The football movie "Invincible" (starring Mark Wahlberg) is the weeks biggest release, though big second weekends are expected from "Soap", "Talladega Nights", and "Snakes On A Plane" as well. Mitch recaps the weekend releases to the theaters and on DVD, as well as the latest Hollywood news, rumors, and projects in this weeks edition of 'The Crystal Ball'.

No worries about anyone thinking too much at the theaters last weekend as “Snakes on a Plane” narrowly beat out “Talladega Nights” as the number one movie. But the Future Cult Classic SoaP only raked in $15 million, which probably will mean it won’t even sniff the Top Ten moneymakers of the year…a list in which “Pirates of the Caribbean 2” is all but guaranteed of topping, as this last weekend Captain Jack Sparrow and company became only the seventh film in history to go over $400 million in U.S. ticket sales.

“Snakes” has already created some additional unintentional (maybe) news in a story that has been debunked as false. A story came out Wednesday that two pranksters had set loose two live rattlesnakes in an Arizona theatre showing the shock-flick. Not true, according to local police, although a small rattler had slithered on its own into a hallway of a local theater. And the Hype Machine rolls on.

For this weekend, I expect SoaP to end up second and Talladega Nights to drop to third as the football flick “Invincible” looks like a sure new #1. The other three new releases look like sure films-to-be-seen-at-Blockbuster-next-month dogs.

News & Rumors:

~ Swerb's favorite James Gandolfini has a new project for HBO. The "Sopranos" star will appear as iconic author Ernest Hemingway in a movie about the author's torrid affair with WWII journalist Martha Gelhorn, to be played by Robin Wright Penn. Gelhorn was reportedly the inspiration for Hemingway's legendary book "For Whom the Bell Tolls". Just as long as they still have Pappa fishing with a pole, and not mafia-izing him by having him take out a Glock to shoot the fish.

~ So often in the N&R section I have the sad duty to inform you all about sucky movies to come. Therefore it is with great joy that I tell you of a sucky movie that will NOT be made: "Oceans 14". Sadly, "Oceans 13" is being filmed, but director Stephen Soderbergh has promised us two things: First off that this second sequel will more closely resemble "Oceans 11" and not the horrid "Oceans 12", and secondly that this will be the last one. Yeah, and my dog doesn't bite and the check is in the mail.

~ Adam Sandler "strange concept" comedies are always "hit or miss" stories that at the least are a departure from some of the cookie cutter dreck put out by Ben Stiller. "Click", "50 First Dates", and even the dreadful "Little Nicky" were at least semi-original in their concept. His next film will be another in that line, "I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry", where Sandler and Kevin James play straight firefighters who pose as a gay married couple in order to qualify for the department's domestic partner benefits. Steve Buscemi, Dan Akroyd, and Jessica Biel will also star. Hmm…I wonder whom Jessica will fall in love with…Sandler or James?

~ Mega Hit to come category. Russell Crowe and Denzel Washington will star in Ridley Scott's' latest huge budget attempt at a blockbuster entitled "American Gangster". Washington will play real life drug kingpin Frank Lucas, a man who shipped heroin to the US in the coffins of dead soldiers in Vietnam. Crowe plays Richie Roberts, the fed who eventually captured Lucas. I'm just wondering if they'll have to order extra trailers on the set to accommodate all the massive egos.

This week's new releases:

Title: **Invincible**

Starring: Mark Wahlberg, Greg Kinnear, Elizabeth Banks.

Plot: 30 year old teacher and bartender gets a once in a lifetime chance to try out for the Philadelphia Eagles. Based on the true story of Vince Papale.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Given that this is first and foremost a sports site, of course I'm going to be looking forward to this one. This has all the makings of one of those prototypical "underdog beats all odds to fulfill his dream" flicks like "The Rookie". And I'm cool with that, as I'd much rather see a film where the goal is just making the team rather than one ending with The Big Game. This one really looks to be a winner, and if it's good enough, maybe I'll have a new entry on my Best and Worst Sports Movies list. It will all hinge on whether or not Kinnear is convincing during the obligatory Dick Vermeil crying jags.

Title: **Idlewild**

Starring: Andre Benjamin, Big Boi (the two members of Outkast), Terrance Howard

Plot: A musical set in the South during Prohibition that has the two Outkast members playing club owners trying to hold on as mobsters want to take over their joint.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: If you follow the music industry, you know that this is widely regarded as the final collaboration between Andre 3000 (Benjamin) and Big Boi as the group is finito. I personally DON'T follow the music industry, and I am affected by this announcement almost as much as I'm affected by tomorrow's weather report for Vancouver. This is a major flop-to-be, and there is a good chance that the soundtrack album will make much more money than the film.

Title: **Beerfest**

Starring: Jay Chandrasekhar, Kevin Heffeman, Steve Lemme (there's three box office toppers if I've ever seen them).

