

Sunday, January 15, 2006

Chicks, Flicks, and Tittie Picks: 2005 Edition

2005 has come and gone, as have we. With this entry, we commemorate the finest of the female form on film in the past year. After all, you can't spell 'matinee' without T & A.1. Sin City - Carla Gugino as the lovely lesbian Lucille2. Wedding Crashers - all those fleeting montage mamas3. The 40-Year-Old Virgin - the speed-dating gal with the, um, wardrobe malfunction4. Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang - the ever-adorable Harmony Faith Lane (Michelle Monaghan), among others5. A History of Violence - Maria Bello as Edie Stall, wife betrayed and bare6. Mrs. Henderson Presents - the bold cast of the Windmill Theatre, with the notable exception of Bob Hoskins7. The Constant Gardener - Tessa (Rachel Weisz), an activist equally fiesty and pregnant8. Broken Flowers - Alexis Dziena, queen of eyebrow elevation9. Munich - the local honey trap, whose robe just might have a few stains in it10. Brokeback Mountain - the cameo of Anne Hathaway's admirable assets, which leads us to...Honorable Mention: Havoc - so this direct-to-video may suck more than a Hoover, but it does indeed feature more of Ms. HathawayThe "We're Waiting" Award: (tie) Rachel McAdams and Elizabeth BanksThe "Wham, Bam, No Thank You, Ma'am" Award: Keira Knightley (for Domino, among others)

Posted by William Goss in Award Season at 12:31

Saturday, January 14, 2006

Why Being A Movie Star Might Suck

I thought about it a lot over the holidays. We didn't go anywhere, but I'm sure lots of people did. I thought about the dance you do with family. They have known you forever, but sometimes, at least to me, it seems like they know you very little, in reality. Because their expectations for you were sealed long ago, there is no easy shift from perception to reality when it comes to the relatives.

I think it is among family that you first realize how little people in general know each other, really. You take a look at your mother or father and, all of a sudden, realize that they are a person outside of their relationship to you. They get scared; they cry. It's a mind-blowing idea to the newly aware kid. Then, the most worrisome part, you think to yourself – if I don't really know this person I have lived with for years, how does anyone really know anyone?

Of course, we don't often struggle with the gaping chasm between our own perceptions and reality in modern life. When getting to know someone initially, we might pay closer attention to small details, but a few weeks or months into it, we think we have them fairly well figured out. We all do it, consciously or no. We drift in and around one another without ever taking the time to stop and see the individual life taking place before us. For example, anytime someone finds that one is a writer, they will inevitably say, "You should write about my life." The truth is, every life is a story worth telling.

Back to the point, then. In getting ready to spend time with family, you often have to guard yourself against insult for their assumptions. If Grandma still thinks you collect unicorns, then you smile and thank her for them. If your mother insists that you have always loved pumpkin pie, even if you can't stand it, you take a slice and shut up. These are the trade offs for enjoying the company of the people we love.

A similar situation arises in the wake of any reunion. Just as we must for family, we have to show our best side to gathered friends and foes of yesteryear in the old high school gym every ten years or so. We lose a couple of pounds, get a new haircut, take a date, and act like we have the whole world by the tail. The preparation for such things is startling. Just as we must gear up to see family at holiday time, we must be ready for the challenges of reuniting with people we haven't seen since the retainers they wore made them lisp. It is a big deal.

So, why must it suck to be a celebrity? Two reasons spring immediately to mind. One – People who have never met you think they know you very well. Two- Every day has the stresses of a family or high school reunion.

To the first. I was watching CNN Headline News hoping for some actual, you know, news, when some item relating to Brad Pitt was mixed in with the crime and international stories. The anchor read said 'news' then proceeded to chuckle and make some snarky comment about Mr. Pitt, as though he was a good buddy that could be ribbed or joshed or tossed by said anchor. Imagine turning on CNN and hearing something you are alleged to have done, read by someone you have never, will never, know. That would suck. Added to this disaster about celeb personal lives is the fact that people in general seem unable to separate actors from the roles that they play. So, not only are you, as a movie star, responsible for and given credit for the actions of your everyday life, as they are perceived by an eager tabloid industry and public. You also must take credit or blame for the activities of your characters, whose identities people tend to meld with your own persona, the persona that is a construct and not really you.

Consider it as a game of telephone. The real Brad – the public persona – public response to said persona – generally accepted assumptions based upon that response. How often do things filtered through so many stages come out exactly right? Never. And yet, we continue to make our assumptions and judgements, believing what we wish to believe, that Brad will just love that ceramic unicorn we sent, because he collects them. Grandma said.

The second part, the everyday is a high school reunion part, sucks, perhaps, more. The same shield we use to present to acquaintances the best idea of ourselves, never reality, is the one that movie stars must don every time they step outside of the confines of their actual home life. If you are a movie star, you better look damn good running to the store or dropping the kids at school, because the camera is always watching.

There is a show running on VH1 called "Bad Habits." It is basically a collection of movie stars caught picking their noses, biting their nails, and doing random other things that no human would wish to be captured on film and aired on

Blog Export: Hollywood Blogslap, <http://unreelmedia.net/serendipity/>

VH1. And, somehow, the public seems to find this kind of thing exhaustively entertaining. Imagine your worst moment of the last week, last day, last hour displayed on television for the world to see. If it is not something you would want for yourself, then why is it expected of those in the public eye?

Yes, movie stars enter a sort of agreement with the public, by becoming famous, to be somewhat available to us, just as do politicians and any figure haplessly trapped in a news story that gains some national attention (which also would suck). Yes, they get the best tables and free clothes and lots of money. Is that a trade you would take? Having your face splashed across CNN and VH1 with a finger in your nose? Not me. Being a movie star must suck.

Posted by Natasha Theobald in Rants and Raves at 07:38

Saturday, January 7, 2006

'Brokeback' canceled at Utah theater; shrieking harridans applaud the move

I am delighted by the comedy of errors surrounding "Brokeback Mountain" and the Jordan Commons theater in Sandy, Utah. As locals know, Jordan Commons is owned by Larry Miller, a car-dealership tycoon who also owns the Utah Jazz. A devoted Mormon, he has also financed production of some LDS-themed films such as "The Work and the Glory" and "States of Grace." Well, "Brokeback Mountain" was scheduled to open at Jordan Commons this past Friday. It was already playing to record-setting crowds at the Broadway Centre in downtown Salt Lake City (Sandy is a suburb 20 minutes south), and was set to open in two other area theaters on Friday, too. On Thursday, Miller was being interviewed by KCPW-FM reporter Jonathan Brown, who brought up the imminent showing of "Brokeback Mountain." I haven't heard the interview, which aired on the NPR affiliate Friday, but I gather from Miller's quoted response that Brown was expressing surprise that Jordan Commons, which has occasionally shied away from controversial movies, was showing it. Miller said, "It's something that I have to let the market speak to some degree.... I don't think I'm qualified to be the community censor." But here's the thing: Turns out Miller didn't actually know what "Brokeback Mountain" was about until Brown told him. Two hours after the interview was conducted, Jordan Commons told the local papers to pull "Brokeback Mountain" from its Friday ads, because they weren't going to show it after all.

open at Jordan Commons on Friday? "Grandma's Boy" and "Hostel." If we're talking just about content, and not dealing with matters of artistic or entertainment merit, both films are far more graphic and potentially damaging to the community than "Brokeback Mountain." Unlike "Brokeback Mountain," which has one brief, fully clothed sex scene between two men and a few brief scenes of heterosexual married sex later on, "Grandma's Boy" and "Hostel" feature wall-to-wall profanity, sexual vulgarity, nudity, very graphic illicit sexual activity, and rampant drug use. On top of that, "Hostel" also has gruesome, horrific violence and gore. And that's just the onscreen content! If we get into the ideas or "themes" of the films, it's much more disturbing. We have premarital sex being encouraged, promiscuous young people being lionized, drug use being championed, and sadistic torturers of human beings being granted a free pass. But don't worry, Gayle! "Grandma's Boy" and "Hostel" may be depraved, degrading and salacious -- but at least don't have any implications of adult men being in love with each other! So they're totally fine, and Larry Miller can still be your new hero even though he's showing them. I wonder, though. If pulling "Brokeback Mountain" tells young people that there's something wrong with the movie, does NOT pulling "Hostel" or "Grandma's Boy" tell young people that there's NOT something wrong with them? If one movie is a condemnation, then the other, logically, has to be an endorsement. (By the way, last weekend the Broadway Centre's box office for "Brokeback Mountain" was 12th-highest among the 300-plus theaters that were showing it. I'm sure the folks at the Broadway are happy to have Jordan Commons cancel it, because it means more audiences for them.) Sources: The Salt Lake Tribune, Deseret Morning News

Posted by Eric D. Snider in Movie News at 17:42

Thursday, January 5, 2006

Will Newman nab a nom, a win, or a snub?

If you're anything like me (condolences if you are), you believe that Thomas Newman is one of the most talented, perfectly-suited-to-the-medium composers working in film today. You may even be loopy enough to buy one his soundtracks – as I did some time ago with *American Beauty* – and find yourself drawn in not only by those memorably quiet piano/string melodies, but by the mandolin-driven Latin rhythms that brighten up the score with tablas and Appalachian dulcimers. He writes lean, powerful scores, with lean, powerful orchestrations, trusting his unerring ear to determine when there should be silence, and when his music should swell in and dictate the feeling of a moment. These moments include: That drifting plastic bag in *American Beauty's* cold winter breeze; those stirring last few minutes when Morgan Freeman guides us through the perfect ending of *The Shawshank Redemption*; and that unforgettable sequence where Sam Mendes drained away all sound in *Road to Perdition* to allow the power of a thundering rainstorm and an Oedipal realization to be conveyed with nothing but Newman's resonant bass strings and graceful piano. To me, each of these moments – combined with the rest of the score Newman delivered for these brilliant films – should have landed him three Academy Awards in a snap. But strangely, his trophy case has remained Oscarless, steadily collecting dust as each of his seven nominations (beginning with 1994's dual consideration of *Shawshank* and *Little Women*) have gone for naught. As soon as we remind ourselves that he's also scored *Scent of a Woman*, *The People vs Larry Flynt*, *Phenomenon*, *Erin Brokovich*, *The Green Mile*, and *In the Bedroom* (amongst others) – this lack of prizewinning recognition is shameful. And let's face it, the man was born to win Oscars. Son of legendary composer Alfred Newman (not to be confused with *Mad* magazine mascot and George W. Bush look-alike, Alfred E. Neuman) cousin of Randy, brother and other relation to a plethora of other musical Newmans, Tommy can be said to have a pretty okay family tree as far as catchy tune-making goes. His father set the family's Oscar bar high by nabbing a nomination for the year's biggest prize a ludicrous 41 times (take that Edith Head), and ended up taking home the gold on 9 occasions. Alfred's nephew, Randy, was up for 15 Oscars before finally breaking through with *Monsters, Inc.* a few years back, and with that win passed on the title of most-thwarted-chances-to-win to his 40 year-old cousin Tom. It's pretty safe to say that if a musical-genius gene exists, the Newman clan is solid evidence it doesn't skip generations. For Thomas, the last calendar year saw him produce scores for the too-early-for-your-consideration *Cinderella Man*, and the quickly forgettable *Jarhead*; meaning his 2005 efforts are virtually guaranteed to be swept under the red carpet. This realization came as a surprise to me, as at the start of the year I thought his inimitable style would fit nicely into the sentimental, depression-era Opie-epic, and, since *Jarhead* would team him for the third time with Mendes (whose 2-for-2 in the movie world was highly reliant on the Newman touch), I figured one way or the other he'd shed the bridesmaid reputation. Sadly, both are disappointing films aside from their music, and so his victory speech will have to wait at least until the 2006 festivities. Of course, according to IMDB.com, the only project he has in the hopper is some sort of prequel to the never-ending Hannibal Lector saga, and that doesn't bode well for his breaking the losing streak. But hey, maybe the film will actually turn out to be a great horror flick, and Newman's work will do for him what *The Omen* did for Jerry Goldsmith. In fact, it would be somewhat fitting if it did, as not since Goldsmith has there been a more deserving composer so routinely snubbed by Academy voters; that is, if my predictions about a snub this year come to fruition, and it's hard to imagine they won't. I'm confident before he's through beguiling us with beautiful music, the Academy's voting members will recognize Newman's contribution to film – a contribution heard daily in film after film, promo after promo, commercial after commercial, NBC-sports-bio after NBC-sports-bio, and trailer after trailer – places him in a grand spot atop the heap of Hollywood scorers. At the very least, that contribution should allow him the chance to stand at the podium of the Kodak Theatre and try to fit each member of his bevy of musical kinfolk into the 45-recommended-seconds of thank-yous.

