The Summer Of Suck has almost wound to a close, and we're finally in for what should be a great fall movie season. In this weeks edition of The Crystal Ball, Mitch looks ahead to those films and examines this weeks releases as well. Note that I said the Summer Of Suck has ALMOST wound to a close. This weeks crop is brutal, and Mitch opens season in his reviews of them ... in only a way Mitch can.

One last weekend of semi-crappy films to be dumped on us, and then we're set for three months of excellent releases (see the Upcoming Biggies feature at the bottom).

At least with this week's new films, there is some potential for a few chuckles. Some intentional ("Open Season", "School for Scoundrels"); some not (Kevin Costner and Ashton Kutcher).

News & Rumors:

~ One of Ron Howard's next Serious Projects will be a film adaptation of the play "Frost/Nixon", centered about the 1977 interviews the disgraced former President gave to the famous British TV host. Hopefully it's going to have lots of flashbacks…but I still can't figure out how it would be different from say…renting the actual interview and then watching Oliver Stone's excellent "Nixon".

~ Alien vs Predator 2 has been greenlighted. Why? Reiko Aylesworth (Michelle Dressler in

"24") and Steven Pasquale (the dim witted Garrity in "Rescue Me") will be the human stars. I get the feeling that the "Snakes on a Plane" will look like "Casablanca" compared to this.

~ From the ridiculous to the sublime: Tommy Lee Jones and Charleze Theron are set to star in "The Garden of Elah". Jones will play a career soldier whose son goes AWOL under mysterious circumstances after returning from the Iraq War. Theron plays a detective trying to help Jones get to the bottom of it all. There are many things I would like Charlize Theron help me with…none of which I should really get into in this column.

~ And the man who will be playing Tony Stark, aka Iron Man in the upcoming Superhero movie is: Robert Downey, Jr??? OK, I know the comic book character was one extremely screwed up dude…but Robert Downey, Jr??? Could be worse…could be Ashton Kutcher or Tom Cruise.

~ And you just have to love this news. I've been reporting for some time that Keith Richards will be playing Captain Jack Sparrow's father in the third Pirates of the Caribbean movie. Well, they were trying to film his cameo, and Keith was shitfaced drunk, requiring assistance from director Gore Verbinsky. Richards' reported line to the director/staff was classic: "If you wanted straight, then you got the wrong man". Keith Richards is my hero.

This week's new releases:

Title: **The Guardian**

Starring: Kevin Costner, Ashton Kutcher

Plot: Coast Guard rescue swimmer burns out and turns to teaching back at the academy

where he mentors a young hot shot.

The BeerBuzz: So you have to ask yourself two questions. Is Kevin Costner on a horse or playing a jock? Is Ashton Kutcher on screen? Unless the answers are “yes” and “no”, then you are going to have a sucky movie…and this one looks to be laugh out loud B-A-D. “An Officer and a Gentleman; Lite-weight”. If Kutcher tears up while yelling “I got no where else to go!!!”, my lunch may have somewhere else to go.

Title: **Open Season**

Starring: the voices of Martin Lawrence, Ashton Kutcher, and Debra Messing.

Plot: A domesticated grizzly beer and a mentally deficient one antlered deer try to survive the start of hunting season.

The BeerBuzz: From the trailers, this looks like it could be pretty funny, and a movie that you can take the kids to and not want to step out to the refreshment stand to order a double Clorox. Lawrence’s bear looks to be the coolest one since Yogi, and ya gotta love the pissed off Scottish squirrels. And I’m not sure what’s up with the numerous wigged out rabbits…might be fun to watch it totally wasted when it comes out on DVD.

Title: **School for Scoundrels**

Starring: Billy Bob Thorton, Jon Heder, Michael Clarke Duncan

Plot: Loser-boy signs up for a self-confidence class to work up the courage to ask out the girl of his dreams. But it ends up that the rascal instructor sets sights on the girl himself.

The BeerBuzz: Could really be funny…or could really be stupid. OK, it's stupid one way or another, but the funny part has yet to be determined. Billy Bob looks to expand upon his excellent bad boy performance in "Bad Santa", which bodes well for the film, as does Duncan playing any role in a comedy (the man makes James Earl Jones sound like a tenor in comparison). The funniest story coming out of this movie was the dig Billy Bob managed to get through regarding ex-wife Angelina Jolie. At one point, his character listens to Heder's character talk about his love for the girl (Jacinda Barrett), and responds, "Yeah, I'm sure your days away from adopting a Chinese kid together"…a slam against Angelina's adoption of an Asian child. BBT, of course, denies anything derogatory was meant from it. And the check is in the mail, too.

New DVD Releases on Tuesday, October 3rd

X-Men 3: The Last Stand – For the 20 or so movies I've reviewed since the inception of this board, only the horrid "Lady in the Water" has received a lower grade than this stinker. In truth, it's not horrible…but in comparison to the excellent first two editions directed by Bryan Singer, it really leaves a lot to be desired. Not Batman 4 or Hulk level suck…but very disappointing to fans of the series. Kelsey Grammer as "Beast" and Hugh Jackman's Wolverine still shine, though.

Thank You for Smoking – Biting satire of a film centered around a lobbyist for the tobacco industry. I'm holding out for the version where they put back in the nude scene with Katie

Holmes. Somebody help me.

And I'm not sure why, but there are a boat load of "classics" being re-released this week as "special editions", including:

21 Grams: Special Edition

Body Double: Special Edition

Bugsy: Extended Cut

Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels: Locked 'N Loaded Director's Cut - Unrated

The Little Mermaid: 2-Disc Special Edition

The Maltese Falcon: 3-Disc Special Edition

Point Break: Pure Adrenaline Edition (their wording…NOT mine)

Scarface: Platinum Edition

Calendar Watch:

Next week: *The Departed, Employee of the Month, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: the Beginning.*

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

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.

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.