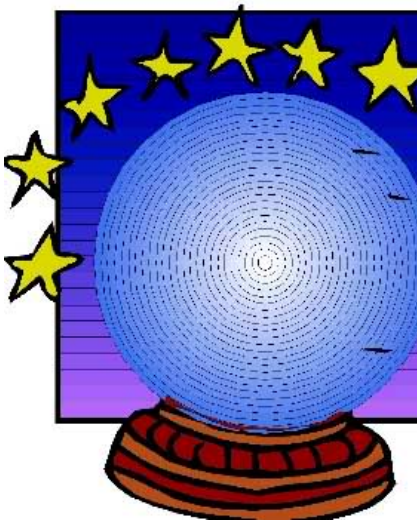
Forget all about the fact that reading "The Crystal Ball" is said to reverse the effects of balding and add points to your IQ. You should read it each Friday night cause it's a damn good column. Each week Mitch previews the new releases at the theater, as well as on DVD. He gives us the lowdown on all the latest Hollywood news and rumors. And the "Calendar Watch" section previews all the biggest things set to come down the road in 2007. Enjoy.



The movie season right now is sort of like being a football fan in Northern Ohio. You have the stench of films being released that are the equivalent of the Browns' recently ended nightmare season, but like the anticipation of Monday night's BCS Championship Bowl, you have the upcoming nation wide releases of awards contending films that have previously been available for viewing only in NY or LA.

Huge changes this week to the Calendar Watch section, as more information has become available regarding a lot of the new releases for 2007 (including a great teaser trailer for the new Fantastic Four movie) Lots of interesting movies on the horizon this year.

News & Rumors:

~ Looks like they've finally come up with an Indiana Jones 4 script that meets the approval of producer George Lucas, director Steven Spielberg, and star Harrison Ford. Shooting will start this year with an expectation of the film being released in May of 2008…which may coincide with Ford's 90 th birthday.

~ As one of the perhaps 100 people that liked Jim Carrey as Andy Kaufman in the strange biopic “Man on the Moon”, this looks interesting: Tim Burton directing Carrey in “Ripley’s Believe It or Not!”, with Carrey portraying Robert Ripley as he traveled around the globe to obtain the strangest and oddest artifacts. No indication of whether or not Burton will have Ripley in Pittsburgh uncovering a local with a full set of teeth and a college degree drinking something other than Iron City…I guess that depends on whether or not it’s a fantasy.

~ Hopefully there is a scriptwriter with an IQ in triple digits to make this interesting concept worth watching. Ewan McGregor, Hugh Jackman, Natasha Henstridge, and Michelle Williams will star in “The Tourist”, a sexually charged thriller featuring McGregor as an accountant introduced to a mysterious sex club by his lawyer friend (Jackman). McGregor later becomes the prime suspect in a woman’s disappearance. Then again…there were people disappearing in “The Prestige” and mysterious sex clubs in “Eyes Wide Shut”; possibly two of the worst movies of the past ten years. Which will come first? Jackman making a non-sucking movie or Scott Pollard scoring a point for the Cavs?

~ Just announced upcoming movie: “Aqua Teen Hunger Force Colon Movie for Theaters”. I’ve walked into a room once where my teenager was watching this Adult Swim cartoon…and I immediately feared that someone slipped some LSD into my bottle of Guinness.

~ In my twisted way, I felt the best way to remember the legend of James Brown was to re-watch “The Commitments”. Fictional? Of course; but a good depiction on how many people he did inspire and how widespread his appeal actually was. “ *Do you not get it, lads? The Irish are the blacks of Europe. And Dubliners are the blacks of Ireland. And the Northside Dubliners are the blacks of Dublin. So say it once, say it loud: I'm black and I'm proud.”* –
Jimmy Rabbitte.

This week’s new releases:

Title: **Children of Men**

Starring: Clive Owen, Julianna Moore, Michael Caine

Plot: In the near future, women have lost the ability to bear children, dooming mankind and sending the world into near anarchy. Miraculously, a young woman does become pregnant, prompting Owen and Moore to take steps to secure her future.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Extremely high critical praise from those that have seen it in it's initial release to the big cities. Director Alfonso Cuaron did a great job in turning the kiddie friendly "Harry Potter" series into something much darker when he directed the third movie of the series, "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban", and by all reports, this is another dark, stylish film with a lot of social ramifications. I'll let you know next week as this is my target movie for this weekend.

