

# MADNESS BREWING

## WEEKLY MOVIE NEWSLETTER

MARCH 14, 2010 – VOL. 2

### Alice in Wonderland Takes Record \$116.1 in First Weekend

*Alice in Wonderland* took in a record \$115 million in its opening weekend last week. This makes this weekend very interesting to watch for a number of reasons. If *Alice in Wonderland* maintains high numbers, then we will definitely see a shift in the movie industry towards 3D. Even if it doesn't, there's no reason why the film did so well other than because it's in 3D. It'll also be interesting to see how both Hollywood and the theatres respond to 3D movies becoming such juggernauts.

The reviews weren't good for *Alice in Wonderland*. However, people didn't seem to mind. In fact, the film stayed strong all weekend. It beat out the second place movie, *Brooklyn's Finest* by over \$100 million. It also took the record for biggest box-office opening in March; beating previous record-holder *300* by over \$40 million.

This paints a scary picture for some in the movie industry. If 3D is the road to record profits, we're going to see a major shift in the movie industry which is not necessarily a good thing. The biggest problem is that, for the most part, Hollywood executives are incredibly reactionary. *Avatar's* success, and now *Alice in Wonderland's*, will convince all the major movie studios to move towards making 3D movies a priority. The problem is that 3D movies are expensive to produce and while *Avatar* and *Alice in Wonderland* were able to make incredible amount of money over their budgets, it is all in large part due to the fact that 3D movies are still a spectacle. When everyone is doing it, it no longer becomes special and the audiences will dry up. 3D technology might become cheaper over time but not substantially enough in the short term that if people stop flocking

towards 3D movies, studios stand to lose a lot with these productions.

Another major issue is the theatre operators. If 3D becomes that the big ticket, the theatre houses without IMAX 3D screens will see themselves in trouble. Looking at the preliminary numbers for this weekend, it appears that *Avatar* has suffered a significant drop. This is despite the fact that *Avatar* is still playing in 3D at some theatres. However, the major drop has occurred because *Alice in Wonderland* has bumped *Avatar* out of the IMAX 3D screens. If 3D becomes the mainstream, then people will prefer to go to theatres that have IMAX screens. Additionally, generally theatres that have IMAX only have one of those special screens. That means movies are going to fighting over that one screen which could make all the difference between profit and deficit for some big-budget productions. However, the bigger problem will be for the smaller movie theatres to upgrade their screens so that they can show 3D movies with their standard rooms. While it may not be a big problem at some of larger movie theatres, the smaller places have tighter operating margins and refitting their screens and improving their projectors may add a substantial amount to their budgets. Either way you look at it, expect popcorn prices to rise by two bucks.

Another issue that some may find with this situation is that both *Avatar* and *Alice in Wonderland*, while may have been innovative visually, both films didn't have all that much of an original story. It seems as if, for the short term anyways, that there will be less focus on the creative aspect and more on the visual aspect of making films. While this may be fine for the next little while, audiences will

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WEEKLY MOVIE  
PODCAST

NEW PODCAST EVERY FRIDAY

eventually want something more. There are no guarantees with Hollywood productions so there isn't a light at the end of the tunnel that says the creative process will improve. It seems as if all of this will turn into a special effects war which could have the potential at wreaking havoc on smaller pictures that already have a hard time trying to find themselves in theatres as it is. If the theatre operators begin to pass on smaller productions in favour of more large-scale 3D experiences, then many of the films that receive praise during the awards season may have trouble finding any audience.

However, the differences between the standard high-budget blockbusters that we normally see fill the theatres during the summer and the new 3D standard might be hard to see from the outside. If you look at it, films like *Spider-Man 3* and *Quantum of Solace* are films that have comparable budgets to *Avatar* and *Alice in Wonderland*. However, big-budget movies sans-3D generally only come out during the summer. If theatre operators are going to see a decent return on their investment on the new technology, they're going to want to see 3D movies playing in their cinemas all year round. Same goes for Hollywood in that the studios are going to want to see the pricey high-tech equipment they bought to make these movies put to good use. That means there will be less focus on smaller productions and more money put towards 3D extravaganzas.

This is not going to end well for anybody. There are no winners in this situation (except those working in the special effects fields). The studios are not going to make a ton of money from this venture and some are going to end up hurting themselves by putting too many eggs in this basket. The theatre operators will have to raise prices and will see a consumer backlash. It also doesn't help them much that the TV manufacturers are keen on ramming 3D HDTVs down our throats in the next few years. Before the end of the decade, most people will be able to get their 3D entertainment at their house instead of having to pay through the nose to see it at the theatres.

