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Orlando hopes for a little off-season Magic

By Alex Barrett
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The Orlando Magic had a lot to be thankful for last season, when they took on the Lakers in the finals. Knocking off Boston in a terrific game 7 trashing in the Garden, taking down favorites Cleveland in the Eastern Conference Finals, but eventually losing to Los Angeles.

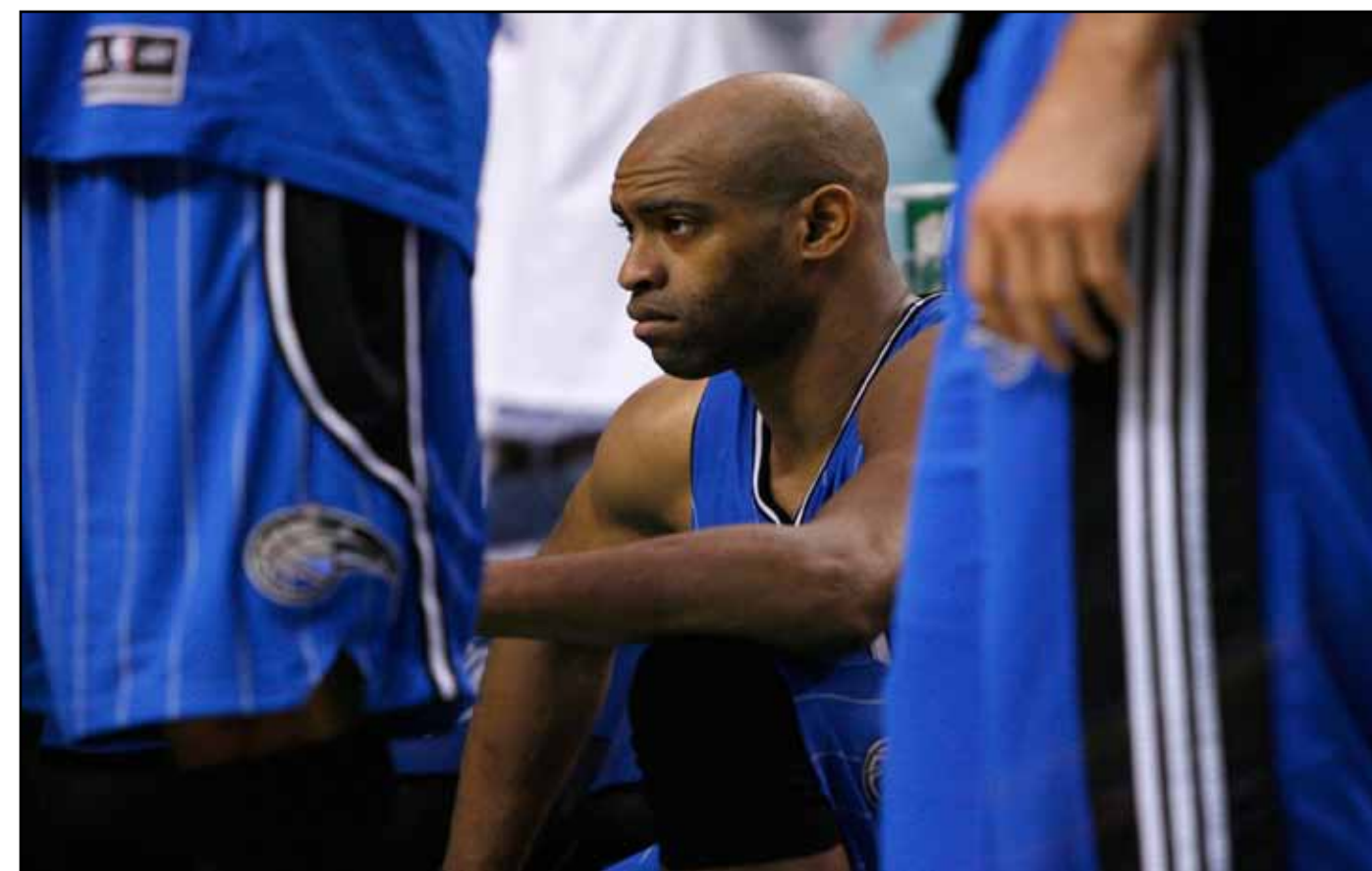
General Manager Otis Smith was not content. He had paid Rashard Lewis tons of money and secured a nucleus of talent involving Dwight Howard and Jameer Nelson to be young team to beat. Against L.A., those young mistakes piled up against a veteran team.

