

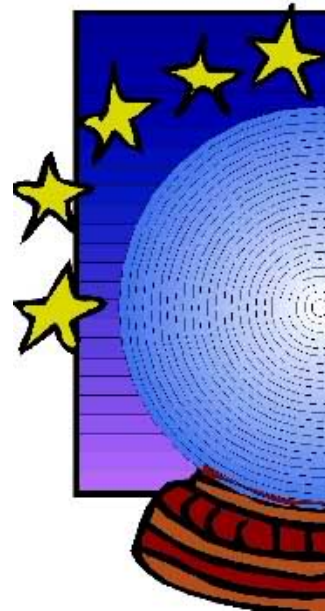
## The Crystal Ball - Nov 2 Releases

Written by {ga=mitch}

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"Transformers", "Pirates of the Caribbean", "Harry Potter", "Bourne Ultimatum", "Spider-Man", "Knocked Up", and "The Simpsons". It was a big summer for blockbusters. But in this week's Crystal Ball, Mitch says the crop of films from the fall have been even better, if lower profile. We got another should-be good one this week as "American Gangster" hits the theaters tonight ... and Mitch is heading out to the cinema this weekend to review it for us.



There have been all kinds of theories as to why the box office has stunk so badly since the end of August.

To me, it's very simple...it's because of how huge the summer blockbuster season was this year.

Most adults attend three to six movies per year at the theater. This summer, there was a deluge of high interest, mega-budget films, and there was pretty much something for everyone.

So most people who limit themselves on theater attendance used almost their entire year's worth of movies to go see "Transformers", "Pirates of the Caribbean", "Harry Potter", "Bourne Ultimatum", "Spider-Man", "Knocked Up" and/or "The Simpsons".

After all of those, their wads have been shot, and despite the influx of smart, well made films aimed at adults (&quot;3:10 to Yuma&quot;, &quot;Eastern Promises&quot;, &quot;Michael Clayton&quot;, &quot;Gone Baby Gone&quot;), these sporadic theater attendees have had enough for now, but are vowing to catch all of these films once they hit DVD.

There hasn't been a film released since August 17<sup>th</sup> that has crossed the \$100 million mark (&quot;Superbad&quot;). But that will change starting this week, as I fully expect both &quot;American Gangster&quot; and &quot;Bee Movie&quot; to quickly pass the \$100M figure.

## News and Rumors

~ Speaking of &quot;Michael Clayton&quot;, the director/writer of that fine film, Tony Gilroy, has his next project lined up, and it looks like a winner. Clive Owen and Julia Roberts will star in &quot;Duplicity&quot;, another corporate mystery/thriller with Owen and Roberts playing longtime lovers who work as rival corporate spies, but team up to stage an elaborate con.

~ Noted twisted mind Terry Gilliam (Monty Python) has an interesting project in the works. &quot;The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus&quot; will have Christopher Plummer playing a man with the gift of guiding the imagination of others. The ability is a result of a deal with the devil, played in a perfect bit of casting by Tom Waits. Heath Ledger will be the &quot;lead&quot; in the film, getting involved when it comes

time for the Devil to collect his debt.

~ A sequel to "Dances with Wolves"? Evidently, there has been a commitment to put "Wolves"; author Michael Blake's "The Holy Ground" to film. It picks up 10 years after the conclusion of the Kevin Costner classic, focusing once again on Lt. John Dunbar and his wife Stands with a Fist, but they are in the American Southwest, and have been assimilated into the Comanche nation, not the Sioux, and are leaders of the tribe. The book was panned, and turning this project over to director Simon Wincer, who gave us "Operation: Dumbo Drop", "Crocodile Dundee in LA", and "Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man" seems to scream CRAP! Don't look for Costner to be involved in any sense of the word. And don't look for me to be in line once it's released.

~ "X-Files 2" will be ready for a July 25, 2008 release. Series creator Chris Carter will be at the helm again, leading Scully and Mulder on a standalone story that will be unrelated to the series and the first film.

~ Jason Statham will return as hitman Chev Chelios in "Crank 2". Pretty interesting considering how "Crank" ended. Nothing like having a sequel to what I consider the worst film that I watched from 2006.

~ In conjunction with the upcoming "Justice League" movie will be separate films about The Flash and Green Lantern. When will it end?

~ William Shatner is whining about not being allowed to star in the new Star Trek film. Psst...Bill...Kirk was killed off in "Star Trek: Generations". And for good reason; you're an egotistical idiot and people hated the caricature you have made of yourself. Let it go.

## **This week's new movie releases:**

### **American Gangster**

Starring: Denzel Washington and Russell Crowe

Plot: A 1970s detective tracks down a kingpin of a heroine empire who gets his drugs into the country by smuggling them in body bags of soldiers killed in Vietnam.

[View Trailer](#),

The BeerBuzz: Ridley Scott looks to get his game back after last year's debacle "A Good Year", teaming his "Gladiator" star with Denzel channeling his character from "Training Day". This looks to be a huge success both critically and financially. I'll let you know in a few days, as I'll be seeing it tonight.

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## **Bee Movie**

Starring: The Voices of Jerry Seinfeld, Renee Zellweger, Chris Rock, Mathew Broderick, and John Goodman

Plot: A bee who has just graduated from college is

disillusioned at his lone career choice, making honey. On a special trip outside the hive, his life is saved by a florist in New York. As their friendship blossoms, he discovers people actually eat honey, and he decides to file a lawsuit

against mankind

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: The Seinfeld Curse lives. Very lukewarm early reviews on this effort, as most point out how poorly it compares to "Ratatouille". But it looks to be extremely family friendly, so it'll make a lot of money...just don't expect too much if you're an adult being drug into the theater by your kid.

