This winter has been brutal for new movie releases ... but promise is on the horizon and we're about to get The Mitch Factor cranked back up here on The Cleveland Fan with movie reviews on every film of note that hits the theaters in '08. The fun starts next week when we will run reviews from Mitch on each of the five contenders for Best Picture on consecutive days. In his latest, Mitch has put together a GREAT piece for us, looking at the greatest sci-fi films of all time.

Science fiction has been a major staple of the Arts since the beginning of written history. From Homer's depiction of the god Poseidon assisting the Greeks in their battle against the Trojans in "The Iliad" to Mark Twain's vision of an inventor traveling back in time to the days of Camelot in "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court" to the modern blockbusters we now see onscreen, Science Fiction has been, currently remains, and always will be one of our most popular genres.

So what better way to celebrate it than by stirring up everyone's emotions by ranking the best Sci-Fi movies?

I can hear the whining now... *"Great. Another article were ONE person gets*

to spout off his opinions as if they are the only thing that matters".

Good point. So we are going to do things differently here, so that MY opinion only amounts to 20% of the rankings.

I went to four well regarded sources, and pulled their lists for the Greatest Sci-Fi movies.

RottenTomatoes.com' Top 100

IMDB's Top Rated "Sci-Fi" Titles (50)

The Online Film Critic Society's Top 100 Sci-Fi Films

Top 10 Movie Reviews Top Rated Sci-Fi

And then I added my Top 64 as well, put together a spreadsheet with all the movies and all their related rankings, and worked out a mathematical average of them all...which begins below.

Some notes about the entire process:

The definition of "science fiction" seems to be different things to different people. On Top 10 Movie Reviews, they consider "Dr. Strangelove", "The Rocky Horror Picture Show", "Creepshow", and "Abbott and Costello Meet

Frankenstein" as Sci-Fi. (But given that they list "Death Race 2000" at #25, that should tell us something).

IMDB considers "Fail-Safe" sci-fi, although there was nothing scientific about it, it was just a "what-if" doomsday scenario, just like "Dr. Strangelove". It also has "The Truman Show" listed, and as much as I like that movie, it is a stretch to call it Sci-Fi.

Overall, 200+ different movies showed up at various points on these lists. I'm not giving out my official top 64 (you math majors can look at the other four ratings and compute it out if you are that much in need of a life), but I will say that I only evaluated films that were on at least two of the other lists.

On the flip side of that, only 20 movies made it on all five lists...an amazing fact as far as I'm concerned.

Think this list is whack? Then you'll get your chance as well, as Swerb will be putting together another of our famous ClevelandFan brackets, seeding all of these films so that all of you can put in your 2 cents worth.

So in the words of Casey Kasem, "let's get on with the countdown.

64) Gattaca (1997) - Mr. and Mrs. Uma Thurman (Ethan Hawke) get it on with the help of Jude Law's perfect DNA.

63) Contact (1997) - Astronomer Carl Sagan of PBS's famous "Cosmos" series did a good job with his one and only novel.

62) Time After Time (1979) - Malcomb McDowell as the real H.G. Well who had a real time machine and goes to present day San Francisco to stop Jack the Ripper.

61) The Prestige (2006) - My least favorite movie of 2006 has Christian Bale and Hugh Jackman as rival magicians who stop at nothing to outdo the other.

60) Videodrome (1983) - Early David Cronenberg fantasy/sci-fi/horror flick with James Woods as TV station operator fascinated with a torture type mysterious satellite show.

59) Tron (1982) - The first major film using CGI, concerning a hacker/programmer (Jeff Bridges) sucked into a video game

58) Fantastic Voyage (1966) - A surgical team is shrunk to microscopic size and injected into a scientist to operate on a blood clot in his head. Rachel Welch looked amazing back then in a slick wet suit.

57) Total Recall (1990) - The Governator in a fascinating Philip K. Dick story about memory implants and the colonization of Mars. Sharon Stone and Rachel Ticotin have never been hotter.

56) Primer (2004) - Indie film made for $7,000, an intellectual thriller/mystery about some geeks that may have invented a time machine.

55) Repo Man (1984) - Another cult classic with Emilio Estavez as a punk rocker who works repossessing cars, but winds up grabbing one that may be connected to aliens.

54) Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home (1986) - First of three Star Trek movies to find their way to the list, this was the one with the crew visiting our time frame and saving whales.

53) V for Vendetta (2005) - Brilliant adaptation of the graphic novel by the Wachowski Brothers ("Matrix") about a vigilante trying to spark an overthrow of a fascist government controlling Great Britain. And Natalie Portman in the sexy school girl outfit was great...in a manner that should disturb me.

52) The Truman Show (1998) - Peter Weir reigns in Jim Carrey's normal hyperness in a tale of a man who unknowingly lives in a television studio, with everyone he knows being actors, and every moment of his life broadcast to the world.