Posted by Paul Bryant in Rants and Raves at 15:50

Friday, December 30, 2005

HBS Radio debuts on Live365!

Okay, so right now it's nothing more than six hours of quite awesome soundtrack tunes on a loop, mixed in with some robotic station IDs and movie quotes, but that certainly puts Hollywood Bitchslap Radio ahead of your average morning zoo. We've got everything from Rushmore to Royal Tenenbaums, Virgin Suicides to Garden State, Boogie Nights to American Beauty and Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels...So take a listen and tell us what you think!

Posted by Oz in HBS/EFC at 20:14

Tuesday, December 27, 2005

National Film Registry says: No shirt, no shoes, no dice!

The Library of Congress today announced the 25 films selected as the 2005 entries into the National Film Registry, the collection of "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" movies (features, shorts, newsreels, etc.) that are now guaranteed the proper preservation due. Among this year's titles, you'll find an alien transvestite, talking toys, a couple of basketball hopefuls, con men who touch their noses, con men who sing about trouble, a prisoner who enjoys a failure to communicate, rough cops who love a good car chase, and even Kris Kringle himself. Oh, and Spicoli got in there, too. Looks like that long talk with Mr. Hand finally paid off. The complete list of titles: Baby Face (1933) The Buffalo Creek Flood: An Act of Man (1975) The Cameraman (1928) Commandment Keeper Church, Beaufort South Carolina, May 1940 (1940) Cool Hand Luke (1967) Fast Times at Ridgemont High (1982) The French Connection (1971) Giant (1956) H2O (1929) Hands Up (1926) Hoop Dreams (1994) House of Usher (1960) Imitation of Life (1934) Jeffries-Johnson World's Championship Boxing Contest (1910) Making of an American (1920) Miracle on 34th Street (1947) Mom and Dad (1944) The Music Man (1962) Power of the Press (1928) A Raisin in the Sun (1961) The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975) San Francisco Earthquake and Fire April 18, 1906 (1906) The Sting (1973) A Time for Burning (1966) Toy Story (1995) You can find the complete NFR press release here; it includes summaries and credits of all 25 selected films. You can also view the complete list of all films selected into the Registry since its inception in 1989 here.

Posted by David Cornelius in Movie News at 10:41

Thursday, December 22, 2005

Gordon vs. Stockwell

It recently dawned on me that both of the young leads from John Carpenter's 1983 flick *Christine* have gone on to become fairly successful filmmakers. And that realization led to the obvious revelation that there are two distinct definitions of the word "successful." Keith Gordon, whom you may remember from his performances in *Jaws 2*, *Dressed to Kill*, *The Legend of Billie Jean*, and *Back to School*, played Arnie Cunningham, the nerd-turned-automotive assassin in *Christine*. Mr. Gordon has since gone on to direct *The Chocolate War* (1988), *A Midnight Clear* (1992), *Mother Night* (1996), and *Waking the Dead* (2000), four extreeeeemely good films, if it's me you're askin'. Gordon also directed the big-screen adaptation *The Singing Detective*, which I've not yet seen due to the millions of awful things I've heard about it. I really should rent the thing already. Aside from his performance as the blandly noble Dennis Guilder in *Christine*, John Stockwell is probably most recognizable for his work in *Losin' It*, *Eddie and the Cruisers*, *My Science Project*, and *Top Gun*. As a director, Mr. Stockwell brought us 1987's *Under Cover*, the 2000 TV flick *Cheaters*, the Kirsten Dunst romance crazy/beautiful, the surfer-girlz classic *Blue Crush*, and the keeningly awful Paul Walker/Jessica Alba gape-a-thon *Into the Blue*. Which just goes to show you: If you're a young actor who has aspirations of becoming a film director, and you have the chance to star in a Stephen King adaptation ... be sure to audition for the role of the tragic villain.

Posted by Scott Weinberg in Rants and Raves at 10:37

Sunday, December 18, 2005

Annoying Things That Happen in Movies, Vol. #2: I Yelled, But No One Heard Me!

The following is another entry into a series of commentary pieces on annoying trends that are seen in movies these days. This is partly based on Roger Ebert's "Little Movie Glossary".#2: I Yelled, But No One Heard Me!Here's an annoying film trend that I've been seeing lately. When a character either yells to another character or outdoors when another character doesn't want some outside force to hear them, that character will shush the offending loudmouth and get away with it.What should normally happen is the character or characters that are supposed to hear it will respond, but Movie Law dictates that they are not supposed to hear it so as long as a character says "Be Quiet, or they'll hear you!"

In "Analyze This", for example, there's an early scene where Robert DeNiro is talking to Billy Crystal and he asks him if he wants a guy "whacked". Crystal refuses but DeNiro yells to Jimmy, Crystal shushes him and Jimmy doesn't respond at all.

Or in "Lethal Weapon 2" where a character goes "Wahoo!" mere feet away from the bad guys at the LAPD warehouse, yet Mel Gibson shushes him even though the bad guys are just feet away and would no doubt hear them coming. "The Goonies" is another example of a film where it happens throughout. where the kids would get caught but shushes and putting hands over mouths to silence characters will keep them safe. This also happens in countless horror films.What I would like to see happen in a film is a character silence another loudmouth character when they're sneaking into a building or across a field, and have them surprisingly caught later on because of that first loud offense. "Yeah, you thought you were going to sneak across, but we heard you yell the first time! Shushing the other guy did nothing!" Next: "Annoying Things That Happen in Movies: Why do people in movies always have money even if they're broke?"Jasonefilmcritic.com

Posted by Jason Whyte in Rants and Raves at 23:58

Saturday, December 17, 2005

PosterWatch: Vice, Date, Firewall, and The Hills Have... Hands?

Four new teaser posters for your viewing pleasure: Firewall features Harrison Ford, his family, and a tagline that suggests another Panic Room. Date Movie (Alyson Hannigan and Fred Willard: yay! Eddie Griffin: boo!) gains points for taking a jab at the unfunny Scary Movie. Miami Vice showcases the look familiar to anyone who's visited the movie's website lately. And the artwork for the Hills Have Eyes remake shows more hand than eye (kudos to the designer for not going the obvious route). Full-sized images behind the cut.

Posted by David Cornelius in Movie News at 22:48

Friday, December 16, 2005

Second Chance Spin - Week of 12/13

My stab at a regular contribution will be Second Chance Spin, a weekly column in which a spotlight film is picked that may have missed its audience on the way to DVD shelves. This week's selection: Michael Bay's *The Island*. If you had told me at this time last year that a Vince Vaughn/Owen Wilson rom-com would breeze by a Michael Bay summer blockbuster at the box office, I would have laughed in your face while pouring gasoline on a bag of kittens. However, such events have indeed taken place, and *The Island* took in a paltry \$35-million as a result, making it Bay's first financial flop. (It didn't help that the marketing department practically gave away the entire movie with the posters and trailers.) That's a damn shame, too, seeing as *The Island* may very well be his best film yet, facing competition from only *The Rock*. Here's a few reasons why *The Island* deserves justice in the rental realm: 1. It's two movies for the price of one! The first half is a solid sci-fi story about a utopian community of survivors who go about their lives in the aftermath of a global catastrophe and eagerly await their chance to leave for the titular paradise, which is apparently the world's last pathogen-free zone. Curious Ewan McGregor finds out that not only is there no island, but also that all the citizens are actually products, who conveniently "win" only to be harvested for spare parts. Mildly annoyed by this revelation, he flees the habitat with fellow clone Scarlett Johansson to find their human counterparts out in the real world. From this point on, the film becomes one long chase sequence, made exhilarating in typical Bay fashion, with plenty of lavish destruction and all-around mayhem. 2. Scarlett Johansson! In addition to being stunningly attractive, Johansson has this habit of being a rather fine actress at the same time. At the very least, she is a most welcome distraction from the rampant product placement throughout the film. Just remember to keep your eyes on her as you sit on your couch, conducting an MSN search while drinking Aquafina next to your X-Box. (Oh, and for the ladies, there's double the Ewan for your viewing pleasure.) 3. It doesn't insult your intelligence! Though it's obviously just a big summer thrill ride, *The Island* doesn't knock you senseless with bombastic and hollow action setpieces, nor does it continue to bug you about the complexity of the plot, thus taking away from all of the fun. The plot is what rises this film above the 'guilty pleasure' status that most Bay films share, even if it's not the most original storyline (then again, most of us haven't seen *Parts: The Clonus Horror*, so no harm, no foul!). As cleanly divided as the movie might be, the result is an adequate fusion of sci-fi and action, creating an ultimately satisfying adrenaline rush out of typical summer fare. With that in mind, viewers will hopefully discover for themselves that a visit to *The Island* is indeed a worthwhile one.

Posted by William Goss in DVD at 23:05

NO LATE FEES! Well okay, some late fees.

It was good while it lasted. Who honestly thought this wouldn't happen? Blockbuster, despite making their big push for liquidity dependent on the concept of the abolition of all late fees, has announced that a third of their US stores are quietly reinstating late fees. The 'no late fees' credo has been popular with the customers, despite the ever-so-sneaky back-door trap of charging customers' credit cards for the purchase price of any film returned a little too late, but anyone who has walked into a Blockbuster store over the past few weeks has in all likelihood noticed three things: 1. There are no movies on the shelves. 2. On weekends, the place is shoulder-to-shoulder busy. 3. During the early to mid-week, the stores are all but empty. Of course, in hindsight, all of the above makes perfect sense. After all, if you don't HAVE TO go to a Blockbuster store on a Monday night, why would you? Then again, if it's a rainy weekend and the kids are bored, hey, that'd be a good time to go return those movies you've had for a week and a half.

The absence of product left on the shelves is cited as the major reason that Blockbuster stores are reverting to late fee charges - those stores that are independently owned under the Blockbuster banner are simply not in a financial state that allows them to keep adding product to the shelves. This all, of course, is terrible news for Blockbuster shareholders, who have watched the company crumble since it raped the industry and spent the best part of a decade pushing substandard product and high prices at customers, expecting that they'd never lose interest, get wise, or start shopping elsewhere. If indie Blockbuster stores aren't making enough money to buy more product for the shelves, that would seem to indicate that the great no-late-fee experiment is not working, and that the company is bound to announce some fairly horrific results in the months ahead, which will in all

likelihood see the return of ALL late fees across the chain. Time to start signing up for Netflix, people.

