So what's been happening over the last few months? That's how long it's been since I've talked about any News and Rumors. Of course, one reason that I didn't bring these tidbits up in the columns for September and October were because not much was happening. That's changed a lot over the past four weeks.

Hobbit Time!! – Those furry footed little critters were everywhere in the entertainment news over the past few weeks. First was the story that Peter Jackson would indeed be directing the two films (for any of you who don't already know, the first Hobbit film will cover the entirety of the book "The Hobbit". The second movie will cover the 60 some years from the end of the first book until the start of "The Lord of the Rings", using Tolkien's material). Then there was bad news as a labor disagreement looked like it might put a kibosh on filming the movies in New Zealand.

Next came casting news; the biggest of which was the long-rumored-about signing of Martin Freeman as Bilbo Baggins. Excellent choice, as far as I'm concerned. Freeman was perfect for the role, and does resemble Ian Holm (Bilbo in the LOTR trilogy) enough to make it work. They also announced the casting of several of the dwarves. I didn't recognize any the names, but that doesn't concern me, as they'll be under as heavy of makeup as John Rhys-Davies was.

Finally, the labor dispute has been resolved, so look for filming to begin very soon. My guess is that the movie will be released at Christmastime, 2013 (I'd love to see it in 2012…I just don't see how it will be possible, given how long it took to do the CGI for LOTR).

Big Blue – James Cameron has never done a sequel to any of his original movies. He HAS made sequels to other directors' films, with "Terminator 2" and "Aliens", each time then stepping away from the franchises after his film. But you had to know that this was coming after "Avatar" grossed the GNP of the entire 3rd world combined: Avatar 2 and Avatar 3. Each will be self contained stories, and Cameron vows to "not back off the throttle of 'Avatar's' visual and emotional horsepower, and will continue to explore its themes and characters". These will hit the screens in December, 2014 and December 2015.

By George – George Clooney won't back off making the lower impact dramatic films HE wants to do, no matter what the box office might finally say. Which is why he'll still do the occasional fluffy bigger budget film; so that the studios will keep funding his passion works. "The Ides of March" definitely will fit into the "lower impact" category. Clooney will direct and star in this political drama that has Ryan Gosling as the main character, a political press spokesman for Clooney's Democratic presidential candidate. Gosling will tangle with Paul Giamatti as a rival campaign manager, as well as dealing with Marisa Tomei as a reporter and Evan Rachel Wood as an alluring intern. Clooney and Grant Heslov wrote the screenplay (they also collaborated on the excellent "Good Night and Good Luck").

The Last Christopher Nolan Batman – Christopher Nolan has revealed the title of his next Batman film, "The Dark Knight Rises"…and little else. But what we do know is that (a) this is to be "the final part of the trilogy" and (b) the Riddler will NOT be in this film (nor will Mr. Freeze). This leave Catwoman as the betting favorite for the villain, but it's all just guess work right now. I found the "end of the trilogy" part to be the most interesting blub…which makes me about as excited for the fourth film as I am for the "reboot" of "Spider-Man" (as in…not bloody much).

Bye-Bye, Big Love – HBO has announced that this upcoming fifth season of the polygamy based drama "Big Love" will be the last. I'm not really surprised at all, I'm just hoping they find a way to rebound from last season, which was flat out awful. Bill Henrickson (Bill Paxton) turned into a complete self-absorbed jerk, and I don't think it was intentional from the writers…it was just due to the stupid plot devices they threw in; particularly the idea of Bill running for political office for the sole intention of "coming out" as a polygamist once he won; which is how the season ended. At this point, a satisfactory conclusion would be for two of the sister-wives; Barb and Margine, to leave Bill, forcing him to deal 100% of the time with the obnoxious Nikki.

November new movie releases

Movies I'm Anticipating

Megamind
November 5

Starring: the voices of Will Ferrell, Brad Pitt, Jonah Hill

Plot : Megamind is the most brilliant super-villain the world has ever known, though after several unsuccessful attempts to conquer Metro City, a new foe sees him attempt -- for the first time in his life -- to use his powers for good.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Am I **really** looking forward to seeing this? OK…not really…lacking any 12 or under children, nieces or nephews to drag to the theater, it takes a LOT for me to go to an animated film alone. And I spell a LOT "P-I-X-A-R". But despite those paranoid rationalizations, this looks to be a fun movie, much in the same vein as Dreamworks/Paramount's earlier "How to Train Your Dragon".

