

We'll pop your culture: good TV gets the shaft

JOHN CAMPBELL & MIKE GORGONE

Columnists



Due to our comments in the previous issue, we are legally obligated to state that our views and opinions are not those of the Amplifier or its staff (not including those brave souls who choose to stand with us above the seeping pit of scum that is mainstream Hollywood). This is written of our own free will and not because of the class-action suit filed against us by the producers of "House Party 4," or the pressure from the Disney goons threatening our families (please send help). No, this is being written out of what goodness is left in our mostly dark hearts.

In this installment, we'd like to shy away from the

silver screen and lean towards its red-headed stepchild, television; more specifically that wedge of television that actually entertains and is then cancelled by the buffoonish actions of the idiotic network presidents. We're talking about television that's too good to be on television.

While many brilliant TV writers have gone through this experience, this is the story of one such man; more of a god than a man really. His name is Joss Whedon and he had a vision: a hybrid of science fiction and western. He called this vision "Firefly."

"Firefly" premiered on the FOX network on Sept. 20, 2002. Unfortunately this so called premiere was marred by the fact the network refused to air Whedon's original pilot. Instead of the two-hour long pilot, which perfectly exemplified his series, they demanded a substitute pilot which was a more actioned-up adventure that would appeal to the NASCAR watching, beer-guzzling American stereotype that is FOX's viewership.

This, compacted with shifting time slots and episodes being aired out of order, resulted in a negligible amount of people who saw the episodes in their original network run.

And of course, those money grubbers at the FOX network assumed after only 10 aired episodes that the show would be a flop and thus cancelled it out of hand. One thing networks must learn is that fans, who call themselves Browncoats, will never give up on a series they love.

Write-in campaigns and DVD sales led to a feature film entitled, "Serenity" (available on Universal DVD, wherever movies are sold). But one movie is not enough and fans are now demanding a trilogy! Thanks to an internet podcast called, "The Signal" (available for download from iTunes), a documentary, "Done The Impossible" (available for purchase on Amazon.com), a graphic novel, "Those Left Behind" (available in bookstores nationwide), and numerous other items that you can purchase, you too can help

to support the Browncoats and our quest to bring "Firefly" back.

Other great shows like "Arrested Development," "The Tick," "Greg The Bunny," "John Doe," "Millennium," "Undeclared," "Dark Angel," "Andy Richter Controls the Universe," "Oliver Beene," "The Pitts," "Futurama," "Profit" and of course "The Adventures of Brisco County Jr" starring B-movie god Bruce Campbell have also been assassinated by FOX.

Despite the long, long, long, long list of programs that FOX has left to die in the wastelands of DVD shelves, other networks have committed similar atrocities. Networks such as ABC have taken good shows and beaten them to death with bad time slots and poor advertising. Shows such as "Sports Night" and "The Night Stalker" were killed before their time. One was a comedy that was too good to be funny, and the other was a throwback to a cult series from the 1970s that no one really got back then.

These shows had intelligent writing and excellent production value, but if there is one thing we have learned about the average television viewer, it's that they hate intelligence. Shows like "John Doe" or "Sports Night" which require viewers to actually reason and think, just don't fly with most networks these days. That's because the American people don't want to have to understand what's going on; as long as there are things blowing up, bad guys being shot, flatulence related humor and the occasional shot at our country's political system, we are content.

This is not to say that we absolutely hate these networks. Without the hardworking men and women of FOX and NBC, we would never have discovered great shows like "Scrubs," "24" and "Boston Legal." On the other side of this subtle coin, we can more clearly see the contrast of bonehead mistakes that left shows like "Family Guy" forced to make a comeback.