Posted by Oz in DVD at 15:50

40-Year-Old Virgin opens huge on DVD

Remember when the DVD format first came out and the studios weren't really sure if it would catch on? Remember how some embraced the technology, and others kind of dribbled out product without much thought about its possibilities? Welcome to the new world order. Hot on the heels of Disney claiming that they were considering releasing films on DVD and in theaters simultaneously, comes the news that the 40-Year-Old Virgin, a film that was definitely successful in theaters considering its genre, has sold TWO MILLION COPIES on its first day on DVD. Now, think about that for a second - two million DVDs in one day. Let's imagine that Universal makes only \$7 per disc (a conservative estimate when they can sell for \$25 or more in some stores), that comes out at a \$14m opening day - or 50% more than the box office on the opening day big screen release of Peter Jackson's King Kong! Is it any wonder that the studios are abandoning the big screen in favor of the take-home option when the payday on a middle of the road movie on disc can be larger than the big screen blockbuster of the season? The DVD contains bonus features including deleted scenes, behind the scenes footage, commentary by the filmmakers and cast, and extra "you know how I know you're gay?" dialogue. There's also an unrated version, which has an extra 17 minutes of the film, specifically shot for the DVD release. Eat it up, people, but take my word for it - if the studios actually do make DVD releases simultaneous with theatrical releases, successes like the 40-Year-Old Virgin won't happen. Think about it, the reason this film is selling so hugely on DVD is BECAUSE the theatrical release was so well received. People have been waiting for this film to hit DVD, and if you take away that anticipation, you take away the chance for an explosive debut like this.

Posted by Oz in DVD at 15:22

Larry Fishburne takes on The Alchemist. Yikes.

Just about any college student, hippy, self-help guru and aging renaissance man has read Paolo Coelho's The Alchemist, and most likely committed it to memory. Call it an international version of Jack Kerouac if you will, but it's widely considered to be a phenomenal book, about a boy who decides he needs to travel to figure out what life is all about, and in doing so realizes that the biggest treasure of all is sometimes right under your nose. Legions of men and women, lost in the everyday blah of life, have found meaning in the pages of this book... but it's one of those tomes that very much fit into the category of "this shit would be impossible to put to film." Enter Laurence Fishburne, who wants to not only star in it, he wants to direct as well, according to Production Weekly. Jinkies! Hey, I'll give the guy a chance to prove me wrong, but I can't see a seasoned director doing this book justice, let alone an inexperienced actor-turned-director, who will be too busy acting to concentrate on helming the shoot. I predict disaster. The flick is due to be shot in Dubai and Jordan in 2006. Good luck!

Posted by Oz in Movie News at 15:02

How Many Bullets Did Kong Take Before Falling?

Me have legs, you watch. Me smash Drudge. Here we go again! Reactionary journalism before all the facts are in. A lack of perspective that helps spin a story to either a point of view or a juicier headline. I, for one, am sick of it. The latest comes on the heels of King Kong's opening day, a \$9.7 million-ish take which inspired Matt Drudge to plaster all over his front page "KONG BOMB?" At least he had the decency to choose a slightly more responsible punctuation. Sure, that's not a sexy number in the 21st century where we've had six Wednesday openings that grossed over \$20 million. But let's all calm down and take a step back starting with the sentence I just wrote. Six Wednesday openings since 2002 over \$20 million. There have only been seven in HISTORY! The seventh? The return of Star Wars known as The Phantom Menace in 1999. Where does Kong's \$9.7 rank? 21st. Yes, behind Pokemon as Drudge so callously observes. But consider this:- 12 of the films above Kong are sequels (if you count Phantom Menace and Batman Begins.)- Only 9 of the Top 20 were released on a date when school was still in session.- Only 5 of the films were released in December during the same period. Three of those were Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings films. So let's not call King Kong dead in the jungle just yet. You can spin it to the positive just as easily as Drudge did by saying it's the third best Wednesday opening of 2005 (behind War of the Worlds and Batman Begins). Shrek 2 was the FOURTH best Wednesday opener in 2004 (\$11.7 million) and it went on to gross \$441 million, good enough for the third highest grossing film in history. But, like the negative, it's a defense that can't yet be justified since IT'S ONLY BEEN OPEN FOR TWO DAYS!!!! Instead, let's do something crazy and do some thinking outside the box and consider what King Kong has in store for it. To speculate

that it had the potential to do "Titanic-like" numbers were both premature and pretty ludicrous. The highest 3-day opening in December's history belongs to *The Return of the King* with \$72.6 million. Last week, *The Chronicles of Narnia* was good enough for second (\$65.5). Conservatively, if *Kong* only comes up with \$60 million over the 3-day weekend, it will still be looking at \$76 million for the five-day. Yes, only about 33rd on the all-time 5-day list – but just more than *The Fellowship of the Ring* which is currently the 3rd highest December 5-day ever and 1 of only 3 December openings to do a 5-day of over \$75 million. (*Narnia* managed \$74.1.) The other two? *The Return of the King* (\$124) and *The Two Towers* (\$102). And that's being conservative. What does *Kong* have to look forward in its journey through December? On the positive side, it has a 2-day head start on Xmas vacation for the kids. Yes, it begins for many kids this weekend until Jan. 3. That's 17 days of vacation when the movie theaters will be packed. Working against it is the unfortunate calendar placement of the Christmas and New Year holidays which fall on Saturday and Sundays. You lose a few showings on Christmas Eve, but since 2002 the top grossing film on New Years Day has risen each year from \$10.2 million (*Fellowship*) to \$18.2 (*Meet the Fockers*). The same goes for Christmas, rising from \$10.9 (*Cast Away*) to \$19.5 (*Fockers*). But Erik, you say, *Kong* is not the only film in the marketplace and is about to get some stiff competition in the coming weeks. Oh really? By whom? *The Family Stone*, *Cheaper by the Dozen 2*, *Fun with Dick and Jane*, *The Ringer*, *Rumor Has It*, and *Wolf Creek*? You mean those advance ticket sellers? If they are lucky, there are two \$100 million grossers in that bunch. And now I'm being liberal, even if I say just north of \$100 million. *Wolf Creek* and *The Ringer* aren't even cracking 2,000 screens. *The Producers*, *Munich*, *Memoirs of a Geisha* and *Brokeback Mountain* are going to gestate in their platform releases before launching wider. The former two will be on less than 1,000 screens Christmas day. Does anyone believe that *Kong* won't be #1 until January? Yes, it's three hours long, limiting the play times – but *Titanic* was ten minutes longer. Yes, it's not a sequel – but it's a remake which should have a built-in audience. This is a story that can be spun negatively by the press and positively by studio execs. But shouldn't it be given the courtesy of being allowed to breathe a little before the hammers come down? How many declared *The Polar Express* a "bomb" last year, before it just kept growing in audience numbers en route to over \$160 million. If that winds up as *Kong*'s final tally, then yes, it will be a disappointment. But anything less than \$250 probably would be. Shall we just declare its Oscar chances dead because we found a critic who didn't like it? Of course not. But we should let the experts do the prognosticating and the real journalists, who understand both sides of the story, do the reporting.

Posted by Erik Childress in Rants and Raves at 14:24

Life imitates art. Art gets raped by censors.

Doco director, Kirby Dick When Kirby Dick decided to investigate the Motion Picture Association of America's ratings system by doing a documentary about it, part of him must have known that if he dug up anything worth exposing, the MPAA would rate his film into the toilet. And shock, horror - it's done just that. "This Film is Not Yet Rated" has been rated NC-17 for "some graphic sexual content." An appeal is underway, and you can bet the cameras will be rolling as that appeal is heard. Kirby, who was nominated for best documentary for his film "Twist of Faith", spent a year investigating what goes on behind the secretive doors of the MPAA, and his decision to include clips from movies that have been rated NC-17 was apparently what led to his own film being kyboshed. The filmmaker told Reuters, "We encountered what many indie filmmakers encounter [...] There are a great many inequities and inconsistencies in the rating system, in part because it is so secret. The ratings board is reluctant to be specific, which can be maddening." An NC-17 rating is generally considered to be a kiss of death for a feature film in the US. Films with that rating are effectively (and often contractually) banned from many mall-based cineplexes, they don't end up on the shelves at Blockbuster, and they end up unseen in 75% of US towns. Irrespective of what rating the film ends up getting, rest assured, this site will lead the charge in telling people to go see the thing anyway, should IFC Films decide to release it with rating intact.

Posted by Oz in Movie News at 11:30

Super Size Me director, Morgan Spurlock, goes after the Republicans.

Super size this. "I'll have the Tom Delay Corruption-Burger, and chase that with an Intelligent Design shake, thanks!" Morgan Spurlock, who we all dig mightily at HollywoodBitchslap.com because we knew him back before he got all famous, and because his film caused several of us to lose serious weight, has announced that his next documentary project is going to be based on Chris Mooney's best-selling non-fiction book, the Republican War on Science. The flick, according to the London Guardian, will investigate the Bush administration's efforts to railroad science and scientists for political objectives, from refuting the idea that global warming exists, to refusing to approve the morning after pill for over the counter use, to attacking the concept of evolution and forcing schools to teach creationism dressed up as 'intelligent design'. And what's more, we'll each be buying a ticket. So there.

Blog Export: Hollywood Blogslap, <http://unreelmedia.net/serendipity/>

Posted by Oz in Movie News at 11:15

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

Critical Mass: King Kong

In this, part 1 of a brand-new series that I just thought up like 4 minutes ago, I'll bring you small snippets of my favorite reviews from new movies. Once I get done writing my own reviews, there's nothing I love more than reading the opinions of my favorite critics. And today's a good day to start this column because KING KONG comes out today. And I loved it. A lot. And, yay, so did most of my favorite critics. "And then it just keeps getting more almost unbearably exciting -- I can't remember the last time I actually gasped or moaned out loud at sometime I was seeing on a movie screen, or actually slapped my hands to my face half in awe at what I was seeing and half resisting the urge to cover my eyes so I wouldn't have to see any more... but Kong made me feel like a little kid again, astonished at the transporting power of The Movies." -- MaryAnn Johnason, The Flick Filosopher "King Kong is gloriously uninhibited, fearlessly silly and willing to express itself through grandiloquent statements and breathless pronouncements. At three full hours, I wanted three full hours more. I hadn't felt as exhilaratingly free and goofy in a film since I was an eight-year-old watching RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK through my fingers. They don't really make movies like this anymore; I don't know if they ever did." -- Walter Chaw, Film Freak Central "The movie is, almost by definition, too much - too long, too big, too stuffed with characters and over-the-top set pieces - but it is animated by an impish, generous grace. Three hours in the dark with a giant, angry ape should leave you feeling battered and exhausted, but KING KONG is as memorable for its sweetness as for its sensationalism." -- A.O. Scott, The New York Times "The result is a surprisingly involving and rather beautiful movie -- one that will appeal strongly to the primary action audience, and also cross over to people who have no plans to see KING KONG but will change their minds the more they hear. I think the film even has a message, and it isn't that beauty killed the beast. It's that we feel threatened by beauty, especially when it overwhelms us, and we pay a terrible price when we try to deny its essential nature and turn it into a product, or a target. This is one of the year's best films." -- Roger Ebert, Chicago Sun-Times

Posted by Scott Weinberg in Rants and Raves at 04:40

This week's new trailers

This week, four new trailers have emerged, giving us an early look at four of the bigger film releases of the coming months. Well, three of them are big, anyway...

