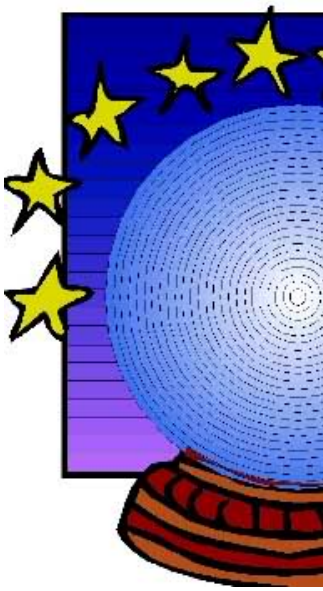
Mitch checks into his regular Friday night spot, and we've got a huge weekend coming up at the theaters, at least in terms of the number of new releases, which stands at nine. There are also a slew of high profile films that just came out on DVD, and if you're like me, you use The Crystal Ball to realign your Netflix queue every Friday. Mitch also fills us in on the latest projects for Will Smith, Ridley Scott, and George Clooney in the News & Rumors section as well.



Technical difficulties pre-empted this column last week. Not that you really missed anything...just five or six new movies that were completely uninspiring; although "Eagle Eye" did make a lot of money...despite not making a lot of sense.

Which is still better than how Spike Lee ended up. Not only has his attempt at Oscar failed with "Miracle at St. Anna" tanking at the box office, he is now under heavy criticism from the Italians ticked off at the liberties he took with the truth regarding a key component of the movie. Spike's answer? He pretty much told them that he doesn't care about real history, he was just making entertainment.

Pretty classy, eh?

Huge weekend coming up, at least in terms of the number of new releases, which stands at nine.

And that is not counting the sneak previews tomorrow of the Ernie Davis bio "The Express", which will be playing in 700+ theaters for the one day only, and then will be out nationwide next weekend.

RIP Paul Newman. The likes of you may not be seen again.

News and Rumors

~ Nominations for the Stupidest Man In Hollywood must start with whoever it is that advises Nicolas Cage on his choice of films. Coming up; "Season of the Witch", where Nic will play a 14th century knight who transports a girl suspected of being the witch behind the Black Plague.

His compatriots help him bring the girl to an abbey of monks trained in exorcising demons.

OoooKaaayyy.

~ Hong Kong martial arts director and actor Stephen Chow will assume both duties in the upcoming "Green Hornet" movie, taking the director's chair while also playing the Green Hornet's sidekick Kato. Seeing that the title role will be played by roly-poly comedic actor Seth Rogen ("Pineapple Express"), I'm not exactly expecting many comparisons to "The Dark Knight".

~ Will Smith is happy that the studios have given the greenlight to a prequel to last winter's hit "I Am Legend". For obvious reasons, this can't be a sequel, but since it's science fiction, you can never tell. I'll reserve judgment on this until I get some more details regarding the script.

~ I'll have "HUH?" for $1,000, Alex. The answer is; "Tonto". The question is; who will Johnny Depp be playing in an upcoming remake of "The Lone Ranger".

And the man behind the mask?

George Clooney.

You would think he'd never go that route again after "Batman and Robin", but who knows?

~ Ridley Scott is looking into writing a sequel to "Blade Runner". No details yet on what the plot would look like.

~ Ricky Gervais' name is being bantered about as the next host of the Oscars. Seems the producers were impressed at the British comic's performance at the Emmy's, and want to give him a shot. I'm actually impressed that anyone really watched the Emmy's.

Stupid Remakes and Sequels:

~ Charlize Theron has made comments that there will be a sequel to this summer's popular, but uneven superhero story "Hancock". I was tempted to put "I Am Legend" in this category as well, but we'll see.

~ "Lethal Weapon 5" is still in the works. Just because Bruce Willis actually pulled off "Die Hard 4", and movie executives are greedy, unimaginative idiots.

~ A live action/CGI movie of "Yogi Bear"? After "Underdog" and "Alvin and the Chipmunks", should we be surprised?

This week's new movie releases:

Appaloosa

Starring: Ed Harris, Viggo Mortensen, Renée Zellweger

Plot: A pair of lawmen out to save a Western town from a rancher's tyrannical reign find their bond and their mission tested by the arrival of a double-dealing widow.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Very positive buzz on this Ed Harris directed western that has been out in limited release for a couple of weeks now. Jeremy Irons adds to the stellar cast as the villain, while Harris and Mortensen are said to be excellent in this film.

I'll let you know what I think next week.

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Beverly Hills Chihuahua

Starring: Drew Barrymore, George Lopez, Jamie Lee Curtis

Plot: While on vacation in Mexico, a pampered Beverly Hills chihuahua (voiced by Drew Barrymore), finds herself lost and in need of assistance to get back home.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Looks to be the box office winner of this week. Good buzz on this kids' movie, and it looks to be amusing enough for the adults who will be drug to the theaters by their children. Let's put it this way; it HAS to be better than "Snow Dogs".

If for no other reason than the fact that Cuba Gooding Jr. is nowhere to be seen.

