With the Browns on a bye week and the Indians about to finish off the Red Sox on Saturday night, Mitch says this is a good weekend to take in a flick. As Mitch points out in this week's version of The Crystal Ball, there are some solid, if under the radar, new releases at the theaters this weekend. In addition to previewing all the new theater and DVD releases, Mitch also updates us on the latest Hollywood news ... which includes the scoop on the new Spider Man, X-Men, and Star Trek movies.

This is actually a fun time of year at the theaters.

If you look hard enough, even in the backwater areas (like my hometown), you can find all kinds of new releases this week, with plenty of high quality movies that can fit just about anyone's taste.

What else do you have to do this weekend, with the Browns in a bye week, and the Indians hopefully only playing on Saturday night?

News and Rumors

~ I predicted this months ago. Of course there will be another "Spider-Man" movie, but as expected, it will not be directed

by Sam Raimi, which also means it will not have Tobey Maguire or Kristen Dunst in the cast. Raimi did say, however, that he would take on producer responsibilities for the film. My expectations are about as low as they were last night when I saw Tom Mastny walk in from the bullpen.

~ Now for a good comic book blurb, the excellent Liev Schreiber will be joining Hugh Jackman in the film "X-Men Origins: Wolverine". Schreiber will play the bad guy, William Stryker, played by Brian Cox in X-2. The storyline will also involve the furrball's relationship with Victor Creed, aka Sabertooth. Release date tentatively set for May, 2009.

~ Mucho casting updates on "Star Trek". Karl Urban, Eomer from "Lord of the Rings", has been announced as the younger Dr. McCoy. Simon Pegg, the great British actor who gave us "Hot Fuzz", and "Sean of the Dead" will be Scotty, and John Cho, Harold in the "Harold and Kumar" films, will be Sulu. Chris Pine, a relative unknown last scene by almost no one as the romantic lead opposite Lindsay Lohan in "Just My Luck", will take the lead as the young Captain Kirk.

~ Joe Pesci, who has pretty much fallen off the face of the earth lately, will be making a comeback of sorts, starring with Helen Mirren ("The Queen") in "Love Ranch", the true story of the first legalized brothel in the state of Nevada. No word on attempts to try to get Lindsay Lohan, Britney Spears, and Paris Hilton to star as the working girls. Wouldn't work. Too skanky for a high class ho-house.

~ Jimmy Kimmel got booted from his appearances on Monday Night Football after making a general ass of himself. Anything giving publicity to Joe Theisman is a bad thing, so the executives made the right decision on banning him. Now if they can just do the same with Mike Tirico.

This week's new movie releases:

Plenty of new movies coming out...and lots of films expanding into the local markets that are starting to make their push for Oscar consideration. NINE movies hitting screens near you for the first time this weekend.

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Rendition

Starring: Reese Witherspoon, Jake Gyllenhaal, Alan Arkin, Meryl Streep

Plot: A CIA analyst questions his assignment after witnessing torture interrogation at a secret detention center outside the US.
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View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This is not being received well at all, with the consensus being "great cast: horrible script". It's a shame, as this is a topic well worth looking at, but it is being reduced to pure melodrama.

My Estimated Rating: Tim Couch (1 ½ footballs)

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30 Days of Night

Starring: Josh Harnett, Melissa George

Plot: A husband and wife cop team in Barrow, Alaska, rise up to protect their town as a pack of vampires descend upon them just as the sun is about to set for 30 days.
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View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Said to be one of the full-on, non-stop horror films where the relentless gore starts early, and doesn't stop. Sam Raimi is producing this film, which is good. Josh Hartnett is acting in it, which is the kiss of death.

My Estimated Rating: Bill Nelson (2 ½ footballs)

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The Comebacks

Starring: David Koechner, Robert Ri'chard, DJ Qualls

Plot: Satire following the coach of the worst football team in college history, sending up numerous sports movies

View Trailer
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The BeerBuzz: Remember when satire movies were really great, because they'd lovingly make fun of the genre, not relying on skits directly ripping off other movies? This is what made "Blazing Saddles", "Young Frankenstein", and "Airplane" so wonderful. And that's why this movie may be the worst thing coming out this year.

My Estimated Rating: Spergeon Wynn (0 footballs). I'd rather listen to Brian Billick lecture for two hours about offensive game planning that to see this.