The Da Vinci Code

X-3

Poseidon

Mission: Impossible 3

Posted by Scott Weinberg in Trailers at 03:01

Annoying Things That Happen in Movies, Vol. #1: The Bizarre Alarm Clock

To go along with my Outing Bad Film Presentations series, I have decided to do a series on the little character or plot driven things that annoy me to no end when watching movies. Things such as; When somebody looks at a clock and sees the minute change exactly when he looks, when those coffee cups aren't filled all the way, why those streets are always wet, why nobody says "Pardon Me?" or when somebody talks to a person wearing headphones and the person

listening to music hears him perfectly! It's things like these that don't happen in real life and seem to exist only in the movieworld. And it is therefore my job to make note of these things to make you aware of the wacky things that can be found in films. Perhaps you were thinking the same problems yet had nowhere to talk about it? Well here's your chance. This is somewhat inspired by Roger Ebert's Little Movie Glossary, however I am more in favor of pointing out silly things that some movies do. Read on to view my first entry into this new series...

Annoying Thing: The Bizarre Alarm Clock Setting
Explanation: When an alarm clock goes off at a truly weird time that is not on an even-hour or five minute interval. such as 9:12 in the morning or at 6:22 in the AM. And when the radio goes off, it is always the radio that goes off and not the alarm, and most likely it is a DJ mentioning the fact that it is early in the morning. See Jerry Maguire and Back To The Future for examples of the Bizarre Alarm Clock Setting!

Posted by Jason Whyte in Rants and Raves at 02:13

Tuesday, December 13, 2005

Other Networks Hoping to Get Arrested??

Holy crap. Here's some potentially great news from Variety: Fox still hasn't officially canceled "Arrested Development," but if it does, other networks are interested in the show. Both ABC and Showtime have had conversations with 20th Century Fox TV and indicated they're open to making a deal for new episodes of the critically beloved, Emmy-winning comedy from creator Mitch Hurwitz. No formal negotiations have taken place, and there are still numerous hurdles that might prevent such a move -- including the show's hefty pricetag. That said, those familiar with the talks described them as serious, with Showtime said to be in particularly hot pursuit of the ratings - challenged laffer, now on life support at Fox. Skein's third-season order was recently cut to 13 episodes.

Great news for all AD fans, except maybe those who don't get Showtime...

Showtime could be a good place for Arrested. Skein's subversive humor and heavily serialized storylines always made it a tough sell as a mass-appeal broadcast series. What's more, Showtime already has a potential companion for Arrested in Weeds, which just received a second-season pickup. That show is a suburban satire centered on a drug-dealing soccer mom played by Mary-Louise Parker. Network entertainment topper Robert Greenblatt has made an aggressive push to make Showtime a player in the comedy biz. He's greenlit several since his arrival -- including Fat Actress and Barbershop -- and Arrested could be the piece de resistance. If even half of the skein's Fox viewers -- last averaging around 4 million per episode -- watched on Showtime, Arrested would be an instant cable hit. ABC, meanwhile, is also looking to make its mark in comedy, having already established itself as the home of TV's most buzzworthy dramas (Lost, Desperate Housewives, Grey's Anatomy). Net has high hopes for upcoming laffers, such as Emily's Reason's Why Not, Crumbs and Sons and Daughters, as well as a sophomore contender, Jake in Progress. Since Fox has yet to officially cop to canceling Arrested, 20th can't formally make any deals with another net. There are other barriers to setting the show up elsewhere, however. Studio has already deficiated millions in order to produce the show, which costs about \$1.6 million per half-hour to produce. It's believed 20th deficits about \$400,000 per episode. Even if ABC or Showtime stepped up with the same license fee Fox now forks over for the show, 20th execs will have to decide whether it's worth it to sink more money into a show that isn't a proven ratings winner. That's one reason the studio might push for at least a 22-episode (or greater) commitment from a net. Studio needs 36 episodes to get Arrested to the magic number of 88 episodes required for syndication. But even if it gets to syndication, there's no guarantee of a rich payday in the off-net market. On the other hand, Arrested is a winner in the DVD market, and more episodes mean more DVD sales. Skein could also take off if given mass exposure on a cabler such as Showtime -- particularly now that the feevee cabler is part of Leslie Moonves' CBS Corp. family. Moonves certainly knows something about making lemons out of lemonade. One of his first acts upon taking over CBS was picking up a show from NBC called JAG. Skein ran for nearly a decade on the Eye and spawned the successful spinoff NCIS. Studio, Showtime and ABC declined comment.

So there you have it. Arrested Development might not only get saved - it could make it into syndication. Which would indicate the existence of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Posted by Scott Weinberg in TV at 23:59

Globetrottin' With The Hollywood Whorin' Press Association

The Golden Globes announced their 63rd annual nominations this morning and provided about 63 years worth of confusion into this year's Oscar race. Giving life to film's that were dying a slow death in the race and ignoring others probably cause they didn't see them until late or their brains couldn't process everything in time to make their pencils work. They have continued to give strength to Ang Lee's Brokeback Mountain, again leading the pack with 7 nominations after taking top prize from the LA & NY critics. Two of this year's expected front runners, Munich and King Kong, both failed to receive Best Picture nominations yet Steven Spielberg and Peter Jackson each received a nod for Best Director. Munich's screenplay was nominated as was James Newton Howard's rush-job score for Kong, an odd choice considering it may be the most unnoticeable aspect of the film. If you want some statistics or just a fan of the show Numbers (as I am), this doesn't necessarily bode well for both films to come away with a Best Picture nod at the Oscars.

Blog Export: Hollywood Blogslap, <http://unreelmedia.net/serendipity/>

With 10 films in two Picture categories to choose from, 6 of the last 10 years have seen the five finalists cobbled together from the Globes' 10 choices and 2 of those years saw four of the choices. This year those choices are (with my own odds of their chances) Brokeback Mountain (EVEN)The Constant Gardener (8-1)Good Night, and Good Luck (3-1)A History of Violence (15-1)Match Point (10-1)Mrs. Henderson Presents (25-1)Pride & Prejudice (4-1)The Producers (6-1)The Squid and the Whale (100-1)Walk the Line (2-1) Was Squid and the Whale really a comedy? Where in the hell is The 40 Year-Old Virgin in all of this? I must credit Collin Souter who surmised that the group "probably thought the movie was making fun of them." Walk the Line steals a slot in the comedy category by default because it happens to have songs in it and if it manages to win, it's a lock. Not that I don't think it isn't already, but only 3 times in the last ten years have both Drama and Comedy/Musical winners failed to each get a nomination. Also shut out of the big categories are hopefuls Capote, Cinderella Man, Crash and The New World. Memoirs of a Geisha and Syriana continue their death march, although the latter picked up a couple surprising nominations for Supporting Actor and Score. The acting categories are a bit less stable in the past decade. In a bit of reversal, only three times have all five Oscar nominees come from the Globe picks, although five times there has only been one absentee from the Globe list. This year, your 11 choices are: Russell Crowe, Cinderella Man (8-1)Philip Seymour Hoffman, Capote (EVEN)Terence Howard, Hustle and Flow (6-1)Heath Ledger, Brokeback Mountain (2-1)David Strathairn, Good Night, and Good Luck (5-1)-----Peirce Brosnan, The Matador (100-1)Jeff Daniels, The Squid and the Whale (15-1)Johnny Depp, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (25-1)Nathan Lane, The Producers (10-1)Cillian Murphy, Breakfast on Pluto (50-1)Joaquin Phoenix, Walk the Line (3-1) No Eric Bana for Munich and no Tommy Lee Jones (The Three Burials of Melquaiades Estrada) who could show up as a late underdog. Other than that, few surprises. As for the ladies, 6 of the last 10 years have shown up with the Globes getting 5 of their nominees Oscar nods. This could easily be 7 out of 11. Judi Dench, Mrs. Henderson Presents (3-1)Keira Knightley, Pride & Prejudice (4-1)Laura Linney, Squid and the Whale (25-1)Sarah Jessica Parker, The Family Stone (100-1)Reese Witherspoon, Walk the Line (EVEN)-----Maria Bello, A History of Violence (10-1)Felicity Huffman, Transamerica (5-1)Gwyneth Paltrow, Proof (8-1)Charlize Theron, North Country (6-1)Ziyi Zhang, Memoirs of a Geisha (12-1) No Joan Allen (The Upside of Anger) and clearly everyone has forgotten about Julianne Moore and The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio by now. Also no Q'Orianka Kilcher for her turn as Pocahontas in The New World, so either the Hollywood Whorin' Press Association didn't get to screen it in time or they are thinking sensibly that the film is absolute garbage. Kilcher isn't bad though, so she may drum up some late heat from the Malick slurpers. The Supporting categories get very sketchy. Only twice apiece for the actors and actresses have the Globes gone 100%. Without two categories going for them, I only see a few close-to-locks in here. George Clooney, Syriana (10-1)Matt Dillon, Crash (3-1)Will Ferrell, The Producers (25-1)Paul Giamatti, Cinderella Man (2-1)Bob Hoskins, Mrs. Henderson Presents (6-1) Clooney is going to get honored behind the scenes for Good Night and Good Luck, so I'm fairly confident to strike that choice. After all, William Hurt (A History of Violence) is going to get somebody's place. And of all the performances in The Producers, do you really think the Academy is going to nominate Will Ferrell over Matthew Broderick, Gary Beach or Roger Bart? I doubt it. Speaking of which - where is UMA?!!! My choice to win the Oscar this year (singing - dancing - accent) ignored by these morons? Well, in 2002 the same thing happened to Catherine Zeta-Jones for Chicago. No Globe nomination. She gets the Oscar nod and wins it. Also getting no love was the supporting cast of Munich (Geoffrey Rush, Daniel Craig, Ciaran Hinds, Michael Lonsdale). Someone is due from that group. Clifton Collins Jr. (Capote) must have been completely forgotten about as he hasn't received any notices yet during award season. Scarlett Johansson, Match Point (2-1)Shirley MaLaine, In Her Shoes (8-1)Frances McDormand, North Country (5-1)Rachel Weisz, Contant Gardener (6-1)Michelle Williams, Brokeback Mountain (EVEN) Catherine Keener had great supporting work in four different films this year, yet she's ignored. Amy Adams (Junebug) looks like the Little Engine That Could, unless its run by the HFFPA. Some were chalking up a win for Diane Keaton (The Family Stone) but she's nowhere to be found. Maria Bello went lead, so she may still come back here for Oscar night. These 5 have all been on the Oscar Eye depth chart for some time now, so its hard to blindly eliminate any of their chances. I'd still only bet on Williams and Johansson as locks though. Best DirectorWoody Allen, Match Point (5-1)George Clooney, Good Night, and Good Luck (4-1)Peter Jackson, King Kong (10-1)Ang Lee, Brokeback Mountain (EVEN)Fernando Mereilles, The Constant Gardener (8-1)Steven Spielberg, Munich (2-1) You want sketchy? Welcome to it. Spielberg and Jackson get nominations but their films don't and I already suspect that Munich and King Kong will get Best Picture recognition, but Jackson will fall short since he just won two years ago. That being said - not once in the last TEN YEARS have all of the Globes' directors gotten nominated. Only 4 times has 4 of the 5 received nominations and in the three years when 6 directors were nominated, the Oscars picked out 2 (1995), 4 (2001) and 3 (2002). Those six are going to be hard to weed out, even with the potential of James Mangold (Walk the Line), David Cronenberg (A History of Violence) and Terrence Malick (The New World). Best ScreenplayBrokeback Mountain (EVEN)Crash (EVEN)Good Night, And Good Luck (2-1)Match Point (EVEN)Munich (EVEN)While only once since 1995 has all five Globe nominees received slots amongst the 10 Original and Adapted scripts, this may undoubtedly be the second. Brokeback and Munich should be locks in the Adapted while Crash and Match Point look like gold in the Original category. Good Night and Good Luck, by the slimmest of margins could be the odd man out if someone can't thinks its original status is hurt by a good chunk of the film being based on transcripts and television footage. With limited slots, scripts ignored include (original) Broken Flowers, Cinderella Man, The Family Stone, Hustle & Flow, Mrs. Henderson Presents, The Squid and the Whale, The Three Burials of Melquaiades Estrada and (adapted) Capote, The Constant Gardener, A History of Violence, King Kong,

Memoirs of a Geisha, The Producers and Walk the Line. Finally, anyone who has ever heard of Best Original Song nominee - Christmas in Love - they are lying. Cause no one has heard of it.

