Next weekend is The Oscars, and we have a big week of prep for you here on Da Blurbs. The mega-talented Mitch will review ALL FIVE movies up for Best Picture of the Year .. and we will run them all over the course of the next week. In this weeks Crystal Ball, Mitch previews the new movies at the theaters (Ghost Rider, Breach) and on DVD (The Prestige, Babel).

I apologize.

I realize that every esteemed entertainment reporter, writer, and gossip columnist on the planet has been working feverously to give the public all the Anna Nicole Smith news they can possibly handle, burning the midnight oil so that we can forget for a week or three all the rest of the minutia that is so unimportant; like wars, the economy, and crappy weather.

I apologize because I have failed you all in that regard ... giving you nothing but a line or two of sarcasm in last week's Crystal Ball and this week's "24" recap.

I hate giving free publicity to other sites, but if you feel neglected due to my shortcomings as a writer, please feel free to hyperlink on over to cnn.com or foxnews.com , where you can get your fill of this enGROSSing story.

And don't come back.

News & Rumors:

~ Here's one for both boxing fans and Mark Wahlberg fans. The former MarkyMark will team up with "The Departed" co-star Matt Damon in "The Fighter", a movie about former Boston boxing legend "Irish" Micky Ward. Wahlberg will play Micky, with Damon portraying his manager brother. No release dates have been mentioned, but this immediately goes near the top of my "to be watched in 2008" list

~ From that high, we go to a potential low. Dustin Hoffman and Antonio Banderas will appear in "Lovers, Liars, and Thieves", a story in which two crooks convince an Italian cabinet maker to steal the Mona Lisa. I like both actors, but they've not really done great work lately, so I'm not exactly putting this one on the same list as "The Fighter".

~ There is a live action adaptation of "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" on the drawing board, starring Nicholas Cage. Yep...that would be a remake of the classic cartoon bit from Disney's "Fantasia". I'm not sure any thesaurus could have enough descriptive words to properly tell how bad this will be.

~ Later on in this article, you will see me trashing Barry Levinson for the awful "Man of the Year". This one may be some redemption. Robert De Niro, Bruce Willis, Sean Penn, Stanley Tucci, and John Turturro in "What Just Happened"; a story about a worn down movie producer (De Niro) who is trying to hold on to his dignity and soul due to the backbiting and backstabbing that is Hollywood. Let's hope for the best on this one, but with that cast, I have high hopes.

~ You have got to be kidding me. A television series base upon the movie "Mr. and Mrs. Smith"? Starring (and I use that term loosely) Martin Henderson (who?) and Jordana Brewster. Now I grant you that Miss Brewster is extremely hot...and the only real reason to have watched "The Fast & the Furious", but she's not exactly making Helen Mirren shake in her acting boots.

This week's new releases:

Better week this week than we've had this entire year. But that's not saying much.

Title: **Ghost Rider**

Starring: Nicolas Cage, Eva Mendes, Sam Elliot

Plot: A motorcycle racer has a curse on him that changes him into a flaming skulled superhero when he's around evil.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: A comic book adaptation being dumped on us in the middle of the winter. Just like "Daredevil" and "Elektra". This movie is going to suck so bad...that it might actually end up being a cult favorite for years to come. I'll let you know as I'll be reviewing it (although the review might not be posted until after all the Oscar coverage next week).

Title: **Breach**

Starring: Ryan Phillippe, Chris Cooper, Laura Linney, Dennis Haysbert

Plot: A new FBI agent must spy on his own boss, a man suspected of selling secrets to the Soviets.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This one looks to be very good. Great cast (Laura Linney and Chris Cooper never have a bad performance, it seems), and a smart, tense story bodes very well for this one. A rare week when I'll try to get to two films during the week.

Title: **Bridge to Terabithia**

Starring: Josh Hutcherson, Anna Sophia Robb, Zooey Deschanel

Plot: Two friends invent an imaginary world to cope with their real life problems. But then they discover a magical kingdom where they are made King and Queen.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Since I do not have kids between the ages of 6 and 12, it's highly unlikely that I'll be seeing this film. For those of you who do, however, this is said to be the best family film that's come down the pipe in a very long time...a very special movie in the "Chronicles of Narnia" vein.

