

■ Movie preview

Spring season promises devastating cornucopia of box-office productions

'The Ring 2' and 'Miss Congeniality 2' are among many sure-to-be cinematic failures

BY RYAN NYBURG
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After the doldrums of the post-Oscar rush winter season, the upcoming spring movie season promises to be a breath of fresh air for cinemaphiles. Let's take a quick look at the upcoming film mother load that will be offered to us during the next few months. Of course, once people realize this is mere subtle sarcasm, they will probably be filled with an unbearable sense of futility and sadness.

Spring break will see the release of the long awaited sequel to "The Ring," the cleverly titled "The Ring 2." Directed by Hideo Nakata, the director of the original Japanese "Ringu" series, the film promises to offer Japanese horror fanatics another watered-down American version of the movies they love. Three cheers for Hollywood and for a director who is literally repeating himself.

March 25 brings us the latest opus from Sandra Bullock, "Miss Congeniality 2: Armed and Fabulous," a film in which the very concept is so banal it may very well slip into nonexistence before the projectors even start rolling. Also opening is "Guess Who," starring that veritable acting juggernaut Ashton Kutcher in a reworking of "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner." Modern race relations will never again see a more sensitive and

thoughtful on-screen portrayal.

One of the most talked about films of the year, "Sin City," offers a hard-hitting script and a dazzling visual style that achieve the impossible by making it look as if Bruce Willis is actually acting. April 8 brings promise to all of those who have begged to see Steve Zahn as a lovable sidekick in a cheesy action film, as he stars alongside Matthew McConaughey in "Sahara," a film that in no way was created to capitalize on the success of "The Da Vinci Code."

Another horror classic gets the Michael Bay-and-whatever-former-music-video-director-he-hired treatment with the release of "The Amityville Horror" on April 15. Should play great in the automaton market. April 22 has Nicole Kidman as the title character in "The Interpreter," in which Sean Penn plays a detective looking for the mysterious origins of Kidman's accent.

Fan boys across the world will rejoice on April 29 with the release of "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy." The streets will be filled with revelers chanting their credo of "Dear God, Please Don't Let It Suck." On the diminishing returns front is "XXX: State of the Union," which stars a bunch of people who apparently had nothing better to do. Can Ice Cube fill Vin Diesel's shoes? The world waits for the answer.

May 6 brings us Orlando Bloom's first attempt at a real acting career with the release of "Kingdom of Heaven." Director Ridley Scott can be expected to bring all the emotional depth and moving character development that made his "Gladiator" such a rousing success among the tasteless and vacant-eyed. For those wishing to see Paris Hilton dipped in a vat of boiling wax, "House of Wax" may have the goods you have been looking for, but may not be worth the risk.

May 13 opens with the oh-so-cleverly titled "Monster-in-Law," which stars Jennifer Lopez, who as an actress must suffer under the stigma of being the bane of all that is good and wholesome in modern society. It also inexplicably stars Jane Fonda, as well as an some actor or other as the male lead, though that might as well be filled by a potted fern for all anyone cares.

Simpering little geeks around the world will explode in another joyous fangasm on May 20 with the release of the latest crappy "Star Wars" movie, "Episode III: Return of the Sith." It stars Ewan McGregor as a man with no legitimate career left and Hayden Christensen as a block of wood.

Finally, May 27 gives us Adam Sandler ruining a halfway decent film from the 1970s as the screeching man-child clobbers his way through "The Longest Yard."

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Vacations: Cruises are an enticing alternative to the stress and strain of airline traveling

Continued from page 11A

steep for a week-long trip, STA Travel provides other services with the cost.

"We offer special airfare, primarily for students under the age of 26 and also for teachers," Werstuk said. "We book the entire package for them, which includes the flight, the accommodations and the transportation."

Planning ahead won't always guarantee a smooth ride either.

"Last year, we had a group of high school cheerleaders due to leave for California right around spring break, and there was a mechanical problem (with the plane)," Kouba said. "What was sad was that because it was spring break, there was no scheduled service that they could

get because all of the seats were filled for the next couple of days. They ended up having to actually bus it down there."

Flights to other states and countries aren't the only way to get away; cruise ships, such as Carnival, are just as popular. Prices start around \$500 for a five-day cruise to the Western Caribbean, plus costs to get to the closest available port, most likely Vancouver, British Columbia.

Activities abound on a Carnival cruise: a Las Vegas-style show, complete with music, dancing, lights and costumes; bars, nightclubs and live entertainment; casinos with roulette, poker, blackjack and slot machines for passengers 18 years and older; spas for relaxation; and "Shore Excursions,"

which include white-water rafting in Acapulco, swimming with dolphins in the Bahamas and helicopter and ATV expeditions in Kauai, Hawaii, among others.