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Fair Game
November 12 (nationwide)
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Starring: Naomi Watts, Sean Penn

Plot : While investigating the existence of Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq, CIA operative Valerie Plame discovers her identity allegedly leaked by the government as payback for an op-ed article her husband wrote criticizing the Bush administration.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Between the involvement of Bill O'Reilly's best buddy Sean Penn and the subject matter, there are going to be all kinds of closed minded people who will be screaming their hatred of this movie sight unseen. All the more reason for me to want to go see it. I am very interested in seeing how they handle this, because I personally consider the subject matter disgusting; the outing of a covert agent strictly for political gain. That won't stop me from slamming this movie if it is not; accurate, believable, and relevant. (But even if it's none of them, I'll still have watching Naomi Watts going for me…which is nice).

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Unstoppable
November 12

Starring: Denzel Washington, Chris Pine, Rosario Dawson

Plot : A rail company frantically works to prevent an unmanned, half-mile-long freight train carrying combustible liquids and poisonous gas from wiping out a city.

View Trailer
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The BeerBuzz: I wasn't initially sure I would be into ANOTHER train movie directed by Tony Scott and starring Denzel Washington after the dreck that was "The Taking of Pelham 1-2-3" last year. But I am intrigued by the trailers. If this is the balls-to-the-wall, unapologetic 100 mph thriller that it looks to be, it just might be a lot of fun to watch. The key will be the chemistry of two generations of charismatic actors in Washington and Pine.

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Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1
November 19

Starring: Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson, Rupert Grint

Plot: Harry, Hermione), and Ron set out from Hogwarts to find and destroy the Horcruxes -- the secret to Voldemort's power and immortality.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: THE blockbuster of the winter season, and a sure bet to finish in the top 2 for Box Office Champion of 2010. While last year's "Half Blood Prince" had a bit lighter tone as the kids spent a lot of the movie dealing with the complications of puberty, this one looks to be even darker than "The Order of the Phoenix", building off the tragedy at the end of "Half Blood Prince" towards the final battle between Good and Evil. No 3-D on this one, despite earlier plans…which doesn't bother me in the least. I'll be making the 90 mile trip to the nearest IMAX theater to catch this one the first weekend.

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The Next Three Days
November 19

Starring: Russell Crowe, Elizabeth Banks, Liam Neeson

Plot : A married couple's life is turned upside down when Lara Brennan is accused of murder. Three years into her sentence, Lara's husband John is struggling to keep their family together and, realizing his wife's deteriorating condition, he decides to break her out of prison.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Interesting decision to have this open on the same weekend as Harry Potter. I'm very interested in this, especially given that the director and screenwriter is Paul Haggis ("Crash", "In the Valley of Elah" as director, also screenwriter for "Letters from Iwo Jima", "Casino Royale", and "Million Dollar Baby"). The cast looks to be excellent, and it appears to be an adrenaline pumper in the same line as "Unstoppable".

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Love and Other Drugs
November 24

Starring: Jake Gyllenhaal, Anne Hathaway, Judy Greer

Plot : A romantic comedy that skewers the pharmaceutical industry and is centered on relentlessly charming Viagra salesman Jamie Reidy and his romantic involvement with free-spirited Maggie Murdock

View Trailer
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The BeerBuzz: A romantic comedy about a Viagra salesman. What's not to love? I'm also sensing a lot of social satire in this one as well, perhaps a bit like we saw last year in "Up in the Air"? Love the trailers on this one, especially seeing Anne Hathaway playing this type of role.

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Movies That Might Be OK

Due Date
November 5

Starring: Robert Downey Jr., Zach Galifianakis, Michelle Monaghan

Plot : High-strung father-to-be Peter Highman is forced to hitch a ride with aspiring actor Ethan Tremblay on a road trip in order to make it to his child's birth on time.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: I'm sure this movie is going to be a big hit, but right now I'm not really planning on seeing another variation a "Planes, Trains, and Automobiles", one where they just make Galifianakis out to be a dumber version of John Candy. What makes it worse is that to me, it looks as if Downey is bored out of his mind in these trailers. I could be wrong, though…we'll see.

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Morning Glory
November 12

Starring: Rachel McAdams, Harrison Ford, Diane Keaton

Plot : A hotshot television producer is set the challenge of reviving a struggling morning show program, despite the constant feuding of its high-profile anchors.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: I get the feeling that my wife will be dragging me to this one, in hopes that it might be as amusing as “It’s Complicated”. At this point, I’m pretty leery about it. I love the idea of having Rachel McAdams as the centerpoint…just because, like Naomi Watts, I don’t have a problem oogling…er…watching her. My problem is with Harrison Ford. Unlike Diane Keaton, who has found a great niche as an “over 55” actress, Ford just hasn’t adjusted well to not being an action hero any longer. I’m not sure this is going to be the vehicle to take him into his next phase, either.

