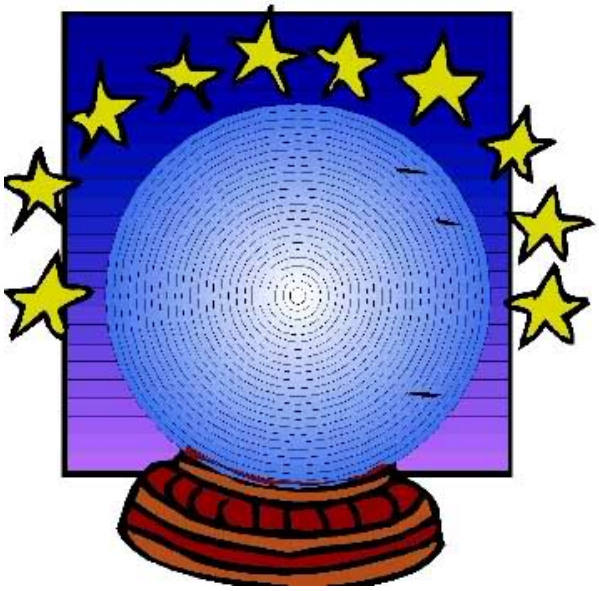

"Avatar" is now officially the highest grossing film ever. At least when you take a look at the worldwide boxoffice. For the US, it passed "The Dark Knight" last week, and I think there is little doubt it will pass "Titanic" within two weeks.

I'm right now predicting that as soon as it is announced as one of the 10 films nominated for Best Picture Oscar, the backlash will begin, and we'll start seeing all kinds of snippy stories about it.

Since the Oscar nominations are announced on Tuesday, let me go ahead and put on record the ten films I think will be nominated in this first ever expansion of the category.

Avatar
Up in the Air
Precious
Invictus
Inglourious Basterds
The Hurt Locker
Up
An Education
A Serious Man
Star Trek

Yes, I did just put "Star Trek" in that list. I really think they'll use this opportunity to nominate a sci-fi film, and if it isn't this one, it will be "District 9"

News and Rumors

~ RIP to famous recluse author J.D. Salinger. One interesting not about his iconic novel "Catcher in the Rye"...it's never been made into a film, never adapted for the stage, and never spurred a sequel. Salinger was insistent on that, up to and including suing anyone who tried to use either the name of the book, the plot, or the main character Holden Caulfied. Now that Salinger is gone...don't expect that to change, as his J.D. Salinger Literary Trust has made it clear that they will always abide by J.D.'s wishes.

~ So as much as I was hoping these two stupid film ideas would just go away...they won't. Ryan Reynolds will be seen in 2011 as both Green Lantern and again as Deadpool in a spinoff from the character he played in "X-Men Origins: Wolverine". Nothing like not letting the fact that the character had his head cut off interfere with anything.

~ Mel Gibson makes his re-appearance as a movie star today in "Edge of Darkness" (more on that later one), and he evidently liked getting back in front of the camera, as he's already looking into reteaming with his "Lethal Weapon" screenwriter for "Cold Warrior", playing a retired Cold War spy having to come back in with a young partner to confront a domestic terrorism threat from Russia. Doesn't that sound a little too close to the plot of this season's "24"?

~ And just because we can never get enough vampires. Now we have Sam Worthington, soon to be known as the busiest man in Hollywood after "Terminator Salvation", "Avatar", and "Clash of the Titans", inking a deal to star in "Dracula: Year Zero". It is to be a big budget tale that will try to intersperse the vampire mythology with the true history of Prince Vlad the Impaler. Just as long as he doesn't glisten in the sunlight.

~ And we bid a fond adieu to Miramax Studios. The high arts firm will be shutting its doors forever this week. Founded by Harvey and Bob Weinstein, who have since gone on to make pretty much nothing but crap (save "Inglourious Basterds") once gave us films like "Sex, Lies, and Videotape", "My Left Foot", "Pulp Fiction" and "Good Will Hunting". However, I'll personally

never forgive them the idiotic politicking they did that managed to score a Best Picture Oscar for the dreadful "Shakespeare in Love" over "Saving Private Ryan".

Stupid Remakes and Sequels

~ Another "Mad Max" movie? Evidently, as "Fury Road" will be made, set a short time after the story told in "Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome" from 1985...which obviously means Mel Gibson won't be starring in it. No word yet who will be playing Max, but Charlize Theron has been announced as part of the cast...which may be the only good thing it has going for it.

~ Miley Cyrus and Demi Moore are looking to star as mother and daughter in a remake of the French film "LOL: Laughing Out Loud". Can't they just rename it "GOL: Gagging Out Loud?"

This week's new movie releases:

Edge of Darkness

Starring: Mel Gibson, Ray Winstone, Danny Huston

Plot: As a homicide detective investigates the death of his activist daughter, he uncovers not only her secret life, but a corporate cover-up and government collusion that attracts an agent tasked with cleaning up the evidence.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Mad Mel is back in front of the camera for the first time since 2002, and man, does HE look pissed. I guess this is for those of you who thought Liam Neeson was too cerebral last year as he was ripping Paris apart while looking for his daughter in "Taken". I

actually have high hopes for this one, and the reviews have been generally positive, quite surprising for this genre. As we here at TheClevelandFan happen to love the action-adventure genre, I'll be surprised if it's not popular with our readers.

