Welcome to the new and maybe even improved Crystal Ball. As we go into the time of the year when the releases aren't nearly as major, and as they compete with something much more important: Promising seasons for both the Browns and the Buckeyes. Given that, movies don't hold the same prestige with many of us sports nuts (including me) as it does in the summer.

So I'm going to change up a few things here, but I will still place the emphasis on letting you know what to look for as a potential good investment of your time and money when it comes to the multiplex, as well as giving you a heads-up about the DVD releases; both what's coming, and what is now out there that might be worth renting.

Micro Reviews

Yes, these will be for the people who thought I was a little too verbose on my weekly "Mini-Reviews". I'll still be giving you my opinion about movies that have recently been released that I finally caught. In all cases, it will be movies that I didn't deem worthy of seeing at the theater, so take that little fact for what it's worth.

***The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo.* –** I'm using this as a teaser review. My opinion of this foreign film, after viewing it, is that it is special enough to deserve a review of its own…something I've only done one other time (the Irish indie musical "Once"). Watch for the

full review to be published in the next few days.

Hot Tub Time Machine – I don't get this one. Everyone raved about how great it was, but I just found it mostly gross, although it did have several highly amusing little scenes. John Cusack used to be one of my favorite actors, but he's blowing it after this and "2012": Stop the whining already, John. Plus, I can't get past the fact that they blew it with by showing "The Drive" game. The game was in January, 1987, but the boys were supposed to be transported back to January 1986. Sloppy.

My Rating: Derek Anderson (1 football)

The Runaways – This surprised me a bit. Not great by any means, but the biographical depiction of the early 80s all-girl band The Runaways scored points for grit, some fine acting from Dakota Fanning as lead singer Cherie Currie and Kristen Stewart as Joan Jett, and a raw, unblinking light shining on the excesses these young woman took once they reached the top.

My Rating: Bill Nelsen (2 ½ footballs)

The Losers – The title says it all for this horrible attempt to cross the A-Team with "The Expendables". Played the villain shooting a young woman in the face for not holding his umbrella right as a joke scene and also callously played off the murder of 25 children as just a reason to get our "heroes" upset. A few decent action scenes, but that's it.

My Rating: Mike Phipps (½ football)

September new movie releases

Movies I'm Anticipating

Machete
September 3

Starring: Danny Trejo, Michelle Rodriguez, Robert De Niro

Plot : After being betrayed by the organization who hired him, an ex-Federale launches a brutal rampage of revenge against the people who double-crossed him.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Relatively high critical praise for the “Exploitation” film. You get exactly what you expect; tons of blood, gore, and skin…but also a fun style to watch as Robert Rodriguez recaptures the magic he first showed with “Desperado”. And how can you not love a movie where the trailer lists the stars, and at says “and introducing…Don Johnson.”?

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The American
September 1

Starring: George Clooney, Paolo Bonacelli, Violante Placido

Plot : An assassin hiding out in an Italian village while he anticipates his last-ever assignment tempts fate by seeking out the friendship of a priest as well as the affection of a local woman.

View Trailer
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The BeerBuzz: Very different movie for Clooney, a political type thriller done in the style you normally see from European films. Currently running at 60% positive on Rottentomatoes.

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The Town
September 17

Starring: Ben Affleck, Rebecca Hall, John Hamm, Jeremy Renner

Plot : A career thief considers deepening his relationship with a bank teller who was traumatized by a recent heist -- and who has no idea that he was behind the crime. Meanwhile, an investigator, who is close to unmasking the thief's secret life, wrestles with his feelings for her as well.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: I think I'm looking forward to this one more than any other this month. The trailers look great, and the casting is fantastic. Affleck continues to do an admirable job in rehabilitating an image that was nearly destroyed by his involvement with Jennifer Lopez (and the movie Daredevil). Could be another "Gone Baby Gone".

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Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps
September 24

Starring: Shia LaBeouf, Michael Douglas, Carey Mulligan

Plot : Fallen stockbroker Gordon Gekko teams up with a young Wall Street trader, who's mentor was recently murdered, to track down the killer and warn others about an impending massive financial meltdown.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Oliver Stone has lately showed himself to be nothing more that bat guano crazy lately…but I'm really hoping that he's going to recapture the winning formula that he had in the original. I love the trailers I've seen, and I think the three lead actors are all perfect for their roles…but I'm a little weary of the whole murder mystery aspect of it.