But the biggest loser in the situation is the theatre-going public. We're not getting much bang for our

buck. Outside of a few fancy images, these movies have yet to give much substance. They're expensive and once people get tired of the 3D effect, audiences will not be willing to spend nearly double the price on a movie.

As well, it's going to lead to less consumer choice. Romantic comedies aren't going to be the 3D movies that the studios are going to push. They are mostly going to be intense action movies or family-oriented films. Low-key films are going to become harder to find.

This is a worst case scenario though. Hopefully, things won't get this crazy. However, the movie industry is all about trends. Audiences are very fickle and the studios are constantly trying to keep up. When they strike gold, they take as much as they can while they can. It's not going to be all doom and gloom but if the industry does shift towards a 3D-centric model, there will be some studios that will have trouble adapting and some smaller cinemas will have to close because they will not be able to compete. There will always be room for art-house films but they will be harder to find.

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There were other films in the cinema other than *Alice in Wonderland*. *Brooklyn's Finest* took in a disappointing \$13.4 million in its opening weekend. The movie was heavily advertised and expectations were high. There were several factors in the way though. The biggest one is that *Alice in Wonderland* was unstoppable. The second is that even though there was a lot of advertising put in place for the movie, it screened in less than 2000 theatres. Usually, major releases are shown in around 3000 theatres. *Brooklyn's Finest* did manage to take in a respectable \$6.9k per theatre. However, considering that there are several new major releases for this weekend as well as the strong possibility that *Alice in Wonderland* will have a very strong second weekend, there is a huge chance that *Brooklyn's Finest* falls out of the box office top five. Its production budget was \$25 million so it will most likely have to depend on the home video market to make its money back.

The weekend before Oscars can do wonders for some of the nominated

movies. The biggest winner was *Crazy Heart* which improved 34.5% over last weekend. It took in \$3.3 million which represents about 11.1% of its total gross. *The Hurt Locker* also managed to take in another \$439k last weekend which is pretty good considering that the movie has been available on home video for several weeks.

Four major releases opened this weekend. *Green Zone* is most likely going to fare the best out of the new releases. Starring Matt Damon, there are going to be people who think it's another Bourne movie. In fact, my Dad asked me if I wanted to go see the new Bourne movie this coming week. Additionally, the advertising hypes the fact that the people making this film are partially the same team from the Bourne series.

*She's Out of My League* looks to be the biggest loser. It's probably been just as heavily advertised, if not more than *Green Zone*. The problem is that there are no big stars in the movie and considering that there are several big titles in theatres catering to specific audiences (*Alice in Wonderland* for families, *Green Zone* for adults), *She's Out of My League* will be one for the teenage crowd. It'll be interesting to see how it performs considering the competition it's up against.

## Top 5 Films for the Weekend Ending March 7, 2010

(All data comes from <http://www.the-numbers.com>)

	<u>Title</u>	<u>\$ Wknd.</u>	<u>\$ Overall</u>	<u>Weeks</u>
1	Alice in Wonderland	\$116.1m	\$116.1m	new
2	Brooklyn's Finest	\$13.4m	\$13.4m	new
3	Shutter Island	\$13.2m	\$95.8m	3
4	Cop Out	\$9.3m	\$32.5m	2
5	Avatar	\$8.1m	\$721.6m	12

## Hollywood Officially Out of Ideas: Plans for a Space Invaders Movie Going Forward

While people have been making jokes about how Hollywood has been out of ideas for years, perhaps we now have been given a sign that it has actually happened. Earlier this month, it has been reported from numerous sources that Warner Bros. has contacted Taito about licensing the *Space Invaders* franchise and developing an original full-feature film using its properties. Warner Bros. figures they can make a good enough script based around a very simple coin-op game from the 70s that will score them some revenue. Then again, it's not like this would be the first time that video games have made for a bad movie idea.

Considering that video games are only a few generations old, it's not like video game movies are a long-entrenched genre in the movie industry. The very first video-game movie was *Super Mario Bros.* based on the most popular video game franchise in the world. Debuting in 1993, it was a giant flop. It had a budget of \$42 million and had major names like Bob Hoskins and Dennis Hopper attached. It was co-produced by Roland Joffe (who also co-directed without credit) who had been nominated previously for the Academy Award for directing for the films *The Mission* and *The Killing Fields*. It's not as if the film did not have a decent enough budget or a strong pedigree. Still, the script was awful and it was a really weird (and bad) movie. I remember watching it as a kid and thought it was terrible and that's coming from a huge fan of the Mario series of games. It only took in just over \$20 million domestically and was a black mark on the careers of those who were a part of it. In fact, Hoskins has gone on record several times saying that it was the worst thing he has ever been a part of.

