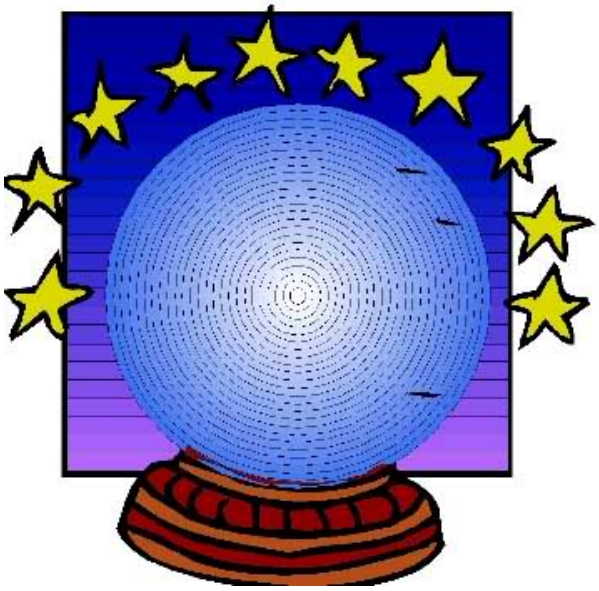
All kinds of good stuff in this week's Crystal Ball. Mitch makes his annual predictions on which 10 films of 2008 will gross highest at the box office. He fills us in on next week's highly anticipated release of "Iron Man" and also brings us up to speed on the film being made about former Heisman Trophy winner (and Browns draftee) Ernie Davis. And as always, Mitch previews all of this week's releases at the theaters and on DVD.



An early start to the BlockBuster Season this year. "Iron Man" will first be shown at 8 PM on Thursday, May 1st, as opposed to the normal tradition of the first showing occurring at 12:01 AM on the first Friday of the release.

Strong buzz over the movie, along with very favorable early reviews have led to this decision.

Speaking of the BlockBuster Season, this week, you get Blessed with my First Annual Summer Box Office Predictions!!

Not content with making a fool of myself over my yearly Oscar Predictions, I now plan to do a yearly preview of what I think will end up being the Top Ten Box Office hits of 2008. It's certainly not to late to start, because there isn't a single film out right now that will have a

chance to end up on this list.

Note that this is NOT a prediction of how good a movie will be. As we all know...Highest Quality and Most Popular are often polar opposites.

My Guesses:

1. Batman: The Dark Knight
2. Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull
3. Iron Man
4. Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince
5. Wall-E
6. The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian
7. Speed Racer
8. Get Smart
9. 007: Quantum of Solace
10. The Incredible Hulk

Possible breakthroughs: "Wanted", "Hancock", "Tropic Thunder", "Sex and the City".

Biggest bombs of the Summer: "Dave" (with Eddie Murphy), the latest Will Farrell stupidity "Step Brothers", and the Vin Diesel sci-fi flick "Babylon A.D."

News and Rumors

~ I am still trying to figure out why it's taken me this long to hear anything about this...I must be slipping. Cleveland Browns fans and fans of football movies definitely have something to look

forward to in October. "The Express" will tell the tale of Ernie Davis, the Syracuse running back who was the first African American to win the Heisman Trophy. As most Browns fans know, Davis was drafted by Cleveland, but tragically died of leukemia before playing. Rob Brown, who first burst on the scene as the young basketball phenom opposite Sean Connery in "Finding Forrester", will play Davis. Dennis Quaid will be his college coach Ben Schwartzwalder.

~ The female lead has been cast opposite Tom Hanks in the next film in the "Da Vinci Code" series. Avelet Zurer will portray the next damsel in distress to Hank's intrepid professor/author Robert Langdon in "Angels and Demons". Don't know who Zurer is? You're probably not alone, but if you saw Steven Spielberg's magnificent "Munich", you watched her as the Israeli wife of star Eric Bana. "Angels and Demons" was written by Dan Brown as a prequel to "Da Vinci Code", but will be restructured to serve as a sequel for the movie.