51) Forbidden Planet (1956) - First of the true Sci-Fi Classics on our list, Leslie Nielsen takes his spaceship to Altair-4, where he runs into Dr. Morbius (Walter Pidgeon), his gorgeous daughter, and Robby the Robot.

50) Westworld (1973) - Yul Brenner in his iconoclastic role as a robot gunslinger on a fantasy vacation world where nothing can go wrong...go wrong...go wrong.

49) A.I. Artificial Intelligence (2001) - Surprised that this ended up as high as it did, because this Steven Spielberg tale of a futuristic Pinocchio was not initially received very well.

48) Altered States (1980) - Perfect end-of-the-70s psychotic fantasy about a scientist (William Hurt) who de-evolves after spending too much time in a sensory deprivation tank.

47) The Host (2007) - South Korean Godzilla film that was even popular in North Korea as the U.S. military was supposed to be the cause of the creation of the monster.

46) Mad Max (1979) - Mel Gibson's introduction to the world...back when he still spoke in an Aussie accent.

45) Escape from New York (1981) - Another classic cult film, one that resurrected Kurt Russell's film career as he played Snake Plissken, possibly one of the baddest anti-heroes in Sci-Fi history.

44) Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan (1982) - William Shatner at his scene chewing finest. "Khaaaaaaaannnnnnn!!!!!!"

43) Minority Report (2002) - Another underappreciated Steven Spielberg masterpiece, with Tom Cruise (chuckle) as the lead investigator for a police team that uses psychics to discover crimes before they happen.

42) The War of the Worlds (1953) - Campy looking Martians, but still an excellent adaptation of the classic H.G. Wells novel.

41) Men in Black (1997) - One of the funniest Sci-Fi movies ever. I still laugh thinking of Tommy Lee Jones singing to an Elvis song while driving upside down in the Holland Tunnel.

40) Jurassic Park (1993) - Spielberg again...this time taking CGI and puppetry to an entirely new level with this blockbuster about cloned dinosaurs going nuts. Before this, only true nerds knew what a velociraptor was...afterwards, NBA teams were naming franchises after them.

39) The Fly (1986) - One case where a remake was better than the original...although watching Jeff Goldblum loosing body parts was a bit much.

38) Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith (2005) - The only one of the sequels to make the list (can you blame them)...a much better story than Episodes I or II.

37) Serenity (2005) - Glad to see this as high as it was. Although I never watched the TV series it was based upon, "Firefly", I really like the combination of sci-fi and old west in this film.

36) The Man Who Fell to Earth (1976) - Speaking of the psychotic 70s, nothing epitomized that more than David Bowe as an alien from a water starved world turning into a alcoholic dope addict.

35) Star Trek: First Contact (1996) - Has to frost Shatner's drawers that the best received Star Trek movie featured Picard. I personally think it had just as much to do with the Borg, time travel (but still to our future), and the entire "Moby Dick" motif.

34) Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1978) - The only case where we have both an original film and its remake both making the list. Don't be expecting Nicole Kidman's dreadful "Invasion" showing up here anytime soon.

33) Solyaris (1972) - And here's a case in point of the above statement. This Russian classic is on the list, the bland remake by George Clooney and Steven Soderbergh is not.

32) The Iron Giant (1999) - Brad Bird showing off his early genius in this cartoon

of a robot from space befriending a small boy.

31) Dr. Strangelove or : How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964) - Don't know why it's being called Sci-Fi, but I still love the movie. Slim Pickens rules!

30) A Clockwork Orange (1971) - I am guessing that the lists consider movies set in the future as "sci-fi" regardless of the science of the subject. In this case, Stanley Kubrick paints a scary picture of the future with Malcolm McDowell at his creepiest as gang leader Alex.

29) The Road Warrior (1981) - Most people didn't even know "Mad Max" existed until they saw this film, then rushed to the video store to pick up the first one.

28) The Abyss (1989) - Worked better as a psychological thriller between Ed Harris and Michael Biehn than the parts about the underwater aliens. Spectacular visuals, nonetheless.

27) Donnie Darko (2001) - The highest rated film that I don't think should be on the list. A "love it or hate it" cult film about large bunny rabbits and time shifting.

26) The Incredibles (2004) - Brad Bird does it again with his Pixar Studio superhero movie that might have been meant to be a take-off of "The Fantastic Four", but was light years ahead of those lame superhero flicks.

25) 12 Monkeys (1995) - Bruce Willis and Brad Pitt were perfect in this dark tale of time travel, sacrifice, and destiny.

24) The Invisible Man (1933) - H.G. Wells comes up in connection with this list almost as much as Steven Spielberg. The best part of this film is that it held on to Wells' psychological look at the impact of the incredible, with Claude Rains delivering a performance for the ages.

23) Ghostbusters (1984) - "We came, we saw, we kicked their ass!" I'm not sure it should be this high, but a landmark movie in any case.

22) Return of the Jedi (1983) - By far the lowest ranked of the original "Star Wars" trilogy. One word tells you why: "Ewoks".

