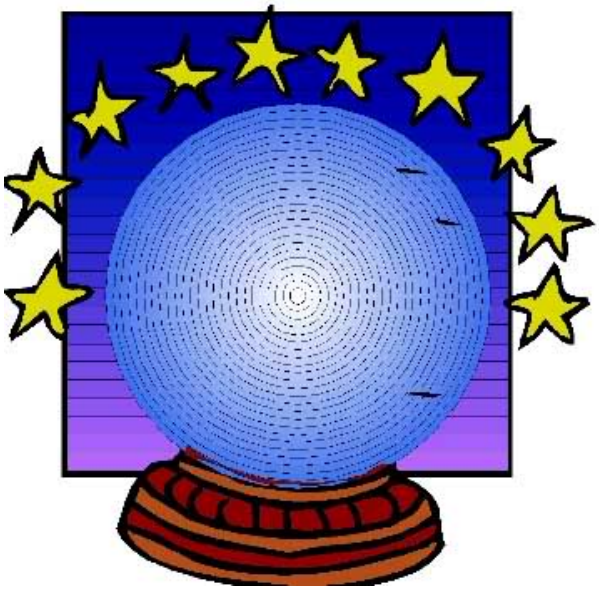
It is official; The Summer of 2008 is definitely the Summer of the Joker. Yes, we should say the Summer of The Dark Knight, but forget about that, it's Heath Ledger's portrayal of the homicidal maniac that is shooting this movie to heights that haven't been seen in a long time. In this week's Crystal Ball, Mitch talks about that, this week's two theater releases of note ("The X-Files" and "Step Brothers"), as well as this week's DVD releases and Hollywood rumors.



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And now that we are "done" with blockbusters for the summer (no, I don't consider "Mummy 3" as a blockbuster), look for "The Dark Knight" to stay at #1 for a couple of more weeks, and it will stay in the Top 5 possibly past Labor Day as well. The only question is; will it surpass the $436 million brought in by "Shrek 2" in 2004, and become the biggest box office hit since "Titanic"?

I wouldn't bet against it.

News and Rumors

~ Peter Berg is set to follow up his (box office) successful directing job of "Hancock" with another superhero...sort of. Berg will produce and direct "Hercules: The Thracian Wars". It will focus more on the mortal side of the Greek half-god, perhaps getting into his inner conflicts a little better than Berg was able to pull off with "Hancock". No rumors yet regarding who will be the star. We haven't had a decent Greek God movie since "Clash of the Titans", so here's to hoping for something good.

~ George Lucas is looking into purchasing/developing the technology that could turn all of his Star Wars movies into 3-D features. Sounds good...as long as he finds a way to edit out Jar Jar Binks.

~ NBC will be airing their own attempt at the "24" audience with "My Own Worst Enemy". Christian Slater will be the one hoping his career gets the boost that Keifer Sutherland enjoyed by playing a spook. The twist on this one? Slater plays an efficiency expert/family man named Henry AND a Jack Bauer-esque spy named Edward. But Henry doesn't know about Edward due to some high tech gizmo installed in him that allows his boss (Alfre Woodard) to pull a switch enabling the other personality to take over. Good buzz on this...but I'm a little leery on the concept at this point. Sounds a little too close to Josh Weldon's "Dollhouse".

~ I think each week I'll just start listing the Stupid Sequels and Remakes in one blurb. Unless noted otherwise, assume I'm of the opinion that all of these are bad ideas. "Top Gun 2: Maverick Flies Back to the Mother-ship", "Harold and Kumar Do Something Else Stupid", "Hairspray 2: The Revenge of the Curling Iron", and "RoboCop 8: Detroit is Still an Open Sewer" (that they are planning to make these sequels is a fact; the titles have been changed to mock the guilty). And then there is MTV's idea to remake "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" . Yes...remaking campy cult films is always a good idea. See also; "Reefer Madness; the Movie

Musical".

