

Film Feature: Summer 2011's 10 Most Anticipated Movie Moments

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 18, 2011 - 4:04pm

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CHICAGO – Every summer movie season aims to be one thing above anything else – BIG. Summer movies are supposed to be spectacles, larger-than-life, they are specifically designed to overwhelm. And while that can be a whole lot of fun, there are moments where we get so caught up in counting the sequels and the counter-programming vehicles that we lose the forest for the trees.

This year, for the 2011 Summer Movie Season, we invite you, in the immortal words of Steve Martin, to “get small.” Let’s stop looking at the final movie counts, the budgets, the pre-marketing buzz, and let’s focus on the little things. Identify the true tiny nuggets of goodness that you’re REALLY looking forward to this summer movie season. Are you actually excited about “Transformers 3” or are you mostly just interested in seeing if Michael Bay’s new lingerie model can act better than the last one? Are you really nervously waiting to see “Thor,” praying that it fits thematically with the rest of Kenneth Branagh’s oeuvre, or are you really just jonesing to hear Chris Hemsworth try to say “By Odin’s Beard!” without laughing?

Go ahead and pre-plan your list of summertime hits and flops later, but, meanwhile, here are our picks for the ten very-specific things we’re most looking forward to from the 2011 summer movie season, in chronological order.

Diesel vs. Dwayne in “Fast Five” (April 29)



Fast Five

Photo credit: Universal

There’s been a script floating around Hollywood for years called “Van Damme vs. Seagal,” which is, allegedly, a hilarious “Grumpy Old Men”-esque action comedy about ‘80s kickboxing stars Jean Claude Van Damme and Steven Seagal playing themselves as washed-up bitter rivals and next-door neighbors. The premise alone makes you want to see that movie, doesn’t it? (It’d be better than anything either “actor” has done for the past twenty years EASILY.)

Who doesn’t want to see two former action icons going at it toe-to-toe? Stallone vs. Schwarzenegger? Willis vs. Snipes? Chan vs. Li? Heck, that was the whole premise of “The Expendables,” and it’s a big reason why it was a hit. And, this summer, we get a mano-a-mano showdown between two “not-quite out to pasture, but almost” action stars – Vin Diesel and Dwayne Johnson.

It might sound a bit mean to call two guys as young as Diesel and Johnson over-the-hill, but let’s be frank, neither has lived up to their action potential lately. Diesel has completely fallen off the map, thanks to garbage like “A Man Apart” and “Babylon A.D.,” and Johnson, while

admittedly a much bigger name than Diesel, hasn't front-lined a kick-ass action flick in a long while.

"Fast Five" might be exactly what these two hulking powerhouses need to reboot their action street cred. Forget about the sexy girls, car wrecks, and Paul Walker (please forget Paul Walker). The part that really got us pumped in the last "Fast Five" trailer was the footage from the knockdown, drag-out Diesel vs. Dwayne deathmatch in an abandoned warehouse. Car chases are a-dime-a-dozen, but two men – who were both once hoped to be the new face of the modern action movie – beating each other senseless in a fight to reclaim their glory as the king of the ass-kicking heap? THAT will make us ignore crap like "2 Fast 2 Furious" and get us into that movie theatre FAST.

Hans Zimmer's Score to "Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides" (May 20)



Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides

Photo credit: Disney

Yes, yes, we know. There's a running debate about how much of the bombastic score for the first "Pirates of the Caribbean" can be attributed to the listed composer, Klaus Badelt, and how much can be attributed to his mentor, the great Hans Zimmer, who credits himself as "overproducing" the original score. But it's safe to say that the soundtrack was definitely inspired and enhanced by Zimmer, which is still saying a lot. The themes running throughout the "Curse of the Black Pearl" score remain some of the most iconic, over-the-top movie adventure music of the past decade, and Zimmer's contributions to the two "Pirates" sequels, "Dead Man's Chest" and "At World's End," are often overshadowed by the simple fact that most people we know didn't really care for either movie. Sure, there are cool bits in each, but Johnny Depp and Bill Nighy's squid face get all the credit, while Zimmer's score is the true unheralded hero of both films.

Zimmer took Badelt's piercing bombast from the original and refined and expanded on it throughout the "Pirates" sequels, creating something that was, at once, rousing, beautiful, and uniquely complex. The soundtrack for "Dead Man's Chest" was a particularly fun bit of swashbuckling goodness – our personal favorite moment is the stirring end credits suite (which, sadly, has yet to appear on a soundtrack CD). People either love or hate Zimmer, which we get, but he really has done some superior work throughout the "Pirates" movies, which often gets overlooked. That's why, despite our many reservations about "Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides" — Has the well run dry? Are we getting tired of Jack Sparrow? Can Rob Marshall direct action? — the one (almost) sure thing is that Zimmer's contributions to the score will be something to remember.