No matter what is decided for spring break 2005, it's never too early to start planning spring break 2006, and getting advice from a travel agent is always helpful.

"The majority of students book spring break plans within the last one to two months, but some of the best deals come out around six months in advance," Werstuk said.

"You have to be very much ready for crowds for higher prices because of such demand, and you better plan early," Kouba said.

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Nat: Baby steps will prevent post-graduation anxiety

Continued from page 11A

companies, and at the same time search for an apartment for less than \$1,500 a month that isn't in Hell's Kitchen.

A cross-country move seemed exciting but ... overwhelming. For a brief time last summer, I had a new city on my mind: San Francisco. Hey, it's not New York, but it's big enough. I could drive there and Sunset magazine is close by! It would do.

During this school year, I juggled thoughts of New York, San Francisco and a new addition, Los Angeles, in my head. As graduation time drew closer, I began to wish I hadn't sworn in stone that whichever plan was in my mind at the time HAD to happen because having an all-or-nothing attitude would likely lead to disappointment. Especially when the "all" part keeps changing.

After spring break, the one thing I do know I'll be doing is spending every spare minute I have on my resumé, cover letters, clips, craigslist.org, mediabistro.com and

the telephone. I could end up anywhere, and somehow, that feels more comforting than a specific plan. Of course, I do have a No. 1 desired destination, Southern California, and a No. 1 non-desired destination, Oregon. But because I'm not set on one spot now, I know I won't be judging my happiness on whether I can see a tall skyscraper, a palm tree, the ocean or a fir tree from my window. (Except maybe I'd be upset if I could see rolling plains, because the Midwest is pretty much out.)

So for all of you who were fans of my Ask Nat column two years ago (did you ever take any of the advice? I sure didn't), here is my last suggestion: Dream big, work hard to achieve those dreams, but have an open mind. Graduation is scary if you don't have anything lined up yet, but focus on taking baby steps. And don't lose those college feelings of carefree joy while on your journey, wherever it may take you.

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Food: Bada Bings a welcome substitute to campus eateries

Continued from page 11A

Guacamole and Bacon burger, an "In Your Face Chili Burger" or the "How You Doin'" burger, which comes with pepper jack cheese topped with hot peppers.

And what Italian restaurant would be complete without a wide variety of classic Italian dishes? There's Frank's Spaghetti, Jane's Cheese Ravioli, Stella's Cheese Tortellini, Steven's Linguine and Clams and eggplant parmesan, all available for around \$12. Most come with garlic bread and a salad as well, so even the hungriest customer is sure to leave pleasantly full.

Bada Bings also has classic entrees such as BBQ pork ribs, a 6-oz. rib-eye steak, country fried steak and grilled chicken breasts. All entrees come with a vegetable, cheese bread, and a baked potato, garlic mashed potatoes or fries. The cost ranges anywhere from \$8.95 to \$12.95.

And for those watching their waists, Bada Bings offers wraps such as the Sesame Chicken wrap for less than \$8 and low-carb dishes for around \$10. But the food and cheap prices aren't the only thing that will bring customers back. There are eight televisions throughout the restaurant, including one on the heated smoking deck. There's a large projector screen — vital for Duck games — and lots of games such as darts, arcades, pinball and Cruis'n Exotica. In the bar, there

are also plenty of video-poker machines and Keno for those who like to gamble away their drinking money.

Luckily for those gamblers, drinks are cheap at the bar, which opens at 11 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Bud, Bud Light, Coors, Fat Tire and Hefeweizen are all on tap, and a pint costs about \$4. Daily Happy Hour lasts from 3 p.m. until 7 p.m., during which Bud and Bud Light are \$1.75. Specialty drinks vary during the week for Happy Hour, such as Tequila Night on Tuesdays and Long Island Ice Teas for \$4.75 on Fridays.

There is also a selection of wines, from Merlot and Cabernet to Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Bada Bings also offers mixed drinks such as the Beer Infused Vodka Martini, the Vanilla-Razz Cocktail and the Anti-Freeze, which contains citrus vodka, peach schnapps, melon liquor, lemonade and 7UP for \$5.50 and under.

Although there weren't a lot of students on the night I went, when an important game is going on, Bada Bings is sure to be packed full of fans. But Bada Bings is also a great place to take a date, meet with friends or get away from the wild campus bars. The friendly staff and family-oriented atmosphere will keep customers coming back, and the cheap prices and delicious food surely don't hurt.

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