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Skyline
November 12

Starring: Eric Balfour, Donald Faison, Scottie Thompson

Plot : A group of friends fight to survive as a mysterious light source causes people to vanish into the air

View Trailer
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The BeerBuzz: “Independence Day” meets “Cloverfield”. Starring the guy who played Milo on “24”? I don’t know.

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Tangled
November 24

Starring: the voices of Mandy Moore, Zachary Levi

Plot : Rapunzel a princess with 70 feet of magical, golden hair, has been locked away for years in a tower high above her kingdom. Desperate to be free, she strikes a deal with Flynn Rider, a handsome bandit who chooses her tower as a hide-out spot.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Not a great gut feeling about this one. The fact that it’s coming out a week after Harry Potter is going to seriously cut into its box office potential.

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Movies That Aren’t Worth Wasting Your Time

For Colored Girls
November 5

Starring: Janet Jackson, Anika Noni Rose, Whoopi Goldberg

Plot : A drama centered on a group of black women whose lives and experiences intersect at a 12-step healing program.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Tyler Perry does his first non-original film, trying to adapt the 1975 play “For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Enuf”. I just don’t see how Perry, given his body of work, can actually do something decent with something from 35 years ago.

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Burlesque
November 24

Starring: Cher, Christina Aguilera, Alan Cumming

Plot : A small-town girl ventures to Los Angeles and finds her place in a neo-burlesque club run by a former dancer.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This one looks aimed right at the same demographic that loves “Glee”, and “Pricilla, Queen of the Desert”. Me? Despite all kinds of friends who set their week up to watch “Glee”, I’ve never seen an episode…so don’t expect me to take one for the team and go watch this (probable) mess. I already have visions of this being much more like “Xanadu” or “Glitter”
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than “Chicago”.

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Faster
November 24

Starring: Dwayne Johnson, Billy Bob Thornton, Maggie Grace

Plot : An ex-con (Johnson) sets out to avenge his brother's death after they were double-crossed during a heist years ago. During his campaign, however, he's tracked by a veteran cop (Thornton) and an egocentric hit man.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Ugh. The Rock just needs to keep churning out Disney flicks.

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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.

BTW, you can tell that it’s Christmas Season towards the end of this month. Just check out all

the new releases.

***Toy Story 3* – Nov. 2 –** Just go ahead right now and make it a point to buy this one on Blu-Ray. And keep the Kleenex box handy for the last 10 minutes.

Grown Ups – Nov. 9 – Another Adam Sandler movie that made a boatload of money ($160 million plus) that was universally despised by critics. Sandler is crying all the way to the bank.

Scott Pilgrim vs. the World – Nov. 9 – I regret not having time to get to the theater for this one, as it's supposed to be pretty good…but the marketing department didn't know how to sell it, so it bombed at the box office. I'm smelling Cult DVD here.

Charlie St. Cloud – Nov. 9 - For those of you who can't get enough of Zach Efron (and you people really need help).

***Ramona and Beezus – Nov. 9 – ***Have a girl between 8 and 13? That would be the only reason in the world to buy or rent this.

***Cats & Dogs: The Revenge of Kitty Galore – Nov. 16 – ***Talking dogs; my biggest movie nightmare.

***Disney's A Christmas Carol – Nov. 16 – ***Disney knows how to milk a profit, waiting a full year to release this Jim Carrey animated film out to DVD.

***The Last Airbender – Nov. 16 – ***M. Night Shyamalan still sucks**.**

***Lottery Ticket– Nov. 16 – ***Spend your money on real lottery tickets. Even if all of them are losers, it's better than watching this.

Eat, Pray, Love – Nov. 23 **-** My wife is still ticked that I slammed this without seeing it. So I'm sure we'll rent it…then I'll slam it again.

The Expendables ***– Nov. 23*** **–** It is exactly what you would think it would be. So go rent it.

The Twilight Saga: Eclipse – Nov. 30 **–** Since I've watched the other two films, and neither loved nor totally hated them, I'll finally catch this as well. They aren't the worst things out there (that would be anything from M. Night), but they are nowhere near the hype.

The Kids Are Alright – Nov. 30 **–** Expect an Oscar nomination for either Julianne Moore, Annette Bening, or both for this quirky tale of a lesbian couple dealing with their teenage children learning of their biological father.

Knight & Day – Nov. 30 **–** For some reason, I'm really looking forward to this one.

Vampires Suck – Nov. 30 – And so does this movie.

Calendar Watch

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

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 Tourist – December 10 – Johnny Depp and Angelina Jolie in a "Romantic Spy Thriller".

The Fighter – December 17 – 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.