Two big time releases this week, with "Flags Of Our Fathers" and "The Prestige" opening at theaters nationwide today. Mitch breaks down these films, the other new releases at the theater and on DVD, and the latest Hollywood news and rumors in latest version of "The Crystal Ball".

The early buzz regarding “Man of the Year” turned out to be true…it really was a bad movie. Which brings up the question; why do Robin Williams comedies almost always suck?

Here is a man who is arguably one of the top four stand up comedians of all time along with Lenny Bruce, George Carlin, and Richard Prior (my favorite), but most comedies he performs in are complete flops at worst (“RV”, “Flubber”, “Father’s Day”, “Hook”), or saccharine dreck at best (“Mrs. Doubtfire”, “Patch Adams”). Hell, the man has proven that he can act, especially in dramas, given his performances in “One Hour Photo”, “Insomnia”, “Awakenings”, and particularly his Oscar winning performance in “Good Will Hunting”.

I had high hope initially for “Man of the Year”, since he was teamed back up with the only man that seemed to know how to translate his stand-up genius to film, Barry Levinson, the director of “Good Morning, Vietnam”. But Barry wimped out, and decided to make a mish-mosh movie that was part broad comedy, part satire, part romance, and part political thriller. And came up with something that may end up rivaling “All the King’s Men” as the biggest disappointment of the year.

News & Rumors:

~ Speaking of major bombs, “The Adventures of Pluto Nash” rates up there as one of the biggest disasters for a studio EVER. The futuristic Eddie Murphy-in-space film had a budget of over $100,000,000 and took in less than $5 million at the box office. So that should be the last we ever see of Eddie in space, right? Wrong…as 20th Century Fox will put Eddie back in the Spacesuit for “Starship Dave”, where he will have two roles…one as the captain of a crew of miniature human like aliens who are flying to earth in a spaceship…that is also Eddie Murphy. See people…drugs really ARE bad…especially when ingested by middle aged studio execs right before making decisions.

~ Helena Bonham Carter and Sacha Baron Cohen (“Ali G”, “Borat”, “Taladega Nights”) have joined Johnny Depp in the cast of Tim Burton’s “Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street”. Carter will play Mrs. Lovett, the maker of wonderful Meat Pies (whose main ingredient is the remains of bodies killed by Sweeney Todd), while Cohen will portray rival barber Signor Pirelli. I have little expectation of box office success for this movie, as it is a dark, dark musical comedy about a serial killer, but I will certainly be there for its opening weekend. As I have confessed all along, I am a sick, sick man (emphasized by my enthusiasm towards a TV series about a serial killer, “Dexter”).

~ If you’ve read many of my Crystal Ball News & Rumors reports, you know I have had a lot of fun ridiculing the planned big screen adaptation of “Dallas”, with John Travolta as J.R. Ewing. And to channel Beetlejuice for a moment, “it keeps getting funnier every single time I see it”…as now the producers have decided it would be too expensive to have Jennifer Lopez, Shirley MacLaine, and Luke Wilson as co-stars, so they’ll be going with “lesser” actors. Let us know how that works out for ya. This segues perfectly into my last blurb…

~ Some complete and utter idiot has decided to remake the 1984 cult classic comedy “Revenge of the Nerds”. Why? Didn’t we suffer enough with “Dukes of Hazard”? Ryan Pinkston, Christopher Marquette, Nick Zano, and Jenna Dewan will “star” in this abomination, and if you recognize two or more of those names, you should immediately move out of your parents’ basement and get a life.

This week’s new releases:

Title: **Flags of Our Fathers**

Starring: Ryan Phillippe, Barry Pepper, Joseph Cross

Plot: Depicts the lives of the men who raised the flag in the famous picture of the Battle of Iwo Jima.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Clint Eastwood is the director, Steven Spielberg is a producer, and Paul Haggis ("Crash") is one of the screenwriters. That is enough right there to let you know it's going to be a very good movie. Whether or not it will be a classic and an award winner is another, and the early buzz is that this isn't quite up to that level, but still a terrific picture with some really intense, "Private Ryan" level battle scenes. I'll give you the details early next week in my review

Title: **The Prestige**

Starring: Christian Bale, Hugh Jackman, Scarlett Johansson.

Plot: Two magicians in turn of the century London become rivals determined to destroy each other's career.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: This looks to be another of Christopher Nolan's "love it or hate it" mind benders. I've got to give Nolan credit for making another dark mystery after the success of "Batman Begins", rather than taking on a splashier big budget spectacle. This may not be as good as the cult favorite "Momento", but it may be right up there with Nolan's "Insomnia", which wouldn't be bad territory at all. David Bowie and Michael Caine co-star.