Posted by Erik Childress in Award Season at 21:19

Golden Globe nominations announced. Hollywood Foreign Press remains weird.

The Golden Globe nominations for 2005 are out, and the list is, how we say in French, le fucked up. In the Best Drama category, there's no sign of Syriana, Munich, North Country, King Kong, Capote or Memoirs of a Geisha. The Constant Gardener, which is good but not great, gets a nod, as does the largely floppish A History of Violence. Brokeback Mountain, Good Night and Good Luck and Matchpoint round out the category. Despite Brokeback Mountain scooping much of the pool on nominations this year, Jake Gyllenhaal has been overlooked in the Best Supporting Actor category (George Clooney, Matt Dillon, Will Ferrell, Paul Giamatti and Bob Hoskins took the five available spots), and also disappointing is the fact that, apparently, the Hollywood Foreign Press don't watch Arrested Development. Bastards. The full list of nominations follows the fold.

Best Motion Picture - Drama

Nominees:

Brokeback Mountain (2005)

The Constant Gardener (2005)

Good Night, and Good Luck. (2005)

A History of Violence (2005)

Match Point (2005)

Best Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy

Nominees:

Mrs. Henderson Presents (2005)

Pride & Prejudice (2005)

The Producers (2005)

The Squid and the Whale (2005)

Walk the Line (2005)

Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture - Drama

Nominees:

Russell Crowe for Cinderella Man (2005)

Philip Seymour Hoffman for Capote (2005)

Terrence Howard for Hustle & Flow (2005)

Heath Ledger for Brokeback Mountain (2005)

David Strathairn for Good Night, and Good Luck. (2005)

Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture - Drama

Nominees:

Maria Bello for A History of Violence (2005)

Felicity Huffman for Transamerica (2005)

Gwyneth Paltrow for Proof (2005)

Charlize Theron for North Country (2005)

Ziyi Zhang for Memoirs of a Geisha (2005)

Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy

Nominees:

Pierce Brosnan for The Matador (2005)

Jeff Daniels for The Squid and the Whale (2005)

Johnny Depp for Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005)

Nathan Lane for The Producers (2005)

Cillian Murphy for Breakfast on Pluto (2005)

Joaquin Phoenix for Walk the Line (2005)

Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy

Nominees:

Judi Dench for Mrs. Henderson Presents (2005)

Keira Knightley for Pride & Prejudice (2005)

Laura Linney for The Squid and the Whale (2005)

Sarah Jessica Parker for The Family Stone (2005)

Reese Witherspoon for Walk the Line (2005)

Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in a Motion Picture

Nominees:

George Clooney for Syriana (2005)

Matt Dillon for Crash (2004)

Will Ferrell for The Producers (2005)

Paul Giamatti for Cinderella Man (2005)

Bob Hoskins for Mrs. Henderson Presents (2005)

Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in a Motion Picture

Nominees:

Scarlett Johansson for Match Point (2005)

Shirley MacLaine for In Her Shoes (2005)

Frances McDormand for North Country (2005)

Rachel Weisz for The Constant Gardener (2005)

Michelle Williams for Brokeback Mountain (2005)

Best Director - Motion Picture

Nominees:

Woody Allen for Match Point (2005)

George Clooney for Good Night, and Good Luck. (2005)

Peter Jackson for King Kong (2005)

Ang Lee for Brokeback Mountain (2005)

Fernando Meirelles for The Constant Gardener (2005)

Steven Spielberg for Munich (2005)

Best Screenplay - Motion Picture

Nominees:

Brokeback Mountain (2005) - Larry McMurtry, Diana Ossana

Crash (2004) - Paul Haggis, Robert Moresco

Good Night, and Good Luck. (2005) - George Clooney, Grant Heslov

Match Point (2005) - Woody Allen

Munich (2005) - Tony Kushner

Best Original Song - Motion Picture

Nominees:

Brokeback Mountain (2005) ("A Love That Will Never Grow Old")

Christmas in Love (2004) ("Christmas in Love")

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (2005) ("Wunderkind")

The Producers (2005) ("There's Nothing Like a Show on Broadway")

Transamerica (2005) ("Travelin' Thru")

Best Original Score - Motion Picture

Nominees:

Brokeback Mountain (2005) - Gustavo Santaolalla

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (2005) - Harry Gregson-Williams

King Kong (2005) - James Newton Howard

Memoirs of a Geisha (2005) - John Williams

Syriana (2005) - Alexandre Desplat

Best Foreign Language Film

Nominees:

Joyeux Noël (2005) (France)

Kung fu (2004) (Hong Kong)

Mo gik (2005) (China)

Paradise Now (2005) (Palestine)

Tsotsi (2005) (South Africa)

Best Television Series - Drama

Nominees:

"Commander in Chief" (2005)

"Grey's Anatomy" (2005)

"Lost" (2004)

"Prison Break" (2005)

"Rome" (2005)

Best Television Series - Musical or Comedy

Nominees:

"Curb Your Enthusiasm" (2000)

"Desperate Housewives" (2004)

"Entourage" (2004)

"Everybody Hates Chris" (2005)

"My Name Is Earl" (2005)

"Weeds" (2005)

Best Mini-Series or Motion Picture Made for Television

Nominees:

"Blackpool" (2004) (mini)

Empire Falls (2005) (TV)

"Into the West" (2005) (mini)

"Sleeper Cell" (2005)

Warm Springs (2005) (TV)

Best Performance by an Actor in a Mini-Series or a Motion Picture Made for Television

Nominees:

Kenneth Branagh for Warm Springs (2005) (TV)

Ed Harris for Empire Falls (2005) (TV)

Bill Nighy for The Girl in the Café (2005) (TV)

Jonathan Rhys-Meyers for "Elvis" (2005) (mini)

Donald Sutherland for "Human Trafficking" (2005) (mini)

Best Performance by an Actress in a Mini-Series or a Motion Picture Made for Television

Nominees:

Halle Berry for Their Eyes Were Watching God (2005) (TV)

Kelly Macdonald for The Girl in the Café (2005) (TV)

S. Epatha Merkerson for Lackawanna Blues (2005) (TV)

Cynthia Nixon for Warm Springs (2005) (TV)

Mira Sorvino for "Human Trafficking" (2005) (mini)

Best Performance by an Actor in a Television Series - Musical or Comedy

Nominees:

Zach Braff for "Scrubs" (2001)

Steve Carell for "The Office" (2005)

Larry David for "Curb Your Enthusiasm" (2000)

Jason Lee for "My Name Is Earl" (2005)

Charlie Sheen for "Two and a Half Men" (2003)

Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series - Musical or Comedy

Nominees:

Marcia Cross for "Desperate Housewives" (2004)

Teri Hatcher for "Desperate Housewives" (2004)

Felicity Huffman for "Desperate Housewives" (2004)

Eva Longoria for "Desperate Housewives" (2004)

Mary-Louise Parker for "Weeds" (2005)

Best Performance by an Actor in a Television Series - Drama

Nominees:

Patrick Dempsey for "Grey's Anatomy" (2005)

Matthew Fox for "Lost" (2004)

Hugh Laurie for "House, M.D." (2004)

Wentworth Miller for "Prison Break" (2005)

Kiefer Sutherland for "24" (2001)

Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series - Drama

Nominees:

Patricia Arquette for "Medium" (2005)

Glenn Close for "The Shield" (2002)

Geena Davis for "Commander in Chief" (2005)

Kyra Sedgwick for "The Closer" (2005)

Polly Walker for "Rome" (2005)

Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in a Series, Mini-Series or Motion Picture Made for Television

Nominees:

Naveen Andrews for "Lost" (2004)

Paul Newman for Empire Falls (2005) (TV)

Jeremy Piven for "Entourage" (2004)

Randy Quaid for "Elvis" (2005) (mini)

Donald Sutherland for "Commander in Chief" (2005)

Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in a Series, Mini-Series or Motion Picture Made for Television

Nominees:

Candice Bergen for "Boston Legal" (2004)

Camryn Manheim for "Elvis" (2005) (mini)

Sandra Oh for "Grey's Anatomy" (2005)

Elizabeth Perkins for "Weeds" (2005)

Joanne Woodward for Empire Falls (2005) (TV)

Posted by Oz in Movie News, Award Season at 15:39

The Thrifty Jew's DVD Shopping List (12/13)

With the holiday shopping season in full swing, 12/13 marks a very expensive day for the DVD-aholics out there. Here's a little guide on what's cheapest and where. (Sales start today, but new releases aren't out till Tuesday.) And trust a jew on this: DVDs make awesome stocking stuffers.

The 40-Year-Old Virgin -- Circuit City: \$13.99
Airplane! SE -- CC: \$11.99
Death Race 2000 SE -- Best Buy \$11.99
Gallipoli SE -- BB: \$9.99
The Island -- BB: \$16.99
Pretty Persuasion -- BB: \$19.99
The Producers SE -- BB: \$14.99
Rock 'n' Roll High School SE -- BB: \$11.99
The Simpsons Season 7 -- BB: \$29.99
Sin City SE -- BB: \$29.99
Not new but nonetheless noteworthy: Aladdin SE (CC \$12.99), Apollo 13 SE (BB 2/\$20), Austin Powers box set (BB \$16.99), The Aviator (BB 2/\$20), Back to the Future box set (BB \$19.99), Blazing Saddles SE (BB 2/\$20), Boogie Nights SE (BB \$12.99), The Bourne Supremacy (BB 2/\$20), Caddyshack (BB 2/\$20), Casablanca SE (BB \$12.99), Citizen Kane SE (BB \$12.99), Collateral (BB 2/\$20), Constantine (BB \$8.99), Ed Wood (CC 2/\$20), Enemy of the State (CC 2/\$20), Enter the Dragon SE (BB \$12.99), ET the Extra-Terrestrial (BB 2/\$20), Fargo SE (CC \$7.49), Forrest Gump (CC \$7.49), Ghostbusters double feature (BB 2/\$20), The Girl Next Door (BB 2/\$20), Gone with the Wind SE (BB \$16.99), Good Will Hunting (BB 2/\$20), Harry Potter 1 (BB 2/\$20), Harry Potter 2 (BB 2/\$20), Harry Potter 3 (BB 2/\$20), The Italian Job (CC \$7.49), Jackie Brown SE (CC 2/\$20), The Last Samurai (BB 2/\$20), Lethal Weapon box set (BB \$16.99), The Lost Boys SE (BB \$12.99), Master and Commander (BB 2/\$20), Million Dollar Baby (BB \$8.99), The Nightmare Before Christmas (CC \$9.99), Not Another Teen Movie SE (BB 2/\$20), Ocean's Eleven (CC \$7.49), The Office S1 (CC \$13.99), Open Range (CC 2/\$20), (BB 2/\$20), Pirates of the Caribbean (BB 2/\$20), The Princess Bride SE (CC \$7.49), The Right Stuff SE (BB \$12.99), Rounders SE (CC 2/\$20), Saw (CC \$7.49), Scarface SE (BB 2/\$20), Seven SE (BB

\$12.99), This is Spinal Tap SE (CC \$7.49), Troy SE (BB 2/\$20), True Romance SE (BB \$12.99), The Truman Show SE (BB 2/\$20), Underworld (CC \$7.49), Unforgiven SE (BB \$12.99), The Usual Suspects SE (BB 2/\$20), When Harry Met Sally (CC \$7.49), Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (BB 2/\$20)

Posted by Scott Weinberg in DVD at 04:38

The 2006 Horror Checklist

As the resident mega-horror geek at HBS, I thought my inaugural blog post should be something informative, entertaining, and coated with gore. So here's what 2006 looks like, horror-wise. If you don't know that release dates are subject to change, then you're a monstrous idiot who probably doesn't even like horror movies. There, I said it. It's been brewing for a while, and I apologize.