This season, pulling the league's second best record into the playoffs with

a re-vamped roster, hopes were high. Orlando has, by far, the deepest bench in the league. A more athletic Vince Carter replaced an aging Hedo Turkoglu, (who had a dismal year in Toronto,) and Jason Williams, Brandon Bass, and Matt Barnes were brought in to bolster the Magic core of players. Unwilling to let the 'Polish Hammer' Marcin Gortat leave in free agency, Smith also matched Dallas' offer to the backup center to retain him at a significant cost. The Magic was going to be tough to beat. Their bench was inordinately deep. At the end of the season, they were riding nearly a 20 game winning streak, going into the playoffs hot.

Then it all fell apart.

After posting ridiculous, lopsided wins, resulting



Gary W. Green, Orlando Sentinel / MCT Campus

Vince Carter watches the final minutes of Orlando's season from the bench in game 6.

in sweeps against its first two opponents, Atlanta and Charlotte, Orlando looked as dominant as last year's Cleveland in the playoffs,

and when Boston upset the Cavs in their conference matchup, it seemed like an easy road back to the finals, most likely against the Lak-

ers once more.

It was here the Magic went cold. Losing the first three

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OUR VOICE

Product placement in movies is getting a bit ridiculous

Hollywood has always been known for showing off new fashion. Representing new ways to do things, showing how we as people interact and view the world around us.

Once movies stopped representing an ideal, and moved more towards connecting with the audience in various ways, it was somewhat of a taboo to use a product on screen. Companies may or may not have wanted their product portrayed because the masses may have thought that their product sympathized with the movie itself, which could lead to adverse reactions.

In a time where censorship of t-shirts, cans of soda and shoe logos on television is at an all-time high, as soon as you look at the silver screen it appears that companies have turned completely around on top of themselves.

Coke wants a can of Sprite (logo facing the camera, of course,) in the hero's hand before the fight. McDonald's wants to be the drive through the couple goes through on the way to someone's house. As we have seen in the 'Transformers' movies, General Motors wanted their cars to be represented in the movies as the Autobots so badly, that they invited Michael Bay to a secret underground lair in which to choose what cars he wanted to turn into robots for the films. Facing two-year span that saw GM drop almost \$3

billion dollars in debt, they provided thousands of cars to the set of the movies so that they could be tossed around and blown up, but they would be done so with the Chevrolet logo on them.

Does product placement work when it is drawn to this degree? Do people go out to buy a GMC Sierra because they liked 'Transformers?' It can't be that people want to buy a new Camaro because they hope it will eventually change into a synthesized humanoid robot capable of destroying cities. Do you, the viewer, want to run out and grab a Pepsi after seeing it for a half a second on a table in the background of a dimly-lit kitchen of a romantic comedy? Are you more likely to eat Pizza Hut over Dominos because they deliver to the family in a movie you're watching?

Some movies, like 'Transformers,' while they are still good movies, seem to pull one too many close-ups of logos, and it is beginning to get pretty ridiculous. I, like many people, get urges to go eat, buy and watch things at different times, and sure, sometimes it takes me seeing a double cheeseburger to want to go eat one, but when movies are starting to become less about the show and more about the previews before it, I start to think less about the presentation and more about how annoyed I am that the actors are being forced to



C / O Paramount Pictures, MCT Campus

General Motors had to supply Michael Bay, the destruction-happy director of 'The Transformers' movie series hundreds of each of the cars featured, with a stipulation that all "hero-cars," or Autobots included in the movie would be GM vehicles.

hold or eat things a certain way and how much it is detracting from the movie. If I wanted to pay for commercials, I would just have stayed home and fast forwarded through shows on the DVR to see all the wonderful products that vie for my money every day

in a normal way, without them invading another aspect of my time. A little placement is okay, and adds to realism. When I turn on a racing game and every third building I pass is an Arby's, the realism is thrown out and the aggravation returns.

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POLL

Do you feel Hollywood reflects life and entertains, or is just starting to become a big commercial?



Movies should be fantasy, but they end up just trying to sell us stuff.

— Paul Wheeler



They pretty much just sell things, every movie has promos for products now.

— Jeremy Semanisin



Totally just sell stuff.

— Ashley Moss



Movies just market to little kids now really.

