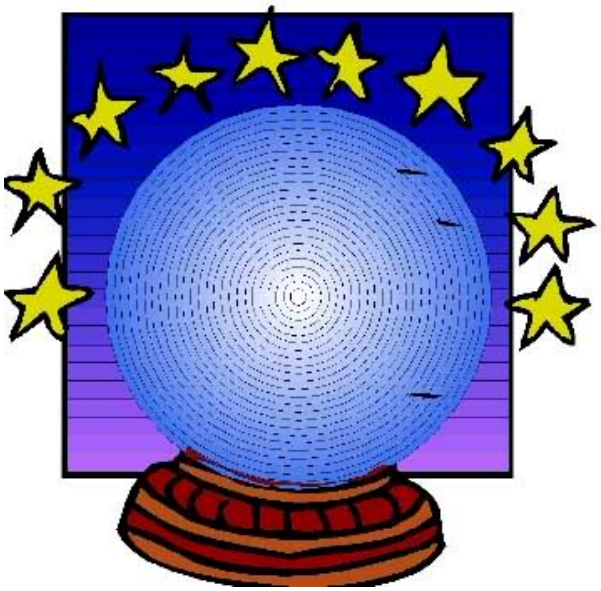
And the Blockbuster season begins! The Mitch Man took last week off to head up to Cleveland for the Mother of all Draft Parties ... and a great time was had by all. But now it's back in the saddle as things come roaring out of the gate for a highly anticipated Summer schedule. Mitch previews all this weeks theater and DVD releases, as well as all the latest Hollywood news, rumors, and projects in this week's "Crystal Ball".



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News and Rumors

~ I've talked several times about the rumor of a second Wall Street movie. Well mark it down as no longer a rumor.

Oliver Stone is set to write and direct, and Michael Douglas will be back as Gordon Gekko.

Shia LeBeouf is said to be joining the film as a young trader who finds himself in the middle of a world of corporate greed and corruption (in other words, he's taking the Charlie Sheen role).

~ Next in line for a franchise "reboot"? "Predator". Under normal circumstances, this news would go into the next category...but not when it's to be written and directed by Robert Rodriguez.

~ One of the more anticipated films this summer (at least by me) is the Tony Scott directed film "The Taking of Pelham 1 2 3" with Denzel Washington. Well look for those two to team up again in another train flick; "Unstoppable".

This one will have Denzel as an engineer who jumps in a train with a young conductor to chase down a runaway train carrying a cargo of toxic chemicals.

~ No real surprise here. Sony/Columbia Pictures have already given the Green Light to film the third Dan Brown novel about cryptographer Robert Langdon, "The Lost Symbol"...a book that won't even hit the stores until September 15th. No confirmation that Ron Howard and Tom Hanks will be involved again, but as long as "Angels & Demons" doesn't tank, I'd expect them back.

Stupid Remakes and Sequels

~ Universal is looking to remake the sickeningly awful 1991 comedy "Drop Dead Fred", starring sickeningly awful comedian and human being Russell Brand. Signs that extensive drug use still occurs in Hollywood.

~ A remake of David Cronenberg's cult horror classic "Videodrome"? Not quite as bad of an idea as remaking "Drop Dead Fred"...but close.

This week's new movie releases:

X-Men Origins: Wolverine

Starring: Hugh Jackman, Leiv Schreiber, Ryan Reynolds

Plot: The story of how the most popular of the X-Men got his claws.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This one is not being treated kindly by the same critics who last year fell in love with "Iron Man". Lots of sound and noise, but very little plot, they say.

I'll reserve judgment until I see it myself, which will be this weekend.

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Ghosts of Girlfriends Past
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Starring: Matthew McConaughey, Jennifer, Garner, Michael Douglas

Plot: At his younger brother's wedding, a committed bachelor/womanizer is haunted by his romantic past

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Another one getting positively killed by the critics...but that may not matter for the women who do not want to get drug by their boyfriends/husbands (or both?) to go see Wolverine. I do love the concept of Michael Douglas playing a sort of Jacob Marley in this take off of "A Christmas Carol".

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Battle for Terra

Starring: the voices of Evan Rachel Wood, Justin Long, and Luke Wilson
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Plot: A space explorer crash-lands and finds himself at the forefront of a battle to prevent his people from invading this beautiful and peaceful planet.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This is a disaster with a capital "D". The studio realizes this, which is why it wasn't screened for critics, and is only being released to barely over 1000 theaters (compared to over 4000 for Wolverine).

