In this week's Crystal Ball, Mitch says that we may actually have a solid January movie release, which is a break from tradition. The film hits the theaters tonight, and is being described as "Blair Witch Project" meets "Godzilla". And in the news and rumors section of his piece, Mitch hits on all kinds of biggies, with news on the latest "Harry Potter" film, the latest from Peter Jackson and "The Hobbit", and also the latest "Justice League" and "X Men" films. It's Friday night! It's The Crystal Ball!

In a shocking revelation for a January, there is a movie being released that may just be a big box office and critical hit.

Good early buzz on "Cloverfield"...hopefully it delivers more than just hype.

News and Rumors

~ Speaking of JJ Abrams ("Cloverfield" director), Moviephone has a "first look" picture of the new Enterprise, along with pictures an mini-bios of the cast. Check it out here.

~ Potter-maniacs are sure to be pleased with this bit of news. There is a good possibility that the final book of the series, "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" will be split into two movies. Author J.K. Rowling has come out in favor of that move, stating that it would realistically take at least four hours to adequately cover all of the material from that book in a film. I can hear my wife and daughter applauding wildly already.

~ I'm not sure if this is good news or bad news, but the live action "Justice League" film, featuring all the DC Comics biggies, has been put on indefinite hold due to the writers' strike.

~ Drew Barrymore will direct Ellen Page, the star of "Juno" in "Whip It!", a comedy set in the wild and crazy world of roller derby. Let's see...Page is about 4'6" and 85 pounds...yeah, I can believe she could be in the roller derby.

~ Charlize Theron hasn't been making the best script choices lately ("Aeon Flux", anyone?), but this looks promising...a gig co-staring with Viggo Mortensen in "The Road". Written by Cormac McCarthy ("No Country for Old Men"), it's a tale of a man trying to get his son to safety in a post-apocalyptic world. Theron will appear in flashbacks as Mortensen's wife.

~ I mentioned a few weeks ago that the speculation was that of the two movies announced for "The Hobbit", the second would probably be about the years between where the book "The Hobbit" ends, and the start of the LOTR trilogy. Take the

"probably" off...that's definitely what they are going to do. Elijah Wood has stated that he would be more than willing to reprise his role of Frodo.

~ Casting news for the "X-Men Origins: Wolverine" movie. Live Schreiber is said to be taking on the role of Creed/Sabertooth, with Michael C. Hall, star of TheClevelandFan favorite "Dexter" set to play the young Stryker (played by Brian Cox in the second X-Men movie).

This week's new movie releases:

Cloverfield

Starring: Mike Vogel, Jessica Lucas, Lizzy Caplan

Plot: A going away party turns into a fight for survival for a group of friends when a monster attacks New York.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: "Blair Witch Project" meets "Godzilla" is how this is being described...except that I thought both of those movies sucked (especially the Matthew Broderick version), and this is actually supposed to be pretty good. J.J. Abrams is about as hot as a director can be right now, and this looks to be the first hit of 2008.

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27 Dresses

Starring: Katherine Heigl, James Marsden, Malin Akerman

Plot: After serving as a bridesmaid 27 times, a young woman has to deal with the fact that her sister is marrying the man she is secretly in love with.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: I should know better than to trash this, as I get the feeling this is going to go the same route as "P.S. I

Love You" and score big time with the ladies...most of which will need something to do on Sunday while their men are watching football all day. Sexist? Maybe...but that doesn't mean there isn't some truth to the stereotype. For the record, my wife will be sitting right next to me in front of the HDTV...pulling for Brett Favre, and debating which AFC QB she hates more, the smug Tom Brady, or the immature punk Phillip Rivers.

My Estimated Rating: Kelly Holcomb (2 footballs).

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Mad Money

Starring: Diane Keaton, Queen Latifa, Katie Holmes

Plot: Three janitors at the Federal Reserve conspire to steal a fortune in money that is about to be destroyed

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Now THIS is a "chick flick" that not only sucks, but is also going to bomb at the box office. Once upon a time, Diane Keaton was one of the best actresses on the planet. After this mess and "Because I Told You So", I'm not sure if she would rank in the top 1,000.