My Estimated Rating: Bill Nelson (2 1/2 footballs)

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## Martian Child

Starring: John Cusack, Amanda Peet, Bobby Coleman

Plot: A writer trying to rebuild his life after the death of his wife adopts a troubled young boy who believes that he's a Martian.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: I love John Cusack in most everything he does, and I admire the hell out of the fact that he chooses so many risky, indy projects. However, this one looks like a total mushy mess.

My Estimated Rating: Tim Couch (1 ½ footballs)

## ***New DVD Releases on Tuesday, November 6<sup>th</sup>***

**Ratatouille** - I spoke of it earlier as the "class" of this years animated flick, and here it is on DVD, ready to eat into "Bee Movie's" profits. From Brad Bird, the mad genius behind the fantastic animated flick "The Incredibles", here we have all the elements for a bomb. France...cooking...and disgusting rodents trying to look cute. But it works, and is on the top of my Netflix Queue. If you have kids in the house, forget the rental and go out and buy it.

**I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry** - Another Adam Sandler disappointment...this one a painful story about two "obviously

straight&quot; Philadelphia firemen who pretend to be gay so that one of the (Kevin James) can get domestic partner benefits for his kids. It spends the first part of the film seeing how many lame gay stereotypes in can inject, and the last part trying to turn into a &quot;why can't we all get along&quot; message movie.

**Deck the Halls** - One of the most critically trashed movies of 2006, finally being released in hopes that everyone forgot how much this movie sucked. Danny DeVito and Mathew Broderick play two suburbanites trying to outdo each other in decorating their house for Christmas.

**Sicko** - Another &quot;documentary&quot;

from professional gadfly Michael Moore, this time poking his satirical camera lens at the health industry. No truth to the rumors that the Department of Homeland Security is secretly gathering information from Netflix regarding anyone renting this movie.

## ***Calendar Watch***

Next week: [\*Lions for Lambs\*](#), [\*Fred Claus\*](#),  
*P2*

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

[Beowulf](#) - November 16<sup>th</sup> - Robert Zemeckis gets all medieval on us with a motion capture (like &quot;Polar Express&quot;) adaptation of the epic poem. Crispin Glover as the monster Grendel and Angelina Jolie as Grendel's mother? I'm there.

[Hitman](#) - November 21<sup>st</sup> - Deadwood's Timothy Oliphant follows up his portrayal as the chief villain in &quot;Live Free or Die Hard&quot; in this action/adventure film where he play...what else...a hitman. Look for it to be in the same vein as &quot;The Transporter&quot;, and a hit (heh...I kill me).

## [The Golden Compass](#) - December 7<sup>th</sup>

- Major, major push from the studios for this big budget fantasy...designed to be the first of a franchise. Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig star (their second collaboration this year, let's hope it's better than "The Invasion";), along with Sam Elliot and Eva Green.

[Atonement](#) - December 7<sup>th</sup> - Artsy British film with Keira Knightley and James McAvoy, about a 13 year old girl who changes several

lives when she accuses her older sister's lover of a crime he did not commit.

[I Am Legend](#) - December 14<sup>th</sup> - Will Smith in what is basically a remake of the Chuck Heston apocalyptic film "The Omega Man";.

[National Treasure: Book of Secrets](#) - December 21<sup>st</sup> -

Follow-up to the hugely popular guilty pleasure &quot;National Treasure&quot; with Nick Cage back at his wacky best.

[P.S., I Love You](#) - December 21<sup>st</sup> - Hillary Swank, Gerard Butler, and Harry Connick Jr. in an award contender about a widow who discovers love

letters written by her recently deceased husband (Butler) that are meant to help her begin the next chapter of her life.

*Charlie Wilson's War* -

December 25

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- Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts,

and Philip Seymour Hoffman in an Oscar contender about the charismatic and eccentric Texas Congressman who orchestrated the funding of the Afghans against the Soviet Union in the early 80s.

[The Bucket List](#) - Decemb

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Jack Nicholson as a corporate billionaire and Morgan Freeman as a mechanic. And odd couple, but they are both terminally ill men who escape from a cancer ward to take one last road trip.

*Sweeny Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* - Limited release in December - Tim Burton's adaptation of the macabre Steven Sondheim musical about a deranged barber bent on revenge (Johnny Depp) and the meat pie baker that assists him (Helena Bonham Carter),

who uses the bodies to  
make delicious snacks.

[\*Untitled J.J. Abrams  
Project\*](#) - January 18<sup>th</sup> -

You've seen the buzz  
generating hand held  
camera trailer during  
"Transformers"  
t;, and wondered what it's

all about. We don't know yet, but we're thinking it should be fun.

*The Other Boleyn Girl* -  
February 29  
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- Natalie Portman as  
Anne Boleyn, Scarlett  
Johansson as her sister

Mary, and Eric Bana as King Henry VIII. I expect this to blow the tepid Showtime series "The Tudors" out of the English Channel...but since it's gotten pushed back to the waste-land of February releases, I don't have a good

feeling about it.

[10,000 B.C.](#) - March 7<sup>t</sup>

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- Roland Emmerich, he of &quot;The Day After Tomorrow&quot;, gets to unleash his big-budget vision of

mammoth hunters in this film that is NOT a remake of "One Million Years B.C." Bummer. I was hoping of a really good visual update to Rachel Welch in that fur bikini.

*21.* - March 21<sup>st</sup> -  
Swerb's favorite  
upcoming movie, the  
true tale of six MIT  
students that are  
trained by one of their  
professors (Kevin  
Spacey) in the art of  
card counting. They  
later take down Vegas

# casinos for millions.