



TRADES

Wednesday, March 3, 2010

Joseph Gordon-Levitt joins cancer film

Joseph Gordon-Levitt is taking over the role that James McAvoy was to have played in the untitled cancer comedy that Jonathan Levine is directing for Summit Entertainment and Mandate Pictures. Summit said McAvoy left the project, which begins filming Monday in Vancouver, "due to unrelated circumstances beyond his control." Neither the film company nor the actor's reps offered any further explanation. Gordon-Levitt will appear opposite Seth Rogen in the autobiographical tale, written by Will Reiser, of a man dealing with cancer. The film also stars Anna Kendrick, Bryce Dallas Howard, Anjelica Huston and Philip Baker Hall.

Lorne Michaels says Conan O'Brien will prevail

"Saturday Night Live" creator and executive producer Lorne Michaels predicted Tuesday night that Conan O'Brien would prevail after his recent departure from "The Tonight Show" and NBC. He also said he is not in a hurry to retire, because he is very engaged in the show and enjoys it. "There will be a time for that," Michaels quipped. "It will be very difficult for me to stop." He also said he feels it is important to keep an old-school variety show on the air as networks nowadays wouldn't launch a new one. "This will be the last of it," he said. Michaels, who used to executive produce "Late Night With Conan O'Brien," said he originally picked the comedian because he was "very smart," "just brilliant" and had an "amazing character." After early struggles, he prevailed, he added. "And I'm sure he will again," Michaels added. He made his comments at "Live From New York," a discussion led by the New Yorker's Ken Auletta with Michaels and "SNL" head writer Seth Meyers.

Trio joins Matt LeBlanc series 'Episodes'

Claire Forlani, Kathleen Rose Perkins and Stephen Mangan have been tapped to co-star opposite Matt LeBlanc on Showtime/BBC's comedy series "Episodes." The project, which has a seven-episode order, revolves around a successful British husband-and-wife comedy team (Forlani, Mangan) thrilled by the prospect of producing an U.S. version of their hit series. But they soon are forced to replace the erudite British lead in the original with the quintessential U.S. comedy star, Matt LeBlanc, who is playing a version of himself. They begin to sink deeper into the quicksand that is the Hollywood TV business, ruled by a legion of network and studio executives, including the smart head of programming (Perkins). "Episodes," from "Friends" co-creator David Crane and Jeffrey Klarik, is slated to start production in early May for a premiere on Showtime and BBC 2. The series is enjoying strong early buzz after a well-received promo featuring LeBlanc auditioning to play himself on the show.

'Locker' producer banned from Oscars show

In the highest-profile effort this Oscar season by the Academy to police overzealous awards campaigning, "The Hurt Locker" producer Nicolas Chartier has been banned from the Awards ceremony. If his movie wins best picture on Sunday night, Chartier will not be at the Kodak Theatre to accept the award with three other producers. However, he would receive an actual statuette at some

point. The Academy said Tuesday that Chartier was penalized by the executive committee of the Producers Branch during a special session a day earlier because of what they deemed "an ethical lapse." Chartier disseminated an e-mail to certain Academy voters and other film industry figures in which he solicited votes for his own picture and disparaged one of the other contending films. Academy rules prohibit "casting a negative or derogatory light on a competing film." In the e-mail, Chartier encouraged those who liked "Hurt Locker" to vote for it as best picture over "the \$500 million film," an obvious reference to "Avatar."

Jason Isaacs to star in Fox drama pilot

It took two years of courtship and eight offers this season alone, but U.S. broadcast networks finally got British actor Jason Isaacs to do a pilot. He has signed as the lead in the Fox drama pilot "Pleading Guilty," lifting the contingency on the project from Peter Chernin's company and 20th TV. A legal thriller based on Scott Turow's book "Pleading Guilty," about embezzlement, bookmaking, offshore banking and the politics of a high-powered law firm, "Guilty" centers on Mack (Isaacs), a cop-turned-attorney described as "a big handsome Irish lunk" who is assigned to investigate the disappearance of the firm's star litigator.

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