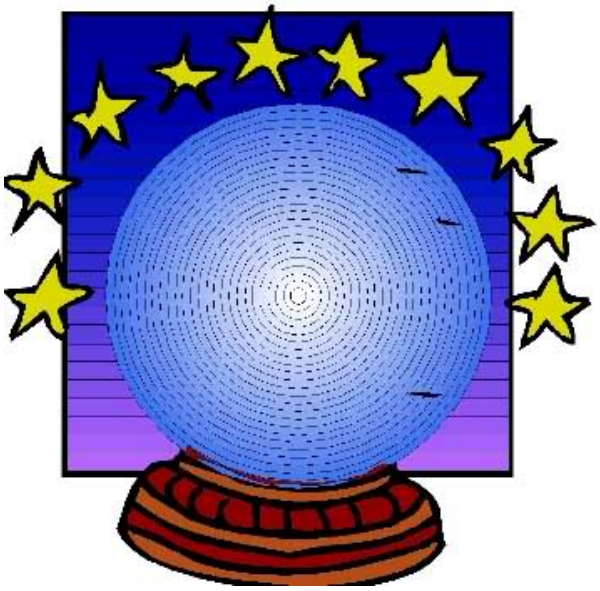
The Oscars have been announced, and the wailing you are hearing are all the fanboys going ape about the fact that "The Dark Knight" wasn't nominated for Best Picture. In this week's Crystal Ball, Mitch gives our readers his take on the Best Picture selections and ommissions. And as always, he gives us his takes on all this week's releases on DVD and at the theater. Also, Mitch's radio show "THAT'S Entertainment" debuts tonight at 8 PM on The Cleveland Fan Live!!! You asked for more Mitch, and you get more Mitch.



The Oscars have been announced, and the wailing you are hearing are all the fanboys going ape about the fact that "The Dark Knight" wasn't nominated for Best Picture.

Personally, I don't entirely disagree with them, as I feel TDK, WALL-E or Gran Torino all should have been considered before "The Reader", but that always seems to happen.

In either case, I'll be discussing my takes on the Oscar nominations tonight in my first episode of That's Entertainment? on TheClevelandFan.com Live radio network hosted by BlogTalkRadio.

8 PM tonight, and available on Podcast. Click here for information

http://www.theclevelandfan.com/internetRadioShows.php

As far as reviews to the Oscar nominated films, we'll be following tradition here at TheClevelandFan and running all five during the week run-up to the actual presentation, along with my yearly predictions (I would say laughable predictions...but my record has actually been pretty decent over the last few years...which means I've just jinxed myself).

News and Rumors

~ First bit of news on this blurb that I originally reported over a year ago. Tom Wilkinson and Jim Belushi are joining Pierce Brosnan and Ewan McGregor in the political thriller "The Ghost". Brosnan portrays a former British prime minister who is working with an aide to write his memoirs.

When the aide dies, McGregor's character steps in as a ghostwriter, but he soon uncovers a nasty truth about the PM's career.

~ Imagine how this one would have worked out. Sean Penn is up for an Oscar as Best Actor for his performance in "Milk"...but the role was originally supposed to go to Tom Cruise. That would have been weird.

~ TV news: George Clooney will be heading back to ER. As the show rounds out its final season, several of the early stars have made guest appearances, including Noah Wiley, Alex Kingston, Eric La Salle, and even Anthony Edwards (obviously in flashbacks), but this is definitely the biggest coupe of all. Not much in the way of details are out yet, but look for this to be substantially more screen time than Clooney's last appearance, when he showed up for a 10 second cameo at the end of the 2000 season, hooking back up with Julianna Margulies' Nurse Carol Hathaway.

~ Now this is some great news (I hope). Arnold Schwarzenegger and Tom Arnold are planning on reteaming for a sequel to 1994's excellent action comedy "True Lies".

Ah-nuld has not acted since assuming the responsibilities of the governor of California, but his second term is coming to an end, and California law prohibits him running for a third term...so he needs to find something to do.

Director James Cameron is also said to be on-board, and they're pretty sure they'll get Jamie Lee Curtis to return as well.

~ Speaking of good news for sequels, the entire quartet of Hobbits will be back for the Peter Jackson/Guillermo del Toro prequels to The Lord of the Rings trilogy "The Hobbit". Elija Wood, Sean Astin, Billy Boyd, and Dominic Monaghan will all return to the roles that made them famous (OK...Rudy made Astin famous, but work with me here).

Not sure how they'll be portrayed since none of the four was in the book by J.R.R. Tolkien...my best guess is that they'll appear towards the end of the second film, which is said to cover the years in between those portrayed at the end of the book "The Hobbit" and the beginning of "The Fellowship of the Rings"

Stupid Remakes and Sequels

~ This one has a CHANCE to not be stupid...but we'll see. 20th Century Fox is planning to make a CGI movie about "Tom and Jerry", much in the same manner as last year's "Alvin and the Chipmunks".

Now as long as they allow that brawling cat and mouse team to be as wickedly violent as they were in the (unedited) cartoons, we may be OK.

But I get the feeling it will be PC'd down so much that it will make me sick.

~ Ralph Macchio is on the record for hating the idea of Jayden Smith and Jackie Chan remaking "The Karate Kid". However, Macchio's choice of words made me laugh...talking about the original being such a "classic".

Right, Daniel-san...I have it right up there between "Casablanca" and "The Godfather".

This week's new movie releases:

Two new releases coming out this week, but the big news is in all of the Oscar nominated films that are now being released nationwide.

Frost/Nixon (expanding)

Starring: Frank Langella, Michael Sheen, Sam Rockwell

View Trailer

Plot: A dramatic retelling of the post-Watergate television interviews between British talk-show host David Frost and disgraced former president Richard Nixon.

