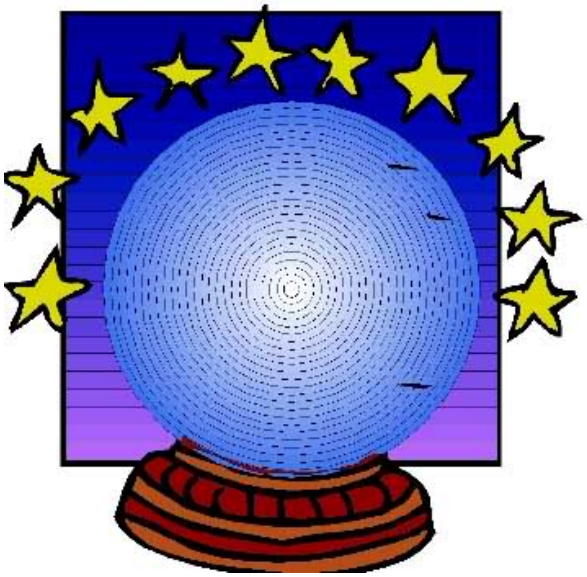

Back in the saddle again. Not much was really missed here last week. Only one movie opened nationwide, the Steve Carrel/Tina Fey comedy “Date Night”, which opened as number one…barely. I expect this film to drop off the radar very quickly, as it has been described by most as “amusing, but nowhere close to hilarious”.

Only two new movies coming out this week, but one of them is getting a huge amount of positive buzz (yeah, we’ve heard that before, haven’t we?)

Mini Review – An Education

This was a very strange year for me, as it was the first year since I’ve been writing for TheClevelandFan that I had not seen all of the movies nominated for the Best Picture Oscar prior to the awards telecast. A lot of that had to do with the fact that there were ten films nominated, so it was difficult to get out to see all of them.

I had really wanted to see the British period piece “An Education”, but had not had the time until this week, now that it has finally come out to DVD. After watching it, I’m sorry I didn’t get to the theater, as it was definitely deserving of its nomination as a film, and star Carey Mulligan absolutely deserved her nomination as Best Actress.

I might even go so far as to say that part of me believes that Mulligan should have won the award over Sandra Bullock…at least if you look at the difficulty of the part and the performance given. That's not to take anything away from Sandra, it's just that Mulligan was dazzling. The comparisons of her to a young Audrey Hepburn are spot on.

How else can you explain how a movie based upon a charming scoundrel seducing an almost seventeen year old girl ends up being quite enjoyable to watch, as opposed to fifty different brands of creepy? The answer lies in Mulligan's breakthrough performance as Jenny Mellor. Jenny is a highly intelligent only child of two well meaning, but overprotective parents, played by Alfred Molina and Cara Seymour. They want nothing more than for Jenny to get into Oxford. Jenny doesn't mind the idea of going to Oxford, but she wants to live as well, so when a charming man in a fancy sportscar offers to drive her home in a rainstorm, she accepts.

Peter Sarsgaard plays her suitor David with the perfect amount of (relatively) innocent allure and sincerity. You know that there is a little something not-quite-right behind his "career" and his actions, but they never come off as malicious, and he is not really shown as a cad just out to take advantage of a young girl. These two really do match up well intellectually and emotionally. Perhaps it's a bit more innocent due to being set in 1961 London. As such, it plays a little more like an extended episode of "Mad Men".

Mostly, it's a coming-of-age story of a girl in a bustling city on the verge of the entire 60s revolution. And it was a joy to watch.

My Rating – Brian Sipe (3 ½ footballs)

News and Rumors

~ A bit of casting news for the next Pirates of the Caribbean front. First of all, the name of the film will be "Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides", and Penelope Cruz will be onboard. We also hear that French hottie Astrid Bergés-Frisbey has been cast as a mermaid who will be crucial to the film.

~ Looks like there might be another Jack Ryan movie. We haven't seen anything of this Tom Clancy series since Ben Affleck took over the role (and surprisingly didn't suck) in 2002's "The Sum of All Fears", but reports are that Chris Pine ("Star Trek") will be the next Jack. But this time it won't actually be based on a Clancy novel, instead it will follow the details written about Ryan and his personality from the books, placing him in Dubai shortly after he leaves the Marines as a younger man. He initially works as a financial advisor in Moscow, until his evil boss frames him as a terrorist, and he must fight to clear his name, reveal the terrorist plot, and save his wife, who is a hostage of the billionaire. Sounds like a busy day.