Too many movies for anyone's wallet hit theaters this summer

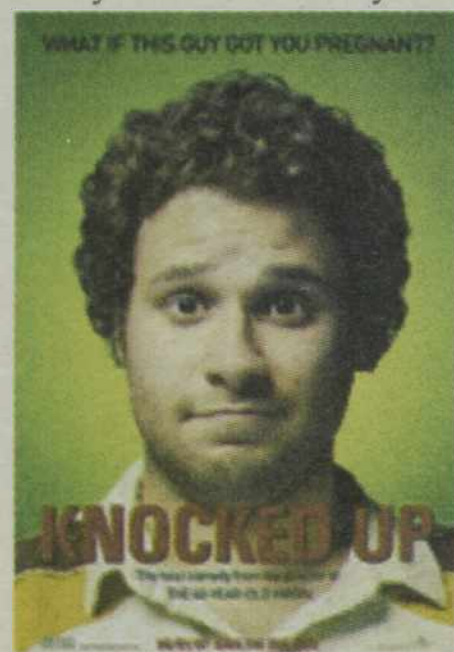
JOHN CAMPBELL

Staff Reporter

Summer's here and it's time for Hollywood to unload its truck load of major blockbusters, but with so many movies coming to theaters this summer it might be hard to choose which one to see. Here is a list of 15 of the most anticipated movies, from boy wizards to giant robots (that are more than meets the eye), and even biblical heroes. This summer has something for everyone.

JUNE

1. **"Knocked Up"** From the brilliant writers behind 2005's "The 40 Year Old Virgin," comes a new comedy about parenthood. Starring Seth Rogen ("Freaky & Geeks") and Katherine Heigl ("Grey's Anatomy") the story revolves around a slacker who becomes a father after a drunken night on the town. Also look for a cameo from "Firefly" star Alan Tudyk.



2. **"Ocean's 13"** The final installment of the trilogy reteams George Clooney, Brad Pitt and Matt Damon along with the rest of the crew of thieves. This time around, the gang comes back together to rob a sinister casino owner played by Al Pacino. With its

all-star cast and clever writing, "Ocean's 13" looks to be a hit.

3. **"Fantastic Four: Rise of The Silver Surfer"** The first family of superheroes returns to save the world from total destruction in the sequel to the 2005 smash hit. Taking on fan favorites Silver Surfer and Galactus, the Four certainly has their work cut out for them.

4. **"Evan Almighty"** Starring Steve Carell ("The Office") this spin-off of the Jim Carrey comedy "Bruce Almighty" sees God (Morgan Freeman) warning Carell of a massive flood and ordering him to build an ark to save the world. With the help of his family and his animal friends, Evan might just be humanity's last chance.

5. **"Live Free or Die Hard"** The fourth film of the "Die Hard" franchises focuses on hard boiled detective John McClane's (Bruce Willis) battle with a terrorist planning on destroying America with a computer virus. However the case becomes more personal when the villain kidnaps his daughter.

JULY

1. **"Transformers"** Based on the classic 1980's cartoon series, this big budget epic about a war between two groups of alien robots has been in development for years. With superstar director Michael Bay at the helm, it promises to be another box office smash.

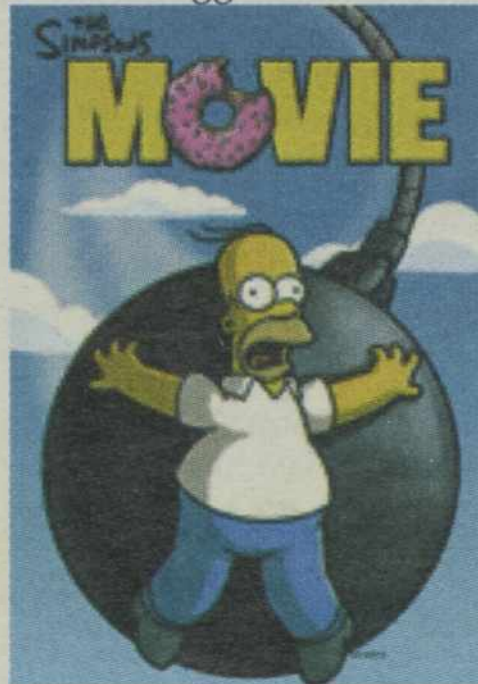
2. **"Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix"** This movie probably doesn't need a whole lot of explanation; the fifth film in the hugely popular franchise looks to be the most epic as well.

