

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

Tuesday, December 13, 2005

### **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

Monday, December 12, 2005

### **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 then than he is now, but he was still a bit on the stocky side. The guy is just a pudgy, 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