

Film Feature: The 10 Most Anticipated Films of Summer 2011

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 27, 2011 - 11:01am

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CHICAGO – It's the most wonderful time of the year as moviegoers shake off the doldrums of winter weather, awards season snoozers, and a truly horrendous first trimester of 2011 and finally get to see something blow up for their hard-earned dollars. There's something about the warm months of the year that allows for critical faculties to fall away as we relax and simply embrace cinematic chaos. What will we get out of Summer 2011? What are the movies that look the most promising? Let us guide the way.



Want the bad news first? This could be a brutal summer. Going over the schedule from May through August allows for very few potential highlights. It's a season crowded with sequels to movies that weren't really that good in the first place or that were good enough that we don't really need to repeat it. Was anyone really concerned about where Jack Sparrow would go next ("Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides")? I know most of you liked "Kung Fu Panda," "Cars," and "The Hangover," but even fans can't be too excited for sequels that are likely to just spin the same wheels. And "Transformers: Dark Side of the Moon" is likely to be better than the last movie in the franchise, but so are 99% of the films released this year.

Now that the bitching is out of the way, let's stay positive. Here are the ten movies that you should mark on your calendar with your favorite color highlighter plus ten runner-ups in case the others are sold out. Don't miss 'em.

(Note: We're not including anything we've seen already so "The Beaver" and "Bridesmaids" are absent when they would have both been runner-ups otherwise.)

Runner-Ups: 30 Minutes or Less, Another Earth, Brighton Rock, Captain America, Cars 2, Cowboys and Aliens, Friends With Benefits, Larry Crowne, Our Idiot Brother, and X-Men: First Class

10. "Rise of the Planet of the Apes"

Release Date: August 5

Starring: James Franco, Andy Serkis, Freida Pinto, Brian Cox, John Lithgow, and Tyler Labine

Written by: Rick Jaffa, Jamie Moss, & Amanda Silver

Directed by: Rupert Wyatt

Why It Should Rule: Because it looks really interesting with a strong cast and clever concept. Instead of offering a traditional sequel or reboot,

the producers of “Rise of the Planet of the Apes” have gone back to the monkey drawing board, telling the story of how we got to the day when Helena Bonham Carter looked like Amy Poehler’s impression of Michael Jackson. The great James Franco continues to impress with his unique career decisions (don’t hold the Oscars and “Your Highness” against one of the most talented actors of his generation) and the rest of that cast up there is not your typical one for a summer blockbuster. This could be that rare intellectual summer hit...

Why It Might Suck: ...Or it could be a whole lot of dumb. CGI apes — Hasn’t Andy Serkis done this already? And “King Kong” wasn’t exactly well-received. Orangutans who know sign language trying to pull their own version of “The Great Escape” could be a whole pile of cheesy science fiction that skews closer to SyFy Original Movie-quality than theatrical-caliber science fiction. When we read director Rupert Wyatt tell [EW.com](http://www.ew.com) [15] that it’s “an A-Team of apes,” it didn’t exactly instill creative confidence.

9. “Horrible Bosses”

Release Date: July 8

Starring: Jason Bateman, Charlie Day, Jason Sudeikis, Jennifer Aniston, Colin Farrell, Jamie Foxx, Kevin Spacey, Julie Bowen, and Donald Sutherland

Written by: Michael Markowitz and John Francis Daley & Jonathan Goldstein

Directed by: Seth Gordon

Why It Should Rule: The cast features many of the funniest people on TV of the last several years including the best “SNL” member not named Bill Hader, the great Charlie Day of “It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia,” and the perfect comic timing of Jason Bateman (we won’t hold some of his recent bad decisions on the big screen against him). And then look at that supporting cast! Getting A-listers to play the title characters — the whip-snappers whom the central characters don’t just resent but actually try to kill — was a fantastic idea, even though, at this point, Spacey could play a horrible boss in his sleep. It sounds like a very dark version of “Office Space” and that sounds great...

Why It Might Suck: ...Unless they fumble the execution. Black comedy takes amazing comic timing to walk that fine line between being honestly edgy and overly aware of how clever you think you are (never mind not being just straight-up offensive). And as much as we loved Seth Gordon’s “The King of Kong,” his follow-up (“Four Christmases”) didn’t exactly display the comic wit needed to make a piece like this work.



8. “Bad Teacher”

Release Date: June 24

Starring: Cameron Diaz, Lucy Punch, Jason Segel, Justin Timberlake, and Phyllis Smith

Written by: Gene Stupnitsky & Lee Eisenberg

Directed by: Jake Kasdan

Why It Should Rule: With the exception of “Orange County,” Jake Kasdan has proven himself as a comic director with strong work on “Zero Effect” and “Walk Hard: The Dewey Cox Story.” He’s a funny dude. And the red-band preview for “Bad Teacher” is a riot, hinting at a dark side that Cameron Diaz hasn’t been allowed to show since “There’s Something About Mary.” She could be merged perfectly with a well-used supporting cast of incredibly talented comedians like Lucy Punch, Jason Segel, and Justin Timberlake. Yes, JT. If you haven’t seen him hosting “SNL,” get thee to [Hulu](http://www.hulu.com) [16]. The dude is also very funny. We know. We hate him a little bit too.

