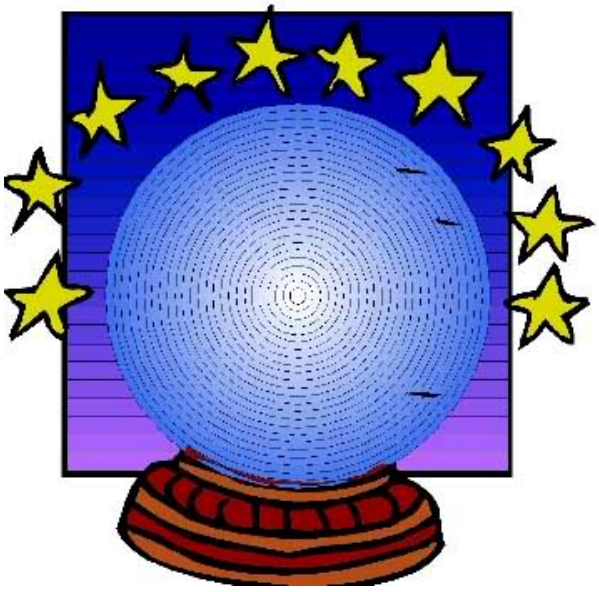
It's all about "Avatar" this weekend at the theaters, which released today amid big time buzz and super early reviews. We're dispatching The Mitch Man to the theaters this weekend to review it for us, and you'll see his thoughts on the film on our front page sometime early next week. And next week ... is a HUGE week for new theater releases. Mitch touches on Avatar, next week, the Golden Globes, the frontrunners for '09 Best Picture, and all the latest Hollywood rumors and news in this Friday's Crystal Ball.



News and Rumors

~ So the Golden Globe and SAG Award nominations have been announced, with not too many shocking surprises. Probably to me, the biggest ones were the inclusion of "Avatar" on the best picture side for Golden Globes, and "Nine" for the SAG Awards. I was also disappointed that "The Road" was overlooked, including Viggo Mortensen being passed up for Best Actor. So as it stands now, "Up in the Air", "Inglorius Basterds", "Precious", and "The Hurt Locker" seem to be locks for inclusion in the 10 films to be nominated this year for Best Picture Oscar.

~ On the TV side, I'm happy to see both of the above awards groups have recognized great shows like "Dexter", "True Blood", and "Mad Men". And speaking of Dexter, we're still abuzz over on the boards about the shocking conclusion of last week's season finale. Don't click on the link if you haven't seen the final episode yet, cause I don't want to spoil the jaw-drops at the

end.

~ Bryan Singer has decided to get back into the X-Men franchise. He will be developing "X-Men: First Class". It will cover the teen years of some of the more famous mutants, as well as a few lesser known ones. It will also cover the first meeting of Professor Xavier and Magneto.

~ Big Love starts again in a few weeks on HBO, so this announcement is timely. Amanda Seyfried has announced that this will be her last season as eldest child Sarah. Given the intelligence of this show, I'm hoping they rise above the cheap fall-back of having her contract some life-threatening disease.

~ Another rumor has come out regarding Peter Jackson's "The Hobbit", and this would be great if it comes about; Tobey Maguire as Bilbo Baggins. Given that Tobey played Elijah Woods older brother in "The Ice Storm", there would be some symmetry in that.

Stupid Remakes and Sequels

~ The fact that Laurence Fishburne is cast MAY make the upcoming remake of "Predator" not quite so sucky...but I'll hold judgment on that for the time being.

This week's new movie releases:

Another light week. But next week will be HUGE for new releases.

Avatar

Starring: Sam Worthington, Sigourney Weaver, Michelle Rodriguez.

Plot: A paraplegic former marine accepts a unique mission that sends him to the planet Pandora, where, through a connection to a remotely controlled biological body, he learns the way of the indigenous Na'vi people. His link to this world puts him in direct opposition with his orders to infiltrate the Na'vi and remove the barrier between them and the precious ore desired by military and corporate interests.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: The critics are going wild over this movie...but the public still seems to be in a "wait-and-see" mode. James Cameron has been working on this project for years, and Cameron doesn't make crap movies. Ever. So with that in mind, I'm looking forward to seeing it this weekend. I'll let you know.

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Did You Hear About the Morgans

Starring: Hugh Grant and Sarah Jessica Parker
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Plot: In New York City, an estranged couple who witness a murder are relocated to small-town Wyoming as part of a witness-protection program.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: While the critics may love "Avatar", they are sharpening their knives for this one. Remember the awful 1997 film "For Richer or Poorer" where Tim Allen and Kirstie Alley played New Yorkers hiding out amongst the Amish? This one sucks that bad.

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New DVD Releases:

***District 9* -** One of the biggest surprises of the year was this low budget Aliens-as-refugees tale by novice director Neill Blomkamp and producer Peter Jackson. It is a very original film, and although it is sometimes tough to watch, it is still one of the top ten films of 2009.

***All About Steve* -** Sandra Bullock is having a huge year with
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"The Proposal" and "The Blind Side" dominating at the box office and with the critics. And then there was this mess, where she plays a crossword puzzle designer who stalks a CNN television personality. Skip it at all costs.

***(500) Days of Summer* -** Top of me Netflix Queue for Tuesday is this charmer with Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Zooey Deschanel in an offbeat romantic comedy about a girl who doesn't think love exists, and the guy who falls for her.

***Extract* -** Will this be another Mike Judge cult favorite like "Office Space" and "Idiocracy"? Not sure, as this one with Jason Bateman as the manager of an extract company dealing with issues did not get the same loving from the masses as his other films.

Calendar Watch

Next week; *Up in the Air*, *Nine*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *It's Complicated, Alvin and the Chipmunks; the Squeakquel*

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

The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus - Limited release December 25 - A story-telling doctor's deal with the devil sends him scrambling to save his daughter on the eve of her 16th birthday. Terry Gilliam's wild tale is the last movie from Heath Ledger, who passed during shooting. In his place, Colin Farrel, Jude Law, and Johnny Depp all play the same character as Ledger, in a "Doctor Who" type manner.

The Lovely Bones - December 25 (limited, expanding ??) - Peter Jackson's latest, about the ghost of a young, murdered girl watching over her family and friends' reactions to the event. Mark Wahlberg and Rachel Weisz star.

The Book of Eli - January 15 - Denzel Washington as a lone man fighting his way across a post apocalyptic country in order to protect a sacred book that holds the secrets to saving humankind.

The Wolfman - February 12 - Lots of date changes for this remake of the classic horror tale, starring Benicio Del Torro and Anthony Hopkins. Let's hope that doesn't mean that this is a stinker.

Shutter Island - February 19 - Martin Scorsese working once again with Leonardo DiCaprio in this mystery set in 1954. Pushed back from 2009 due to marketing concerns...this still looks like an incredible movie.

Clash of the Titans - March 26 - Re-imaging of the campy Harry Hamlin sword-and-sandals film from the 80s. The trailer looks intriguing, at least.