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Movies That Might Be OK

Resident Evil: Afterlife
September 10

Starring: Milla Jovovich, Ali Larter, Wentworth Miller

Plot : As the T-Virus continues to spread, Alice maintains her mission to find survivors and keep them safe from the Undead, and to take down the Umbrella Corporation. Reteaming with Claire, Alice makes a dangerous journey to a new city that is said to be a safe haven: Los Angeles.

View Trailer
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The BeerBuzz: As far as sci-fi horror movie franchises go, these aren't that awful. Not exactly my cup of tea, but I understand the appeal. Accordingly, this one doesn't look too bad at all.

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Devil
September 17

Starring: Chris Messina, Caroline Dhavernas, Bokeem Woodbine

Plot : A group of peple trapped in an elevator realize that the devil is among them.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This was written by M. Night Shyamalan, so I am tempted to call it a piece of crap sight unseen. However, since the Egotistical One isn't directing this, it might actually have a chance of not sucking.

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Alpha and Omega
September 17

Starring: the voices of Hayden Panettiere, Justin Long, Christina Ricci

Plot : After being relocated to Idaho by park rangers, a female and a male wolf face a dangerous trip across unfamiliar territory in their attempt to find their way home to Canada.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: For the kids, this may be fun, which is the only reason I'm putting it in this category. From the trailer, I don't see this as anything for the adults that could possibly pass as anything better than tolerable.

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Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole
September 24

Starring: the voices of Jim Sturgess, Hugo Weaving, David Wenham

Plot : Soren is a young Barn Owl who lives in the peaceful forest of Tyto. Kidnapped and brought to the foreboding St. Aegolius Academy for Orphaned Owls, Soren must face certain challenges -- including taking his first-ever flight -- on a dangerous adventure that leads to the mythical Great Ga'Hoole Tree, where he and his friends Gylfie, Twilight, and Digge look to fight a great evil in their world.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Another one strictly for the kids…but I will concede that there is a possibility that this one could stretch out to adults as well. The 3D aspect looked great at the theaters. At best, it could be a 2010s version of "Dark Crystal".
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Movies That Have Little or No Interest to Me (but your mileage may vary)

Going the Distance
September 3

Starring: Drew Barrymore, Justin Long, Ron Livingston

Plot : A romantic comedy centered on a guy and a gal who try to keep their love alive as they shuttle back and forth between Chicago and Los Angeles to see one another.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Justin Long as a romantic lead? Sorry…just not buying it. Maybe a harmless date night movie that is at least a little bit better than “Valentines Day”.

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Easy A
September 17

Starring: Emma Stone, Amanda Bynes, Penn Badgley

Plot : As she studies *The Scarlet Letter*, a high schooler notices her parallels to the novel and begins to work the school's rumor mill to advance her social and financial standing.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: For girls from the ages of 15 – 29 only.

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You Again
September 24

Starring: Kristen Bell, Odette Ustman, Sigourney Weaver, Jamie Lee Curtis, Betty White

Plot : When a young woman realizes her brother is about to marry the girl who bullied her in high school, she sets out to expose the fiancée's true colors.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Interesting that in my first attempt at doing this format, the three movies I've listed as "avoid" are all chick-flicks. I hope I'm not skewered by my wife for that. For this film? Ugh.

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New DVD/Pay-Per-View Releases

As mentioned in previous columns, these dates are when the movies are released to be purchased as DVDs, or released for DirecTV/Cable/Dish Network Pay-Per-Views. The actual release to Netflix or Blockbuster may be as much as 28 days later.

Killers – *Sept. 7* – Ashton Kutcher and Katherine Heigl in a lame rip-off of "Mr. and Mrs. Smith". You know it's not worth watching when I tell you to hold out for "Knight & Day".

MacGruber – *Sept. 7* – Don't miss your chance to watch the movie most likely to clean up at next year's Razzies as the probable winner of "Worst Picture".

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time – *Sept. 14* – Another video game adaptation that stunk it up critically and at the box office. Sorry…Jake Gyllenhaal just doesn't cut it as an action hero.

Letters to Juliet – *Sept. 14* – Sappy romantic comedy with the stereotypical crappy plot

Just Wright – *Sept. 14* – Queen Latifah as a personal trainer and romantic interest to an NBA star? Right.

Robin Hood ***–*** *Sept. 21* – Not as bad as what you might think.

Iron Man 2 ***–*** *Sept. 28* – Not as great as the first one, but still a lot of fun.

Calendar Watch

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

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.