It's been a BIG week at the theaters with "Transformers", "Ratatouille", and "Live Free or Die Hard" all raking it in at the box office. Mitch provides us some serious Hollywood scoop and previews all of this weeks new releases at both the theater and on DVD in this week's Crystal Ball. Also ... posting tomorrow: Mitch's full movie review of "Transformers".

In case you've been living in a cave the last several days, there's this movie out right now that is packing every single theater for almost every single showing.

Which makes it pretty interesting now at the box office, as "Ratatouille" and "Live Free or Die Hard" are also doing very well, both critically and attendance-wise. And then on Wednesday we'll throw a certain boy wizard into the mix, and listen to the "cha-chings".

***News & Rumors**:*

~ So what the hell was up with that strange trailer prior to "Transformers", showing a bunch of people at a rooftop party in New York when a giant fireball hits, and people start freaking out? Well, according to Ain't it Cool News , the JJ Abrams ("Lost" creator) film has a temporary (read

"fake") title of "Cloverdale", and that it's described as a "giant monster movie" that is being shot entirely with camcorders. Blair Witch meets Godzilla.

~ We have another serious movie coming out with Jamie Foxx, with the Oscar winner appearing in the film "Blood on the Leaves", an adaptation of the novel by Jeffrey Stetson. Foxx will play a DA dealing with feelings of revenge as he prosecutes a black history professor accused of murdering two white men suspected of hate crimes against blacks during the Civil Rights movement. Anything to make us forget "Miami Vice".

~ Matt Damon and Ben Affleck are planning on writing another screenplay together. The two first burst onto the scene with the surprising, out-of-nowhere "Good Will Hunting", which skyrocketed both of their careers. Damon is now one of the top actors in Hollywood, and Affleck is still basically a Gigli-level punch line (although Affleck was great as George Reeves in "Hollywoodland").

~ Willem Dafoe and Ethan Hawke will be playing vampires in the upcoming film "Daybreakers" In the futuristic film, EVERYONE is a vampire, and they are trying to come up with a blood substitute so they stop all munching on each other. Sort of like a gaggle of lawyers after an major accident.

~ Have you been following all the soap opera level antics going on regarding Tom Cruise's attempt to film a movie in Germany? Neither have I...but any opportunity to make fun of Cruise is OK in my book.

~ As often as I keep reading crap about disgraced "Grey's Anatomy" asshole Isaiah Washington, I'm longing to go back to the days of 24/7 Paris/Britney/Lindsay coverage. I understand that next week, he'll be blaming Larry Dolan, Anderson Varejao, and the Cleveland Clinic Staph Infection Ward for his firing.

~ Happy 61st birthday today to Sylvester Stallone...the only man to which Barry Bonds comments "damn, he takes a lot of steroids!"

This week's new releases:

Both movies have been out since earlier this week, but as I only run this column on Fridays, let's just pretend you need to be taught about them like you were a six year old (end obscure Denzel Washington reference).

Transformers

Starring: Shia LaBeouf, Megan Fox, Josh Duhamel, and

Jon Voight

Plot: Robots In Disguise! Decepticons; Bad! Autobots; Good! Megan Fox; Hot! Script; Dumb!

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Already saw it, and Rich will run the review later this weekend. Bottom line, as so not to steal my own thunder; a fun movie to watch on the big screen...and not once do you have to risk injury by being required to engage your brain.

License to Wed

Starring: Mandy Moore, Robin Williams, John Krasinski

Plot: A reverend puts an engaged couple through a bizarre marriage preparation course if they intend to marry in his church

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This seems strange to say, but Robin Williams needs to stop doing live action comedies; he sucks at them. Give the man a dramatic role and an authoritative director, and he's brilliant ("Good Will Hunting", "Insomnia", "One Hour Photo"). Lock him in a studio alone to do the voices in animation, and you can edit to your heart's content and end up with a "Happy Feet" or "Aladdin". Turn him loose in a live action comedy, you get "RV", "Man of the Year" or this piece of garbage. This is another one of those movies where the buzz can best be summed up by quoting a line I recall reading somewhere; "the only good thing about seeing this movie is knowing that I cannot see a worse one this year." Ouch.

New DVD Releases on Tuesday, July 10th

Last week, we had nothing come out.

This week, we have a couple of family-type pictures, both of which didn't make much of a dent in the box office.

The Astronaut Farmer - Billy Bob Thornton plays a NASA trained astronaut who had to drop out of the program prior to ever flying so that he could take care of his family. Much older now, he builds his own private rocket on his family farm. Schmaltzy, saccharine filled goo, that may nonetheless be somewhat watchable due to the talents of Thornton and Virginia Madsen.

The Last Mimzy - One for the smaller tykes: A young brother and sister find a mysterious box of toys, and soon the children, their parents, and their teachers are drawn into a strange fantasy world. Good special effects, but definitely aimed at the 12 and younger crowd.

Calendar Watch

Next week; *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (July 11th), *Captivity*

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

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 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".

Rush Hour 3 - August 10th - More of the same...this time in Paris.

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.

The Brave One - September 14th

- Jodie Foster going all Charles

Bronson-DeathWish on some thugs.

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.

Fred Claus - November 9th

- Vince Vaughn as Santa's embittered little brother. With Paul Giamatti. Another slightly naughty Christmas

fairy tale that will make a bundle of cash.

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".

National Treasure: Book of Secrets - December 21st

- Follow-up to the hugely popular guilty

pleasure "National Treasure" with Nick Cage back at his wacky best.

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.