

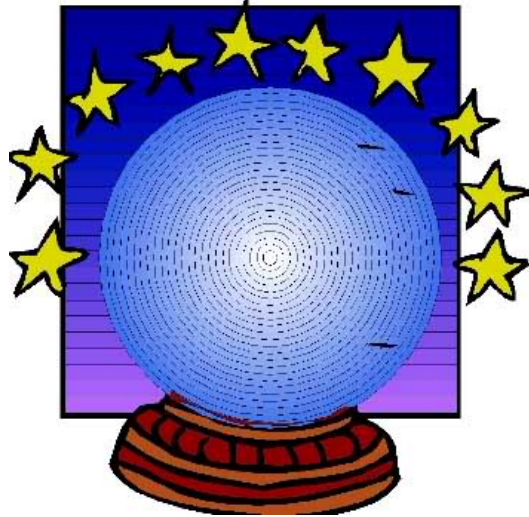
## The Crystal Ball - Jan 26 Releases

Written by {ga=mitch}

Thursday, January 25 2007 7:00 PM -

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Jenna Jameson wants Scarlett Johansson to play her in a film based upon her book. Yes, you read that right. There is a God. Where else can you get scoop like this? The Crystal Ball, that's where! Mitch gives us the details on that, as well as the newest movie releases. And it's a monster week for both releases at the theater, and on DVD. It's Friday night on The Blurbs. It's The Crystal Ball.



The big news this week in the film industry is, of course, the Oscar nominations. That will be covered in more detail later on, but the biggest thing that struck me was the randomness of it all. "Dreamgirls" gets the most nods with eight, but three of them were for "Best Song", and it as shut out of the Big Four categories of Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, and Best Actress. Also shocking was that Jack Nicolson was overlooked for Best Supporting Actor in "The Departed".

As for the five films up for Best Picture, I have seen three of them and reviewed two ("The Departed" and "Babel"). In the next few weeks, I'll add reviews of "Little Miss Sunshine", "The Queen", and "Letters From Iwo Jima".

The one thing I will say about it is that having seen three out of five, I can unequivocally say that "World Trade Center" and "Children of Men" should have been nominated ahead of "Babel" and "Little Miss Sunshine".

### News & Rumors:

~ Paul Greengrass is set to write and direct a movie about Iraq based upon the book "Imperial

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---

Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone". (hopefully he'll re-title it to something that could actually fit on the tickets). The book, written by the former Baghdad bureau chief of the Washington Post is set in the aftermath of the Iraq invasion, depicting the chaotic attempts to set up a provisional government in Saddam's palace. After seeing Greengrass's talents in making "United 93", I'm looking forward to this one. Just don't be expecting a lot of laughs.

~ Mark Wahlberg has revealed that there might be both a prequel and/or a sequel to "The Departed". Since the Chinese movie it was based upon, "Internal Affairs", there is material to draw off from. According to rumors, Martin Scorsese is seriously contemplating making at least one more film in the series.

~ Looks like Johnny Depp will be getting back into more serious roles after his turns in 2007 as Captain Jack Sparrow in "Pirates 3", and the murderous barber in "Sweeney Todd". Depp has agreed to headline the movie "Shantaram", where he will play an Australian heroin addict who escapes a maximum security prison and manages to re-invent himself as a doctor treating the destitute in Bombay, India. Mother Theresa he won't be.

~ Al Pacino will play surrealistic painter Salvador Dali in an upcoming movie. I can't wait to see Pacino eating scenery with that huge handlebar moustache Dali was famous for.

~ Looks like a great gig for one of my favorite unheralded actors, Timothy Olyphant (Seth Bullock in "Deadwood"). He will be replacing Vin Diesel in a sci-fi/action flick called "Hitman", playing a genetically engineered assassin. Let's all hope it's better than the last movies concerning sci-fi assassins, "Ultraviolet" and "Aeon Flux". Maybe "better" isn't the right word to use here. It would be as easy to be better than those two as it would to be taller than Mini-Me.

~ And one last one that will COMPLETELY make Swerb's day...porn superstar Jenna Jameson wants Scarlett Johansson to play her in a film based upon Jameson's book, "How to Make Love Like a Porn Star: A Cautionary Tale". Hey, Scarlett has come out and said she'd do nudity on screen if it was right for the part. Merry Christmas, Swerb.

### This week's new releases:

That's what I get for writing this article a day earlier than usual last week...they snuck in and opened "Letters From Iwo Jima" in more theaters than they originally planned.