Why It Might Suck: Comedy previews can be very misleading and sometimes even the most talented group of stars can disappoint. Remember “Dinner For Schmucks”? Yeah, we tried to forget it too. Sorry for bringing it up.





Thor
 Photo credit: Paramount

7. "Thor"

Release Date: May 6

Starring: Chris Hemsworth, Natalie Portman, Anthony Hopkins, Stellan Skarsgard, Kat Denning, Clark Gregg, Idris Elba, and Colm Feore

Written by: Ashley Edward Miller & Zack Stentz and Don Payne

Directed by: Kenneth Branagh

Why It Should Rule: Easily the most interesting of the summer superhero movies (now that we've seen previews and early reviews... "X-Men: First Class" originally sounded better on paper), "Thor" should be a license to print money and add another legend to the Marvel movie roster. God of Movies, please make this as fun as it could be. At first, we thought Kenneth Branagh was probably just taking a paycheck, but then we thought about it a little more — who better to bring a tale founded on powerful mythology than a man who is well-versed in larger-than-life theatrics like Branagh? Are Shakespearean tragedies and God-based mythology that far apart? And if he mixes that Shakespearean nobility with the extreme nature of something like his "Frankenstein," this could totally rock...

Why It Might Suck: ...But Marvel has screwed us before. Hard. It's been three years since "Iron Man," and "The Incredible Hulk," "X-Men Origins: Wolverine," and "Iron Man 2" have all ranged from disappointing to horrendous. Honestly, Marvel needs another hit franchise now. Please let this be it. Don't make us wait for "Captain America."



Don't Be Afraid of the Dark
 Photo credit: Miramax

6. "Don't Be Afraid of the Dark"

Release Date: August 13

Starring: Katie Holmes, Guy Pearce, Bailee Madison, and Alan Dale

Written by: Guillermo del Toro & Matthew Robbins

Directed by: Troy Nixey

Why It Should Rule: Because Guillermo del Toro rules. And the story, so well-recounted [here](#) [17] about the movie getting an R for "pervasive scariness" could not be a better selling point for horror fans than if Katie Holmes came to our office and handed us the tickets herself. What

was the last movie you saw that was R not because it was gory or gruesome but simply because it was TOO SCARY? If that doesn't make the horror fans in our audience put this high on their list, we don't know what possibly could.

Why It Might Suck: Did you say Katie Holmes? On a ten MOST anticipated list? Yes, it's been years since Mrs. Cruise did anything worthwhile, but we sat through "The Kennedys" and we're STILL putting this high on the list. If we can forget about her spotty track record of late and just go with it, so can you. ("The Kennedys" should have been rated R for "*pervasive suck.*")

5. "Fright Night"

Release Date: August 19

Starring: Colin Farrell, David Tennant, Anton Yelchin, Christopher Mintz-Plasse, Imogen Poots, and Toni Collette

Written by: Marti Noxon

Directed by: Craig Gillespie

Why It Should Rule: Yes, two horror movies in the top six. And neither are sequels. It should be a good season for genre fans, "Final Destination 5" notwithstanding. In all seriousness, there have been some interesting August horror offerings of late, including "The Last Exorcism" last year, and we have a feeling that this wonderfully-staffed project could be this year's August horror hit. What do McLovin, the mom from "Sixth Sense," one of the best writers from "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," the director of "Lars and the Real Girl," Colin Farrell, and Doctor Who have in common? We don't know, but when they all get together to remake an iconic 80s horror flick, sign us up. NOW.

Why It Might Suck: What do they say about the best laid plans? For some reason, even a group as talented as this can falter, especially in horror. Even "Cursed" looked good on paper. Most of the high-quality horror flicks of the last few years have been from unknowns, not from a cast and crew this A-list. And there's always reason to be cautious about remakes, never mind the fact that the bloodsucker genre seems pretty worn out by now. Thanks a lot, Team Edward.

4. "Crazy, Stupid, Love"

Release Date: July 29

Starring: Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling, Emma Stone, Julianne Moore, Marisa Tomei, and Kevin Bacon

Written by: Dan Fogelman

Directed by: Glenn Ficarra & John Requa

Why It Should Rule: The preview rules and we've heard from some folks who have read the script that it's simply fantastic. And look at that cast! Ryan Gosling is the best actor of his generation. Steve Carell has been making some fantastic career decisions lately ("Date Night" notwithstanding). Julianne Moore is the best actress without an Oscar. Emma Stone continues her meteoric ascent with several roles this season (this one being the most promising). And Marisa Tomei and Kevin Bacon always make everything better. (Seriously. Everything.) Finally, Ficarra & Requa proved to be interesting directors last year with "I Love You Phillip Morris." This could be one of the few Summer 2011 movies to make top ten lists at the end of the year.