3. **"1408"** This horror-thriller is based on scare-master Stephen King's short story.

The film stars John Cusack ("High Fidelity") as a man who debunks paranormal events. He hears of a haunted room in a popular hotel and plans on staying the night in it. The manager of the hotel (Samuel L. Jackson) warns him of its dangers, but nothing can prepare him for the horror that awaits him in room 1408.

4. **"I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry"** is a new comedy starring Adam Sandler ("Click") and Kevin James ("The King of Queens") as New York firefighters who must pretend to be a married couple in order to take advantage of the department's pension plan. However, matters are complicated when Sandler falls in love with a beautiful social worker (Jessica Biel).

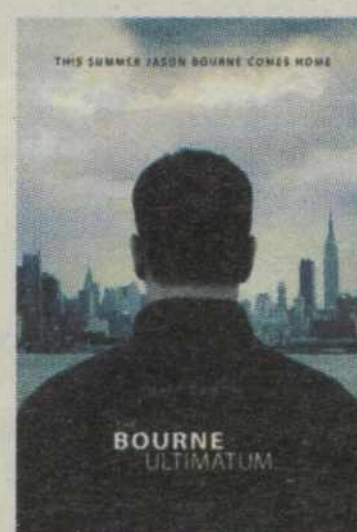
5. **"The Simpsons Movie"** The film 18 years in the making is finally hitting the big screen. Based on the longest running sitcom in television history, this time around the yellow skinned family is attempting to save the world after Homer makes his biggest mistake ever.



AUGUST

1. **"The Bourne Ultimatum"** The third entry in the series sees Matt Damon reprise his role as former CIA agent Jason Bourne. Once again, a secret

government agency is out to silence Bourne forever. But, of course, no one is ready for just how good Bourne is.



2. **"Rush Hour 3"** The mismatched pair of detectives are back and this time they're fighting drug dealers in Paris. With Jackie Chan's high flying kung-fu and Chris Tucker's meta-Eddie Murphyness makes this a sure fire hit.

3. **"Stardust"** Based on the best selling novel by British author Neil Gaiman, this is a fantasy epic in the classic sense, complete with evil witches, pirates, and swashbuckling heroes. This could be the sleeper hit of the summer.

4. **"Good Luck Chuck"** Every summer needs its lighthearted romantic comedy, and this one stars Dane Cook ("Employee of the Month") as a man who is a gateway to true love. Every girl he dates always meets and marries the man of her dreams afterwards. Everything is going fine until he meets the perfect girl (Jessica Alba).

5. **"The Ten"** This indie comedy that was a huge hit at Sundance is collection of ten short films each one based on a different biblical commandment. Written and directed by comedian David Wain ("Stella") the movie features a cast of character actors including Paul Rudd ("Anchorman") Liev Schreiber ("The Manchurian Candidate") and Thomas Lennon ("Reno 911")

With the many diverse films coming out this summer, it promises to be a big one. Of course there are many more movies than these 15, but if you're looking to have some fun these are the ones to see.

Shorts VIII showcases technical talents of students

Shorts VIII

continued from page 17

"It's not for the faint of heart," Ares said.

For Shorts VIII, the crew includes: Set Designer Alix Gerber, senior; Lighting Designer Cole Fiala, senior; Sound Designer Dustin Audirsch, junior; Costume Designer Gabrielle Foushee, junior; and Props Master Georgina Cohen, junior.

Ares also trains the Stage

Management team Production Stage Manager Mimi d'Autremont, sophomore; Assistant Stage Managers Natasha Guzie, sophomore, Jessica Smith, sophomore, Cohen and Natalie Douglas, senior.

"Mimi is 'in charge' of running the show, but each play is assigned their own Assistant Stage Manager, who runs the rehearsals," Ares said.