BloodRayne - If you don't see it, you can't join in all the Boll-bashing fun. Well, you can, but you'll be faking it. Kristanna Loken, Ben Kingsley, Michael Madsen, Michelle Rodriguez, Udo Kier, Will Sanderson, Michael Pare, and Billy Zane. (Jan. 6th)Hostel - From the lunatic freak whose debut was Cabin Fever comes this tale of international backpacking, loyalty among friends, and sheer, shrieking torture. This one's for the grown-up horror whores. Jay Hernandez, Derek Richardson, and several amazingly hot topless females. (Jan. 6th)Underworld: Evolution - That vampire chick in the skin-tight leather is back and ... beyond that, what else really matters? Kate Beckinsale kills more werewolves in this action/horror/soap opera sequel. (Jan. 20th)When a Stranger Calls - "Why don't you check on the remake?" Camilla Belle plays the harrassed babysitter once played by Carol Kane. (Feb. 3rd)Final Destination 3 - First it was an airplane crash. Then it was a highway wreck. This time it's a runaway roller coaster. Neato. (Feb. 10th)Night Watch - The oft-delayed Russian horror flick has a sequel already waiting in the wings. Here's hoping Fox Searchlight doesn't disembowel the thing too much. (Feb. 17th)Feast - Also known as the "Project Greenlight Horror Movie," this one stars a whole bunch of kooky folks as they do battle with slimy beasties from inside their favorite watering hole. Already the recipient of the Childress Seal of Approval. (Release date TBD)Pulse - Beware the evil emails in this J-horror remake. Kristen Bell, Ian Somerhalder, Samm Levine, and (I bet) a PG-13 rating. (March 3rd)The Hills Have Eyes - The Frenchman behind the rather awesome High Tension brings us a remake of Wes Craven's classic survival tale. Kathleen Quinlan, Ted Levine, Aaron Stanford, Vinessa Shaw, and Emilie de Raven. (March 10th)Slither - The writer of the Dawn of the Dead remake goes old-school splatter with this tale of alien invaders, frequent dispatches, and hilariously outrageous human mutations. Nathan Fillion, Elizabeth Banks, Gregg Henry, and Michael Rooker. (March 31st)Silent Hill - Yes, it's yet another horror flick based on a video game. But there's some pretty good news, too: The writer is Roger Avary, the director is Christophe Gans, and the cast includes Sean Bean, Radha Mitchell, Kim Coates, and Deborah Kara Unger. (April 21st)See No Evil - A group of delinquents clean a hotel to fill their community service. Unfortunately for them they are not aware a maniac is also in the hotel. He locks them in and begins to hunt them down." Sounds good to me. (May 19th)The Omen 666 - Somebody gave the director of two so-so war movies the gig directing an Omen remake. Hmph, Not sure how I feel about this one. Julia Stiles, Liev Schreiber, Mia Farrow, David Thewlis, and Pete Postlewaite. (June 6th, 2006. Get it?)Snakes on a Plane - It's already an internet sensation, and it doesn't even hit theaters for another 6 months. The synopsis is all there in the title. Samuel L. Jackson stars. (Aug. 18th)DOA: Dead or Alive - Four hotties must participate in a series of death-brawls if they hope to escape from a decidedly unpleasant island. Directed by Corey Yuen and starring Eric Roberts, Devon Aoki, Sarah Carter, Holly Valance, and Jaime Pressly. (Aug. 25th)Grindhouse - Tarantino & Rodriguez get together on an old-school horror 2-parter. (Sep. 22nd)Texas Chainsaw Massacre Prequel - As yet untitled, but starring Jordana Brewster, Andrew Bryniarski, and R. Lee Ermey (Oct. 6th)The Grudge 2 - Buffy's back. Kinda. (Oct. 20th)Saw 3 - Like this is a shock to you? (Oct. 27th)

Posted by Scott Weinberg in Movie News, Horror at 04:08

Pryor to His Demise

Richard Pryor passed away this morning, and while he's probably best remembered for his incendiary stand-up material (as evidenced in 1979's Live in Concert, 1982's Live on the Sunset Strip, and 1983's Here and Now) and his also-incendiary battle with an exploding freebase pipe, I'll always remember the guy as one of my favorite move-time comedians. So on the day we say goodbye to one of my generation's most admired comedians, I say we take a look

back and remember, y'know, all those funny movies....

He wasn't allowed to play the Cleavon Little role in *Blazing Saddles*, but he did earn a screenplay credit ... on one of the funniest movies ever made. Small roles in *Lady Sings the Blues* (1972), *The Mack* (1973), and *Uptown Saturday Night* (1974) led to bigger gigs in *Car Wash*, *Adios Amigo*, and *The Bingo Long Travelling All-Stars & Motor Kings* in 1976. 1976 would also see the first pairing between Pryor and another Mel Brooks pal, Gene Wilder. They co-starred in Arthur Hiller's *Silver Streak*, which is a movie I've always liked a whole lot. (Classic scene: Pryor blackfacing Wilder and convincing him to walk jive.) The late 70s saw Richard Pryor pop in a wide variety of movies: *Which Way Is Up?* and *Greased Lightning* in 1977, *Blue Collar*, *California Suite*, and *The Wiz* in 1978, and *The Muppet Movie* in 1979.

Pryor might have begun the 1980s with a pair of certifiable turkeys (*In God We Tru\$t & Wholly Moses!*), but it was a re-team with Gene Wilder (1980's *Stir Crazy*) that would make Richard Pryor adored by every 13-year-old in America. A few more missteps would follow (1981's *Bustin' Loose* & 1982's *Some Kind of Hero*), but Pryor teamed up with Jackie Gleason and Superman director Richard Donner to deliver *The Toy*, which made some solid coin despite being pretty darn awful. From there the comedian leaped into *Superman 3* (1983) and *Brewster's Millions* (1985) before tackling the thorny and autobiographical *Jo Jo Dancer, Your Life is Calling* in 1986.

The deviation from funnyman formula didn't sit too well with Pryor's fans, but his subsequent comedies (1987's *Critical Condition* & 1988's *Moving*) did nothing to win the fanbase over. Itching for some more of the old-school magic, Pryor teamed up with Gene Wilder for a third flick, the silly-yet-entertaining gimmick comedy *See No Evil, Hear No Evil*, which has since gone on to become a cable flick guilty pleasure of the highest order. 1989 also saw Richard Pryor starring alongside the best of black comedians (Eddie Murphy and Redd Foxx included) in the odd misfire known as *Harlem Nights*.

Aside from a nominal handful of throwaway cameos, Richard Pryor's last movie was *Another You*, a limp 1991 farce that saw the actor work with Gene Wilder for a fourth and final time. Even worse than the movie itself is the clear evidence that Mr. Pryor's MS was limiting his abilities in a massive way.

Richard Pryor died this morning at the age of 65, and while we're all silently grateful that the man's long-term suffering is at an end, we can't help but look back on all the great memories and feel some real sadness. Richard Pryor was one of the men who taught me what true comedy was, and his schtick, be it the family-friendly or the angry-raunchy kind, was always welcome in my home. He was a whole lot more than just some "funny guy." He was an absolute trailblazer, a pioneer, a guy who hoped to break down racial walls through the sheer power of giggles. He died too young, and he suffered too much, but I think the world is made just a little bit better by people like Richard Pryor. He shall be missed.

Posted by Scott Weinberg in Rants and Raves at 03:54

Monday, December 12, 2005

A double shot of action geek madness!

So you've seen the supercool Mission: Impossible 3 teaser poster in theaters, and now you can catch the even cooler teaser trailer, which is currently exclusive to Yahoo! And if the mere fact of this movie's existence isn't enough to geek you out, then the appearance of Philip Seymour Hoffman will. You can watch it here. Not to be outdone, that other big TV-to-movie event pic of next summer just had its own website go live. Michael Mann's Miami Vice was always about the style, and from the looks of the site, the movie will be true to form. You can also check out the brand new teaser trailer, although the site shoots you over to the 21-and-up-only Bacardi home page - because nothing says "let me see this preview!" than having to waste time entering your birthdate. (A system I'm sure is completely uncrackable.) But the trailer's quite worth it, if only to see Colin Farrell in Don Johnson's snappy suits. Now if only we can get him to cover "Heartbeat." (As for Mission: Impossible, that one also has its site up this week. You can find it here, although there's not much to see beyond the trailer link, the poster, and a whole bunch of "register for updates" junk. Oh, and Tom Cruise's giant mug, although he kinda looks glib.)

Posted by David Cornelius in Movie News at 23:24

More gay love for the gayest film critics group on the planet

For those of you who don't know who the Broadcast Film Critics Association are - lucky you! Shawn Edwards, Mark S. Allen, Bill Bregoli, Jim Ferguson, Andy Jones, Jeffrey Lyons, Michael Medved, Mose Persico, Tony Toscano, Jim Svejda and Clay Smith are just a few of the names on their roster. With apologies to critics like James Rocchi, Paul Zimmerman and David Poland - this is a group that should be at the top as a toilet paper substitute. They love to brag about their ability to be a forecaster of the Oscars, which is pretty easy when you nominate TEN films for Best Picture and more than five actors and actresses. I once knocked the crap out of member Leo "The Film Freak" Quinones on the radio in 1998 in movie theme trivia and called him on the carpet for praising the sci-fi epic, Soldier, while having all sorts of hats to giveaway. That has nothing to do with their award announcement. It's just a fun story.

Like the Los Angeles Film Critics, the BFCA gave some appropriate backdoor love to Ang Lee's Brokeback Mountain with 8 nominations. Other big vote getters were Crash (6), Good Night, and Good Luck (5) and 4 nominations each to Capote, Cinderella Man and Walk the Line. Also grabbing Best Film nods, but only 2 nominations each, were The Constant Gardener, King Kong and Munich.

Blah Blah Blah. So hip are the BFCA that they forgo traditional category titles like Screenplay and Original Score and substitute Best Writer and Best Composer.

Oooh. They also vote on the best young actor and actresses, where Daniel Radcliffe and Emma Watson have inaugural placement -- and apparently they want to be forecasters of the original "forecasters" of the Oscars (The Golden Globes) with a Best Comedy Movie category. Not Best Comedy or Best Comedic Film - Best Comedy Movie! How much you want to bet that with the exception of Kiss Kiss Bang Bang, The 40 Year-Old Virgin, Mrs. Henderson Presents, The Producers and Wedding Crashers get Globe nominations this week in the same category? I could rail about the Best Soundtrack category being a rather pointless exercise considering they already have a Composer and Song category.