Why It Might Suck: The preview gives off the impression that the script — the witty banter and insightful look at modern relationships — is going to be key to the success of this film. And, despite what those who have read the script have said, screenwriter Dan Fogelman, primarily known for kids movies like "Cars" and "Bolt," doesn't exactly strike a note of confidence with his resume. Anyone involved with "Fred Claus," which he also "wrote," has some atoning to do.



Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows — Part 2

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

3. "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows — Part 2"

Release Date: July 15

Starring: Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson, Rupert Grint, Ralph Fiennes, Jamie Campbell Bower, Gary Oldman, Tom Felton, Bonnie Wright, Helena Bonham Carter, Emma Thompson, Alan Rickman, and Jason Isaacs

Written by: Steve Kloves

Directed by: David Yates

Why It Should Rule: This is it, folks. The end of wizard days. The film we've all been waiting for as the saga finally comes to a close. There has been a generation raised with "Harry Potter" by now, and it seems likely that they'll get the cinematic send-off they deserve. Does anyone really think the "Potter" filmmakers have built to this point and will drop the ball on the one-yard line? We doubt it. The only question is if the Academy will recognize the entire series by giving the final film a few more nods than any of the previous ones. Don't rule it out.

Why It Might Suck: It's not unheard of for a final film in a franchise to disappoint, especially when it's based on material this beloved. Will this be "Return of the King" or "Return of the Jedi"? (Sorry Lucas fans, it's easily the worst film of the original trilogy.) Only time will tell.

2. "Tree of Life"

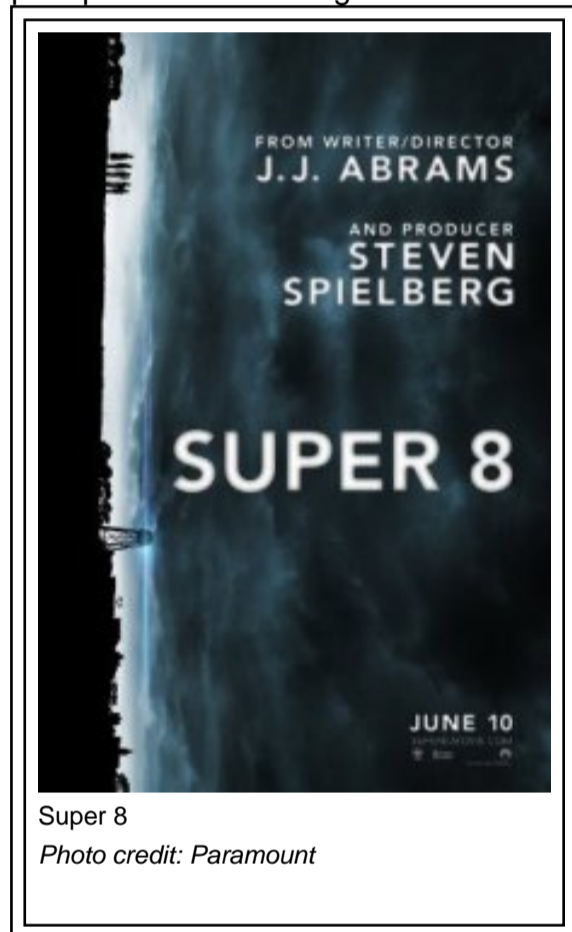
Release Date: May 27

Starring: Brad Pitt, Sean Penn, and Jessica Chastain

Written & Directed by: Terrence Malick

Why It Should Rule: It's been years since we first thought that "Tree of Life" would be hitting theaters, so it almost feels like jinxing our chances of actually seeing the damn thing by putting it on this list, but we'll take the risk. The preview makes it look like it was worth the wait. While multiplexes are booming with the sounds of loud sequels, millions of film historians will be drooling over the latest effort by the man who gave us "Days of Heaven" and "Badlands"...

Why It Might Suck: ...but who also gave us "The New World." Not a horrible movie by any stretch, but not one that lives up to the standards of Malick's previous classics and the fact is that, if it were ANY other filmmaker, people would be pointing to the copious delays in post-production as a sign of someone tinkering too much with their final product to try and fix it. What took so long?



1. "Super 8"

Release Date: June 10

Starring: Elle Fanning, Kyle Chandler, Ron Eldard, Noah Emmerich, Joel Courtney, Amanda Michalka, Gabriel Basso, Katie Lowes, and Zach Mills

Written & Directed by: J.J. Abrams

Why It Should Rule: We know we've said this in this feature before, but have YOU SEEN THAT PREVIEW??!! It's amazing. If the film lives up to it, it's not only going to be one of the best of the summer but also one of the best of the year. Let's get this straight — one of our current best entertainers, the man who gave us "Lost" and "Star Trek," is making an ode to one of the all-time bests at summer entertainment, Steven Spielberg? There's almost no way this could be bad....

Why It Might Suck: ...almost. The only concern is that Abrams' love for a filmmaker who can sometimes be too sentimental could bring out the same thing in "Super 8." If the final act of "Super 8" is a bit too cheesy and melodramatic, as Spielberg can sometimes be, it could sink the final product. But there's almost no way that's going to happen, right? Right?!?!



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