Seeing if "The Hangover, Part II" Will Be "The Wolfpack Strikes Back" or "Hangover 2: Die Harder" (May 26)



The Hangover, Part II

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

A sequel to “The Hangover” was a total no-brainer. Aside from the fact that the original is still the highest-grossing R-rated comedy of all time, Bradley Cooper, Ed Helms, and Zach Galifianakis just had such unbelievable chemistry that it would’ve been a waste to not get the band back together for one more tour. But the second they announced “The Hangover, Part II,” the first question we had was “What’s the premise going to be? They’re not just going to do the same thing all over again, right?”

Fine, getting the Wolfpack together again will be fun, but are they really going to forget ANOTHER bachelor party night, particularly after the events of the first film? We were convinced that the movie was going to have to come up with some sort of clever plot device – resetting the sequel in Bangkok sounded promising – but then the first trailer came out and, to be frank, it looks a lot, A LOT like the first “Hangover.”

No one expects director Todd Phillips to reinvent the wheel or anything, but we didn’t expect the movie to look like such a “Die Hard 2.” You know, John McClane shows up the very next Christmas Eve, looks at the camera, and says “I can’t believe this is happening AGAIN!” (Cue wacky sound effect.) We want the Wolfpack to take us on a new adventure, not just revamp their past hits. That never works. To us, this is the BIG challenge facing “The Hangover, Part II.” The first trailer was funny, we’ll totally admit, but if they can’t sell us on why Part II is more than just a rehash of Part I, then maybe what happened in Vegas should’ve stayed in Vegas.

Kyle Chandler’s Lead Performance in “Super 8” (June 10)



Super 8

Photo credit: Paramount

We love J.J. Abrams, but we’re strangely wary of “Super 8.” Granted, the first trailer looked WONDERFUL, but it’s the homage aspect that has us worried. Everyone and their mother has taken one look at “Super 8” and said “Ah, this is obviously an homage to late 1970s Steven Spielberg films.” And those films are amazing, they’re pillars of modern filmmaking. However, way, way too many filmmakers have been caught in the insidious traps of homage filmmaking lately, valuing their cinematic tributes way more than good old-fashioned storytelling.

“Mission: Impossible 3” and “Star Trek” were good enough that Abrams deserves the benefit of the doubt, but the main reason that we’re excited for “Super 8” is the chance to finally see the amazing Kyle Chandler in a leading role onscreen. Are there people out there who are still unaware that “Friday Night Lights” will forever be remembered as one of the most underappreciated series in television history? Are there people who will never recognize Chandler’s Coach Taylor as one of the most three-dimensional, restrained, multi-layered, virtuosic performances to ever grace the small screen? If so, pity those people.

With “Friday Night Lights,” Chandler created one of the most believable male characters – charismatically paternal, yet fallible – in recent memory, and the idea of unleashing his chiseled talent and square-jaw on a major summer movie sounds like a fantastic idea. (His small role as the vain Bruce Baxter was one of the best parts of Peter Jackson’s “King Kong.”) Fine, the “stars” of “Super 8” will probably be the cast of precocious kids, but we’re really, really hoping that Abrams stepped up to the plate and gave something meaty to Chandler for his first major movie leading role. Heck, if we had to pick a new Chief Brody for the 21st Century, we’d pick Coach Taylor in a Dillon, Texas minute.

Finding Out If There Really Is a Connection Between “Green Lantern” and “Howard the Duck” (June 17)



Green Lantern

Photo credit: Warner Bros./Green Lantern Comics

We hate bringing this up, especially since you have to give director Martin Campbell credit for even attempting to bring a superhero as cosmic as Green Lantern to the big screen. BUT, that being said, has anyone else noticed how much the first images of Green Lantern's swollen headed villain, Dr. Hector Hammond (played by Peter Sarsgaard), look like Jeffrey Jones' Dr. Walter Jennings from the epic George Lucas flop "Howard the Duck"? That's got to be an accident, right?

Sarsgaard and Jones' characters even sound alike – scientists who become possessed by evil alien life forms (Parallax and the Dark Overlord, respectively) which warp and disfigure their physical bodies. The characters appear similar, the circumstances sound similar, the designs of the Dark Overlord and Parallax (at least the early designs that have been leaked) do, unfortunately, look kind of similar... it's got to be a coincidence... doesn't it? Is Martin Campbell secretly a huge Howard fan? Because we're rooting for Ryan Reynolds to really win us over this summer, but, man, it would help if we didn't think of Lea Thompson turning down duck sex every time we watch the trailer.