Title: **Happily N'Ever After**

Starring: Voices of Sara Michelle Geller, Sigourney Weaver, and Patrick Warburton

Plot: Princess leads a rebellion against the evil stepmother who has taken control of Fairy

Tale Land

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Boring cross between last year's delightfully twisted "Hoodwinked" and "Shrek". The little kids will probably enjoy it

Title: **Freedom Writers**

Starring: Hilary Swank, Imelda Staunton, Patrick Dempsey

Plot: A new teacher in an inner city school in California inspires her students through creative writing.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Seems to be a fairly generic equivalent to the yearly movie about a dedicated white teacher being the only person that can reach minority inner city kids and help them reach their potential. The fact that it has a two time Oscar winner as the lead, but is being released on January 5 th instead of a week earlier, which would make it award-eligible, tells the story that even the producers think this movie sucks.

Title: **Code Name: The Cleaner**

Starring: Cedric the Entertainer, Lucy Liu, Nicolette Sheridan

Plot: A janitor with amnesia thinks he's a top secret agent.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This appears too stupid for words. But look for it to unseat another stupid movie at the top of the box office charts, the embarrassingly dumb "Night at the Museum". At least Lucy Liu still looks to be pretty hot. Nicolette Sheridan? Michael Bolton and T.O. can have her…yech.

Title: **Thr3e**

Starring: Some people with resumes as deep as Paris Hilton's intellect.

Plot: Lunatic kills people we don't care about and terrorizes other people that the director would like for us to care about, but we don't.

The BeerBuzz: This dreck won't even make it into the Top 10 at the box office, so why bother? Hell, it's so bad that I can't even find a trailer online for it.

New DVD Releases on Tuesday, January 9th (and a recap of the few released on January 2nd)

There is a chance I may not even be functional on January 9th, depending on my mood and state of recovery after Ohio State kicks Florida's collective ass up and down the field the night before.

The Covenant (Jan 2nd) – While "Heroes" showed that superheroes can succeed on TV, "X-Men3" and this dull cross between X-Men and X-Files with a bit of "Carrie" added in flopped miserably.

Snakes on a Plane (Jan 2nd) – They're on a plane, badly animated, and pissed off. And that's just the actors (line borrowed from my review). There are also a hell of a lot of wacky CGI snakes and more gross violence than I have sat through since "From Dusk Til Dawn". Rent for Camp Value only.

The Illusionist – One of the movies that I missed at the box office that will jump to the top of my Netflix queue. Far less known than its "magician in Victorian London" counterpart "The Prestige", it is by all accounts a far superior movie, as Edward Norton trumps Hugh Jackman.

Crank – This will go in my "Guilty Pleasure" list and also be high on the Netflix queue. Jason Stratham in pretty much a "Transporter on crystal meth" movie with Stratham's character

needing to keep his poisoned body flowing with adrenaline to stay alive long enough for him to solve the mystery…which of course leads to 90 minutes of non-stop impossible stunts.

Idiocracy – Mike Judge last directed a movie with 1999's cult favorite "Office Space", a movie that bombed at the box office, but found fame once it hit DVD. He may have another one here, a biting satire in which normal schlep Luke Wilson is frozen for 500 years, and wakes up to a world so dumbed down that he is easily the most intelligent man on the planet.

Broken Bridges – Hey! Toby Keith made a movie! And it sucked its way to only $250,000 at the box office…or roughly what "Pirates of the Caribbean" took in per afternoon. Or to put it another way…it took in one fifth as much as the Dixie Chicks documentary, "Shut Up and Sing". By the way…Tim McGraw's movie "Flicka" made over $20 million…AND he gets to sleep with Faith Hill. Tim wins.

Calendar Watch:

Next week: *Miss Potter* , *Arthur and the Invisibles* , *Letters From Iwo Jima* , *Alpha Dog* , *Primeval* , *Stomp the Yard.*

Upcoming Biggies (click on the hyperlink to view the available trailers).

Notes on a Scandal – Oscar hopeful with Cate Blanchett and Judi Dench as a teacher

involved in an affair with a young student, and the colleague who betrayed her. Limited release in December, no dates yet given for nation-wide release.

The Good German – January 19th – Nation wide release of the latest Steven Soderbergh/George Clooney collaboration. The buzz coming about this one is not good.

Smokin’ Aces – January 29th – Interesting concept…Jeremy Piven as a motor-mouthed Vegas stand up comedian who decides to rat on the mob, setting up competing hitmen vying for the bounty.

Hannibal Rising – February 9th - Tale of how the young Hannibal Lecture became the cretin we all know and love. As you know, February release dates normally indicate a bomb, and the fact that I still can't find a trailer for it might indicate a delayed release or the Worst. Movie. Ever.