~ For a sequel that may not be in the "why in the HELL are they making this?" category; "Anchorman 2". Will Ferrell is teaming back up with Adam McKay, so the "brains" behind the very popular first movie are intact. For this one, we'll jump ahead a decade, and see how Mr. Burgundy handles the 80s.

~ And finally, a technology note. Tired of all those cables hanging off from the huge flatscreen you hung on the wall of your Man-Cave? Sony and Samsung have announced that they plan to adopt a standard technology called Wireless Home Digital Interface (WHDI) that will make those pesky HDMI and audio cables a thing of the past. Motorola, Sharp and Hitachi are also buying into the technology, which would add about another $100 to the cost of the sets.

This week's new movie releases:

The X-Files: I Want to Believe

Starring: David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson, Billy Connolly

Plot: If you watched the original series, then no explanation is necessary. If you didn't, then no explanation could help. (OK, this one involves a troubled priest with psychic visions).

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: I never watched the series, and I didn't watch the movie from 10 years ago, so this might be the most confusing movie I've ever went in to see. However, this movie is SUPPOSED to be able to stand alone from the series and the first film. We'll see about that, as I'll be attending this with my wife, who never missed an episode.

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Step Brothers

Starring: Will Farrell, John C. Reilly, Mary Steenburgen

Plot: Two really stupid over-40 losers become stepbrothers when their father and mother get married.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: There is almost no point in me even trying to discuss this. I have no intention of seeing another in the long line of movies where Ferrell does the only thing he has the talent to do; playing a complete, blithering idiot. But also be aware that some of that opinion is just from my personal distaste in Ferrell, and these types of films. For those of you that really enjoyed "Dumb and Dumber", "Superbad", and "Talladega Nights", this is supposed to be in the same line, and should be a lot more enjoyable to you than Ferrell's last flop; "Semi-Pro".

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New DVD Releases for Tuesday, July 29th

Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay - Stoned slackers Harold and Kumar manage to get themselves confused as terrorists from Iran and North Korea. Hilarity and Neil Patrick Harris ensues! (I may even have to rent this to see if it fits into the "Guilty Pleasure" category...which I think it will).

Never Back Down - A rebellious teen is lured into an underground fight club, where he finds a mentor in a mixed martial arts veteran. I'm not sure that even our own MMA expert Scott Swerbinsky would like this snooze-fest.

Doomsday - Cheap rip-off of the cheesy "Resident Evil" movies, this one with a second rate television actress playing the Milla Jovovich part (but she's British!).

Calendar Watch

Next week; *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor, Swing Vote*

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

Tropic Thunder - August 15th - 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".

Star Wars: the Clone Wars - August 15th - First ever animated Star Wars project from Lucasfilm Animation.

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.

Burn After Reading - September 12th - The latest Coen Brothers' movie, with Brad Pitt joining Frances McDormand, George Clooney, Tilda Swinton and John Malkovich in a dark comedy about missing memoirs of a CIA agent.

Eagle Eye - September 26th - Shia LaBeouf and Michelle Monoghan as a slacker and a single mother who become unwitting members of a terrorist cell plotting a political assassination.

Miracle at St. Anna - September 26th - Spike Lee's tale of a a battalion of black American soldiers who became trapped in a Tuscan village during WWII.

Body of Lies - October 10th - Russell Crowe and Leonardo DiCaprio in Ridley Scott's spy tale of intrigue in the Middle East.

Max Payne - October 17th - Mark Wahlberg stars in the adaptation of the video game about a DEA agent out to avenge the deaths of his family.

Pride and Glory - October 24th - Edward Norton and Colin Farrell in a story about a family of prominent NYC cops who are shaken to their core when a scandal is uncovered.

RocknRolla - October 31st - Guy

Ritchie hopefully back in form for another tale of London gangsters. Gerard Butler, Thandie Newton, Tom Wilkenson, and Jeremy Friggin' Piven star.