Jennifer Aniston's Potty-Mouth in "Horrible Bosses" (July 8)



Horrible Bosses

Photo credit: EW

It feels strange that Jennifer Aniston is one of the things we're most looking forward to this summer – particularly after trainwrecks like "The Bounty Hunter" and "Just Go With It" – but we're really, really liking what we're hearing about her new comedy "Horrible Bosses". And even though the movie was directed by Seth Gordon, who gave us the awesome documentary "The King of Kong," and the cast includes people as funny as Jason Bateman, Jason Sudeikis, and Charlie Day, we're totally going to the movie to see Aniston.

Why, you may ask? Because Aniston's role is supposed to be unbelievably raunchy and vulgar and, frankly, we can't wait to see Jennifer work blue. In fact, we've read an early draft of the "Horrible Bosses" script and, if half of what's in the script makes it into the final movie, people will be raving about Aniston's character the same way they raved about Tom Cruise's Les Grossman in "Tropic Thunder."

Aniston's Julia is one of the "horrible bosses" of the title, and this girl is **WRONG**. She's a dentist who spends her day sexually harassing her put-upon underling Dale (Charlie Day) to a degree that you will barely believe. And even though fighting off a sexually-aggressive Aniston sounds like a fun way to spend a work-day, Aniston's Julia is so unhinged, morally bankrupt, and perverse that, despite her hotness, you will understand immediately why men are afraid of her.

While going against type doesn't always work, we actually love the idea of Aniston putting aside her good-girl image and getting down and comfortable with some honest-to-god filth. There's a scene in the script where Julia tries to force Dale to have sex with her **ON TOP** of Dale's fiancée, who's unconscious in a nearby dental chair, that, if Aniston pulls it off, we'll totally forgive her for "Along Came Polly" and "Rumor Has It." It has the potential to be **THAT** good.

Mrs. Weasley vs. Bellatrix Lestrange in "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part Two" (July 15)



Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part Two

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

Forget Harry vs. Voldemort. We already know how that's going to go down – we've been preparing ourselves for it ever since Harry went looking for the Sorcerer's Stone. The big moment that we're truly looking forward to in "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part Two" is the most earth-shatteringly emotional battle in wizard history – Ron's mom, Mrs. Molly Weasley, unleashing a mother's rage all over Helena Bonham Carter's Death-Eater femme fatale, Bellatrix Lestrange.

ANYONE who's read "Deathly Hallows" knows what we're talking about. There's a moment during the final battle of Hogwarts, where Mrs. Weasley – the model of maternal patience and love throughout the entire Harry Potter series – after witnessing something truly, unspeakably horrible happening to one of her children, EXPLODES into a supernova berserker rage towards the sneering Lestrange, and the aftermath took our breath away. It could be seen as a small moment, a quick wizard v. wizard duel in the midst of a much larger war, but it's a moment filled with more pain, sadness, fury, and passion than almost any other moment in the entire Potter series.

It's the moment where we witness the ostensible head of the Weasley clan, the meekest, most decent people in the wizarding world, after seven books of being marginalized and dismissed, suddenly detonate like an atom bomb once her family is finally pushed too far. To put it bluntly, Molly Weasley goes there. We've no guarantee that director David Yates has even included this scene in his final cut, but it's such a primal part of the story's conclusion that, if he botches it or left it on the editing room floor, it could be the unforgivable Avada Kedavra that kills the Potter finale's lasting impact.

Chris Evans Going All "Benjamin Button" in "Captain America: The First Avenger" (July 22)



Captain America: The First Avenger

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

When it was announced that Chris Evans was going to be playing Steve Rogers in this summer's "Captain America: The First Avenger," an inordinate amount of comic fans immediately began complaining about Evans' hair color ("But, but, he isn't blond?!"), which really is an odd complaint. James Cameron can make an entire movie filled with blue people, but fanboys can't trust that the people behind the "Captain America" movie know where to buy hair dye? It's a non-issue.

On the other hand, we were really interested to see how director Joe Johnston was going to handle Evans' transformation from lowly Steve Rogers into Captain America. For those unfamiliar, Steve Rogers starts out as a 90-pound weakling, but, thanks to super-soldier serum, he transforms into the patriotically buff Captain America. Anyone could see that Evans had the necessary musculature to play Cap, but how do you make a 200-pound heavyweight into a stick-thin 4F loser? (Not even Christian Bale could lose that much body mass.)

