Only one new film hits the box office this week, as evidently everyone was scared to go heads up against "Shrek The Third". Mitch previews the third film in the series starring the green ogre, and also hits on the DVD releases for the week ... headlined by Letters From Iwo Jima. In the news and rumors section, Mitch also reports on DeNiro and Pacino teaming up to do another film together. It's Friday. It's The Crystal Ball.

Welcome to Blockbuster season, where films come out and do incredible business for the first week, and then fall as flat as the Cavaliers did in Game 5.

Exhibit One will be "Spider-Man 3", which will end up in second place this week, but will probably only do one-fourth the business seen by "Shrek the Third". And then next week, the Jolly Green Ogre will get swamped by Captain Jack Sparrow...who may just hold the top spot for three weeks (if the movie is good), until he gets strangled by a Silver Surfer.

And where are the dramatic movies, romantic comedies, and character driven features during all of this? Hiding until September.

News & Rumors:

~ Robert De Niro and Al Pacino together again? Yep...the two will pair up for "Righteous Kill" a big budget indie thriller (isn't that a contradiction of terms). No real details are available regarding the plot, but it is said that the two are doing it because in the only other films they've appeared in together, they've either had no shared scenes ("Godfather II") or only a couple ("Heat"). So look for this one to have them onscreen together for a good part of the movie.

~ This could be really interesting...or a "Poseidon" level bomb. Steven Spielberg and Peter Jackson will be working together in the creation of at least three movies based upon George Remi's comic book "The Adventures of Tintin" (published under Remi's pen name of Herge). They will utilize motion capture techniques that were used in the making of Gollum in the LOTR trilogy to create the world of the Belgian reporter and traveler. Spielberg will also direct the first film, with Jackson taking the second.

~ From the "Are you Kidding Me?" department, we have Tim Allen set to star in a martial arts DRAMA. He will appear in "Redbelt", written by the Pulitzer Prize winning dramatist David Mamet, who tends to have some rather unique scripts ("The Spanish Prisoner") mixed in with his highbrow films ("Glengarry Glen Ross"). In this film, Chiwetel Ejiofor ("Children of Men") will co-star as a Jiu-jitsu master who feels his mojo is being compromised when he is introduced into the movie business and also participates in UFC matches. Allen plays a troubled action star who mieets the master when he is getting beaten in a street fight. OooKaayyy.

~ Nicolas Cage is in negotiations to star as Al Capone in director Brian DePalma's prequel "The Untouchables: Capone Rising". Let's just hope that this isn't a "Hannibal Rising" level trash-fest...but I'm not optimistic.

~ I have a lot more faith in this one, sure to please anyone like me who loved the British Gangster movie "Snatch". The director of that superb film, Guy Ritchie, is set to take the chair for "RocknRolla", a gangster action comedy about a Russian mobster who plans a crooked land deal which attracts almost all of London's criminal underworld.

~ Samuel L Jackson is in negotiation to appear in another Frank Miller adaptation of a comic book. This time it is "The Spirit"...and Samuel would play the Octopus, the nemesis of the mysterious hero. Like Paris Hilton, reality shows, and Ben Stiller movies...this really has to stop.

This week's new release:

I can't remember this happening before during the eighteen months I've been writing this column. Only ONE new movie is being released nationwide. Then again, considering how poorly the "other" movie performed that was released the same weekend as "Spider-Man 3" ("Lucky You"...which wasn't), who can really blame them?

Shrek the Third

Starring: the voices of Michael Myers, Cameron Diaz, Eddie Murphy, Antonio Banderas, and Justin Timberlake

Plot: After Fiona's father (the Frog King...funny, I didn't know he was French) croaks, Shrek must assume the crown. He doesn't want it, so he goes about trying to convince a teenaged Arthur to take it instead. While he's gone, Prince Charming is attacking the castle, and Fiona and four spoiled princesses (Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, Cinderella, and Repunzel), must learn to fight for themselves.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Looks like a great one for the kids, and for anyone that was a huge fan of the first two. My only concern is that they are starting to run out of ideas, and are just coasting their way through this one. The early reviews aren't great, but then again, the reviews for blockbusters are always poor, as (most) critics refuse to look at the entertainment value of a movie when reviewing it. I'll give you the real scoop in a couple of days.

New DVD Releases on Tuesday, May 22nd

Letters From Iwo Jima - One of the best movies of 2006. Clint Eastwood does an incredible job in depicting the invasion of the island from the viewpoint of the Japanese defenders without editorializing or depicting either side as "good" or "bad". This is a powerful film that focuses on the men of a different culture as they prepare for a mission they know they will eventually lose. Filmed in Japanese with English subtitles, this should not be missed by any movie fan.

The Good German - Speaking of "Important Movies from Awards Season"...this wasn't one of them. In fact, it may have been the biggest disappointment of all of 2006. Steven Soderbergh directs George Clooney, Cate Blanchett, and Tobey Maguire in a post WWII Berlin Film Noir...should be great, right? I guess that depends upon your point of view, as most critics found it too "artsy" and experimental for their taste, and the audiences that saw it just went "huh?" So it never was released nationwide. I'll be renting it at some point soon, and will report back.

Epic Movie - You want Stupid? Rent this.

Apocalypto - For those of you that didn't think Mel Gibson was quite gory enough in showing the torture of Jesus in "The Passion of the Christ", here you can watch even more incredible scenes of human cruelty in his story about the last throes of the Mayan Empire. By the way, the Mayan people are not too pleased at Mel for his depiction of their society.

Calendar Watch

Next week - *Pirates of the Caribbean: At the World's End* , *Bug*

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

Knocked Up - June 1st - From the same guys that made "The 40 Year Old Version" comes this tale of a goofy looking slacker that managers to score one night with a hot, hot, hot TV reporter, who gets pregnant, of course.

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.

1408 - July 13th - John Cusack as a famed debunker of paranormal activities encountering real terror in this adaptation of a Steven King tale. Saw the trailer the other day, and it nearly scared the crap out of me.

Hairspray - July 20th - John Travolta in drag. There are some things I really don't need to see.

I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry - July 20th - Kevin James and Adam Sandler as two straight Philadelphia firefighters who pretend to be a gay couple in order to receive domestic partner benefits. Oookaaayy.

The Simpsons Movie - July 27th - ummmm...beeeerrrrrr

The Bourne Ultimatum - August 3rd

- Superspy Jason Bourne (Matt Damon) is back and looking for his roots.

Underdog - August 3rd - Combination of animation and live action. Let's hope it's more "George of the Jungle" than "Scooby-Doo".

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

Shoot 'em Up - September 7th

- Clive Owen and Monica Bellucci protecting a baby from sinister Paul Giamatti. I was so there anyway, and then I found out that in one scene Owen and Bullucci are having sex while in a shoot out. Totally

Awesome!

Eastern Promises - September 14th

- Naomi Watts as a London midwife drawn into the Russian Mob, headed by Viggo Mortensen.

The Kingdom - September 28th

- 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.

3:12 to Yuma - October 5th

- 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.

The Golden Age - October 5th

- Cate Blanchett and Clive Owen in a follow up of the award

winning "Elizabeth".

American Gangster - November 2nd

- 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.

Lions for Lambs - November 9th

- Robert Redford directs himself, Tom Cruise (yeck) and Meryl Streep in this political thriller.

Beowulf - November 16th

- Robert Zemeckis gets all medieval on us with a motion capture (like "Polar Express")

adaptation of the epic poem.

His Dark Materials: The Golden Compass - December 7

th

- Major, major push from the studios for this big budget fantasy...designed to be the first of a franchise. Nicole Kidman and Paul

Bettany star.