My Estimated Rating: Mike Phipps (½ football).

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New DVD Releases for Tuesday, January 22nd

The Game Plan - Since this is a football movie, I supposed I'm going to have to check it out. The Rock plays a hotshot pro QB who finds out that he has a seven year old daughter, and suddenly the uber-bachelor must play Mr. Mom. Said to be a good family flick, and pretty humorous...just may be a little too Disney-smaltzy for my taste.

Saw IV - More Torture Porn!! When I get done watching this, I next want to check out more home videos of Michael Vick electrocuting puppies!

Sydney White - Amanda Bynes plays a modern Snow White as a college freshman hooking up with Seven Geeks to take on the evil sorority bitches. No, thank you.

The Hunting Party - Richard Gere can't catch a break lately, as his last two movies have barely even made an appearance at the box offices. This one is pretty much a mess, with Gere playing a discredited journalist looking for the #1 war criminal in Bosnia. Billed as a "comedydramaactionadventure"...the type of description that normally means "crap".

Blonde Ambition - Speaking of crap...we have this disaster of a romantic comedy that is almost "straight to video". I say "almost" as they released it for two weeks in Dallas, the home of star Jessica Simpson...and it made a whopping $5,561 at the box office. So how many Cowboys fans are going to buy it just for the pleasure of burning it?

Calendar Watch

Next week: *Rambo, How She Move, Meet the Spartans, Untraceable*

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

Vantage Point - February 22nd - Dennis Quaid, Forest Whitaker, and Matthew Fox in a political thriller/mystery showing five different points of view to an attempted assassination of the President.

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...but since it's gotten pushed back to the waste-land of February releases, I don't have a good feeling about it.

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.

Horton Hears a Who - March 14th - Not content to have made Dr. Suess spin in his grave with "How the Grinch Stole Christmas", Jim Carrey now takes on the voice of Horton the Elephant in this animated

tale.

Pride and Glory - March 14th - Ed Norton and Colin Farrell in a tale of a multi-generational family of NYPD officers and an investigation of corruption that could tear the family apart.

21. - March 28th - 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.

Leatherheads - April 4th - George Clooney and Renee Zellweger in an old fashioned screwball comedy set in 1925 about an aging football legend and the college hotshot he's drafted for his pro team both

fighting for the heart of an intrepid up-and-coming journalist.

Iron Man - May 2nd - The latest mega-budgeted superhero flick. Looks very promising, and the casting of Robert Downey, Jr. as the alcoholic billionaire who designs a supersuit.

Speed Racer - May 9th - Emile Hirch, Matthew Fox, and Christina Ricci as Speed, Racer X, and Trixie in the Wachowski Brothers' ("The Matrix" trilogy) adaptation of the campy 1960s Japanese anime.

The Chronicles of Narnia:

Prince Caspian - May 16th - The same four kids from the first movie return to Narnia...1300 years after their last visit in that enchanted land's time frame, to help restore the throne to the rightful heir.

Indiana Jones and the

Kingdom of the Crystal Skull - May 23rd - Spielberg and Ford team up one more time, with Cate Blanchett as the romantic interest, and Shia LaBeouf ("Transformers") as Indy's son.

Sex and the City - May 30th - The movie version of the HBO series hits the big screen. Can we guys get our share of this pie and have a movie version of "Deadwood" ?

The Incredible Hulk - June 13th

- Looks to be much, much better than the Ang Lee stink-fest, with Edward Norton taking on the role of Bruce Banner.

Get Smart - June 20th - Steve Carell, Anne Hathaway, and Alan Arkin take on the roles of Maxwell Smart, Agent 99 and The Chief. As much as I hate movie adaptations of television shows, this

one has potential.

Wall-E - June 27th - Pixar's next masterpiece, about a garbage cleaning robot who dreams of the stars.

Wanted - June 27th - Look for this to make a star out of James McAvoy ("The Last King of Scotland") as he plays a young man brought into a secret society of

assassins by a hot, hot looking Angelina Jolie. Morgan Freeman plays their boss.

The Dark Knight - July 19

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- Batman is back, and this time he's tracking the Joker, played by Heath Ledger. Most likely the box office champion of 2008.