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Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist

Starring: Michael Cera, Kat Dennings

Plot: A guy asks a girl to pretend to be his girlfriend for five minutes so he won't feel awkward around his ex-girlfriend, who just walked into the club where the guy's band is playing. But some sparks occur during those five minutes, so they are off on a memorable date.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Another movie with positive buzz. Think "Superbad" meets "High Fidelity".

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How to Lose Friends and Alienate People

Starring: Simon Pegg, Kirsten Dunst, Megan Fox

Plot: A British journalist crosses the pond for a new job with a high-profile New York magazine, though he soon learns the bridges he burned on his way to the top can only lead to his downfall.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Based on the first memoir by former "Vanity Fair" writer Toby Jones, the popular Pegg gets to strut his stuff as a completely obnoxious jerk. We love seeing people

like that get their comeuppance, and seeing Megan Fox in very few clothes is an attraction as well, but this movie just looks like it tries a little too hard to be "hip".

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Blindness

Starring: Julianne Moore, Mark Ruffalo, Gael Garcia Bernal.

Plot: A thriller set in a city that is suffering from an epidemic of sudden blindness, where only one woman remains able to see as the rest of her society is pushed to its limits

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: I love the concept, but I'm not too sure about the delivery. It's already catching heat and protests from advocates of blind people, claiming that it shows the sightless as near lunatics who are totally helpless.

I'm not sure I buy that...to me it looks like they are showing panic of people that wake up one day and suddenly can't see, and their reaction to that shocking change.

In any case, don't expect much business for this film.

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Flash of Genius

Starring: Greg Kinnear, Lauren Graham, Alan Alda

Plot: Based on the true story of the man who invented intermittent windshield wipers, but had to sue the U.S. automotive industry to get his due.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: I'm just not sure that I'm seeing enough here for an entire feature length film. B ut Kinnear always does well in these kinds of roles, so I expect some great acting, and a heart-string tugging script that would remind you of "Pursuit of Happyness" in terms of the little guy struggling to reach for their just reward.

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An American Carol

Starring: Kevin P. Farley, Kelsey Grammer

Plot: An anti-American documentary maker who is out to abolish the Fourth of July holiday is visited by three ghosts who try to change his perception of the country.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Former liberal David Zucker believes that it's almost illegal to try to make a conservative slanted film in Hollywood today, so he's out to prove them wrong by using the zaniness seen in his previous films like "Airplane". Two things working against him:

First, he felt he had to "dumb down" the satire to connect with modern audiences (see also "Disaster Movie"), and second, like with films about the Iraq War, no one really wants to spend money on a film having to do with politics.

I will be making similar comments in a few weeks about the "other side", when the

same thing will apply to Oliver Stone's Bush biography "W."

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Religulous

Starring: Bill Maher

Plot: Atheist Bill Maher looks comically at the beliefs behind the different world religions.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Maher can be funny with his biting humor...and the film is directed by Larry Charles, the director of "Borat". But this is nearly the exact same thing as "American Carol"...a very one-sided view of a topic that treats the other side like they are idiots. IOW, the same crap we get every day if we watch MSNBC or FoxNews.

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Upcoming DVD Releases

So I'll talk about the two that just came out on September 30, along with the ones for next Tuesday.

Iron Man - No Netflix appearance for this film...it gets purchased on Tuesday. While "The Dark Knight" may have been the best comic book based movie ever, I still contend that Robert Downey Jr.'s performance as hedonistic billionaire Tony Stark is the best I have ever seen in this genre.

The action is terrific, the plot crisp and intelligent, the effects eye-opening, and the supporting cast superb.

If you haven't seen it yet, go rent this movie.

Forgetting Sarah Marshall - On the other hand, this one does go to the top of my Netflix Queue, as I didn't have time to catch this one in the theaters. Very similar to last year's hit "Knocked Up" in terms of being a Judd Apatow raunchy comedy with a heart as a sad-sack copes with being dumped by his television star girl friend by running off to Hawaii, where he runs into his ex and her new beau.

The Happening - Hands down, the worst movie of the year. M. Night Shyamalan has totally lost it. I thought going it HAD to be better than "Lady in the Water", just because Mark Wahlberg was involved.

I was wrong.

This is the worst performance I've ever seen from Marky Mark, and possibly the dumbest script ever written by a man not trying to write a dumb script.

Boring and stupid are the two best words for it.

M. Night just needs to stop making movies.

You Don't Mess with the Zohan - Almost considered a flop given the normal business done by an Adam Sandler film. This time, he plays a naïve Jewish super-soldier who fakes his own death so he can go to New York and become a hair stylist.

Enough funny moments to have been a good hour long skit...but it's stretched way to thin to maintain itself for two hours.

Calendar Watch

Next week: *The Express* , *Body of Lies* , *City of Ember, Quarantine*

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

Max Payne - October 17th - Mark Wahlberg stars in the adaptation of the video game about a DEA agent out to avenge the deaths of his family.

Pride and Glory - October 24th - Edward Norton and Colin Farrell in a story about a family of prominent NYC cops who are shaken to their core when a scandal is uncovered.

RocknRolla - October 31st - Guy Ritchie hopefully back in form for another tale of London gangsters. Gerard Butler, Thandie Newton, Tom Wilkenson, and Jeremy Friggin' Piven star.

