There are reasons you don't see many reviews from me in August or January; those are the two worst months of the year for new releases. It is a time for studios to dump junk upon us, films not good enough for the block buster periods of November and December, or May through July, and also terrible enough to not even remotely qualify for "awards season".

Accordingly, there are FIVE new movies coming out this week. I will not be reviewing any of them, as they are all complete crap…with the possible exception of one semi-decent kid's movie; but I don't fit the demographic for that one, and neither do 90% of the readers of this site.

It is highly unlikely that I'll ever watch any of them…although "The Switch" might end up on my DVD list at some point if I'm trying to score some quality time with my wife by watching it with her.

Mini Review - "The Ghost Writer"

This Roman Polanski directed film ended up at the theaters nationwide for all of about three weeks. Polanksi is such a polarizing figure, and so reviled in the United States that he is absolute box office poison. It doesn't matter how good his movies are, they are not going to be well received in the U.S.

Which is a shame, as “The Ghost Writer” is a very good mystery, and well worth watching.

The movie stars Ewan McGregor as a well known (to insiders in the industry, anyway) ghost writer of memoirs. He is recruited by a huge publishing company to come in and quickly finish up a book for famous former British Prime Minister Adam Lang, played to perfection by Pierce Brosnan. The reason he must step in is that the former friend/confidant of the PM mysteriously died near Lang’s retreat near Martha’s Vineyard.

As McGregor’s character gets into the inner workings of the Tony Blair type PM, things start to unravel for the charismatic former leader; allegations that he allowed for illegal rendition and torture of prisoners in his support of the United States in the Middle East. As he is trying to retain his image, there are calls for a War Crimes tribunal at The Hague.

Complicating things even further are the obvious tensions in the house between Adam and his wife Ruth (exquisitely portrayed by Olivia Williams), and Kim Cattrall as Adam’s right hand woman Amelia…who may be a lot more than just that. Cattrall actually surprised me with a spot on British accent, and an acting performance that was the polar opposite of her work on “Sex and the City”.

As McGregor digs deeper into the mystery of the death of his predecessor, he starts to uncover some rather disturbing facts. But I will give credit to the writer of the original novel, Robert Harris (who also did the screenplay collaborating with Polanski); things are not telegraphed at all, and the final revelations come as a total surprise.

This film also featured some great cameo appearances from Timothy Hutton as Lang’s American lawyer, James Belushi in a great role as the hard-as-nails head of the publishing house, Tom Wilkinson as a mysterious “friend” of Lang’s, and Eli Wallach (he’s still alive???), feisty as ever at 95 years old, as a Martha’s Vineyard resident with an important contribution to tell.

The only thing I really didn’t like about this film was the fact that McGregor’s character was unnamed. He was simply called “The Ghost” in the credits. This is an annoying stunt to pull in

a movie, unless doing so was absolutely necessary to the plot (as in “Fight Club” or Clint Eastwood “Man with no Name” films). Here? There was no reason to do this at all, and it actually made things quite awkward a few times.

A minor quibble, however. If you like political themed suspense and mystery that is low on action but high on intellect, this would be a good choice for your viewing

My Rating – Frank Ryan (3 Footballs)

News and Rumors

~ January Jones, the woman everyone loves to hate as Betty Draper in “Mad Men” has signed on to play Emma Frost; aka, the White Queen, in the upcoming”X-Men Origins: First Class”. As much as I disliked the final X-Men movie and last year’s Wolverine film…this one is really starting to intrigue me.

~ Second rumor dealing with a popular television show; there might be a remake of “The Rockford Files” coming soon. Normally, that news would make this blurb drop down to the “Stupid” category…except for the fact that they are looking at Josh Holloway, who was so awesome as Sawyer on “Lost” to play the role. Hell, I’m already on board to watch at least a couple of episodes of “Hawaii Five-O” when it starts next month…so I can add this to the “Potential” list.

~ Even more TV news. Wait…it’s not TV. It’s HBO. And yes, that usually means a level of quality that no one else can match. In this case, we have a series being developed for Kevin Spacey where he plays a Jim Jones type charismatic preacher/cult leader. No other details are known…but the premise alone is enough to hook me.

~ More Vampires! Ugh. This should probably go down into the next category as well, but the casting has me interested. Colin Farrell is set to wear the fangs in a remake of 1985’s campy “Fright Night”, to be written by “Mad Men” writer-producer Marti Noxon. Noxon also was a scriptwriter for “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” and “Angel”. Co-Starring will be Toni Collette, Anton

Yelchin (“Star Trek”), and Christopher Mintz-Plasse (McLovin).

~ The casting has finally been announced for the title role in the much anticipated English version of “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo”. Relative unknown Rooney Mara, the younger sister of Kate Mara (“The Shooter”), has been given this role of a lifetime as the goth hacker Lisbeth Salander. She joins previously named cast members Daniel Craig, Robin Wright, and Stellan Skarsgard. Meanwhile, look for a heavy Oscar push for Noomi Rapace for Best Actress for her performance in the Swedish version (which I hope to have up as the Mini-Review next week).

~ Maggie Gyllenhaal, Hugh Dancy, Jonathan Pryce, and Rupert Everett will be seen in the upcoming Victorian Era romantic comedy “Hysteria”. The plot? It involves the invention of the vibrator, which was originally created by a doctor to treat hysteria in women. This just sounds too wacky to suck.

Stupid Remakes and Sequels

~ The writers for “Iron Man 2” will be the ones handling the next remake of “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles”. Perfect.

~ A new “Hellraiser” film is in the works. More bad things from the 80s getting regurgitated.