Ghost Rider – February 16th - Nicholas Cage turns into a motorcycle riding superhero with a flaming skeleton head. Bad, bad vibes about this one.

The Number 23 – February 23rd – Mystery/ Supernatural Thriller with Jim Carrey and Virginia Madsen. I'm hoping this is the exception to the "February Stinker" rule.

Zodiac – March 2nd - Jake Gyllenhaal and Robert Downey, Jr star in the tale of the Bay Area serial killer.

Wild Hogs – March 2nd - John Travolta, Tim Allen, Martin Lawrence and William H. Macy as

four middle aged buddies take off for the open road on motorcycles, only to end up crossing paths with a Hell's Angels gang. Might be the Movie to Beat when it comes to next year's "Razzies" for "Worst Picture".

300 – March 9th - Frank Miller adaptation of the Frank Miller graphic novel about 300 Spartans defending Greece from the entire frickin' Persian Empire. Filmed in the same style as "Sin City".

Reign Over Me - March 9th – First major fictional piece dealing with the effects of 9/11 on the families, starring Adam Sandler in an impressive looking dramatic role (if you can believe it) and Don Cheadle.

Shooter – March 16th - Political thriller with Mark Wahlberg as a sniper trying to stop an assassination.

Sunshine – March 16th – A team of eight scientists are sent off in a spaceship to try to re-ignite part of the dying sun.

Lucky You – March 16th – Long delayed film centered around the World Series of Poker with Eric Bana and Drew Barrymore.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles – March 23rd – They're baaaaccckkkk. Supposedly a little more adult oriented than the campy films from the 80s.

Rescue Dawn – March 30th – Christian Bale as a pilot shot down in Laos in the early years of

the Vietnam War, and his efforts to escape captivity.

Grind House – April 6th - Two one-hour short horror stories, one from Robert Rodriguez, the other from Quentin Tarantino. (April). I may hate slasher films, but this one looks too good to miss.

The Kingdom – April 20th – Jamie Foxx, Chris Cooper, and Jennifer Garner in a story about an American team sent into the Middle East to investigate a terrorist attack on Americans in Riyadh.

Spider-Man 3 – May 4th - The webslinger versus Venom, Sandman, and Harry Osborne picking up his father's GoblinGear.

Shrek the Third – May 13th – Shrek & Donkey…together again. This time with the jolly green Scottish ogre trying to push off the king's crown onto a young Arthur.

1408 – May 13th – John Cusack as a famed debunker of paranormal activities encountering real terror in this adaptation of a Steven King tale.

Pirates of the Caribbean: At the World's End – May 25th - Captain Jack goes for the hat trick.

Ocean's Thirteen – June 8th – Ellen Barkin replaces Julia Roberts and Catherine Zeta-Jones in this edition. Talk about a "Brian Giles for Ricardo Rincon" level trade. Will someone please stick a fork in this franchise?

Fantastic Four: The Rise of the Silver Surfer – June 15th – This time the quartet go up against the Silver Surfer and the return of Dr. Doom. Please be better than the first one! (the trailer does look awesome).

Evan Almighty – June 22nd – Steve Carell's Evan Baxter from "Bruce Almighty" is now a Congressman chosen by God (Morgan Freeman) to receive His powers. A reported budget of over $200 million on this will either make it this year's "DaVinci Code" (big budget, big box office) or this year's "Poseidon".

Live Free or Die Hard – June 29th - John McClane strikes again (probably with his walker).

Transformers – July 6th – Michael Bay (hack, spit) tries to spin a former children's cartoon into an "Independence Day" type Armageddon movie. As much as I hate to admit it…the teaser trailer looks good.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix – July 13th – These movies keep getting darker and better as they go. Voldemort (aka "relative of Art Modell") is back and targeting Harry and his friends for some nasty payback.

The Simpsons Movie – July 27th - ummmm…beeeerrrrrr

The Bourne Ultimatum – August 3rd - Superspy Jason Bourne (Matt Damon) is back and looking for his roots.

The Invasion – August 17th – Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig in a sci-fi flick about an alien epidemic.

3:12 to Yuma – October 12th – Russell Crowe and Christian Bale in a remake of a classic Western with Bale as a farmer volunteering to escort a criminal (Crowe) to Yuma by train, with a battle of wits ensuing.

American Gangster – November 8th – Denzel Washington as a heroin kingpin from the Vietnam War era (he smuggled it back in the body bags of dead soldiers) and Russell Crowe as the investigator on his trail.

Beowulf – November 16th - Robert Zemeckis gets all medieval on us with a motion capture (like “Polar Express”) adaptation of the epic poem.