Quantum of Solace - November 7th

- The next James Bond film, picking up shortly after the events ending "Casino Royale"

Australia - November 14th - Baz Luhrmann's epic tale set in WWII Australia. With Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman. Think "Gone with the Wind" with kangaroos.

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.

The Road - November 28th - Viggo Mortensen as a man walking with his son for months across a ravaged, post-apocalyptic

landscape in search of civilization. Charlize Theron co-stars.

The Day the Earth Stood Still - December 12th - Keanu Reeves in a remake of the classic 1951 sci-fi film.

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

Revolutionary Road - December 19th

- Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet as a young couple raising a family in a Connecticut suburb during the mid 1950s. Sam Mendes ("American Beauty") directs

the "Titanic" stars in their on-screen reunion.

The Spirit - December 25th - Frank Miller's next comic book adaptation, done in the same style as

"Sin City".

Blockbusters on the Distant Horizon (movies that would seem to be big hits...as soon as they get

made or released).

Watchmen - March 6, 2009 - The screen version of what is arguably graphic novelist Alan Moore's greatest work.

X-Men Origins: Wolverine - May 1, 2009 - Hugh Jackman goes it alone as the adamentium enhanced anti-hero. With Live Schreiber as Sabertooth, and Ryan Reynolds as Deadpool.

Star Trek - May 8, 2009 - J.J. Abrams and a young cast reboot the franchise, going back to Kirk and Spock's days at Starfleet Academy.

Angels and Demons - May 15, 2009 - Tom Hanks and Ron Howard follow-up to "The DaVinci Code"

Terminator 4 - May

22, 2009 - Christian Bale as John Conner as the franchise moves into the apocalyptic future.

Transformers 2 - June 26, 2009 - The next

chapter of Robots In Disguise!

Public Enemy - July 1, 2009 - Johnny Depp as John Dillinger. Co-staring Christian Bale, and

directed by Michael Mann

The Taking of Pelham 123- August 7, 2009 - Denzel Washington, John Travolta, and James Gandolfini in a

remake of the classic 1974 film about a hijacked subway car.

Shutter Island - October, 2009 - Martin Scorsese working once again with

Leonardo DiCaprio in this mystery set in 1954.

Nottingham - November, 2009 - Ridley Scot and Russell Crowe together again in a

retelling of the Robin Hood legend, this time through the eyes of the Sheriff of Nottingham (Crowe). With Sienna Miller as Maid Marion.

Avatar - December 18, 2009 - James Cameron's sci-fi/CGI extravaganza. The C.I.A. should take lessons about secrecy from Cameron, as he's keeping info about this film very much to

himself at this time.

Iron Man 2 - May, 2010 - Right on the heels of the success of the first one, Marvel is quick to get Robert Downey Jr.

back into his titanium suit.

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader - May, 2010 - The series goes off in a bit

of a different direction, as those of you who love the books already know.

Thor - June 2010 - Another Marvel superhero...but the

Nordic God is about as bland personality-wise as Superman, so we'll see how it goes.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part

I - 2010 - The start of the End for the boy wizard and his battle against He-Who-Shall-not-Be-Named

Lincoln - 2010 -

Steven Spielberg directs the biographical film of the 16th President (Liam Neeson)

The Hobbit - 2010 -

Guillermo del Toro directs and Peter Jackson will produce the prequel to "Lord of the Rings". Ian McKellen will return as Gandalf

Fantastic Voyage - 2010 - Roland Emmerich ("The Day After Tomorrow", "10,000 B.C.") remakes the classic 1967 movie about a miniaturized sub and

crew operating on a scientist from inside his brain.

The Avengers - 2011 - Iron Man, Hulk, Thor, and Captain America open up a

can of whoopass on bad guys everywhere.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part II - 2011 - The end of the line for

what will be beyond doubt the most profitable series in the history of film making.

The Hobbit 2 - 2011 - del Toro and

Jackson again, this time covering the time between the end of Tolkien's book, "The Hobbit" and the start of LOTR.