It's also said to be another one of those "people are evil and destroy the environment" beat-you-over-the-head flicks.

Enough, already.

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New DVD Releases

DVDs released last Tuesday, April 28th, and this coming Tuesday, May 5th
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***Hotel for Dogs* - It was the Dog Days late in 2008 and early 2009, with three different dog themed movies that all performed well. Unlike "Beverly Hills Chihuahua" or "Marley & Me", this one is definitely aimed at the younger kids, following two young teens hiding stray dogs in a vacant house next door.**

***Bride Wars* -** I had a lot higher expectations of this film, with Anne Hathaway and Kate Hudson as life long BFFs going at each other when it turns out that their "dream weddings" are in conflict with each other. My wife will rent it to watch in her girl cave one night next week while I'm tuned into the NBA playoffs.

***Uninvited* -** Typical horror flick...although this one has something going for it; Elizabeth Banks playing against her "cute girl next door" type, playing an evil stepmother married to the always excellent David Strathairn.

***The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* -** The last of the five films nominated for 2008 Best Picture to be released to DVD.

The tale of a man who was born 80 years old, and aged

backwards throughout his life.

Interesting concept from F. Scott Fitzgerald, impressively visualized by David Fincher ("Fight Club", "Se7en"), and well acted by Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett.

Yes...it is similar to "Forrest Gump" in many ways, but without the hokiness.

Well worth renting.

Last Chance Harvey - In London for his daughter's wedding, a rumpled man finds his romantic spirits lifted by a new woman in his life. With Dustin Hoffman and Emma Thompson as the two leads, that makes this under-the-radar independent film something I definitely plan to see.

Calendar Watch

Next week; *Star Trek*, *Next Day Air*

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

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.

Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian - May 22 - This time, Ben Stiller's hapless security guard has to break into the Smithsonian Museum to rescue some of his peeps who've been shipped there by mistake.

The biggest mistake is scheduling this movie on the same weekend as Terminator.

Up - May 29 - Pixar's latest movie certain to be an Oscar

winner for "Best Animated Feature". This time, it's an old man who ties hundreds of balloons to his house so he can go on an adventure while staying home.

Land of the Lost - June 5 - Will Ferrell will now do his completely predictable mugging as a scientist sucked into a space-time vortex into an alternate universe complete with dinosaurs. Based on the lame TV series.

The Taking of Pelham 123 - June 12 - Denzel Washington, John Travolta, and James Gandolfini in a remake of the classic 1974 film about a hijacked subway car.

Year One - June 19 - Jack Black and Michael Cera as a couple of lazy hunter-gatherers on an epic journey through the ancient world. Harold Ramis directs

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen : - June 26 - The next chapter of Robots In Disguise!

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

Bruno - July 10 - Sacha Baron Cohen attempts to recreate the magic he found in "Borat"; this time featuring his flamboyant Austrian fashion reporter character.

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.

G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra - August 7 - Every year, there is one big-budget movie that bombs.

My prediction is that it will be this one.

Inglourious Basterds - August 21 - Quentin Tarantino directs Brad Pitt in this violent (of course) tale of a group of WWII commandos who conducted high-profile executions/terrorist acts against the Nazis in occupied France prior to D-Day.

Astro Boy - September 23 - They are really making a full length animated feature about this Japanese Anime chestnut?

Surrogates - September 25 - Bruce Willis as a cop in a futuristic world where humans live in isolation and interact through surrogate robots.

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

The Wolf Man - November 6 - Benicio Del Toro and

Anthony Hopkins in the retelling of the classic horror tale.

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

Nine - November 27 - Tim Burton's latest animated strangeness, with Elijah Wood and Jennifer Connelly voicing characters fighting aliens in a post apocalyptic world.

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.

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

The Informant - (limited release in Sept) - Steven Soderbergh's latest attempt at Oscar with Matt Damon as a company-man turned whistleblower against an agri-business giant. Might have touches of Coen Brother-like dark humor.

Avatar - (unknown) - 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.

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.

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. Mick ey Rourke and Scarlett Johansson to co-star.

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.

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.

Spider-Man 4 - May 2011 - Tobey Maquire is back as the angst ridden arachnid powered hero.

Thor - June 2011 - 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 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.

The Avengers - 2012 - Iron Man, Hulk, Thor, and Captain America open up a can of whoopass on bad guys everywhere.