Coming off a rather poor weekend of new releases last week, Mitch is here to talk to us about what looks to be a huge improvement with "Live Free or Die Hard" and "Ratatouille". He also has the 411 about new projects from Ridley Scott, Leonardo DiCaprio, Russell Crowe, Guy Ritchie, and Peter Jackson. along with some strange news about Tuesday's DVD releases. It's Friday Night; so it's time for the Crystal Ball.

The Crystal Ball - June 29th Releases

Looks like I picked a good weekend to skip the theaters and get some work done around the house this past week. "Evan Almighty" flopped big time, taking in half of what "Bruce Almighty" scored during its first weekend. And now with all these other blockbusters coming out in the next several weeks, look for investors to be gulping down the Maalox as they realize they won't be getting that much of a return for their $200 million spent on that boondoggle.

News & Rumors:

~ Leonardo DiCaprio and Russell Crowe will team up with legendary director Ridley Scott in "Body of Lies". Crowe will play a high ranking CIA executive teaming up with field operative DiCaprio to track down an Al Qaeda leader. Oh, yeah...and the script will be penned by the man who wrote "The Departed", William Monahan.

Ridley is due for another great film as karmic balance to the horrible "A Good Year".

~ Speaking of Scott and Crowe, what's with these guys always working together? Scott will also direct and produce "Nottingham" (to be released in 2009), another retelling of the Robin Hood legend, this time with Crowe as the Sheriff of Nottingham, involved in a love triangle with Maid Marion and Robin. This would make four straight movies the two work together, following "A Good Year", "American Gangster", and the aforementioned "Body of Lies".

~ Peter Jackson's next major project will be the adaptation of the novel "The Lovely Bones". The plot concerns a young girl who is brutally raped and murdered, and then watches her friends and family from heaven. Sounds like a real barrel of laughs to me. Ryan Gosling and Rachel Weisz have been cast as the girl's parents.

~ Two movies I've always pimped as "hidden gems" were Guy Ritchie crime comedy/dramas "Snatch" and "Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels". Look to add another to the list as Ritchie will begin filming "RocknRolla", about a Russian mobster who attracts London's criminal underground into a crooked land deal.

Great cast, including Gerard Butler ("300"), Ludacris, Thandie Newton, and Tom Wilkinson.

Just as long as he keeps his wife out of it.

~ Brett Ratner, the director of the "Rush Hour" series and "X-Men: The Last Stand" will direct "Playboy", a biography of Hugh Hefner. I guess someone had to do something to keep all those "actresses" playing strippers at the Bada Bing! employed after the end of "The Sopranos".

~ Rumors abound on the increased possibility of a "Sex and the City" movie. This was supposed to happen in the summer of 2003 when the show went off the air, but the actresses couldn't agree to terms.

Things are different now.

As in; "Oh my Gawd!!

My career sucks now that the show is over!!

Show me the money!"

This week's new releases:

We'll have a big ole battle for the top spot this week between two films that are far superior to what we've seen over the past few weeks.

Live Free or Die Hard

Starring: Bruce Willis, Timothy Olyphant, Justin Long

Plot: Techno-terrorists are causing havoc with the infrastructure of the country. John McClane to the rescue

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This was released on Wednesday, and no need for me talking about the Buzz, as I've already seen it, and loved it.
It's the most enjoyable time I've had at the theater this summer.

Check out the review
for more info.

Ratatouille

Starring: the voices of Patton Oswalt, Brad Garrett, and Lou Romano

Plot: A Paris rat with mad cooking skilz conspires with a bumbling busboy to become the talk of the town in an upscale restaurant ruled by a wacko world-famous chef.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Brad Bird was the genius behind one of the best CGI animations ever; "The Incredibles", and is at the helm again for this charming tale. It may not be on that same line as "The Incredibles" as far as adult level entertainment, but it is one of the most favorably reviewed movies of the year, and a sure bet for family entertainment.

Sicko

Starring: Michael Moore

Plot: A look at the health care industry in the United States, seen through the traditionally non-partisan eyes of a completely neutral man who hates attention.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Yes, I totally made that plot line up. Fox News and Rush Limbaugh are all up in arms, while MoveOn.org is praising it as the Greatest Thing Ever. Eh. Bottom line?

It's less invasive and confrontational than "Fahrenheit 9/11", but it's still a case that if you liked other Michael Moore documentaries, you'll like this one.

If you think Moore is the Anti-Christ, stay away.

Simple as that.

Evening

Starring: Claire Danes, Toni Collette, Vanessa Redgrave, Meryl Streep

Plot: A dying woman reflects on the time in her youth when she met the love of her life as her two daughters struggle with their mother's impending death.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This movie is getting killed by the critics as a poor effort to capture the crowds that thought "The Hours" was one of the greatest films ever. Lots of big name actresses, plus the novel concept of having Meryl Streep's daughter play her in flashback scenes. I'm just praying my daughter isn't working too much this weekend, and agrees to go see it with my wife, sparing me two hours of excruciating pain.

New DVD Releases on Tuesday, July 3rd

Here's a switch. With the Forth of July holiday being on a Wednesday, and the new films coming out on Tuesday...there is NOTHING being released this week. Stay tuned next week, when I can tell you how the DVDs being released then will actually be lamer than the ones coming out this week.

Calendar Watch

Next week; *Transformers* , (8 PM July 2nd), *License to Wed* (July 3rd), *You Kill Me*
(expanded)

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

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix - July 11th - 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.

Hairspray - July 20th - John Travolta in drag. There are some things I really don't need to see. I'm predicting right now that this will be the biggest bomb of the summer.

(Edit: "Evan Almighty" might be hard to beat in that "Bomb of the Summer" category)

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. Having seen the previews on the big screen last week, I can now say this may even be worse than "Hairspray"...except that it will still make a ton of money.

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 an adaptation of the sci-fi classic "Invasion of the Body Snatchers"

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.

Check out the trailer, as it is one of the best I have seen.

Eastern Promises - September 14th (limited) - 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.

Hitman - October 12th - Deadwood's Timothy Oliphant follows up his portrayal as the chief villain in "Live Free or Die Hard" in this action/adventure film where he play...what else...a hitman.

Look for it to be in the same vein as "The Transporter", and a hit

(heh...I kill me).

The Golden Age - October 12th - 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.

Bee Movie - November 2nd - Animated flick with Jerry Seinfeld as a bee who files a lawsuit against mankind for eating honey.

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. Crispen Glover as the monster Grendel and Angelina Jolie as Grendel's mother? I'm there.

The Golden Compass - December 7th - Major, major push from the studios for this big budget fantasy...designed to be the first of a franchise.

Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig star (their second collaboration this year),

along with Sam Elliot and Eva Green.

I Am Legend - December 14th - Will Smith in what is basically a remake of the Chuck Heston apocalyptic film "The Omega Man".

Charlie Wilson's War - December 25th - Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts, and Philip Seymour Hoffman in an Oscar contender about the charismatic and eccentric Texas Congressman who orchestrated the funding of the Afghans against the Soviet Union in the early 80s.