Title: **Marie Antoinnette**

Starring: Kirsten Dunst, Jason Schwartzman, Rip Torn

Plot: Stylized depiction of the life and death of the 18th Century's version of Paris Hilton.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Sophia Coppola has definitely decided not to play it safe after her success with "Lost in Translation", picking a movie about one of the most notorious women in history, and playing her as a sympathetic, clueless party girl. While this will certainly not be for everyone, and I have too many other movies at the theater that I want to see; this will be on my "must watch" list when it hits DVD.

Title: **Flicka**

Starring: Alison Lohan, Tim McGraw, Maria Bello

Plot: A teenaged girl claims a wild horse as her own in an effort to prove to her father that she is capable of eventually taking over the family ranch.

View Trailer

The BeerBuzz: Tim McGraw really needs to stay with acting in Billy Bob Thornton movies. And Alison Lohan is close to 30 for God's sake…so why is she still playing a teenager? Oh yeah, it's because she has the body of a 12 year old boy. EAT SOMETHING, you walking swizzle stick!!! In any case, this looks like a perfect tear jerking movie for your wife to take your 10 year old daughter to while you're at the next auditorium watching blood and bullets fly in "The Departed". (Please send your outrage over my male chauvinist pig stereotyping to idontcare@upyours.com
)

New DVD Releases on Tuesday, October 24th

With Halloween coming soon, guess what we're going to be overloaded with this week?

An American Haunting – Blood. Guts. Gore. Screaming.

Slither – Blood. Guts. Gore. Screaming.

Saw II: 2 Disc Uncut Edition – Blood. Guts. Gore. Screaming.

Monster House – A Halloween flick for the kids that doesn't involve blood, guts, gore, but maybe a little screaming. CGI flick about a house that is also a monster…hence the clever title.

Nacho Libre – For serious Jack Black fans only. Tale of a poor Mexican priest who raises money for his charities by doubling as a masked "rassler" on the Mexican pro circuit.

Calendar Watch:

Next week: *Saw III* , *Catch a Fire*

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

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.

Stranger Than Fiction – November 10th – Will Ferrell tries to replicate Jim Carrey's success in the break-from-comedy surrealistic drama in which he plays a man who hears the voice of an author in his head as she contemplates how to kill him off, thinking he is only a fictional character. Strange indeed.

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. The early buzz on this one is that it's going to bomb big time.

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

Apocalypto : December 8th – Mel Gibson's latest controversial movie filmed entirely in a dead language, this one focusing on the decline and fall of the Mayan Civilization.

Blood Diamond – December 15th – Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Connelly, and Djimon Hounsou have various reasons to search for a priceless diamond in Sierra Leone.

Rocky Balboa – December 22nd – I'll admit it…the trailer makes it look much better than Rocky IV or Rocky V.

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

We Are Marshall – December 22nd – Another uplifting movie with football as the backdrop…this one about the attempts to rebuild the Marshall football program after the tragic 1970 airline crash that killed 75 players, coaches, and staff.

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

The Good German – December 25th – Another Good Movie (I kill me). Oscar contender from Stephen Soderberg starring George Clooney and Kate Blanchette in post WWII Berlin.

2007 Attempts at Blockbusters (most dates are nothing more than educated guesses at this point).

Children of Men – New release date for the futuristic Clive Owen and Julianna Moore film about a world where women can no longer get pregnant, dooming mankind. (January)

Zodiac – Jake Gyllenhaal and Robert Downey, Jr star in the tale of the Bay Area serial killer

(January)

Ghost Rider – Nicholas Cage turns into a motorcycle riding superhero with a flaming skeleton head. (February)

Reign Over Me – First major fictional piece dealing with the effects of 9/11 on the families, starring Adam Sandler (against type) and Don Cheadle (March)

300 – Frank Miller adaptation of the Frank Miller graphic novel about 300 Spartans defending Greece from the entire frickin' Persian Empire. Filmed in the same style as "Sin City". (March)

Grind House – Two one-hour short horror stories, one from Robert Rodriguez, the other from Quentin Tarantino. (April)

Spider-Man 3 – The webslinger versus Venom and Sandman. (May)

Shrek the Third – Justin Timberlake as young King Arthur. Gulp (May)

Pirates of the Caribbean: At the World's End – Captain Jack goes for the hat trick (May)

Ocean's Thirteen – Will someone please stick a fork in this franchise? (June)

Fantastic Four: The Rise of the Silver Surfer – No way does this film get completed by this date (June)

Live Free or Die Hard – John McClane strikes again (probably with his walker) (June)

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix – My wife and daughter will be there the first day (July)