This week's new movie releases:

Nanny McPhee Returns

Starring: Emma Thompson, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Ralph Fiennes

Plot : Nanny McPhee arrives to help a harried young mother, Mrs. Green, with running the family farm while her husband is away at war. With Mrs. Green's children waging a personal war with their two spoiled cousins, Nanny McPhee uses her magic to teach the kids five important new lessons.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: My wife actually loved catching the first Nanny McPhee movie on premium cable…although I'll admit that I never sat through it. Still, this movie is getting a very high rating at RottenTomatoes, 88% positive as of this writing. It's being released in the U.S. almost as an afterthought. It's not expected to do well here, but they don't care, as it's made almost $100 million already overseas.

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Piranha 3D

Starring: Elisabeth Shue, Jerry O'Connell, Richard Dreyfuss

Plot : After a tremor under the surface of Lake Victoria unleashes scores of prehistoric piranhas, a group of strangers under the direction of the local sheriff band together to stop themselves from becoming fish food.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: They are trying to promote this as a "so campy and bad that it's good" film. To that, I only have four words to say. Snakes. On. A. Plane. (OK, I will admit that casting "Jaws" star Dreyfuss in this film was a bit inspired).
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The Switch

Starring: Jennifer Aniston, Jason Bateman, Patrick Wilson

Plot : An unmarried 40-year-old woman (Aniston) turns to a turkey baster in order to become pregnant. Seven years later, she reunites with her best friend (Bateman), who has been living with a secret ...

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: The marketing of this film gives me no reason whatsoever to want to see it. Which is a shame, as the concept and the stars are appealing. It's registering right at the 50-50 split from critics, which is about what I'd expect for a romantic comedy.

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Lottery Ticket

Starring: Bow Wow, Brandon T. Jackson, Ice-Cube

Plot : Over the Fourth of July weekend, a young man has to protect his new prize possession -- a lottery ticket worth $370 million -- from his greedy and conniving neighbors.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: The simply looks stupid to me. Condescending, predictable, and full of some of the worst stereotypes available. This would be the worst reviewed movie of almost any week…but not this week, because we have…

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Vampires Suck

Starring: No one that you would possibly know, with the sad exception of the guy that used to play Oswald on “The Drew Carey Show”.

Plot : Do ANY of these send-up movies ever have a plot?

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Another crapfest from two people who should never be able to work in Hollywood again; Jason Friedberg and Aaron Seltzer, the scumbuckets who gave us “Meet the Spartans”, and “Epic Movie”. In fact, these two have the “honor” of having three movies listed in the IMDb Bottom 100 . Look for this one to be their fourth. At least this time they have a movie that includes a description in the title.

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New DVD Releases

The Back Up Plan – That’s it? This is all we have coming out this week? A crappy J-Lo

romantic comedy? Thank God for the NFL Network this week, as I'd rather watch re-runs of third stringers playing substantial minutes in exhibition games that to ever pollute my Blu-Ray player by putting this thing in.

Calendar Watch

Next Week: *The Last Exorcism, Takers* (nope…it doesn't get any better next week).

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

The American – September 1 –George Clooney as an assassin hiding out in an Italian village awaiting what he hopes is his last job.

Machete – September 3 – Yes, they made a full length film from the "trailer" shown in "Grindhouse" with Danny Trejo as the revenge minded blade wielder.

The Town – September 17 – Ben Affleck as a bank robber falling for one of his victims, played by Rebecca Hall. Meanwhile, an FBI agent (Jon Hamm) has eyes on both of them.

Wall Street 2: Money Never Sleeps – September 24 – Oliver Stone brings Michael Douglass back as Gordon Gecko, teaming him with Shia LaBeouf in a film that looks to be quite different in tone than the last one.

The Social Network – October 1 - "True story" about how Mark Zuckerberg "invented" Facebook.

Secretariat – October 8 – Diane Lane in the story of possibly the greatest race horse ever. Could this be another "Seabiscuit"?

Red – October 15 – Another Bruce Willis action vehicle. This time he is a former black ops agent reassembling his old team to thwart an attack from a high-tech assassin.

Hereafter – October 22 – Clint Eastwood directs a supernatural thriller with Matt Damon.

Unstoppable – November 12 – Denzel Washington and Chris Pine in Tony Scott's story of a runaway train.

Morning Glory – November 12 – J.J. Abrams tale of a young TV producer (Rachel McAdams) trying to bolster a failing morning show by teaming a former hotshot anchor (Harrison Ford) with the current flighty host (Diane Keaton)

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part I – November 19 – Part One of the final book about Harry, Hermione, and Ron. This one (and I'm sure the last one) will be in 3-D.

The Next Three Days – November 19 – Russell Crowe resorts to a prison break three years after his wife (Elizabeth Banks) was falsely (maybe) convicted of murder.

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader – December 10 – Third tale of the series…some people (like my wife) are still looking forward to it.

The Fighter – December 10 – Mark Wahlberg and Christian Bale in a biopic of boxer "Irish" Micky Ward and his brother.

Tron Legacy – December 17 – Might be the most anticipated Holiday release of this year.

Gulliver's Travels – December 22 – Jack Black takes on the iconic role.

Little Fockers – December 22 – Yes, they are all back.

True Grit – December 25 – The Coen Brothers remake the iconic John Wayne movie with Jeff Bridges and Matt Damon.

The Green Hornet – January 14 – Seth Rogan in a completely different take on the old radio/TV show.

The Adjustment Bureau – March, 2011 – Matt Damon in a mind bender about a politician falling for a ballerina (Emily Blunt), only to be stymied by mysterious forces keeping the would-be lovers apart.