It didn't get much better from there. In November 1994, *Double Dragon* was the next video game to receive a film adaptation and performed so horribly in theatres that it lasted only two weeks. Even with a reported budget of \$10 million, it failed to come close to recouping its costs. The next video game movie was released the following month;

titled *Street Fighter* starring Jean Claude Van Damme. While it didn't make back all the money of its \$35 million budget (it only made \$33.4 million domestically), it most likely broke even or even made a bit of a profit from international and the home video markets. Still, after these flops, the studios began to get apprehensive towards thinking about making movie adaptation of video games.

*Mortal Kombat* came along a couple of months after *Street Fighter*. It's a good thing it was in production before *Street Fighter* came out or else it might not have seen the light of day. Luckily for everyone involved, it was the first video game movie that made a sizeable profit at the domestic box office. Released in August 1995 on a budget of \$35 million, it was able to bring in over \$70 million. This was an encouraging sign although considering the problems with other video game movies, studios proceeded with caution. In fact, two years passed before the next video game movie was released. Oddly enough, it was a sequel to *Mortal Kombat*. In September 1997, *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation* was released. It had a slightly smaller budget of \$30 million but it barely managed to make a profit with domestic receipts. It made just over \$35 million. With international and the home video markets, the film probably was quite profitable in the long run. In fact, this would begin a trend for video game movies to make some money over their budget in theatres and get boosted by overseas and home video revenue.

The first animated movie based on a video came out and was probably the most faithful to its video game counterpart. *Pokemon: The First Movie* was released in North America in July 1998. Despite the fact that it was originally created for the Japanese market, it did exceptionally well here. This was mainly due to the fact that most school children at the time had Pokemon fever. It had a budget reported as low as \$13 million and as high as \$30 million. It doesn't matter much since the film grossed \$85.7m in North America making it both the most profitable video game movie and the highest grossing at the time. Other *Pokemon* movies have done similarly well.

*Wing Commander* was the first

live-action video game movie since the *Mortal Kombat* films to be released. It had a similar budget compared to other video game movies (\$30 million). Released in March 1999, it also performed just as poorly taking in a paltry \$11.6 million. At this point, most had written off the genre completely.

Then *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* happened. Released in June 2001, two years after *Wing Commander*, the video game waters were tested again. However, *Tomb Raider* was given a very large budget; far larger than any other video game movie previously. While it wasn't critically well received, *Tomb Raider* made tons of money. In fact, it still has the record today for the highest domestic gross for a video game movie. Although its profits were narrowed due to a \$115 million budget, it proved that with a decent script and money behind it, people are willing to see a movie based on video games.

However, *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* ended up being the high-point for video game movies. Several popular series followed *Tomb Raider* but were met with horrible results. A month after *Tomb Raider's* release, *Final Fantasy* received a film adaptation. The computer-animated movie actually had a higher budget than *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*. However, it was a financial and critical disappointment. Released in July 2001, *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* ended up only pulling in \$32.1 million at the box office. The following year in March 2002, *Resident Evil* saw its big screen premiere. While it was profitable with a \$40.1 million gross against a \$33 million budget, it failed to live up to expectations.

*House of the Dead* was the next video game franchise to make the jump to the silver screen in February 2003. It didn't help that it had the smallest budget by far (reported between \$7-12 million). However, it didn't do so bad overall. Even though it's overall domestic rake was just over \$10 million, it probably was profitable when international and home video markets are considered.

The next couple of video game film releases were sequels. Attempting to capitalize on the big business the original did, *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life* was released in July 2003. It had a slightly smaller budget estimated

between \$90-120 million. However, it performed nowhere as well as the original. In fact, it made less than half of what the original made with only \$65.6 million (which still stands as fourth all-time in the genre). *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* was released the following year in September 2004. It performed relatively the same as the previous film in the series in that it made a meagre profit at the box office. Although it took in just over \$50 million, its budget was somewhere between \$45-50 million.

However, the movie studios still had no idea how to make video game movies with a higher profit margin. Only the original *Tomb Raider* movie and the original *Mortal Kombat* brought in a sizeable profit for their respective studios. In 2005, several video game movies, all with different approaches, ended up being huge losses for studios. *Alone in the Dark* and *BloodRayne* both had modest budgets of \$20 and \$25 million respectively. However, both films were bombs. *Alone in the Dark* managed to make just over \$5 million domestically. *BloodRayne* fared worse with only \$2.4 million in box office receipts. Even a big budget affair like *Doom* didn't do all that well. It had the fourth highest budget for the genre at the time with \$70 million. Despite all the buzz around the film, it tanked and only managed to bring in \$28.2 million.