Yes, Cameron Crowe (Elizabethtown) puts together a great mix CD for his films and of course, Walk the Line would have one of the great soundtracks in any year - but Memoirs of a Geisha? You've already got that in the Composer category and the John Williams score is what is present on the CD - so why are you nominating it? Brokeback Mountain had music and songs. Good Night, and Good Luck

had great classic jazz by Dianne Reeves. Where are your heads? If you can't do the category justice, lose it and then lose yourselves. But let's look at that song category, where the BFCA has nominated "Seasons of Love" from Rent.

Granted, the category does not contain the adjective "original" - but are these moronic fucktard whores serious??? Why not nominate "Walk

the Line" from Walk the Line or Asia's "Heat of the Moment" from The 40 Year-Old Virgin?
Shit, how 'bout "Happy Birthday to You"? I'm sure that popped up in a
film sometime this year or is that just too public domain for you? God
knows sloppy seconds ain't yo thang.http://www.moviecitynews.com/awards/2006/critics_awards/bfca.html
BEST PICTURE
Brokeback Mountain
Capote
Cinderella Man
The Constant Gardener
Crash
Good Night, and Good Luck.
King Kong
Memoirs of a Geisha
Munich
Walk the Line
BEST ACTOR
Russell Crowe – Cinderella Man
Philip Seymour Hoffman – Capote
Terrence Howard – Hustle & Flow
Heath Ledger – Brokeback Mountain
Joaquin Phoenix – Walk the Line
David Strathairn – Good Night, and Good Luck
BEST ACTRESS
Joan Allen – The Upside of Anger
Judi Dench - Mrs. Henderson Presents
Felicity Huffman – Transamerica
Keira Knightley – Pride & Prejudice
Charlize Theron – North Country
Reese Witherspoon – Walk the Line
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR
George Clooney – Syriana
Kevin Costner – The Upside of Anger
Matt Dillon – Crash
Paul Giamatti – Cinderella Man
Jake Gyllenhaal – Brokeback Mountain
Terrence Howard – Crash
BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS
Amy Adams – Junebug
Maria Bello – A History of Violence
Catherine Keener – Capote
Frances McDormand – North Country
Rachel Weisz – The Constant Gardener
Michelle Williams – Brokeback Mountain
BEST ACTING ENSEMBLE
Crash
Good Night, and Good Luck.
Rent
Syriana
Sin City
BEST DIRECTOR
George Clooney – Good Night, and Good Luck
Paul Haggis – Crash
Ron Howard – Cinderella Man
Peter Jackson – King Kong
Ang Lee – Brokeback Mountain
Steven Spielberg – Munich
BEST WRITER
Noah Baumbach – The Squid and the Whale
George Clooney and Grant Heslov – Good Night, and Good Luck
Dan Futterman – Capote
Paul Haggis and Bobby Moresco – Crash
Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana – Brokeback Mountain
BEST ANIMATED FEATURE
Chicken Little
Corpse Bride
Howl's Moving Castle
Madagascar
Wallace & Gromit
The Curse of the Were-Rabbit
BEST YOUNG ACTOR
Jesse Eisenberg – The Squid and the Whale
Alex Etel – Millions
Freddie Highmore – Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
Owen Kline – The Squid and the Whale
Daniel Radcliffe – Harry Potter and Goblet of Fire
BEST YOUNG ACTRESS
Flora Cross – Bee Season
Dakota Fanning – War of the Worlds
Georgie Henley – The Chronicles of Narnia
The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe
Q'orianka Kilcher – The New World
Emily Watson – Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire
BEST COMEDY MOVIE
The 40 Year-Old Virgin
Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang
Mrs. Henderson Presents
The Producers
The Wedding Crashers
BEST FAMILY FILM (LIVE ACTION)
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
Dreamer
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire
The Chronicles of Narnia
The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe
BEST PICTURE MADE FOR TELEVISION
Into the West
No Direction Home
Rome
Warm Springs
BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM
Cache
Kung Fu Hustle
Oldboy
Paradise Now
2046
BEST SONG
"Hustle & Flow" – Terrence Howard – Hustle & Flow
"A Love That Will Never Grow Old" – Emmylou Harris – Brokeback Mountain
"Same in Any Language" – I Nine – Elizabethtown
"Seasons of Love" – Tracie Thoms, Jesse L. Martin and Cast – Rent
"Travelin' Thru" – Dolly Parton – Transamerica
BEST SOUNDTRACK
Elizabethtown
Memoirs of a Geisha
The Producers
Rent
Walk the Line
BEST COMPOSER
James Horner – The New World
Gustavo Santaolalla – Brokeback Mountain
John Williams – Memoirs of a Geisha
Nancy Wilson – Elizabethtown
BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE
Enron – The Smartest Guys in the Room
Grizzly Man
Mad Hot
Ballroom
March of the Penguins
Murderball

Posted by Erik Childress in Award Season at 22:47

LA Film Critics Dig Gay Cowboys

For the first time in God knows when, the credibility-challenged National Board of Review were not first out of the gate with their annual "awards". This year the honor goes to the Los Angeles Film Critics. (Actually, it was the Washington Area Film Critics - but no one was looking in their area.) This year, L.A. went with the gay cowboy epic, Brokeback Mountain, producing good news and bad news if statistics are your bread-and-butter.

The Good News: 14 of their last 20 picks for the top prize wound up with an Oscar nomination, including last year's Sideways.

The Bad: Only twice have their pick won in that time - and only 5 times since 1979.

Ang Lee's star-crossed romance also picked up a win for Best Director and a runner-up for Heath Ledger as Best Actor. Runner-Ups?

C'mon people - nothing says amateur hour like Runners-up and yet L.A. and other critics groups still continue to do it. There is no runner-up Oscar, Grammy or Emmy. Maybe a tie once-in-a-while, but that's just as gay. Seriously, if I were David Cronenberg, whose A History of Violence was the runner-up for Picture and Director, the term "First Loser" (or maybe even "pitcher") would be flashing like neon across my brain.

Even gayer than Brokeback Mountain?

How about not being able to make up your mind over which film to give an actor an award for? This is a typical staple of both the LA & NY Critics Circles - awarding an actor for a year's body of work as if every film on their resume is worthy of award consideration. This year's recipient - the very worthy Catherine Keener winning not just for Capote, but also for The 40 Year-Old Virgin, The Ballad of Jack and Rose and The Interpreter. What the hell? If they would have gone with Terrence Howard for Hustle & Flow, would they also have included Four Brothers, Get Rich or Die Tryin', Crash and The Salon. Why stop there? Why not the straight-to-video Animal and the TV flicks Lackawanna Blues and Their Eyes Were Watching God. Advice for the undecided - one vote, one film. MAKE UP YOUR GODDAMNED MINDS! YOU ARE GROWN-UPS!

Other big winners were:

Best Actor: Phillip Seymour Hoffman - Capote (4 of the last 6 winners were nominated; 1 Oscar-winner)

Best Actress: Vera Farmiga - Down to the Bone (The last 6 LA picks were nominated. Too bad no one outside of the coasts and those of us who saw this film at Sundance in 2004 have ever heard of this overrated film and performance.)

Best Supporting Actor: William Hurt - A History of Violence (4 of the last 6 winners were nominated; 2 Oscar-winners)

Best Supporting Actress: Catherine Keener - Every film she's ever been in. (5 of the last 6 winners were nominated; ZERO Oscar-winners)

Best Screenplay: Capote

Best Cinematography: Good Night, and Good Luck.

Best Production Design: 2046

Best Music Score: Howl's Moving Castle

Best Foreign-Language Film: Cache

Best Documentary/Non-Fiction Film: Grizzly Man (not even making the Academy cut)

Best Animation: Wallace & Gromit in The Curse of the Were-Rabbit

The Special Citation Award went to LA Times film critic, Kevin Thomas "for his contribution to film culture in Los Angeles". In related news, Hollywood Bitchslap's Criticwatch awarded Thomas with his own award - The Kevin Thomas Sloppy Seconds Award - for the runner-up to the Peter Travers Quote Whore of the Year. The winner of that award doesn't get much gayer

Posted by Erik Childress in Award Season at 22:44

You know how I know you're gay? You win awards.

The American Film Institute announced their picks for the best films of 2005, and guess who was right there with the big boys? Andy Stitzer, that's who.

Yup, The 40-Year-Old Virgin made the organization's annual year-end ten-best list, alongside such award-bait as Brokeback Mountain, Good Night, and Good Luck, and Munich. The news comes at the perfect time: not only does the film arrive on DVD Tuesday, but it's the beginning of Oscar season. Academy voters are hitting that time where they take note of the early awards. And with the AFI nod following Catherine Keener's win for Best Supporting Actress in the Los Angeles Film Critics Awards (it's a multi-film award, with Keener also being hailed for all her work this year), chances are looking for the Bitchslappers' favorite. Here's hoping we'll get to see an Original Screenplay nomination for Steve Carrell and Judd Apatow.

The complete list of AFI Movies of the Year: Brokeback Mountain, Capote, Crash, The 40-Year-Old Virgin, Good Night, and Good Luck, A History of Violence, King Kong, Munich, The Squid and the Whale, and Syriana. For more, check out the AFI website.

Posted by David Cornelius in Award Season at 22:34

Posterwatch: Mission: Impossible III Teaser

If you visited your local multiplex this weekend, chances are good you caught a peek at the brand spankin' new teaser poster for Mission: Impossible III. Like the teasers for the first two films, this one's pretty basic: just the logo, the date, and that match. Just enough to get a fan (like me) all geeked out.

Love that logo.

Full size poster behind the cut...

Posted by David Cornelius in Movie News at 22:32

Sad Box Office Facts

Quiz: What two things do the following films have in common?

"Doom"
"The Fog"
"Transporter 2"
"The Dukes of Hazzard"
"Fantastic Four"
"Monster-in-Law"
"The Amityville Horror"
"The Pacifier"
"Diary of a Mad Black Woman"
"Boogeyman"
"Are We There Yet?"

Answer: First, they're all really bad.

Second, they were each the No. 1 film in the country for at least one weekend apiece.

That's right, there was one weekend this year when people would rather watch "The Pacifier" than ANY OTHER MOVIE. Doesn't that make you sorta ashamed? Especially considering that on that very same weekend, good movies like "Million Dollar Baby," "Sideways," "Finding Neverland," "Hotel Rwanda" and "In Good Company" were also playing. Heck, even "The Incredibles" was still on a few hundred screens. And instead, everyone went to watch Vin Diesel being bit in the crotch by a duck.

There was a general bemoaning of Hollywood's inferior product this year, just as there is most years. But as long as people keep going to watch the crap that comes out, why should Hollywood make anything different? If you paid money to see "Are We There Yet?," let's face it, you're part of the problem, not part of the solution.

I'm looking at the films liable to make my Top 10 list for the year, and I see quite a few that were box office disappointments. Is it because they're movies that only film critics like, and that regular audiences find boring? Yeah, a few of them. But most of them are accessible, regular ol' crowd-pleasers -- that is, they would be crowd-pleasers if they could attract a crowd to please.

The fact that "Monster-in-Law" grossed \$82 million while "Kiss Kiss Bang Bang" has petered out around \$4 million is a terrible injustice. (Maybe if Jennifer Lopez and Jane Fonda had kissed each other and then shot each other....)