Title: **Factory Girl**

Starring: Sienna Miller, Guy Pearce, Hayden Christensen

Plot: Story of Edie Sedgwick, a rich, beautiful Radcliffe student who dropped out and became Holly Golightly, Andy Warhol's muse.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This is expanding out to 340 theaters nationwide, so if you really want to see it in the Cleveland area, you can catch it at either Cedar Lee in Cleveland Heights or at the Cinemark at Valley View. Bob Dylan was evidently pretty pissed at the makers of the film when he was thinking they were going to blame him for her suicide, but that's all been swept under the rug now. Not sure I buy Guy Pearce as Warhol, but there could be worse things than watching the gorgeous Miss Miller. And it also bumps her up in my book when I heard that she absolutely bitchslaped the city of Pittspuke (where it was filmed), trashing it as the boring in-bred infested sewer that it is. My new hero.

New DVD Releases on Tuesday, February 20th

Let me not mince words (as if I ever do)...there is not a single DVD being released this week that is worth wasting a cent on (two of them are on my Bottom Five list for 2006). So let me break from tradition and use this opportunity to recommend one that you may have missed, but absolutely need to see; **"Green Street Hooligans".**

This story of a London football "firm" (gang) is superb. Surprisingly great script, directing, and acting, including a incredible job by Chief Hobbit Elijah Woods as a framed and expelled Harvard journalism student who moves in with his sister in London, and is soon drawn into this strange world of men who live not just for their teams, but for the senseless violence that makes them feel alive more than their dreary lives possibly could. If you liked "Fight Club" and "A Clockwork Orange", you'll definitely love this one (although unlike those two films, this is not a

fantasy in any way).

The Prestige – OK, I will admit that the trashing I did of this film garnered more emails of disagreement than any I've done. So I'll try to pander to both sides. I thought this movie sucked. Big time. Twists that were either totally predictable or out of left field illogical, mediocre acting, and an uninteresting plot line. However, I've noticed that people who absolutely believe that "Memento" and "Being John Malkovich" are Top 25 All-time movies thought this was a great movie as well. For the record; I thought "Memento" was flawed but very interesting and that "Being John Malkovich" is THE most overrated garbage I've ever seen. Draw your own conclusions.

Babel – On the other hand, this is another movie I trashed, and I haven't had a single person that saw it argue the point with me. Boring, disjointed, and pointless...which of course means it's right now the favorite for winning the Oscar for Best Picture next week. If you hated "Crash" (and so many people did), you'll really despise this one. I liked "Crash", but still hated this.

Flushed Away – "I'll have 'Another Hugh Jackman crappy movie' for $500, Alex". Huge bomb for Dreamworks and Paramount films, as they've lost over $75 million dollars on this very average animation. Kids may enjoy it, but it really paled in comparison to "Ice Age 2", "Cars", "Over the Hedge", and "Happy Feet".

Man of the Year – If you've seen the commercials, you've seen all the funny stuff. Muddled mess of a movie from Barry Levinson that couldn't decide if it was a satire, a slapstick comedy, a romantic comedy, or a political thriller. Robin Williams continues to be my favorite actor who keeps appearing in rotten movies I never want to see.

For Your Consideration – I enjoy many of Christipher Guest's "mockumentaries". "This is Spinal Tap" is, of course, the greatest one ever made, and I also really liked "Best In Show", "A Mighty Wind", and "Waiting for Guffman". But he missed the boat somewhat on this one, an insider look at a small independent film and its actors who are suddenly thrust into the media glare as their "film" garners early Oscar buzz. The concept is cute...based somewhat off the

totally unexpected Best Picture nomination for “The Full Monty” back in 1997...but it’s not up to Guest’s usual standards.

Shut Up and Sing – If there would be more than two people that visit this site that would watch this documentary, I’d be shocked. But I’m mentioning it on the heels of the Dixie Chicks big weekend at the Grammy Awards.

Calendar Watch:

Next week, *The Astronaut Farmer* , *The Number 23* , *The Abandoned, Reno 911!: Miami*

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

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 their homeland from the entire frickin' Persian Empire. Filmed in the same style as "Sin City". Geeks everywhere can't wait.

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 being set up by the government to take the fall for 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. Saw a preview of it recently...and it could be a really awesome movie; at least visually.

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 baaaaccccckkkk. 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.

Perfect Stranger – April 13th – Hopefully Halle Berry is off the schneid with this thriller about a reporter investigating the death of a friend that through the internet got involved with a powerful married man (Bruce Willis)

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. Al Pacino in a role sure to induce his characteristic overacting won't help either. 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.