*Silent Hill* became another casualty in the genre. Released in January 2006, it had a budget of \$50 million. It had a lukewarm reception and while still bringing in a respectable \$47 million, it still failed to meet its budget. While it still made its money back due to revenue from other areas, it still is considered just another unsuccessful video game movie.

2006 also brought forth the most unsuccessful video game movie of all time. To say that *DOA: Dead or Alive* was a failure would be undervaluing the word failure. The movie only made \$480 thousand total on a budget of somewhere between \$21-30 million. The fact that it was able to stay in theatres for three weekends is surprising. During its opening weekend, it had one of the lowest per theatre averages out of all the films in the top 25 box-office charts. The following week, it had the second lowest per theatre average out of the top 100 films

for that weekend (narrowly beating out one film by a single dollar).

The following year looked like everything would turn around. In September 2007, *Resident Evil: Extinction* was released and the end result was similar to the previous *Resident Evil* releases. On a budget of \$45 million, it managed to bring in over \$50 million. Thus far, the *Resident Evil* franchise has been the only series to always find success with every attempt; albeit it with very small margins. Two months later, *Hitman* was released. It had a modest budget reported to be between \$17.5-23 million. And while its \$39.7 million gross isn't something that would make the film the darling of Hollywood, it still managed to pull in around double its budget. When it comes down to it, profits are the most important thing and by looking at return on investment, *Hitman* was a great success.

In the last two years, video game movies have been a mixed bag. Released in January 2009, *In the Name of the King: A Dungeon Siege Tale* became one of the biggest flops of the genre despite having one of the largest budgets in the history of the genre. It had a decent budget of \$60 million but came up short by quite a bit. It only made \$4.8 million at the domestic box office. *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun-Li*, which was released in February 2009, had almost identical results. With a budget of \$50 million, it only made \$9.1 million. The only bright spot was *Max Payne*; although calling it a bright spot might be a bit of a stretch. Released in October 2008, it made \$40.7 million on a budget of \$35 million.

I could not write this article without mentioning Uwe Boll. You can't complain that this guy isn't passionate because he seems to genuinely care about his movies. However, his video game movies have been met with harsh criticism and have made very little money. In fact, it's kind of surprising that he's still able to find funding for his projects but he continues to do so. Aside from *House of the Dead*, none of his video game movies have been profitable. He's responsible for the money pits that were *Alone in the Dark*, *BloodRayne*, and *In the Name of the King: A Dungeon Siege Tale*. Nowadays, most of the movies that he makes are straight-to-video which might be a more

of a financially sound way to go. He's gone on to make several more video game movies that have all been released for the home market only. Even though his movies have been more or less failures, he's been extremely vocal about the criticism that his films receive; going so far as to challenge his critics to boxing matches (which some have actually taken him up on the challenge but have met horrible defeat to Boll).

However, it seems like Hollywood has missed the boat. While most of the video game movies were based on popular franchises, most of those series did not have much mass-market appeal. In fact, game series like *Dragon Siege* and *BloodRayne* have very limited following in the video game world. There are countless franchises that could be made into movies that would have a significant following with video game fans and even those not familiar with video games will recognize the name. Series like *The Legend of Zelda*, *Warcraft*, *Call of Duty*, and *Half-Life* have sold millions of titles and are recognizable to people who have never touched a gaming console in their life. Yet studios seem happy to buy franchises on the cheap and try to flip them into profitable movies. It doesn't quite work out that way.

There are two major franchises that were almost made into movies and they probably would have been pretty successful. *Halo* was pegged for release a few years back and had Peter Jackson attached to it as a producer. However, even though the film had started pre-production there were several delays. Jackson and director Neill Blomkamp started work on *District 9*. By then, the *Halo* project was doomed. Jackson had reservations about making the film due to the lack of personality of the main character, Master Chief. However, considering that *Halo* is one of the biggest grossing video game series of all-time, a movie would have been a guaranteed hit. There has never been a critically acclaimed video game movie so even if *Halo* had been sub-par in quality, it still probably would have made quite a bit of money. When it comes down to it, you don't need to make a good film; you just need to make a movie that makes money.

The other doomed series was *Grand Theft Auto*; which is one of the few

video game franchises with a bigger following than Halo. However, the reasons why it hasn't been adapted into a film is much weirder and more comical than Halo. One of the biggest problems that *Grand Theft Auto* has is that it bears the same name of a film from 1973 so there are trademark issues. However, you would think that the estimated revenue a movie adaptation of the game would encourage negotiations to get the movie made and work out the trademark issues. Another concern is that the movie would be too similar to films like *The Godfather* series and *Goodfellas* considering that the series borrows storyline elements from those films.