Posted by Eric D. Snider in Rants and Raves at 22:26

Brokeback Mountain breaks per screen records... but will it play in Peoria?

The opening weekend numbers for Brokeback Mountain have been awesome - \$109,000 per screen in NYC, LA and San Francisco. As you can see at Box Office Mojo, that puts Brokeback Mountain in the position of having the highest grossing per screen average box office for a non-animated film - ever. Who did it beat? Evita (\$97k), Memoirs of a Geisha (\$84k - big weekend!), and Moulin Rouge (\$83k). It's been a big year for 'huge openers on a small number of

screens' - *Syriana*, *Corpse Bride*, and *The Aristocrats* have all found great opening weekend success on a tiny number of screens, but none have exploded (at least not yet) across the landscape with any sort of huge impact. So how does that bode for *Brokeback Mountain*? Are the early numbers indicative of something huge to come, or is this a case of a film finding its major audience all in the first weekend? Clearly, NYC, LA and San Francisco are primo locations to open a film about homosexual romance between cowboys, and the directorship of Ang Lee is no small deal in such parts of the country, but can an Ang Lee 'gay movie' push into the national consciousness the way *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* did? Will the distributors get pushy with exhibitors and 'force' the film into cineplexes, or will the major movie houses wait for a hard money return to be evident, like they did with *Fahrenheit 9/11*? Or will it fade into obscurity like *My Own Private Idaho*?

Personally, this is a film that makes me harken back to *The English Patient's* box office run, which is odd because I haven't had cause to think about that overrated piece of cliché heaven for several years. The film had picked up solid metropolitan play pre-Oscars night, bringing in about \$30m in box office (which is a great result on its own for an arthouse flick), but it was the English Patient Oscar Night Scoop of multiple wins that saw it back in theaters in large numbers and earning dollars until the following September - \$78m in total. *Brokeback Mountain* has a high 'not interested' factor, mainly from teenage boys who don't go in for the gay stuff, and the Middle America crowd who don't generally fork out their Wal-Mart dollars for romance, let alone romance between Jake Gyllenhaal and Heath Ledger. But many of those people will go see the film if it wins ten Oscars - begrudgingly perhaps, but they'll take a shot on dollar night, just so they can say they did.

So keep an eye out for the "*Brokeback Mountain* will kill all records" hype tomorrow morning in the trades, and promptly ignore it. This is a film that will do well, at least compared to other films of a similar nature, but the *Blair Witch Project* numbers that some will predict are going to be way off the mark. After all, *The Aristocrats* has the 25th strongest opening weekend per screen average in film history - and it only made \$6m in total. Woody Allen's *Melinda and Melinda* hit the charts at #19, and it barely scraped \$4m.

'Daring' movies win awards, so look out for *Brokeback Mountain* at Oscar time... but don't bother looking for it at the Multiplex. America still has way too far to go before the inherent bigotry of the masses can take 'the gays' for any longer than an episode of *Will & Grace*.

Posted by Oz in Movie News at 14:37

No nudes is good nudes

Mick Garris said recently that horror is the rock 'n' roll of cinema. Not bad, but I'd extend that and say that "B" movies are the rock of film. I would add to that the notion that Roger Corman is the Ramones. Fast, funny, elegant in simplicity, wearing jeans with the knees worn out. Well, maybe not the last one. Of all companies, Buena Vista is currently distributing yet another collection of Corman "classics." I took a look at "*Big Bad Mama*" over the weekend, a picture I haven't seen in 25 years or so, and was delighted with the nudity, most of which came our way in the person of Angie Dickinson. No complaints there. But then one of her co-stars appeared nude with her and it was William Shatner. I'll pause while that sinks in. Yes, that William Shatner. You'll forgive me if I don't go into details about it. I feel like someone who's just seen an alien. I think I need to warn others but I don't want to dwell on the experience. Of course, the good Captain was much slimmer than he is now, but he was still a bit on the stocky side. The guy is just a pudge, which isn't saying anything bad about him. I tend that way myself. Way that way. But then, I keep my clothes on when someone whips out a camera. I mean, there are kinky groups in the far East that are into all kinds of sick, perverse stuff, but even they'd pay a quick visit to the vomitorium if they caught a glance of my unironed birthday suit. But enough about that. I just wanted to inform the *Star Trek* completists that this moment of cinema history is available to them, and warn everyone else.

Posted by Doug Bentin in DVD at 14:22

Fox killed *Arrested Development*. And they'll kill again.

I've made a huge mistake. Fans of TV's greatest show, *Arrested Development*, know full well why Fox is choosing to end the life of the show. Put simply, Fox are fucktards of the highest order, who have killed more great shows than most networks have aired. *Family Guy*, *Futurama*, *The Tick* (shut up, it was great), *Firefly*, the list rolls on like Kirstie Alley on a Stairmaster. And if you wanna know why, I found a great explanation of it, right here. If you don't want to bother reading, because you're mentally 'tarded or have to rush off for the latest episode of *CSI: Peoria*, allow David Cross to sum it up for you: "I've got an idea for what you can do, why don't you fucking fire your complete marketing team and get a new one there that knows how to market a show that won five motherfucking emmys, Golden Globes, SAG awards, WGA awards, DVA awards, Producers Guild Awards, critic's top 10 lists; you know if you can't fucking market that kind

of show and get better ratings, then maybe the problem doesn't lie here. Maybe it lies with marketing."Or maybe you can be guided by the words of AD creator, Mitchell Hurwitz, when he told the audience as he accepted yet another Emmy for the show:"We'd be remiss if we didn't point out the fact that the academy has twice rewarded us for something that you people won't watch. Tomorrow you have a chance - tomorrow at 8 o'clock - you know we'd appreciate it. You'll get back to CBS in time for `Two and a Half Men."I'll say it right now - whichever cable station or network picks up this show gets my undying loyalty. I'll watch every fucking show on their schedule at least once, just out of thanks for saving the best show on TV.And Fox? You don't get my business anymore. Season four of '24' is dead to me. Dead.

Posted by Oz in TV at 04:12

Flashback Saturday: Best. Movie review. Ever.

That's not all that floats.Back in the early days of HollywoodBitchslap, we were basically a bunch of kids who liked movies and wanted a forum to say which ones sucked and which ones didn't. That meant the quality of our reviews was, well, mostly questionable - at best.But one review from those early days has stood the test of time, as a genuinely ground-breaking, elegant piece of cinema criticism that gave us all something to aspire to was the one and only review written by an individual known only as Never Fucking Shuts Up Bob. NFSUB reviewed the Forest Whitaker-directed film, Hope Floats, and his words have echoed throughout the years as the high benchmark in film criticism.For those who have never read these historic words, I present them to you today: [CLICK HERE](#).

Posted by Oz in HBS/EFC at 04:06

This is what happens when you let the dance instructor direct.

Sure, Rob Marshall may have won some cred for his direction on Chicago (which was uninspired dreck, but that's just me), but you just knew it was going to go to his head quickly enough. Enter his next gig, Memoirs of a Geisha, which has caused a furore in Japan because Marshall has filled the Japan-set film with Chinese cast members.Hey, it's not like the important people fill be able to tell the difference, right Rob?You know, this stuff really jacks my ass. Can you imagine if a Japanese director came to America to shoot Grapes of Wrath and decided to fill the cast with Australians and Englishmen? Can you just see the outrage on the faces of morons like Bill O'Reilly if anyone dared take Glory and do a remake featuring Russian actors?It's just moronic, and even if the film is great, I'm going to be playing "spot the cultural and physical differences between the Japanese extras and Chinese leads" through the whole damn thing.Bah, humbug.

Posted by Oz in Idiots We Hate at 03:58

Jessica Simpson is a dirty, dirty ho.

Skank!Like that was news. But what might be news to many people is that Jessica Simpson and her ex-husband not only recently filed for divorce but they also BET MONEY ON IT and cashed in on their insider knowledge.Yes, in this day and age where everyone can bet on anything, where nuns and pre-schoolers battle each other on online Texas Hold'em tables as mommy watches Everybody Loves Raymond reruns, a bookmaking company recently had to stop taking bets on the divorce date of Jessica Simpson and her husband Nick Lachey, because of the sheer number of bets coming from their hometown, all on the same day.Executives at the online gambling site Nine.com said red flags were raised by a large number of suspicious wagers against the marriage lasting -- all coming from areas where the couple had either lived in the past or currently reside, MTV.com reported Friday. Rather than lose a bundle to bets based on "insider information," the site canceled all wagers on the couple. (Link).And lo and behold, the divorce was announced on exactly that day.

You know, we knew Jessica Simpson was talent-free just from listening to her 'music', and we knew she was classless when she allowed TV cameras in to film her being a dolt for a TV show that had no purpose other than to make fun of her simple-minded ways. And we knew her family as a pack of useless tools when he fake punk sister pretended to sing on Saturday Night Live, only for the tape to stop halfway through her intro. And the "let's turn Daisy Duke into a hardcore stripper/slut" move on Dukes of Hazzard was nothing short of brutal. But to bet money on your own divorce, that has to be a new low, even for one who has taken low to an artform.Jessica Simpson, you suit your surname well. Homer and Bart ain't got nothing on you.

Posted by Oz in Idiots We Hate at 03:50

Thursday, December 1, 2005

Hey! You suck! Outing the bad projectionists

Hey, Movie Theatres! You think you can get away with dim pictures, crappy sound and dirt all over your prints any more? Think again, as I will be proving Hollywood Blogslap with reports of poor cinema presentation of films that I see. This can be anything that occurs within a cinema auditorium that takes away from the enjoyment of watching a movie.

Reportable problems include the picture being out of frame or out of focus, poor quality sound playback, print problems such as visual anomalies such as dirt, horizontal scratches and noticeable splicing. Details will be provided about what is seen and where it occurred, and if and how it was fixed when problems were addressed. I will also mention about whether the matter has been resolved with cinema management or not.

*Note: A special tribute to film-tech.com from a thread they started on their forums entitled "Hey You! You Suck! Aka. Outing Bad Film Handlers" which inspired my title.

The Victim: The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe

Tech Notes: 140 minutes, Scope 2.39:1 (Super 35) aspect ratio, Sound formats: Dolby SR-D, DTS, SDDS, 9 reels.

Screened at: Silvercity Tillicum, Victoria BC, Canada, 3:15 PM, Saturday December 10th, 2005, Auditorium 6

Cinema Type: Stadium seating, equipped with digital sound, THX certified

Problems:

Film started with analog backup sound; auditorium is THX certified and equipped for Dolby Digital sound. As preshow and trailers commenced, the film jumped from analog to Dolby Digital sound from trailer to trailer.

The feature began in analog sound and stayed all that way until the Reel 3 or 4, where the sound suddenly jumped back into Dolby Digital, but had a rather bumpy sound to it. (When you would hear quieter passages, the sound was choppy).

* At the next reel change, the sound would revert back to analog and then back to digital on a further reel change.

Possible Cause of Problem: Soundhead may be out of alignment or film was improperly threaded in the projector, thus causing the Dolby Digital soundhead to improperly decode soundtrack and switch back and forth from analog to digital. The end result was a distracting presentation with muddy sound quality.

Status: Resolved with management. I spoke with one of the cinema managers and he informed me that he would look into the situation immediately. Management guessed that the sound head may have been dirty and needed to be cleaned. If further problems occur, THX will be notified of the problem.

If you have a story about a subpar film presentation, please post a story!

Jason
efilmcritic.com

Posted by Jason Whyte in Rants and Raves at 15:12