~ Danish director Lars von Tier looks to be ready to make his US debut in a big way, directing the sci-fi disaster film "Melancholia". The casting looks interesting, with Kristen Dunst, Kiefer Sutherland, and Alexander Skarsgaard (Eric from "TrueBlood"). No details out yet about the script, which will also be penned by von Tier

~ Rachel Weisz has signed on to play Jackie Kennedy in Darren Aronofsky's next movie title, appropriately enough, "Jackie". This will be the second movie Weisz has done with Aronofsky, following the 2006 turkey "The Fountain". Aronofsky did redeem himself in 2008 with "The Wrestler", so I'm hoping he can replicate that type of character-driven excellence for this film.

~ Even Martin Scorsese is getting into the 3-D habit, as his adaptation of the children's book "The Invention of Hugo Cabret" will be filmed in 3-D. The stories follow the life of twelve year old orphan Hugo Cabret, who lives in the walls of a busy Paris train station, where his survival depends upon secrets and anonymity. No word yet on how he's going to CGI his way into casting Leonardo DiCaprio as Hugo.

~ There are plans for a movie biography of football star Joe Namath. James Mangold, who directed "Walk the Line", is set to direct this film. No word on casting of Joe Wille. I'm wondering if Suzie Kolber will be available?

Stupid Remakes and Sequels

~ Once upon a time, Zac Efron was pegged to be Ren McCormack in the senseless remake of "Footloose". But he dropped out, and the even less talented Chace Crawford signed on. Now Crawford has backed out as well. Hopefully they'll take the hint and just drop this

bomb-in-the-making right now. But I wouldn't hold my breath.

~ A big screen version of "The Man from U.N.C.L.E"? Time to just say "uncle" and give up.

This week's new movie releases:

Kick Ass

Starring: Aaron Johnson, Nicolas Cage, Chloe Moretz

Plot : Despite the fact that he has zero superpowers, a teenage fanboy looks to reincarnate himself as a crime-fighting superhero named Kick-Ass, a decision that will inspire a subculture of copy cats, put his life in danger, and unite him with a similarly minded father-daughter duo.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This is getting amazingly good reviews so far. I must say I'm shocked, as the first trailers seemed, to say the least, incredibly stupid. Instead, it's said to be quite intelligent, witty, satirical, and violent as hell. We'll see how it goes, but this may be the cult-hit of 2010.

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Death at a Funeral

Starring: Chris Rock, Martin Lawrence, Zoe Saldana
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Plot: A patriarch's funeral leads to a series of family arguments, revealing dark secrets and possibly murder.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: I don't believe I've ever seen a movie remade this quickly, as this was released in 2007 as a British film directed by Frank Oz. This time we change the venue from stuffy Brits to African American comedians. But they did keep Peter Dinklage in the same role as the little guy with a big surprise. Critics are split so far, most liking the casting and the comedy, but at the same time lamenting that it's simply a retread of the original.

New DVD Releases:

Avatar – This is the Big One, coming out on its own special release day, April 22 (Earth Day…just in case anyone out there didn't know what a huge environmentalist James Cameron is…in addition to being a huge egotist). I'm really looking forward to seeing how this plays on DVD. It was so magnificent to view at the theater in 3-D, that I wonder how it will look on a smaller screen. I would push for people to watch it on BluRay if possible.

The Lovely Bones – Interesting life for this film. First it was considered to be a sure Oscar contender, given director Peter Jackson's history and the buzz around the novel and the cast (Mark Wahlberg, Rachel Weisz, Stanley Tucci, and Saoirce Ronan, who was nominated as a 13 year old fore best supporting actress for "Atonement"). Then the release date kept getting pushed back, and all the stories where how this was a horrible film that was going to bomb. Reality came out somewhere in between, as the movie did pretty well at the box office, and was a hit for girls in the age range of 10 – 15.

The Young Victoria – Another historical film made for the Awards Season that just didn't catch on. Emily Blunt got rave reviews as the future Queen of England, and a Golden Globe nomination, but the film was just a little too pedestrian to catch on with the U.S. audiences.

Pirate Radio **–** Released last Tuesday. Philip Seymour Hoffman and Bill Nighy star as 1960s maverick DJs who broadcast banned rock-n-roll to Great Britain on a ship off the English coast. Harmless fun with a great soundtrack.

Calendar Watch

Next Week *The Losers, The Backup Plan*

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

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 23 – Angelina Jolie as a CIA operative accused of being a Russian spy.

Wall Street 2: Money Never Sleeps – September 24 – 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.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part I – November 19 – Part One of the final book about Harry, Hermione, and Ron. This one (and I'm sure the last one) will be in 3-D.

Tron Legacy – December 17 – Might be the most anticipated Holiday release of this year.