The answer was, apparently, through special FX, the same kind that transformed Brad Pitt into various ages and shapes throughout David Fincher's "Curious Case of Benjamin Button." We saw the first footage of Evans' transformation in the first Captain America trailer, and the results are equal parts impressive and creepy. Regardless of whatever scheme the Red Skull is up to in The First Avenger – Nazi robots, Cosmic Cube, whatever – we can't imagine the visuals being any more striking than watching a CGI-ed malnourished Evans with his shirt off. The footage was undeniably intriguing, but we're mostly interested to see if Evans' FX-aided performance will appear seamless in the final product, either making us forget that the effects are there in the first place or making us squirm through the whole pre-Cap prologue as the anorexic Steve Rogers wanders into the uncanny valley.

The "Pervasive Scariness" of "Don't Be Afraid of the Dark" (August 12)



Don't Be Afraid of the Dark

Photo credit: Film District

On the surface, it might seem weird to be looking forward to a summertime horror remake of an old TV movie with Katie Holmes in the lead, but, once you get under the hood of “Don’t Be Afraid of the Dark,” you can understand why it’s got more potential to be epic than any “Saw” or “Paranormal Activity” sequel ever could.

First, it’s written and produced by Guillermo Del Toro – giant stamp of quality there – who co-wrote the movie with writer/director Matthew Robbins, who’s worked on a ton of iconic fanboy projects, ranging from “THX-1138” to “Close Encounters” to “Dragonslayer” to Del Toro’s sadly-unproduced “In the Mountains of Madness.”

Second, the director is Troy Nixey, a first time director, whom geeks will know as the fantastic comic book artist who brought such insane Lovecraftian projects to life as Mike Mignola’s “Batman: The Doom that Came to Gotham” and “Jenny Finn.”

And, third, have you seen the trailer yet? It’ll make your skin crawl.

But those undeniable selling features aren’t the REAL reason why we’re so jazzed for this movie. We’re mostly excited about the film’s R-rating. Why? Because “DBAOTD” was NEVER supposed to be rated R. [According to Del Toro](#) [15], “We created *Don’t Be Afraid of the Dark*, thinking we would be safe looking for PG-13 because we had no profanity, no sex, no gore, but we made a very intense movie in a very classical mold. And the MPAA gave it an R. They said the movie was too intense for a PG-13.” In [another interview](#) [16], Del Toro said, “They gave us an R for ‘pervasive scariness.’ We asked them if there’s anything we could do, and they said, ‘Why ruin a perfectly scary movie?’”

THIS is why we’re chomping at the bit to see *Don’t Be Afraid*. It’s a movie that got an R rating simply because it’s SCARY, really, really scary. The rating can’t be blamed on boobs or blood or any other surface detail. It earned its R because the MPAA thought that, on its merit as a horror film alone, it would MESS UP a thirteen-year-old. And that’s fantastic. That’s the best endorsement of a horror movie we’ve heard in years.

Watching Doctor Who Get His Yankee On in “Fright Night” (August 19)



Fright Night

Photo credit: DreamWorks

Much like “Don’t Be Afraid of the Dark,” we are strangely intrigued by this summer’s forthcoming remake of “Fright Night,” the 1985 classic-ish vampire flick. It’s got a solid team behind the camera – “Lars and the Real Girl” director Craig Gillespie and former “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” writer Marti Noxon; the “vampire next-door” thing is a fun premise; and it has a very respectable cast, including Anton Yelchin (“Star Trek”), Christopher Mintz-Plasse (“Kick-Ass”), Toni Collette, and Colin Farrell taking over the Chris Sarandon role from the original.

However, there’s one other major cast member and it’s his presence that has really put the new “Fright Night” onto fanboys’ radar – David Tennant, the 10th Doctor, and one of the most popular lead actors in the venerable history of the BBC’s “Doctor Who” franchise. Tennant will be taking over the role of Roddy McDowell’s Peter Vincent, with McDowell’s aging horror movie host reimagined as a leather pants-wearing, Criss Angel-esque magician. Tennant is an amazing actor (his “Hamlet” for the Royal Shakespeare Company was fantastic), but our anticipation for his role in “Fright Night” is, regrettably, one part support, one part schadenfreude.

This is Tennant’s first major role in a U.S. film (he briefly turned up in “Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire”), and it’s a tough one. Redoing a venerable Roddy McDowell role as an eyeliner-ed stage magician is a rough feat to pull off, particularly when people already have questions about Tennant’s ability to pull off an American accent. When footage of Tennant’s long-anticipated U.S. TV debut, the pilot “Rex Is Not Your Lawyer,” hit YouTube last year, his American accent was so terrible, no one questioned why NBC didn’t pick it up to series. So, while we’ll be checking out “Fright Night” this summer to revel in ’80s nostalgia and support the man who made us fall in love with the Doctor all over again, there will be a tiny, evil part of us who’ll be anxious to see if Tennant can actually sound American without making us giggle. Here’s hoping that David stakes that nastiness right in the heart the second he opens his mouth.

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