Every friday night here at TCF, Mitch previews the weekends new releases at the theaters and on DVD in his "Crystal Ball" column. This week, Mitch also takes a look at the new fall television season, which starts next week. Last seasons TV debuts were generally weak, but Mitch says the coming season may offer a little more promise as there are some interesting new shows creating some buzz. He covers the Browns for us. He reviews movies. Hes our entertainment guru. The only thing this guy doesn't do is french braid hair. He's Mitch.

Starting next week, it's time for the new TV season. Last year, there was a lot of sizzle and not much steak. Only three new shows really captured people's imagination, NBC's terrific superheroes mystery/adventure "Heroes", the post apocalyptic suspense series "Jericho" on CBS, and the best of them all, the completely original, brilliantly envisioned "Dexter" on Showtime.

What's new this fall that's creating some level of buzz?

Bionic Woman - NBC, Wed 9 PM - Remake of the cult classic from the 70s, with Michelle Ryan playing a bartender who just so happens to have a genius scientist boyfriend...which really helps when he stupidly gets her into a car crash. Extreme Cyborg Makeover follows! The new Jamie Sommers also has to deal with a shady criminal network led by her bionic predecessor (Katee Sackhoff, from "Battlestar Galactica"). Should be fun.

Life - NBC Wed 10 PM - A police detective (Damien Lewis) is released from prison after serving 12 years for a crime he did not commit. After getting a large (but undisclosed) settlement for the wrongful imprisonment, he gets his old job back, but spends his spare time looking for the people who set him up. Worth watching simply due to Lewis, who was magnificent as Maj. Winters in HBO's "Band of Brothers". The concept is original as well, as should be the character, who is describes as having a "zen like approach" to police work.

The Sarah Conner Chronicles - Fox. No schedule released yet (look for it after the baseball playoffs). This is the one I'm most geeked up for. It takes place, chronologically, between Terminator 2 and T3, with John Conner about 16 years old. Lena Headey, so damn good and sexy as Queen Gorgo in "300" plays Sarah, still running from robots. In the coolest twist, Summer Glau, who played the enigmatic programmed assassin River in "Firefly" plays the unlikely robot sent back to protect John. Check out the
preview here

Dirty Sexy Money - ABC, Wed 10 PM - Peter Krause, of "Six Feet Under" fame, plays an idealistic young lawyer who is tempted by the patriarch (Donald Sutherland) of New York's most affluent family to take the position of counsel to the family...which is full of wild and crazy lunatics. This one has potential. It will be good seeing Krause portraying a basically good guy in a bad situation. The cast is excellent, including Jill Clayburgh and William Baldwin.

Back To You - Fox, Wed 8 PM - Kelsey Grammer as a hot shot (but not too bright) L.A. newscaster whose on air meltdown has forced him to return to Pittsburgh to do the local newscast with ex-lover Patricia Heaton. I love the idea of Grammer playing someone who isn't a big brain, and Heaton should be his perfect foil. Heaton, as many locals know, got her start in Cleveland broadcasting the news. But the whole "Pittsburgh" thing bugs me. I see too many people with all of their teeth to actually represent that city.

Cane - CBS, Tue 10 PM - Jimmy Smits as the head of a powerful Cuban-American family in South Florida, and their sugar cane empire. Picture "Miami Vice" meets "Dynasty". The cast makes this worth a peek, including Hector Elizondo, Rita Moreno, Ken Howard, and Polly Walker, so damn good and evil as Atia in "Rome", playing a "Lady MacBeth" role.

New Amsterdam - FOX, Dates to be determined - Another fascinating new twist; A homicide detective in New York who is actually an immortal. John Amsterdam was a Dutch explorer in 1642 when he intentionally stepped in front of a spear destined to kill an Indian princess...so she cast a mean-assed spell on him, saving his life and making him immortal. The concept is great, let's hope the delivery is there as well.

Journeyman - NBC, Mon 10 PM - A San Francisco reporter and family man finds that he can travel through time, enabling him to alter lives and right wrongs. I liked Kevin McKidd as Vorenus in "Rome", but this just looks a little too hokey, and too much like "Quantam Leap" for me.

K-Ville - FOX, Mon 9 PM - A cop buddy drama in post Katrina New Orleans. Anthony Anderson and Cole Hauser star as the mismatched cops. A 9 PM Monday slot for what should be a guy show? Opposite NFL football? Sounds like Fox knows this is going to bomb.

Moonlight - CBS Fri 9 PM - Mick St. John (Alex O'Loughlin) is a private eye with a secret; he's a vampire. But he drinks blood out of bags pilfered from a blood bank and not by killing people, as he's really a good guy. I guess after a show with a serial killer as a hero ("Dexter") you could have seen this coming. And I predict it'll

get a stake through the heart after about six episodes.

Big Shots - ABC, Thu 10 PM - Four life long best friends who are all high powered executives juggle their careers and their complex relationships. Stars Dylan McDermott, Christopher Titus, Michael Vartan, and Joshua Malina. Think "Desperate Housewives" for men. Don't think about watching it. It's slot opposite "Without a Trace" and "ER" pretty much condemns it.

Pushing Daisies - ABC, Wed 8 PM - A guy finds out that if he touches a dead person, they come back to life...but if he touches them again, they are dead forever. Oh, yeah...and if the dead person stays alive, someone else has to die to take their place. So our hero brings the love of his live back to life, knowing he can never touch her...and then he goes about solving murder mysteries. This looks beyond stupid.

Chuck - NBC, Mon 9 PM - A geek at a Circuit City like store gets all the nation's secrets mistakenly downloaded into his brain. A sexy government spy teams up with him to keep him safe. Might be the dumbest thing out this year except for...