— Vanessa Bazile



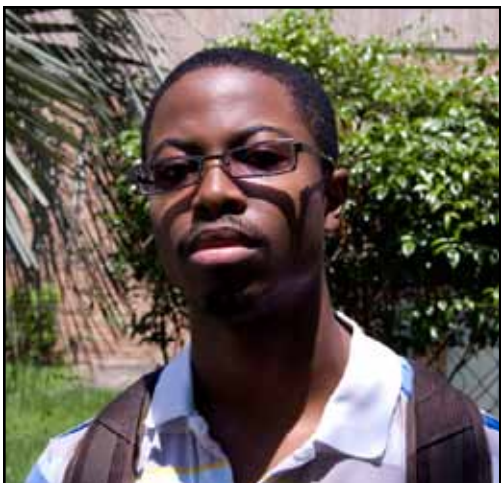
Hollywood is doing a good job at selling, using stars as role models so kids try to copy them.

— Natalie Morales



It's all about the money now.

— Adam Adamski



Movies still entertain, they just help sell products as well on screen.

— Donell Horace



Depends on what company or filmmaker. There are still many great, artistic films coming out.

— Steven Caito



Yes and yes. culture draws from the populous, and they poll from ads. Ads pull from the populous and culture.

— Dr. Paul Licata



We have become the type of culture where it does still represent us to sell stuff.

—Coach Lank

Super Mario Galaxy 2 is an experience that is out of this world

By Jonathan Terbeche
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The name, Mario, is known far and wide, by those who've played his video games and by those who haven't. Being the quintessential mascot for video games, Mario has been around for decades. With his returning adventure on the Nintendo Wii, it's clear that Mario has still got it.

The Super Mario franchise started on the original Nintendo system, carried over to the Super Nintendo, and has been used by Nintendo on every system they have ever created ever

since. With the advent of the Nintendo 64 came the introduction of Mario in 3-D, along with the tradition of having one Super Mario game per console.

For the first time, on the Nintendo Wii, Mario gets a true sequel, and boy does it deliver! The only question on fans minds is, "Why haven't we seen one sooner?"

The first Super Mario Galaxy was absolutely fantastic and incredibly innovative, praised as one of the best video games on the Wii. In fact, it was so imaginative that so many ideas were created for the game that weren't even used.

Those remaining ideas that weren't used in the first one were used to create Super Mario Galaxy 2. Following all of the successful conventions and established gameplay introduced in the first, but adding difficulty, originality, and depth puts this game far and above its already highly-scored predecessor.

Instead of navigating levels from an over world like in the first, the more familiar world map that was present in New Super Mario Bros. Wii is now used to get to levels. This is one of many steps in making the game more accessible to all audiences.

Some other changes it introduces are the optional cosmic guide (a mode which shows players how to complete levels if failed enough times), the tip network (optional videos that provide hints), and an enhanced co-op mode (where players play as an orange star that can grab collectibles and stun enemies, though it still isn't really enjoyable). These enhancements all go a long way to streamlining the robust experience.

Other than new features, the new worlds like the Flip-Flop Galaxy, power-ups like the cloud flower, and gameplay like Yoshi's tongue



C/O MCT Campus

Like so many aspects of the successful Wii, things are different this time around for Mario.

add an incredible amount of fun and novelty to the game.

In one level you'll be platforming, jumping on or around enemies, trying to reach the star, then in the next level you could be fighting a planet-sized boss, having to shoot missiles at weak points, and still in the next level you could be solving some challenging puzzles.

The word diversity really doesn't do this game justice. Just know you'll always

be doing something new and exciting.

Perfection is difficult to achieve in video games, as in every medium. Since quality is subjective, no two people could score it the same. Although, when an experience with such pedigree is created, there is little room for disagreement.

Critics say it is a all around great game, people who have played it believe it is a great game. It is a great game!



C/O MCT Campus

The new planets offer much different challenges for the player to overtake.

‘Sex and The City 2’ falls on it’s flats

Sequel is out of place, out of mind, and leaves audiences out of consciousness

By Jolene Krause

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The glitz, glamour, fashion, friendship, the city, the girls and their gays is what we absolutely love about “Sex and the City” and it is exactly why we have fallen in love with the roller coaster story by Michael Patrick King. But you can only stretch a story so far and so thin because at some point we realize, “Eh, this is a little far fetched, even for the fabulous world of Carrie Bradshaw, I mean, Carrie Preston.”

A quick synopsis of SATC 2 - The girls: Miranda, Charlotte, Sa-



C / O Warner Brothers / MCT Campus

Sarah Jessica Parker, left, as Carrie Bradshaw and Chris Noth as Mr. Big

mantha and Carrie have all fallen into their own little blunders of womanhood and the fabulous lifestyles they live has slowly dissipated as reality of getting older has hit them. Miranda and Charlotte are both dealing with motherhood and the trials that are brought forth in everyday situations. Samantha, as free-spirited as always, can't imagine going through menopause and she attempts to trick her body into thinking it's 20-something again. And of course there is our girl Carrie who's now married to “Mr. Big” and has begun to worry about becoming an old married couple that doesn't go out on the town and she begins to worry that she has traded her glamorous spot lighted life for Chinese delivery, house slippers and television. So what does King do to get our girls out of their mundane state?

