

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

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

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

Friday, December 16. 2005

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 Grudge 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

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

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

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 movie-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

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

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