~ Ang Lee (personally, one of my least favorite directors), will take on the adaptation of the semi-comic book "Taking Woodstock". The 2007 Elliot Tiber book is about a Greenwich Village-based interior designer and part time Catskills hotel manager who headed the Bethel, N.Y. Chamber of Commerce, and issued the permit for the legendary 1969 concert on his neighbor Max Yasgut's farm. No casting

announcements at this time.

~ Some quick TV news. FOX has announced that "The Sarah Conner Chronicles" will return for a second season. I'm just wondering what took them so long to come up with that obvious decision.

~ Speaking of The Terminator, more casting news on the Christian Bale movie version. Moon Bloodgood has been cast as the female lead for the film, a fellow freedom fighter of John Conner (Bale). Bloodgood, a former Lakers' Cheerleader, has been seen previously as the bush pilot in "Eight Below"

This week's new movie releases:

Baby Mama

Starring: Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, Sigouney Weaver

Plot: A driven career woman hires a surrogate mother to

carry her child to term.

The BeerBuzz: A very good concept, at the least, with the RedHot (at least buzz-wise) Tina Fey and an excellent supporting cast. Too bad that Ms. Fey did not take advantage of her extraordinary writing skills and pen the script...it might be getting better reviews than the lukewarm ones this is currently receiving.

My Estimated Review: Kelly Holcomb (2 footballs)

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Harold & Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay

Starring: John Cho, Kal Penn, Neil Patrick Harris

Plot: On a flight to Amsterdam, our two heroes are caught trying to sneak a bong onboard, the first misstep on an adventure that finds them mistaken for terrorists and sent to Guantanamo Bay

The BeerBuzz: Why they didn't release this film about this generation's Cheech and Chong on April 20th, I have no idea. In any case, this absurd tale of two goofy stoners will succeed in being exactly what it intends to be; a silly, funny, moronic diversion.

My Estimated Rating: Bill Nelsen (2 1/2 footballs)

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Deception

Starring: Hugh Jackman, Ewan McGregor, Michelle

Williams

Plot: An accountant is introduced to a mysterious sex club by his charismatic new lawyer friend. But in this new world, he soon becomes the prime suspect in a woman's disappearance and million-dollar heist

The BeerBuzz: This week's repeat of what has become too frequent around here; a movie that looks good in concept and in casting, but is absolute garbage. Long time readers know how much I've ripped Hugh Jackman for all of his bombs last year ("X-Men 3", "The Prestige", "The Fountain", and "Flushed Away"), so maybe I'm not that surprised to see him in a stinker that is 90% ripped off from another stinker "Eyes Wide Shut". But once upon a time, Ewan McGregor was being touted as "The Next Great Actor". What happened?

My Estimated Rating: Mike Phipps (1/2 football)

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New DVD Releases for Tuesday, April 29th

The Golden Compass - This was supposed to be New Line Cinema's next great series...a "Lord of the Rings" for young girls in this fantasy about a spirited orphan in an alternate universe. What it was, was a big budget bore that not even Nicole Kidman, Daniel Craig, and Sam Eliot could save. Not horrible...but well below expectations.

27 Dresses- Katherine Heigl as the embodiment of the expression "always a bridesmaid, never the bride". James Marsden, possibly the most boring Pretty Boy in cinema, plays the object of her desire. Not for the Testosterone Set

How She Move - Who cares how she move...because this movie is a raging mess. Step Dancing as an art form never interested me to begin with...and a crappy movie about it appeals to me even less.

Calendar Watch

Next week:, *Iron Man*, *Made of Honor*

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

Speed Racer - May 9th - Emile Hirsch, Matthew Fox, and Christina Ricci as Speed, Racer X, and Trixie in the Wachowski Brothers' ("The Matrix" trilogy) adaptation of the campy 1960s Japanese anime.