Changeling - October 31st - Clint Eastwood's latest Oscar potential, with Angelina Jolie as a Prohibition era mother who begins to think that the kidnapped son who was returned to her might not really be hers.

Quantum of Solace - November 14th - The next James Bond film, picking up shortly after the events ending "Casino Royale"

The Soloist - November 21st - Rober Downey Jr. and Jamie Foxx star about a talented musician who is now living on the streets.

Australia - November 26th - Baz Luhrmann's epic tale set in WWII Australia. With Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman.

Think "Gone with the Wind" with kangaroos.

The Road - November 28th - Viggo Mortensen as a man walking with his son for months across a ravaged, post-apocalyptic landscape in search of civilization. Char lize Theron co-stars.

The Day the Earth Stood Still - December 12th - Keanu Reeves in a remake of the classic 1951 sci-fi film.

Twilight - December 12th - the adaptation of the popular book series concerning a relationship between a non-blood drinking vampire and a teenaged girl.

Defiance - December 12th - Daniel Craig and Live Schreiber as Jewish brothers in WWII Russian, leading a band of refuges in striking back at the Germans.
A major early Oscar contender

Revolutionary Road - December 19th - Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet as a young couple raising a family in a Connecticut suburb during the mid 1950s.

Sam Mendes ("American Beauty") directs the "Titanic" stars in their on-screen reunion.

The Spirit - December 25th - Frank Miller's next comic book adaptation, done in the same style as "Sin City".

Frost / Nixon - December 26th - Ron Howard's latest Oscar attempt, adapting the stage play of the disgraced president's attempt to re-habilitate his image on David Frost's TV show, and Frost's attempt to drag out the truth from Tricky Dick

The International - February 13, 2009 - Clive Owen and Naomi Watts in a thriller about an Interpol investigation of a world-wide bank funding murder and corruption. And you thought Wachovia was bad?

Watchmen - March 6, 2009 - The screen version of what is arguably graphic novelist Alan Moore's greatest work.

Blockbusters on the Distant Horizon (movies that would seem to be big hits...as soon as they get made or released).

X-Men Origins: Wolverine - May 1, 2009 - Hugh Jackman goes it alone as the adamentium enhanced anti-hero. With Live Schreiber as Sabertooth, and Ryan Reynolds as Deadpool.

Star Trek - May 8, 2009 - J.J. Abrams and a young cast reboot the franchise, going back to Kirk and Spock's days at Starfleet Academy.

Angels and Demons - May 15, 2009 - Tom Hanks and Ron Howard follow-up to "The DaVinci Code"

Terminator 4 - May 22, 2009 - Christian Bale as John Conner as the franchise moves into the apocalyptic future.

Transformers 2 - June 26, 2009 - The next chapter of Robots In Disguise!

Public Enemy - July 1, 2009 - Johnny Depp as John Dillinger. Co-staring Christian Bale, and directed by Michael Mann

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince - July 2009 - The sixth of J.K. Rowling's seven books, setting the stage for the two part conclusion in 2010 and 2011.

The Taking of Pelham 123- August 7, 2009 - Denzel Washington, John Travolta, and James Gandolfini in a remake of the classic 1974 film about a hijacked subway car.

Shutter Island - October, 2009 - Martin Scorsese working once again with Leonardo DiCaprio in this mystery set in 1954.

Nottingham - November, 2009 - Ridley Scot and Russell Crowe together again in a retelling of the Robin Hood legend, this time through the eyes of the Sheriff of Nottingham (Crowe).

With Sienna Miller as Maid Marion.

Avatar - December 18, 2009 - James Cameron's sci-fi/CGI extravaganza. The C.I.A. should take lessons about secrecy from Cameron, as he's keeping info about this film very much to himself at this time.

Iron Man 2 - May, 2010 - Right on the heels of the success of the first one, Marvel is quick to get Robert Downey Jr. back into his titanium suit.

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader - May, 2010 - The series goes off in a bit of a different direction, as those of you who love the books already know.

Thor - June 2010 - Another Marvel superhero...but the Nordic God is about as bland personality-wise as Superman, so we'll see how it goes.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part I - 2010 - The start of the End for the boy wizard and his battle against He-Who-Shall-not-Be-Named

Lincoln - 2010 - Steven Spielberg directs the biographical film of the 16th President (Liam Neeson)

The Hobbit - 2010 - Guillermo del Toro directs and Peter Jackson will produce the prequel to "Lord of the Rings". Ian McKellen will return as Gandalf

Fantastic Voyage - 2010 - Roland Emmerich ("The Day After Tomorrow", "10,000 B.C.") remakes the classic 1967 movie about a miniaturized sub and crew operating on a scientist from inside his brain.

The Avengers - 2011 - Iron Man, Hulk, Thor, and Captain America open up a can of whoopass on bad guys everywhere.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part II - 2011 - The end of the line for what will be beyond doubt the most profitable series in the history of film making.

The Hobbit 2 - 2011 - del Toro and Jackson again, this time covering the time between the end of Tolkien's book, "The Hobbit" and the start of LOTR.