I've got a theory when it comes to video game movies. It seems to me that the main reason why movie studios go after video game licenses is the built-in audiences that some video game franchises have. Video games are a billion dollar industry. The problem though is that people forget that even though the top games make millions of dollars each, they only sell in the single-digit millions. Very few games sell more than a million copies. Therefore, even if everyone who buys a copy of the game goes to see a movie, for a million-copy selling game, that only translates to around \$10-12 million revenue at the box office. Considering that some of the game franchises that have been adopted into movies have never seen a single title in the franchise surpass a million copies in sales, it's not surprising how many of these films are flops. The studios seem to be thinking backwards that the built-in audience will be there but the numbers just don't add up. Throw in bad scripts and horrible direction and the potential for these films to gain mass-market appeal is lost.

A little while ago, whispers started to be heard about an *Asteroids* movie being made. The idea is almost laughable considering that it was a black-and-white video game about a triangle blowing up warped circles. There really wasn't any story to it. However, that didn't stop Universal Studios into spending the money to buy the rights to the movie. Now we are hearing about negotiations between Taito and Warner Bros. for *Space Invaders*. It seems like studios are looking backwards instead of

forwards.

The question is why? The problem with both *Asteroids* and *Space Invaders* is that they really aren't on the minds of the most coveted demographics: 18-34 year olds. Considering that these games are over 30 years old, only people who enjoy playing old-school video games like me and older generations like my father actually would care about the future of these franchises. However, considering that these games were single-screen affairs with no story to speak of, it's hard to understand what value these studios think they can get from these trademarks. I can think of tons of ideas where they could make a film and title it *Space Invaders* but it will be nothing like the video game. So what's the point?

When it comes down to it, it seems that the movie industry is completely bankrupt when it comes to ideas. Even when they have some potentially strong possibilities concerning video game movies, they tend to fumble them as best as they can. Trying to revive thirty year old video game franchises will not work. Unless they are made in 3D; then they'll make a tons of money.

## Movie Review

1981

2009

Starring: Jean-Carl Boucher, Sandrine Bisson, Claudio Coangelo

Directed by: Ricardo Trogi

Ricardo Trogi's *1981* is a peculiar film in that it's a fun movie to watch as long as you're not expecting it to go anywhere. There isn't so much a point A and point B as there is a start and a finish. Basically, we're offered a glimpse in Ricardo Trogi's (which is the name of the character as the director named him after himself) confusing pre-adolescence. It's a bit frustrating to watch because you're never really sure what the point of the movie is. However, there are so many parts of this movie that feel like they've been borrowed from our own childhoods that make the movie feel special.

Ricardo Trogi (the character played by Jean-Carl Boucher) has just recently moved to a new town. He has no friends at his new school although he tries desperately to fit in. His favourite thing in the world is a Consumers Distributing

catalogue and carries it around like a child would a security blanket. He dreams of buying up all the things he desires in the catalogue. His parents are loving but there is both of a disconnect between them and Ricardo. Ricardo is incredibly materialistic which frustrate his parents to no-end. Ricardo will also do anything to get accepted by his peers. He lies about his ability to gain access to pornography to be able to hang out with a small gang of kids at his school. He also is smitten with Anne Tremblay (Élizabeth Adam), a girl in his class. In an effort to win her over, he steals a marble she brought in for show-and-tell with the plan to give it back to her later declaring that he found it. However, most of the time, the plans in Ricardo's head never come close to how things unfold in reality.

The film is really good at building an emotional connection with the audience. Whether it be the use of nostalgia (who doesn't remember the Consumers Distributing catalogue?) or seeing some of the things Ricardo do or experience mirror stuff that has happened in our lives. It's easy to chuckle at Ricardo's insane attempts to fit in but most of us have been there. It's also just as hurtful to see the pain in Ricardo's father's (Claudio Colangelo) eyes when he realizes that his son is embarrassed by his profession; because most have us have been there when our parents are hurt by our actions where we try and see ourselves as better than them. For this, Trogi deserves all the praise in the world because he perfectly captured childhood for many people, not just of those whose parents were immigrants, and not just Quebecers, but for most children of our generation.

The major flaw with the movie is that it's hard to figure out where this film is headed. It doesn't feel there really is any sense of purpose. Sure, we see character arcs and storylines but it feels more like the movie was meant to capture a particular time period rather than try to tell a larger story. There are plenty of themes but nothing feels like it was supposed to be constructed into a set order. It's as if Trogi took the pieces of a puzzle and smashed them together to make them fit. It felt like watching a bunch of stuff happen rather than witnessing a story unfold.