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Gone Baby Gone

Starring: Casey Affleck, Morgan Freeman, Ed Harris

Plot: A pair of detectives track down a missing four year old in one of Boston's toughest neighborhoods.
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View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Ben Affleck may have just re-invented himself as a quality director, based upon all the early buzz for this film...and Casey Affleck may start getting consideration as a good actor, and not just Ben's goofy little brother who plays a dork in the "Oceans' 11-12-13" films. As you probably have seen, this tale was adapted from a novel by the same man who wrote "Mystic River", so if you liked that film, you'll probably want to see this one as well.

No estimated rating...I plan on reviewing this at some point.

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Things We Lost in the Fire

Starring: Halle Berry, Benicio Del Torro, Alison Lohman

Plot: A recent widow invites her husband's troubled best friend to live with her and her two children. As he gradually turns his
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life around, he helps the family cope and confront their loss.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Oscar buzz for Berry and Del Torro in this weep fest. Which is a bummer, because I normally hate going to see these types of movies (real men don't cry), but once the nominations come out, I'll probably make it a point to see it.

My Estimated Rating: Frank Ryan (3 footballs)

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Sarah Landon and the Paranormal Hour

Starring: Rissa Walters, Brian Comrie, Dan Comrie

Plot: During her first summer in Pine Valley, young Sarah Landon bears witness to the town's supernatural occurrences,
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then sets out trying to unravel the mystery behind the events.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Nancy Drew, meets Harry Potter, meets Scooby-Do! This is supposed to be the first of a franchise of Sarah Landon films? Good luck with that.

My Estimated Rating: Kelly Holcomb (2 footballs)

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Into the Wild (Expanding)

Starring: Emile Hirsch, Marcia Hay Harden, Vince Vaughn

Plot: After graduating from college, a young man abandons all his possessions and hitchhikes to Alaska to live in the wilderness.
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View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: More Oscar buzz, this time for director/producer/co-writer Sean Penn in this telling of the actual life of Christopher McCandless. Unbelievably vistas and cinematography make this a must to see on the big screen...or at least on High Definition DVD. I'll be catching up with this one at some point as well.

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The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford (Expanding)

Starring: Brad Pitt, Casey Affleck, Mary-Louise Parker

Plot: Robert Ford, who has idolized Jesse James since childhood, joins James' reforming gang, but gradually becomes resentful of the charismatic leader.
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View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This film has been in trouble almost from the beginning, requiring numerous re-shoots and re-edits...but it's still clocking in now at 160 minutes, something not seen since "Dances with Wolves". Extremely mixed reviews on this film...the type that would normally have me leaning on the side of the nay-sayers, especially with their complaints about how boring it all is.

My Estimated Rating: Tim Couch (1 ½ footballs)

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The Ten Commandments

Starring: the voices of Ben Kingsley, Christian Slater, Elliot Gould

Plot: Animated retelling of the story of Moses
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View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This one is getting universally slammed by the critics as simply a CGI word-for-word imitation of the great Cecil B. DeMille/Charleton Heston classic. From looking at the trailer, it might be the worst CGI animations I have ever seen. Save yourself the trouble, and rent the original for the kids.

My Estimated Rating: Mike Phipps (1/2 football)

New DVD Releases on Tuesday, October 23rd

Meet the Robinsons - A great pickup for the kids, this animation of a young boy looking for his family and his destiny who is taken into the future. The singing frogs were great, and I still think one of the best lines of the year was from the T-Rex, who tells the bad guy that he can't capture the boy "because I have a big head, and little arms!"

Hostel: Part II - Same crap as the first slasher film, this time killing female college students instead of male.

Mr. Brooks - Uneven Kevin Costner flick where he plays a serial killer...with the evil side of him being William Hurt. That part of it looks interesting, but frankly, if I want to watch something about serial killers, I'll tune in Showtime on Sunday nights to watch Dexter.

Calendar Watch

Next week: *Dan in Real Life, Saw IV, The Darjeeling Limited (expanding)*

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

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.

Atonement - December 7th - Artsy British film with Keira Knightley and James McAvoy, about a 13 year old girl who changes several lives when she accuses her older sister's lover of a crime

he did not commit.

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 21st

- 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.

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.

The Other Boleyn Girl - February 29th

- 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.

10,000 B.C. - March 7th - Roland Emmerich, he

of "The Day After Tomorrow", gets to unleash his big-budget vision of mammoth hunters in this film that is NOT a remake of "One Million Years B.C." Bummer.

I was hoping of a really good visual update to Rachel Welch in that fur bikini.

21. - March 21st - Swerb's favorite

upcoming movie, the true tale of six MIT students that are trained by one of their professors (Kevin Spacey) in the art of card counting. They later take down Vegas casinos for millions.