The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian - May 16th - The same four

kids from the first movie return to Narnia...1300 years after their last visit in that enchanted land's time frame, to help restore the throne to the rightful heir.

Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull - May 23rd - Spielberg and Ford team up one more time, with Cate Blanchett as the romantic interest, and Shia LaBeouf ("Transformers") as Indy's son.

Sex and the City - May 30th - The movie version of the HBO series hits the big screen. Can we guys get our share of this pie and have a movie version of "Deadwood"?

You Don't Mess with the Zohan - June 6th - Adam Sandler as a former Mossad agent setting up shop as a hairdresser in New York City.

Kung Fu Panda - June 6th - Jack Black as the voice of a reluctant panda bear recruited by a team of Kung Fu masters.

The Incredible Hulk - June 13th - Looks to be much, much better than the Ang Lee stink-fest, with Edward Norton taking on the role of

Bruce Banner.

The Happening - June 13th - Latest M. Night Shyamalan thriller, staring Mark Wahlberg in a tale about a family on the run after natural disasters threaten the entire planet.

Get Smart - June 20th - Steve Carell, Anne Hathaway, and Alan Arkin take on the roles of Maxwell Smart, Agent 99 and The Chief. As much as I hate movie adaptations of television shows, this one has potential.

The Love Guru - June 20th

- Mike Myers already catching as much hell from India as Sacha Baron Cohen did from Kazakhstan for making fun of cultures that don't seem to have a sense of humor.

Wall-E - June 27th - Pixar's next masterpiece, about a garbage cleaning robot who dreams of the stars.

Wanted - June 27th - Look for this to make a

box office star out of James McAvoy ("The Last King of Scotland", "Atonement") as he plays a young man brought into a secret society of assassins by a hot, hot looking Angelina Jolie. Morgan Freeman plays

their boss.

Hancock - July 4th - Will Smith as a hard-living superhero needing the use of a public relations professional (Jason Bateman) to repair his

image.

Hellboy II: The Golden Army

- July 11th

- The big red cigar chomping demon

with a bad attitude is back for more butt kicking.

The Dark Knight - July 19th

- Batman is back,

and this time he's tracking the Joker, played by Heath Ledger. Most likely the box office champion of 2008.

Mamma Mia! - July

19th - Something for the ladies to attend while the guys are busy watching Batman kick the Joker's ass. A musical featuring the songs of ABBA.

And my wife wants us to go see it. Sigh.

X-Files 2 - July 25th - Little is known yet about these further

adventures of Scully and Fox...not even the title.

Tropic Thunder - August 15

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- A group of actors shooting a big budget war movie are forced to become the soldiers they are portraying in the

film. Stars Ben Stiller, Jack Black, and Robert Downey Jr, playing a white actor donning black make-up to "fit the part".

The International - August 15th

- Clive Owen and Naomi Watts in a thriller about an Interpol agent's attempts to break

up an international arms dealing ring financed by a high profile bank. (What can Wachovia do for you?)

Righteous Kill - September 12th

- Robert De Niro and Al Pacino together again as NY detectives working on a

case that may be related to both a serial killer and a man they might have wrongly imprisoned years before.

Eagle Eye - September 26th

- Shia LaBeouf and Michelle Monoghan as a mother and son who become

unwitting members of a terrorist cell plotting a political assassination.

RocknRolla - October 31st

- Guy Ritchie hopefully back in form for another tale of London

gangsters. Gerard Butler, Thandie Newton, Tom Wilkenson, and Jeremy Frackin' Piven star.

Quantum of Solace - November 13th

- The next James Bond film, picking up

shortly after the events ending "Casino Royale"

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince - November 21st

- The sixth of

J.K. Rowling's seven books, setting the stage for the two part conclusion in 2010 and 2011.

Defiance - December 19th

- Daniel Craig and Live Schreiber as Jewish brothers in WWII Russian, leading a band

of refuges in striking back at the Germans. A major early Oscar contender