This was a problem. After watching the movie, I had a bad taste in my mouth. I was having trouble figuring out what I had watched. However, while trying to gain some perspective and thinking about it while the credits were rolling, it was all the little things that made the movie good. It wasn't about the destination but the journey itself. The movie is able to bring out many emotions from the audience. However, it feels like this is done effortlessly. Scenes aren't overly dramatic; they play on similar incidents that people have had in their past. The movie works for different people in different ways which is a special kind of beautiful.

Ricardo Trogi did a fantastic job with *1981*. It could have been made to feel more complete and well-rounded but, as it stands, is a fantastic movie. It really makes you think back to being a kid growing up and seeing the dynamics of your various relationships change and having to react to new surroundings. It's a film that will make you sad but also make you smile.

☆☆☆☆

## Movie Review

Wall-E  
2008

Starring: Ben Burtt, Elissa Knight, Fred Willard

Directed by: Andrew Stanton

Pixar and Disney movies are always a treat. *WALL-E* is no exception as it really is a charming and enjoyable film no matter what your age is. Andrew Stanton did a remarkable job creating a movie that is very light on dialogue but is able to not only tell a touching love story but also have several deep messages about environmentalism and human activity. It does have its problems in that it could have been paced better and it feels a bit longer than it actually is. However, *WALL-E* is still a wonderful movie.

Earth has become a wasteland; literally. There is so much garbage that the human race had to evacuate the planet. The only creatures that are still "alive" are WALL-E, an incredibly adorable waste disposal robot (think Johnny 5 from the *Short Circuit* movies but without any vocal skills) and his only friend, a

cockroach. WALL-E spends the day compiling cubes of garbage and making towers out of them. He also collects interesting knick-knacks and hoards them. One of his favourite possessions is a VCR and a VHS cassette of the film *Hello Dolly!*. Even though he's a robot, he feels very alone and longs for a companion to share his life with.

Things change radically for WALL-E one day. It seemed like an average day for the small robot until a giant ship lands on the planet. It released a small white robot; which sort of looks like a sleeker version of R2D2. WALL-E is fascinated by this robot although it originally acts hostile towards WALL-E. Eventually, this mysterious robot realizes that WALL-E is not a threat and they begin to develop a friendship. It introduces itself as Eve. WALL-E shows Eve all his treasures which she seems perplexed by. However, Eve goes haywire when WALL-E shows her a plant. Eve steals the plant, hides it within her casing and shuts down. Sometime later, the rocket ship returns to collect Eve. Not wanting to lose Eve, WALL-E sneaks on the ship too. It turns out the ship belongs to the human evacuees from Earth. They've been sending scout ships to Earth for years to see if plants have started growing again. Now's the human race's chance to return to Earth and rebuild the planet.

The main part of the movie is the relationship between WALL-E and Eve. It's a very touching love story that is told with limited dialogue. WALL-E can only say his own name and is barely able to say Eve's name. Eve's vocabulary is limited too. However, it's their actions that tell the story. It's incredible the narrative the two animated robots are able to tell with simple gestures. Elaborate live-action movies generally don't come close to doing as good a job at exploring relationships as WALL-E does. It's a testament to the notion that sometimes less is more. Just the whole storyline arc surrounding how WALL-E desperately wants to hold Eve's hand but is thwarted at every opportunity is better than the entire story for many romance movies. The whole dynamic of the relationship makes this tale very heartwarming.

The other major overlying themes of environmentalism and humanity's reliance on technology also do

a good job at making the audience think about those issues without being annoying or too flashy. The environmentalism theme doesn't feel like the moviemakers are scolding humanity for polluting the world. Instead, it feels more like they're trying to tell a cautious tale about the dangers of overconsumption. The same goes for humanity's reliance on technology. It doesn't feel like it's a lecture. It's told in a comical way but still feels like it has substance. The whole concept that humans have become so fat due to their insistence on using technology for even the smallest tasks like getting dressed or even getting out of bed is both funny but also sends a strong message to a younger generation who is used to technology doing so much for them. It's good for a movie to have strong social and moral overtones without being preachy.

The movie does have pacing issues. It does slow up considerably in spots which may lose the audience. Except for near the end, it feels that every time the movie builds any sort of momentum, it hits lull periods. It can be distracting and become easy to lose interest in the story. It's a good thing the content is so intriguing because if it was any weaker, the movie would feel more like patchwork than something with a solid foundation.