21) Brazil (1985) - Terry Gilliam of "Monty Python" fame's brilliant comedy-fantasy about an a bureaucrat who tries to correct an administrative error, and then finds himself an enemy of the state. A truly off-the-wall film.

20) Young Frankenstein (1974) - I don't consider it "Science Fiction", but I do consider it one of the best comedies ever made.

19) Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956) - The original, and one of the most iconic and chilling scenes of all time when Kevin McCarthy points his finger at the end and lets out that alien screech.

18) Back to the Future (1985) - "You made a time machine out of a Delorean?" One of those movies where just about everything was perfect, from the casting to the script to the special effects.

17) Frankenstein (1931) - Like "The Invisible Man", this one has stood the test of time as it was more than just shock and awe...it truly captured Shelley's commentary about isolation and acceptance as well.

16) Planet of the Apes (1968) - One of the all-time greats when it comes to shock endings ("You Maniacs! You blew it up! Ah, damn you! GDamn you all to hell!"). If you've never seen Tim Burton's remake with Mark Wahlberg...do you self a favor just watch this one again.

15) The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951) - First sci-fi film to be a thinly veiled stab at the absurdities of the Cold War, with Michael Rennie and his robot landing on Earth and telling everyone they need to live peacefully or be destroyed as a threat to other planets.

14) Children of Men (2006) - A pleasant surprise for me to find this film this high on the lists. A chilling tale of what humanity would be like in its final states as all women become infertile...and the hope and desperation that emerge when a young refugee finds she is with child.

13) The Bride of Frankenstein (1935) - I must say that I disagree with three of the four lists that have this rated higher than the original. But you gotta give credit for the Bride's memorable hairdo and that hissing she did when she saw Frank.

12) The Matrix (1999) - "Why oh why didn't I take the BLUE pill?!?" There are many days that I ask myself the same thing. I also ask myself how a movie this good could have had two sequels that bad.

11) Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977) - Coming less than a year after the release of "Star Wars", these two films truly were the rebirth of the Sci-Fi genre. I defy anyone to say they don't know the five musical notes used to talk to the aliens.

10) Blade Runner (1982) - I completely disagree with this being this low...but that's what happens when you use mathematics to rate these things, as it was rated only #36 by Rottentomatoes, and an inexplicable #55 by Top 10 Reviews.

Stupid. However, if you've not yet seen the remixed director's cut just released, go out and rent it...it's so much better than the theatrical release.

9) Terminator 2: Judgment Day (1991) - You will find three pairs of movies in the Top Ten...and that's what happens when you have a great first movie, and then expand upon it for the second, taking it in a different direction, but remaining 100% faithful to the original. Ah-nuld as a good robot was completely believable.

8) The Terminator (1984) - He was also completely believable as a bad one if the first flick, a "grip the edge of your seat and don't let go" action/chase film that didn't stop for 108 minutes. Linda Hamilton epitomized girl power for her generation.

7) Metropolis (1926) - Fritz Lang's groundbreaking film that still looks disturbingly futuristic 80+ YEARS after it was released. In addition to the visuals, it also had a great social commentary story (as so many great sci-fi flicks do), about society divided into two classes; Thinkers and Workers. Certainly dated now in so many ways, but it gets the high rating due to its importance and groundbreaking filmmaking.

6) E.T. The Extra Terrestrial (1982) - For years, you always saw aliens as either terrifying monsters, or super-brained luminaries. Spielberg broke the mold, creating a lovable, benevolent, cuddly icon for a generation in one of the greatest family films ever made. By the way, this is the fifth Spielberg film on this list. The man knows Science Fiction.

5) Aliens (1986) - So does James Cameron. Ingenious filmmaking in taking the principals of the original film, a claustrophobic suspense thriller, and turning it into a frightening war movie as Ripley goes gonzo with the Marines as they take on an army of those ugly buggers.

4) 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) - It took me until the third viewing until I finally "got it" with this confusing, stunning, hypnotic film. Stanley Kubrick was beyond a doubt a cinema genius, and his vision of the Arthur Clarke book about strange monoliths and psycho computers will never be forgotten.

3) Alien (1979) - Before Cameron amped it up, Ridley Scott came out of nowhere with a cast of no-names and character actors, led by a complete unknown named Sigourney Weaver, and put together THE most disturbingly scary sci-fi films ever made.

2) Star Wars (1977) - What more needs to be said? It's roots are from every Buck Rodgers or Flash Gordon serial ever made, every western, and every pirate movie...but it re-defined the genre, taking it to places it had never been before, and taking audiences everywhere along for the ride.

1) The Empire Strikes Back (1980) - The first movie could have stood alone, but its success demanded for there to be more, and Lucas delivered, engulfing the world in his new Mythology of The Force, adding layer upon layer of complexity while not shortchanging the action and special effects. "Luke...I am your father". Who amongst you DIDN'T drop your jaw in disbelief the first time you heard that line?

That's it...now it's your turn. Check out the brackets, and vote early and often!