Sends them across the world into what I deem a disconnected plot that lacks rhyme and reason but makes up for it in fashion and friendship. Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, is where the girls end up. Yes, of all places to take our roller coaster story, we're taking them down to Abu Dhabi, which was a move that landed way off the tracks. You don't take four of the most fashionable divas from New York and put them in the Middle East. Why take our girls to a place that doesn't have a similar taste in fashion? Which, of course, results in them looking arrogant. You can't take the SATC style and swagger and throw it into the Middle East, which leads to a smack in the face. While the outfits and designs are wickedly awesome and do tie in to Middle Eastern culture, it is still a little overboard. As for the disconnected plot, not only do you take our girls to Abu Dhabi but you have Carrie run into Aiden, in of all places, “Abu-freaking-Dhabi.”

To continue with the downward spiral of the plot of each individual girl, Charlotte worries about her bra-less Irish nanny at home with Harry and the kids; Miranda quit her job, so for once, she is



Francois Duhamel, Paramount Pictures / MCT

Robert Downey Jr. returns as Tony Stark in ‘Iron Man 2’

peachy keen and careless. And of course Samantha, always getting into trouble and that is what saves the movie. If not for the antics of Samantha and her popular sexual wit and one-liners like, “Forget Lawrence of Arabia, he's Lawrence of my labia,” this movie would be a dive right into the shallow end, head concussion and all.

Although the movie is very overdone and I pray to any and all gods that they don't attempt a third next summer, there were quite a few fabulous tidbits that made the movie sparkle a little bit. Liza Minnelli's performance of “Single Ladies” in the beginning is the best scene of the entire movie. Sadly, they gave us all the good stuff up front and left us nothing with the plot for the rest of the story. I almost wish they would have thought more about the plot and where the story was going rather than just the glitz, glamour and fashion.

Big ticket free agents will decide off-season moves

Continued from page 1

games of their series against Boston, they had to try and be the only team in NBA history to win a series down 0-3. They fought back valiantly, but it wasn't enough; so if last season saw a complete rebuild of the team after losing in the finals, what are Magic fans in store for this season now that the team has technically regressed?

Again, Smith is not the one to be complacent; he will make a move or two somewhere. The reason this gets tricky is somewhat in part to the massive amount of huge free agents on the market, including LeBron James, Chris Bosh, Dwayne Wade, and Amar'e

Stoudamire.

Then there's Josh Smith, Joe Johnson, Dirk Nowitzki, and a slew of other big name tickets that are sure to mix up the off-season. Due to the almost \$40 million still due to Lewis, the Magic are in a tough spot, and their big defensive player, Barnes, has the option to test free agency if he chooses to. Likely, the team will retain him, but with all the talent flying around out there, don't be surprised if Smith makes a huge, franchise altering move that ships one or two of their token players somewhere in a sign and trade for one of the big stars, allowing the team to offer a full-money deal while still dumping enough salary to stay around the cap.

One scenario could ship Lewis, Anderson and Redick to the Heat for Wade, which should entice other minor free agents to come to the new stadium to try and bring Orlando a championship. Some of the big name free agents have already let the media know that they will meet together in a 'baller summit' to discuss their off-season plans.

Even with all the money the Knicks and Nets have, (as of press time, New Jersey, Miami, and New York only have 2 players apiece on their teams under contract,) their chances of being able to pay any more than two of these superstars is slim, and whomever nails King James will likely have to use pennies left over to build a team around him, as the Cavaliers did unless one player decides to sign for less money to try and be on a competitor.

These names are going to command a lot of salary, and likely put many teams over the cap limit this season, forcing them to pay a luxury tax in hopes of winning the championship. For teams like the Nets and Knicks, they have given up the last three seasons, bringing in crappy players and dealing money just to prepare for this off-season, where they will pull out all the stops to go from 10-win teams to championship contenders.

With all of the names flying around, it should be a fun bit of chaos to watch and see how Smith and Stan Van Gundy ready the team for 2010.



Gary W. Green, Orlando Sentinel / MCT Campus

Coach Stan Van Gundy has plenty to complain about, and a long season of grooming players after his Magic failed to return to the NBA Finals.



Gary W. Green, Orlando Sentinel / MCT Campus

Jameer Nelson removes his jersey after the final buzzer sounds in Boston.