*WALL-E* is a great story. It's very touching and makes you think about the future. At times, it's easy to lose interest but the narrative is strong enough that these moments are fleeting despite the pacing issues. It's enjoyable for the entire family and everyone else.

☆☆☆☆

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## Next Week's Issue

Publication Date: March 19, 2010

- **Feature Article:** The Blu-Ray Debacle: How Sony is Killing Their Own Brand
- Box Office Round-Up
- De pere en flic Review
- Doigts croches Review
- Gran Torino Review
- In the Heat of the Night Review
- A Long Kiss Goodnight Review
- Other assorted junk

## Critics Picks in Theatres

(Asterisk denotes a wide release film playing in less than 250 theatres—meaning it's near the end of its run)  
(stars next to title are my score out of five)

### Critically Acclaimed

Avatar ☆☆☆  
Crazy Heart ☆☆☆  
\*An Education ☆☆☆☆  
\*Fantastic Mr. Fox  
\*Precious ☆☆☆  
\*Up in the Air ☆☆☆☆

### Other Notable Movies in Wide Release

\*Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus  
\*Invictus ☆☆☆  
The Last Station  
\*The Messenger  
\*The Princess and the Frog  
\*The Road  
\*A Single Man  
Shutter Island  
\*Young Victoria

### Limited Release

Ajami  
The Art of the Steal  
Broken Embraces  
The Cove  
District 13: Ultimatum  
Fish Tank  
Ghost Writer  
The Most Dangerous Man in America  
North Face  
Prodigal Sons  
A Prophet  
Red Riding Trilogy  
Terribly Happy  
That Evening Sun  
The White Ribbon  
The Yellow Handkerchief

## New Films in Theatres

### New to Theatres

Green Zone  
Our Family Wedding  
Remember Me  
She's Out of My League

### Limited Release

The Exploding Girl  
Mother  
Stolen  
Tales From the Script

## Quebec Films in Theatres

### Previous Weeks Releases

La Dernière fugue  
Les Mots gelés  
Les Sept jours du Talion  
Les Signes vitaux

## Critics Picks on DVD

### New Releases Last Week

Hachi  
Precious ☆☆☆  
Up in the Air ☆☆☆☆

### Recent Previous Weeks Releases

\*Bright Star  
The Damned United  
Hunger  
Les plages d'Agnès  
Ponyo  
Revanche  
A Serious Man ☆☆

## DVD Release Dates for Oscar Nominees

(unlisted films have already been released)

Ajami – July 2010  
Avatar – April 2010  
The Blind Side – March 23, 2010  
Burma VJ – June 15, 2010  
Crazy Heart – April 2010  
An Education – March 30, 2010  
Fantastic Mr. Fox – March 23, 2010  
The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus  
- April 27, 2010  
Invictus – June 2010  
The Last Station – June 2010  
The Lovely Bones – April 20, 2010  
The Messenger – May 18, 2010  
The Milk of Sorrow - TBA  
The Most Dangerous Man in America  
- September 2010  
Princess and the Frog – March 16, 2010  
Un Prophète – July 2010  
The Secret of Kells - TBA  
El Secreto de Sus Ojos - TBA  
Sherlock Holmes – March 30, 2010  
A Single Man – May 2010  
The Young Victoria – April 20, 2010  
Which Way Home – May 2010  
The White Ribbon – June 2010

## Movies on TV Listings

(all times EST)

### Monday

8PM – Forgetting Sarah Marshall (M Fun)  
9PM – The Silence of the Lambs (M Pix)  
9PM – The Reader ☆☆☆☆ (M Fest)  
10:30 – Rain Man (AMC)

### Tuesday

6PM – The Widow of St. Pierre (Sundance)  
8PM – Boyz n the Hood (BET)  
8PM – Coraline (M Fun)  
8:30 – The Commitments (CHCH Hamilton)  
9PM – The Curious Case of Benjamin Button ☆☆☆ (The Movie Network)  
9 PM – Let the Right One In (M Fest)  
9:45 – Rachel Getting Married ☆☆☆  
(Super Channel 4)  
10:30 – The Silence of the Lambs  
(CHEK Victoria)  
10:45 – High and Low (TCM)  
11PM – A Beautiful Mind (M Pix)

### Wednesday

8PM – 42<sup>nd</sup> Street (TCM)  
8PM – The Hours (More Pix)  
9PM – The Terminator (AMC)

### Thursday

7PM – Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit (Teletoon)  
8PM – My Darling Clementine (TCM)  
9PM – Gladiator (Showcase Action)  
9PM – Shine a Light (M Fest)  
9PM – The Verdict (Vision)  
10PM – The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (Teletoon)  
10PM – Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit (Teletoon West)  
10:30 – Tom Jones (CHEK Victoria)  
11:20 – Richard III (M Pix)

