the US alone. And as he does every Friday night, Mitch brings us up to speed on all the latest Hollywood news and rumors, as well as the new releases at the theaters and on DVD.



Most "experts" state that the Summer Blockbuster season ended last weekend with "Rush Hour 3" opening to tepid reviews, and lower box office receipts than "Rush Hour 2".

That being the case, let's do a short recap of the summer. It was a summer of sequels, maybe more so than I've ever seen before. It was also a summer when a record breaking four movies made over $300 million in the U.S. This will quite probably go to five in a few weeks when the latest Harry Potter film goes over that mark.

The Good: "The Bourne Ultimatum", "Ratatouille", "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix", "Knocked Up", "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End", and "Live Free or Die Hard". All lived up to the hype, and were quite entertaining to watch.

The OK: "Spider-Man 3", "Transformers", "The Simpsons Movie", "Oceans Thirteen", and "1408".

Entertaining movies that didn't make you feel like you wasted your money if you saw them at the theater.

The Bad: "Shrek the Third", "I Now Pronounce You Chuck & Larry", "Hairspray", and "Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer". Probably not even worth catching on Netflix. They might have made money, but they didn't make art.

The Bombs: "Evan Almighty" takes the biggest prize in that lot. The movie cost an estimated $200 million to make and promote, and it's not yet taken in $100 million domestically (figure only half of that money goes to the studio). Other clunkers: "License to Wed", "Surf's Up", "Lucky You", "Georgia Rules", "The Ex", "Delta Farce", "Nancy Drew", "DOA: Dead or Alive", "Captivity", "I Know Who Killed Me", and "Who's Your Caddy".

Notice how The Bad and The Bombs far outnumber those in the first two categories?

## ***News & Rumors**:*

~ There have been six titles registered by the studio for the fourth Indiana Jones movie. It will be one of these (or something else).

- Indiana Jones and the City of Gods
- Indiana Jones and the Destroyer of Worlds
- Indiana Jones and the Fourth Corner of the Earth
- Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull

- Indiana Jones and the Lost City of Gold
- Indiana Jones and the Quest for the Covenant

~ There has been another production delay for the seventh season of "24". This time, it's due to writers needing more time to develop the year-long plot. Maybe they should have thought about that last year? The only major casting change has been the addition of Cherry Jones ("The Village", "Signs", Lionel's mother in "Oceans Twelve") as the president.

~ Len Wiseman, who did an excellent job as director in this summer's hit "Live Free or Die Hard" will be the director for the remake of the classic John Carpenter/Kurt Russell sci-fi thriller "Escape From New York". Carpenter will reportedly server as executive producer, which makes this a bit more palatable for me.

~ Once Upon A Time, Lawrence Kasdan was the hottest writer and director on the planet after penning "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and writing and directing "The Big Chill" and "Silverado". Perhaps he'll be back with "The Risk Pool", with Tom Hanks playing an upscale thief and gambler who must reluctantly take charge of his son when his estranged wife experiences a nervous breakdown.

~ And in this short week of news, let's leave off on a happy note. HBO has cancelled "John From Cincinnati", less than two days after its season finale, which possibly was the strangest and dumbest hour of television I've ever had the displeasure to watch.

# This week's new releases:

Slim Pickens isn't just an actor who bullrode a nuclear bomb.

## The Invasion

Starring: Nicole Kidman, Daniel Craig, and Jeremy Northam

Plot: Remake of "Invasion of the Body Snatchers", where aliens take over your body while you sleep.

*View Trailer*

The BeerBuzz: Two great actors in Kidman and Craig, but evidently one very bad movie. This one is getting killed in the preliminary reviews for being a very stale remake that follows the great remake (with Donald Sutherland) of a great original movie (with Kevin McCarthy)

## Superbad

Starring: Michael Cera, Jonah Hill, Christopher Mintz-Plasse

Plot: Social outcast best friends plan to raise hell on one of their last nights in high school

*View Trailer*

The BeerBuzz: Who knows...this might end up being "Porky's" for this generation; a ribald story of some high school losers hot on the trail of booze and sex (but enough about MY history). From producer Judd Apatow, he of "The 40 Year Old Virgin" and "Knocked Up" and written by Seth Rogen, the star of "Knocked Up", this film is getting great early buzz. Don't be surprised if it outdraws "The Invasion".