The BeerBuzz: Slumdog Millionaire may be the favorite to win the Oscar for Best Picture, but this film might be closer than some people think. Obviously great buzz on this...I'll be watching it tomorrow, but the reviews won't come until the week before the Oscar presentation, as mentioned.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Slumdog Millionaire (expanding)

Starring: Dev Patel, Freida Pinto

Plot: The story of the life of an impoverished Indian teen, who becomes a contestant on the Hindu version of "Who Wants to be A Millionaire".

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: THE film to beat at the Oscars...and one I plan to see this week now that it's finally made it to my little corner of Podunk. Everyone on the boards keeps telling me how great it is, so I'm looking forward to it.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Revolutionary Road (expanding)

Starring: Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Winslet, Michael Shannon

View Trailer

Plot: A young couple living in a Connecticut suburb during the mid-50s struggle to come to terms with their personal problems while trying to raise their two children.

The BeerBuzz: Excellent acting is what's being touted in this film, but beware of a really dour, really serious plot line that isn't going to have you leaving the theater humming a tune. Since this inexplicably wasn't nominated for Best Picture, I'll have a chance to publish a review on it within the next two weeks.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The Wrestler (expanding)

Starring: Mickey Rourke, Marisa Tomei, Evan Rachel Wood

Plot: A character study of a retired professional wrestler as he makes his way through the independent circuit.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Rourke won the Golden Globe for Best Actor, and he's heavily favored to win

the Oscar for this once-in-a-lifetime role. Tomei is also up for Best Supporting Actress. The film itself may have been too much of a character study to be considered for Best Picture...but sometimes watching incredible performances is just as moving as watching a great plot.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Inkheart

Starring: Brendan Fraser, Andy Serkis, Eliza Bennett

View Trailer

Plot: A little girl rallies her friends, both real and imaginary, to rescue her father, a bookbinder who can bring characters to life by reading aloud.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: The bad signs about this is that it's been pushed back at least three different times, originally slated for release last March. On the other hand, Fraser has been on a bit of a comeback lately, so don't sell him short at the box-office when he's in a big budget, kid friendly fantasy.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Underworld: Rise of the Lycans

Starring: Michael Sheen, Rhona Mitra, Bill Nighy

Plot: The origins of the centuries old war between the vampires and the Lycans (werewolves).

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: We already saw a five minute version of this entire film during the first Underworld movie...so what's the point of making a full length film of it? Oh, yeah...money.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

New DVD Releases for Tuesday, January 27th

One decent movie to rent if you're a fan of "Snatch", one OK movie to rent if you're a fan of Samuel L. Jackson, and then several pieces of total trash.

RockNRolla - No, it's not anywhere near as good as "Snatch" or "Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels", but it's still a lot of fun. Gerard Butler recaptures some of his macho from "300" as the leader of a gang of London crooks mixed up with a crime lord (Tom Wilkinson at his best), a Russian mobster, and the crime lord's estranged, drugged out punk rock singing stepson.

Lakeview Terrace - Good thriller and a good film if you like Samuel L...just as long as you're not much into a plot that makes sense.

Pride & Glory - What a waste of talent. Edward Norton and Colin Farrell together in a cop film, and this was the best they could come up with? Pretty much the exact same disappointment I had last year when Mark Wahlberg and Joaquim

Phoenix couldn't rise above the stench that was "We Own the Night".

College - Absolutely terrible film about four geeky high school seniors who visit a local college campus as prospective freshmen. When one of the "stars" is the kid from American Idol who looked like Chicken Little? Trust me...it sucks.

The Rocker - Who was the Hollywood idiot who thought Raine Wilson from "The Office" could carry a motion picture as the leading role? Obviously, no one agreed with said idiot, and this film about a washed up punk rock singer ending up in his slacker cousin's garage band ended up bombing at the box office.

Calendar Watch

Next week: *Taken , New in Town, The Univited*

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

The International - February 13 - Clive Owen and Naomi Watts in a thriller about an Interpol investigation of a world-wide bank funding murder and corruption. And you thought Wachovia was bad?

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

Duplicity - March 20 - Clive Owen again, this time teaming with Julia Roberts as corporate spies looking to pull a con job of their own. Directed by Tony Gilroy ("Michael Clayton").

X-Men Origins: Wolverine - May 1 - 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 - 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 - Tom Hanks and Ron Howard follow-up to "The DaVinci Code"

Terminator: Salvation - May 22 - Christian Bale as John Conner as the franchise moves into the apocalyptic future.

Transformers 2 - June 26 - The next chapter of Robots In Disguise!

Public Enemy - July 1 - Johnny Depp as John Dillinger. Co-staring Christian Bale, and directed by Michael Mann

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince - July 17 - The sixth of J.K. Rowling's seven books, setting the stage for the two part conclusion in 2010 and 2011.

The Taking of Pelham 123- August 7 - Denzel Washington, John Travolta, and James Gandolfini in a remake of the classic 1974 film about a hijacked subway car.

9 - September 9 - Tim Burton's latest animated strangeness, with Elijah Wood and Jennifer Connelly voicing characters fighting aliens in a post apocalyptic world.

Shutter Island - October 2 - Martin Scorsese working once again with Leonardo DiCaprio in this mystery set in 1954.

2012 - November 13 - Roland Emmerich's ("The Day After Tomorrow") tale of global cataclysm and the struggle of the survivors.

The Lovely Bones - December 11 - Peter Jackson's latest, about the ghost of a young, murdered girl watching over her family and friends' reactions to the event. Mark Wahlberg and Rachel Weisz star.

Avatar - December 16, 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.

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

The Road - (unannounced 2009) - 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.

*Nottingham - (*unannounced 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.

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. Kevin Kidd (Rome) is said to be

playing the title role.

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.