

WHAT I DID ON MY CHRISTMAS VACATION: OPENED PRESENTS

By Mike Ward

Severe boredom has set in during my final week of freedom from school and thus I put my digits to the plastic boxes of my keyboard to punch out a review of some of my Christmas presents I received this year. This article will be totally unprofessional and in all likelihood, uninteresting to you the reader, but it's keeping me busy right now. Here are the best of the presents I received this year:

DVDs:

- *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace* and *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones*. I'm a bona fide Star Wars geek so I'm very biased here but it's hard to find something to complain about in these DVDs (minus Jar Jar Binks naturally). Both films receive double-disk treatment and are loaded with extra features. The *Episode I* disk is somewhat of a special edition of the theatrical release of the film with added footage as well as completed special effects (including an extended version of the pod race). The commentaries and bonus features have inspired a new appreciation for *The Phantom Menace* in me, and helped me to somewhat understand the more excruciating scenes of *Episode II*.
- *Minority Report*. The film alone gives this DVD high marks in my book, but the double-disk edition released by 20th Century Fox makes it all the more worthwhile. Steven Spielberg movies are always great (when I say "always great" I mean when he's directing films that aren't A.I.) and his collaboration with Tom Cruise is no exception. Special features include documentaries on the stunts, visual effects, storyboards, and interviews with Spielberg and Cruise.

Books:

- *Mind over Matters* by Michael J. Nelson. This book is a collection of essays written by the hilarious humorist, Mystery Science Theater 3000 Alumni, actor, director, and musician Michael J. Nelson. This is Nelson's second book coming after his collection of movie reviews: *Movie Megacheese*. Essay topics include "Portal to Hell: The RadioShack Experience", "Television and How It's Shaped Us. . . Into Balls of Dough," "Tennis Tips," "Animals: Worth Saving?," and about 50 others. This book is laugh out loud funny and superior to the film-snobbery found in *A Year at the Movies*, written by another MST3K alumnus, Kevin Murphy (the voice of Tom Servo). *Mind over Matters* is definitely worth it if you yearn for reading material that isn't so serious and isn't a novel.
- *Letters to a Young Conservative* by Dinesh D'Souza. This may just be my favorite book I received this Christmas. Written by the former senior domestic policy analyst in the Reagan White House from 1987-88, this book just over 200 pages is a collection of correspondence between the author and a college student named Chris. The book deals with Chris's questions about his still evolving political beliefs. While obviously targeting young people of conservative persuasion, I'd recommend this book to anyone regardless of age or political leanings. If you're a Conservative, it will reinforce your beliefs and answer questions you may have had about them. If you're a moderate, it will paint a

portrait of the Conservative mind. If you're unfortunate enough to be a liberal, this book will give you a better understanding of the enemy and why Conservatives believe what they do.

- *Transfer of Power* by Vince Flynn. For fans of the political thriller, it doesn't get any better than this book. Vince Flynn has authored a series of Jack Ryan-esque books, including *Term Limits*, *Transfer of Power*, *The Third Option*, and *Separation of Power*. The premise of ToP is that terrorists have taken over the White House with the President as hostage. Every book in this series is excellent, but this installment is definitely the best. The very definition of a page-turning political thriller.

Music:

OK, I admit I didn't get any CD's this Christmas. However, here are my favorite songs and/or albums of 2002:

Albums:

- Original Soundtrack Recording of Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones – John Williams
- Original Soundtrack Recording of Black Hawk Down – Hans Zimmer
- Boogie Woogie Christmas – The Brian Setzer Orchestra

Songs:

- “Bodies” – Drowning Pool (Don't think any less of me)
- “My Friends Over You” – New Found Glory
- “Superfly” – The O.C. Supertones
- “Valerie” – Reel Big Fish
- “Lose Yourself” – Eminem
- “Get Free” – The Vines