Cavemen - ABC Tue 8 PM - You've seen this advertised ad naseum. You've seen the dumb Geico commercials. This might be the series I am least interested in seeing.

This week's new movie releases:

Eastern Promises

Starring: Viggo Mortensen, Naomi Watts, Vincent Cassel

Plot: A London midwife trying to right a wrong crosses paths with a mysterious man who is part of the notorious Russian crime families.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Very positive buzz for this movie. It is being described as the film that will take Viggo beyond being known mostly as Aragorn from "Lord of the Rings" and propel him to the upper echelon of actors. All I know is that David Cronenberg is one of the most unique and talented directors in Hollywood, and given how great "A History of Violence" was when Cronenberg and Mortensen teamed up...you add Naomi Watts into the equation, and I am definitely there.

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Good Luck Chuck

Starring: Dane Cook, Jessica Alba, Dan Fogler
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Plot: In order to keep the woman of his dreams from falling for another guy, Chuck must break the curse that has made him wildly popular with single women: Sleep with Chuck once, and the next man you meet will be your true love.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: I find it interesting that in all the trailers on TV for this movie, they just emphasize Jessical Alba being a klutz, acting as if the "Good Luck" part comes from him staying alive...thus totally ignoring what they say is the actual plot, which involves his curse. This type of bait-n-switch tactic doesn't give me a good feeling about the quality of this film.

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Resident Evil: Extinction

Starring: Milla Jovovich, Ali Larter, Oded Fehr

Plot: Survivors of the Raccoon City catastrophe travel across the Nevada desert, hoping to make it to Alaska and safety. They are joined by Alice (Jovovich), to help in their fight against the Umbrella Corporation
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View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: More of the same. Totally mindless slasher/shoot-em-up/kill the evil mutant type films we've seen way too much of. Stick a fork in this series, please.

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Sydney White

Starring: Amanda Bynes

Plot: A modern version of Snow White, with a legacy sorority pledge becoming disillusioned with the schools' hierarchy, so she bands together with seven outcasts to shake things up.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: We haven't had a &quot;Princess Diaries&quot; type movie for girls aged 10 - 15 for about two weeks or so. The movie does seem to be pretty good, given the genre, leaning more towards the tolerable side, such as Bynes' &quot;What A Girl Wants&quot;, rather than the terrible dreck served up in &quot;Bratz&quot;.
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New DVD Releases on Tuesday, September 25th

Knocked Up **-** Terrific combination of smart romantic comedy and R-rated gross humor. Seth Rogen plays the unkept, unemployed stoner who gets impossibly lucky one night with a hot, hot television production assistant who was out celebrating her promotion to on-air reporter. Two months later, she finds that she's pregnant. Surprisingly intelligent and tender movie, given its well deserved R rating. Well worth the rent.

Evening - Major Chick Flick of the month. Claire Danes, Toni Collette, Vanessa Redgrave, Natasha Richardson, Meryl Streep, and Glenn Close are all in this film about the romantic past and emotional present for an older woman and her two daughters, skipping back and forth in time over 50 years. I expect this to be playing at some time in a room where my wife is present...but I am not.

Next - Nicholas Cage as a man who can see two minutes into the future. Naturally, this makes him a highly sought commodity, particularly by the government, in the form of Jullianne Moore. Cage goes over the top again, but it may be worth the risk to put it on your Netflix queue.

Calendar Watch

Next week: *The Kingdom*, *Feast of Love, The Game Plan, In the Valley of Elah*

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

Michael Clayton - October 12th - George Clooney as a top law firm's "fixer" (the type of person played by Jodie Foster in "Inside Man"...IOW, a shady power broker/dirty tricks expert).

The Golden Age - October 12th - Cate Blanchett and Clive Owen in a follow up of the award winning "Elizabeth"...this one looks to be better than the first, with much more action as it focuses on England's defeat of the Spanish Armada, and Elizabeth's flirtation with Sir Walter Raleigh, played by Owen.

We Own the Night - October 12th - Joaquin Phoenix, Mark Wahlberg, and Eva Mendes in a story of a nightclub owner (Phoenix), his police officer brother (Wahlberg), and the conflict with the mobsters who run Phoenix's nightclub.

Rendition - October 19th - Reese Witherspoon, Jake Gyllenhaal, Meryl Streep and Alan Arkin in a political thriller with Gyllenhaal as a CIA agent troubled by witnessing questionable interrogations.

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.

Hitman - November 21st - 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 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, let's hope it's better than "The Invasion"), along with Sam Elliot and Eva Green.

Leatherheads - December 7th - George Clooney in an old fashioned screwball comedy set in 1925. George is an aging football legend who now owns a pro team, and is competing for the affections of Renee Zellweger with his star player.

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.

P.S., I Love You - December 21

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- Hillary Swank, Gerard Butler, and Harry Connick Jr. in an award contender about a widow who discovers love letters written by her recently deceased husband (Butler) that are meant to help her begin the next chapter

of her life.

The Other Boleyn Girl - December 21st

- Natalie Portman as Anne Boleyn, Scarlett Johansson as her sister Mary, and Eric

Bana as King Henry VIII. I expect this to blow the tepid Showtime series "The Tudors" out of the English Channel.

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.

Sweeny Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street - Limited release in December

- Tim Burton's adaptation of the macabre Steven Sondheim musical about a deranged barber bent on revenge (Johnny Depp) and the meat pie baker that assists him (Helena Bonham

Carter), who uses the bodies to make delicious snacks.

Untitled J.J. Abrams Project - January 18th

- You've seen the

buzz generating hand held camera trailer during "Transformers", and wondered what it's all about. We don't know yet, but we're thinking it should be fun.