## The Last Legion

Starring: Colin Firth, Ben Kingsley, Aishwarya Rai

Plot: A soldier escapes barbarians sacking the Roman Empire and takes an incredible journey to save his emperor.

*View Trailer*

The BeerBuzz: Another total piece of crap from The Weinstein Company. Another movie dumped in the doldrums of August that is so bad, they aren't making it available for advanced screenings. This might be competition for "Pathfinder" for the worst "Historical Epic" film of the decade.

## *New DVD Releases on Tuesday, August 21st*

Last week was a good week. This one is a mess

**The Ex -** Completely awful film with a bunch of B-List TV "stars" like Zach Braff, Amanda Peet, and Jason Bateman in a story about a slacker that must leave Ohio and go to work for his father-in-law in New York, side-by-side with his wife's ex fiancé. If this were a half-hour sitcom, it would be airing on the WB.

**Redline -** Action thriller about automobiles starring director Andy Cheng's personal collection, one of which was "accidentally" crashed by Eddie Griffin. When I'm recommending Paul Walker and "The Fast and the Furious 2" over this crap, you know it's really bad.

**Perfect Stranger-** Halle Berry continues her string of post-Oscar stinkers in this yawn-fest with Bruce Willis as an evil married executive hitting on (and hitting...and killing) young, stupid, single

women. As a thriller goes, it was totally lost in the wake of such good films as "Disturbia" and "Fracture".

**The Ultimate Gift** - Uplifting spiritual "message" movie about a young man who must complete a series of tasks before getting all the money from his hated (and recently deceased) grandfather. If you can stay awake for more than 20 minutes of this totally predictable palp, you are a better man than I.

## *Calendar Watch*

Next week: *War, Mr. Bean's Holiday, Illegal Tender, The Nanny Diaries, Resurrecting the Champ*

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

*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.

*3:10 to Yuma* - September 7th - 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.

*The Brave One* - September 14th - Jodie Foster going all Charles Bronson-DeathWish on some thugs.

*Eastern Promises* - September 14th (l imited) - 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.

*Michael Clayton* - October 12th - 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"...this one looks to be better than the first, with much more action as it focuses on England's defeat of the Spanish Armada.

# *We Own the Night* - October 12th

- Joaquin Phoenix, Mark Wahlberg, and Eva Mendes in a story of a nightclub owner (Phoenix), his police officer brother (Wahlberg), and the conflict with the mobsters who run Phoenix's nightclub. And yes, if you are counting, that's FOUR movies I deem

"interesting" debuting on the same day. I get the feeling that will change, and some of them will move their release date.

*Rendition* - October 19th - 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 7

th

- 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.

*Leatherheads* - December 7th

- George Clooney in an old fashioned screwball comedy set in 1925. George is an aging football legend who now owns a pro team, and is

competing for the affections of Renee Zellweger with his star player.

*I Am Legend* - December 14

th

- 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.

*P.S., I Love You* - December 21st

- Hillary Swank, Gerard Butler, and Harry Connick Jr. in an award contender about a widow who discovers love letters written

by her recently deceased husband (Butler) that are meant to help her begin the next chapter of her life.

*The Other Boleyn Girl* - December 21st - Natalie Portman as Anne Boleyn, Scarlett Johansson as her sister Mary, and Eric Bana as

King Henry VIII. I expect this to blow the tepid Showtime series "The Tudors" out of the English Channel.

# *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.

# *Sweeny Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet*

# *Street* - Limited release in December - Tim Burton's adaptation of the macabre Steven Sondheim

musical about a deranged barber bent on revenge (Johnny Depp) and the meat pie baker that assists him

(Helena Bonham Carter), who uses the bodies to make delicious snacks.

# *Untitled J.J. Abrams Project*

# - January 18th

# - You've seen the buzz generating hand held camera

trailer during "Transformers", and wondered what it's all about. We don't know yet, but we're thinking it

# should be fun.