Plot: Beer is good for you.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Ha ha ha, I'm writing "the BeerBuzz" about a movie called "Beerfest", isn't that clever? So why wouldn't I love a movie about and underground beer-and-games competition in Germany? Because it's STUPID! But if you liked "Super Troopers", "Club Dread", and "The Dukes of Hazzard", you'll probably enjoy it...because it's the same people making this one. I'll probably rent it when it comes out on DVD and invent some drinking game to play during it so I end up totally drunk on my ass. This one won't even end up as the Best Beer Comedy ever, as there is no way it could beat out the Mackenzie Brothers in "Strange Brew".

Title: **How to Eat Fried Worms**

Starring: A bunch of snot nosed fifth graders.

Plot: On the first day of class, a boy accepts a dare from the class bully to eat worms.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This just may out-gross “Snakes on a Plane”, and I’m not talking about the box office take here. Sorry, but films aimed at 10 year old boys don’t rake it in like films aimed at 10 year old girls…and someday I must think about the reasons for that…some day when I’m really, really bored.

New DVD Releases on Tuesday, August 29th

Akeela and the Bee – Laurence Fishburne once proved that being a chess geek could be cool in “Searching for Bobby Fisher”. OK, at least it looked that way in the film, but let’s face it…the last thing chess geeks are is “cool”…they are nerds, so let’s skip the bullshit and call a spade a spade. My point (other than a rambling rant?). Laurence is in this one, too. And now he’s trying to convince us that Spelling Bees are cool. If you buy that, I have some swamp land in Silicone Valley to sell you.

The Sentinel – Michael Douglass goes from being the American President eleven years ago to banging the First Lady in this one as a Secret Service Agent that is being set up as the fall guy in an assassination attempt. Kieffer Sutherland plays his protégé as if it were Jack Bauer if he were to actually play by the rules…which makes Jack a dull boy. Pretty predictable thriller, but relatively watchable.

Lord of the Rings: The Umpteenth Different Release Designed To Milk More Money So That Peter Jackson Is Richer Than Bill Gates – If you buy these JUST because you wanted to see a few more "special features", please get help.

Friends With Money: No, this is not a story about the Fall of Maurice Clarett, but a well reviewed Indie Film with Jennifer Aniston playing a middle class woman hanging around several rich friends. This couldn't be seen by that many people at the theaters, as the film was so dripping with estrogen that it kept clogging up the projectors.

The Chuck Norris Collection – When the Boogeyman goes to sleep every night, he checks his closet for Chuck Norris. If Chuck Norris and Jack Bauer banded together, they could go down to Hell, and kick Satan's ass up one side and down the other.

Calendar Watch:

Next week: *Crank, The Wicker Man, Crossover*

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

Hollywoodland : September 8th - Adrien Brody plays an investigator looking into whether or not the death of Superman actor George Reeve (Ben Afflack (gack!)) was a suicide or murder.

The Black Dahlia – September 15th – Brian DePalma's latest, a film noir treatment of a James Ellroy novel. Scarlett Johannson looks totally hot in it.

All the King’s Men : September 22nd Sean Penn, Jude Law, and James Gandolfini in the classic remake of the thinly veiled tale of the life of Louisiana governor Huey Long.

Children of Men – September 29th – Futuristic movie with Clive Owen and Juliana Moore where women can no longer bear children, and mankind seems doomed to extinction until one woman mysteriously becomes pregnant

The Departed : October 6th - Scorsese's latest with the Cast To Die For. Jack Nicholson, Matt Damon, Leonardo DiCaprio, Mark Wahlberg, Martin Sheen, Alec Baldwin, and Ray Winstone in a story about a cop (Leo) who has infiltrated the mob, and a mobster (Damon) who has infiltrated the cops.

Man of the Year : October 13th – Robin Williams as a Jon Stewart type commentator/comedian who runs for President as an Independent to shake things up…and wins.

Flags of Our Fathers: October 20th - Director Clint Eastwood's tale of the men who raised the

flag on Iwo Jima.

The Prestige : October 20th – Christopher Nolan (Momento) directs Hugh Jackman, Christian Bale, and Scarlett Johansson in a turn of the century mystery about two magicians. This one has some great early buzz.

Lucky You : October 27th Eric Bana/Drew Barrymore movie centering around the Poker Craze and the World Series of Poker.

A Good Year : November 10th - Ridley Scott's latest with a kinder, gentler Russell Crowe and a plot line revolving around a vineyard. Crowe and booze…always an interesting combination.

Casino Royale : November 17th - Daniel Craig in his first appearance as 007. Good early buzz on this one.

The Fountain : November 22nd – Hugh Jackman as a 16th Century Conquistador who finds the real fountain of youth and spends 1000 years searching for a way to save his love.

Déjà Vu: November 22nd – Denzel Washington in a Tony Scott time travel adventure.

Rocky Balboa – December 22nd – Adrian!!!! I want to watch Matlock!!!!

The Good Shepherd – December 22nd – Robert Di Niro directs Matt Damon, Anjelina Jolie and himself in a tale of the early years of the CIA.

Dreamgirls – December 25th – Big budget adaptation of the Broadway musical with Beyonce, Jamie Foxx and Eddie Murphy.