### Friday

6:30 – Shakespeare in Love (W Movies)  
8PM – The Browning Version (TCM)  
9PM – Angels and Demons ☆☆☆☆  
(The Movie Network)  
9PM – Batman Begins (Movietime)  
10PM – Goodbye, Mr. Chips (TCM)  
10:15 – Sunset Boulevard (More Pix)  
10:30 – Forgetting Sarah Marshall ☆☆☆☆  
(M Fun)  
11PM – Payback (Peachtree)  
11:30 – Ocean's Eleven (M Pix)

## The Final Madness

The first table below is a list of all the video game movies that saw major release in North America. Excluded from the list are direct-to-video movies as well as all the *Pokemon* movies except for the first one. The reasoning for the exclusion of *Pokemon* is because it's the only video game movie series that caters only to children while the other films in the list are for general audiences. The first *Pokemon* film is included for comparison purposes only.

Also included in the table are the Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic scores

where available. It's amazing how none of these films have favourable scores from either site. Even odder is the film that is one of the more memorable flops, *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*, is the best reviewed movie.

There may be some hope. *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within* is coming out in May and will be part of the start of the summer blockbuster season. It has the largest budget ever for a video game movie. It'll be interesting to see how it rates. Personally, I wasn't too thrilled with the trailer but I was not a fan of the series

of games so I could be totally wrong and it could be the best video game movie yet.

Therefore, I've included a second table of films that are supposed to come out in the next 24 months. All films in this list are either currently in or have completed pre-production. *Mortal Kombat: Devastation* may be in trouble as Midway, the company that owned the video game property, went bankrupt so the situation is a bit of a mess although work is still going forward with the project.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Release Date</u>	<u>Total US Gross</u> <u>(in millions)</u>	<u>Budget (in millions)</u>	<u>Rotten</u> <u>Tomatoes</u> <u>Score</u>	<u>Metacritic</u> <u>Score</u>
Super Mario Bros.	05/28/1993	\$20.8m	\$42.0m	11	-
Double Dragon	11/04/1994	\$2.3m	\$10.0m	0	-
Street Fighter	12/23/1994	\$33.4m	\$35.0m	15	-
Mortal Kombat	08/18/1995	\$70.4m	\$35.0m	24	58
Mortal Kombat: Annihilation	11/21/1997	\$35.9m	\$30.0m	7	11
Pokemon: The First Movie	07/18/1998	\$85.7m	\$13.0-30.0m	15	35
Wing Commander	03/12/1999	\$11.6m	\$30.0m	9	21
Lara Croft: Tomb Raider	06/11/2001	\$131.1m	\$115.0m	19	33
Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within	07/21/2001	\$32.1m	\$137.0m	44	49
Resident Evil	03/12/2002	\$40.1m	\$33.0m	34	33
House of the Dead	02/15/2003	\$10.2m	\$7.0-12.0m	4	15
Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life	07/21/2003	\$65.6m	\$90.0-120m	23	43
Resident Evil: Apocalypse	09/10/2004	\$50.7m	\$45.0-50.0m	21	35
Alone in the Dark	01/28/2005	\$5.2m	\$20.0m	1	9
Doom	10/20/2005	\$28.2m	\$70.0m	20	34
BloodRayne	10/23/2005	\$2.4m	\$25.0m	4	18
Silent Hill	02/09/2006	\$47.0m	\$50.0m	30	30
DOA: Dead or Alive	09/07/2006	\$0.5m	\$21.0-30.0m	34	38
Resident Evil: Extinction	09/20/2007	\$50.6m	\$45.0m	23	41
Hitman	11/21/2007	\$39.7m	\$17.5m-\$23.0m	15	35
In the Name of the King: A Dungeon Siege Tale	01/11/2008	\$4.8m	\$60.0m	4	15
Max Payne	10/13/2008	\$40.7m	\$35.0m	18	35
Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun-Li	02/25/2009	\$9.1m	\$50.0m	4	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	n/a	\$818.1m	\$1015.5-1087.0m	n/a	n/a
<b>AVERAGE</b>	n/a	\$35.6m	\$44.2-47.3m	16.5	30.3

  

<u>Title</u>	<u>Planned Release Date</u>	<u>Estimated Budget</u>
Prince of Persia	05/28/2010	\$150 million
Resident Evil: Afterlife	09/10/2010	unknown
Mortal Kombat: Devastation	2010	unknown
Kane and Lynch: Dead Men	2011	unknown
Silent Hill 2	2011	unknown
Bioshock	2011	unknown