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When In Rome

Starring: Kristen Bell, Josh Duhamel

Plot: Beth is a young, ambitious New Yorker who is completely unlucky in love. However, when she impulsively steals some coins from a reputed fountain of love during a whirlwind trip to Rome, she finds herself aggressively pursued by a band of suitors.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: While "Edge of Darkness" may be right in the wheelhouse for the average TCF reader...this would be a pre-glasses Ricky Vaughn pitch juuuussssttt a bit outside. Just reading the description of the plot, I'm ready to promise my wife just about anything if she won't make me go see it with her. I doubt she'll push it. Even she knows that when stupid Romantic Comedies are released in January, not February, then it's a certainty that they stink (see also; "Leap Year"...or on second thought; don't see it).

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The Young Victoria (Expansion)

Starring: Emily Blunt, Rupert Friend, Paul Bettany

Plot: A dramatization of the turbulent first years of Queen Victoria's rule, and her enduring romance with Prince Albert

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: I seriously doubt that too many of you reading this will ever bother watching this film. It seems to be your standard "Historical Biography" of another member of the British Royalty...one that you really couldn't care less about. The only thing newsworthy about this is the performance of Emily Blunt in the title role; one that might secure her a Best Actress nomination next Tuesday.

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February 2nd DVD Releases:

***Zombieland* -** The release on this fell during the time that I was taking a break from writing last year, so I didn't get a chance to see this. An oversight I will rectify as soon as possible, as this was one of the biggest surprises of the year. I expected a lame rip-off of "Sean of the Dead", but evidently it is wonderful in its own right, with Woody Harrelson stealing the movie as the leader of a ragged band of zombie killers.

***Couples Retreat* -** How does a movie make over $100 million at the box office while hitting a terrible 12% positive on RottenTomatoes? By promising lots of attractive women in bikinis, along with Vince Vaughn. The consensus is that it has some good moments, but overall it's as humorless as Vaughn's "The Breakup".

***Love Happens* -** Rough week this week for guys. Even if you avoid having to go to the theater to see "When In Rome", you have to worry about this moronic RomCom with Jennifer Aniston hooking up with a widower played by Aaron Eckhart. "Eck" is about the right word here.
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Amelia - On of the Top 10 Bombs for 2009. Hilary Swank stars as the famous Amelia Earhart in this biography that makes you want for her to go ahead and crash, so you can leave.

Calendar Watch

Next Week*, From Paris with Love, Dear John, Crazy Heart (expansion)*

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

The Wolfman - February 12 - Lots of date changes for this remake of the classic horror tale, starring Benicio Del Torro and Anthony Hopkins. Let's hope that doesn't mean that this is a stinker.

Percy Jackson and the Olympians: Lightning Thief - February 12 - The next attempt at establishing a franchise to take over the audience once Harry Potter concludes. This is about teenage children of the Olympic gods and their adventures.

Shutter Island - February 19 - Martin Scorsese working once again with Leonardo DiCaprio in this mystery set in 1954. Pushed back from 2009 due to marketing concerns...this still looks like an incredible movie.

Alice in Wonderland - March 5 - Tim Burton and Johnny Depp in a film that seems meant for them. A 3D acid-trip about Alice's return to Wonderland at age 19 to fight the Red Queen.

Green Zone - March 12 - Paul Greengrass and Matt Damon team up again in a Bourne-like film about an Army officer going rouge in Iraq while looking for weapons of mass destruction.

Clash of the Titans - March 26 - Re-imaging of the campy Harry Hamlin sword-and-sandals film from the 80s. The trailer looks intriguing, at least

Wall Street 2: Money Never Sleeps - April 23 - Oliver Stone brings Michael Douglass back as Gordon Gecko, teaming him with Shia LaBeouf in a film that looks to be quite different in tone than the last one.

Nightmare on Elm Street - April 30 - Jack Earle Haley ("Watchmen") takes over the Freddy Krueger role.

Iron Man 2 - May 7 - Downey Jr. is back, this time dealing with Whiplash (Mickey Rourke) and Black Widow (Scarlet Johannson).

Robin Hood - May 14 - Ridley Scott and Russell Crowe in what is supposed to be a more "historic" account of the legendary hero.

Shrek Forever After - May 21 - 3D entry into the series that is seemingly the only way Michael Myers or Eddie Murphy can make any money

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time - May 28 - Might this finally be the first video game that translates to a huge hit at the box office? Depends on whether or not you can buy Jake Gyllenhaal as an action hero. Why not? It worked for Tobey Maguire, Matt Damon, and Robert Downey Jr.

The A-Team - June 11 - Based on the campy TV series...but the makers of this film are trying to sell it more as an action film with no camp. With Liam Neeson playing Hannibal Smith as their leader, they may have a chance.

Toy Story 3D - June 18 - It looks like a big year for 3D films in 2010. In this one, Buzz, Woody, and the rest of the toys are dumped into a day care after Andy grows up and goes to

college.

The Twilight Saga: Eclipse - July 2 - More Wussy Vampires! I can't wait! (sorry...sarcasmectomy isn't scheduled for a few months yet).

Inception - July 16 - Leonardo DiCaprio and Ellen Page in a Christopher Nolan sci-fi mind bender that looks to be in the mode of "Momento"

The Sorcerer's Apprentice - July 16 - Live action remake of the Disney classic short, starring Nicolas Cage.

Salt - July 18 - Angelina Jolie as a CIA operative accused of being a Russian spy.