Oh well...you get the details of it this week, which is going to be a busy one. In addition to everything I'm listing, "The Departed" is coming back into wide release for a couple of weeks prior to the Oscars.

Title: **Smokin' Aces**

Starring: Jeremy Piven, Ben Affleck, Ryan Reynolds, Ray Liotta, Andy Garcia.

Plot: A Vegas performer turns Mob snitch, and the \$1 million rewards draws all the kooks out of the woodwork.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: This is the type of movie that is going to get hammered by the critics, but may

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be pretty damn entertaining to watch...which is why we movie critics are held in such high esteem by the general public. Seriously, if I have a chance with all the snob movies I need to watch to get my Oscar preview ready, I'll probably want to check this out. If you liked "Lucky Number Slevin", my guess is you'll like this.

Title: **Epic Movie**

Starring: Kumar (OK...it's Kal Penn, but I just got into this habit of calling him that after his short turn on "24"), Jennifer Coolidge, Fred Willard.

Plot: Send up of recent box office hits.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: By the same people who insulted your intelligence and bored you to tears last year with "Date Movie". Spoofs of "Pirates of the Caribbean", "X-Men", "Superman Returns," "Harry Potter", "Chronicles of Narnia", and "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory", among others. So now we know what happened to Beavis and Butthead. They "grew up" to become movie producers.

Title: **Catch and Release**

Starring: Jennifer Garner, Timothy Olyphant, Kevin Smith

Plot: A young woman deals with the aftermath of the untimely death of her fiancé by striking up a friendship with a new group of people.

## The Crystal Ball - Jan 26 Releases

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Thursday, January 25 2007 7:00 PM -

---

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: Guys...given what else is out at the theater this week, you may end up being drug to this Estrogen Bath by your wife/girlfriend. You have my sympathy. And what the hell was Kevin Smith thinking?

Title: **Blood and Chocolate**

Starring: Agnes Bruckner, Hugh Dancy, Olivier Martinez (and if you're familiar with any of them, you are a better man than I, Gunga Din).

Plot: A young female werewolf is chosen as the mate for the leader of her pack, but she has feelings for a mortal.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: "An American Werewolf in London" meets "Lost Boys". Except that it's in Paris, has no one that can act in the cast, and will totally suck. When even the trailer makes this out to be lame as hell, it has no chance.

Title: **Letters From Iwo Jima**

Starring: Ken Watanabe, and a bunch of actors with names I have no idea how to pronounce.

## The Crystal Ball - Jan 26 Releases

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Thursday, January 25 2007 7:00 PM -

---

Plot: Clint Eastwood's Oscar nominated film showing the battle of Iwo Jima from the perspective of the outnumbered Japanese

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: This is very much a dark horse for Best Picture, but still said to be far superior to Clint's companion piece "Flags of Our Fathers". Sort of like a Japanese "The Alamo", this follows the soldiers on the island who knew they were outnumbered and that they were going to die. Winner of the Golden Globe award for Best Foreign Language Film, you will be reading subtitles the entire way as it is filmed with the actors speaking in their native tongue.

Title: **Notes on a Scandal**

Starring: Judy Dench, Cate Blanchett, Bill Nighy

Plot: An art teacher's affair with a young student leads to unexpected developments in the form of an older teacher who is aware of the affair and uses it for emotional blackmail

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: If anyone has a chance at upsetting Helen Mirren for Best Actress, it would be Judi Dench in this brave, risky role of an older lesbian teacher making life hell for Cate Blanchett's flawed character.

### New DVD Releases on Tuesday, January 30<sup>th</sup>

**Open Season** – Despite having the totally talentless Ashton Kutcher and the mediocre Martin Lawrence headlining this animation...I'm probably adding it to my Netflix queue, as it just looks like the type of Bugs Bunny level anarchy I'd love to see in an animation.

**Flyboys** – You may recall this movie showing up on my end of year review as one of the biggest money losers for 2006. There is a reason for that: This WWI era picture blows chucks.

**The Marine** – I just never get tired of laughing and Vince McMahon of WWE fame failing at another project. First was the disgusting XFL, and now he decided to become a movie mogul, making action pictures featuring some of his prized pieces of steroid containers. This one 'stars' John Cena in a rip-off of any generic Claude Van Damme/Steven Segal flick. Don't quit your day job, Vince.

**Catch a Fire**– A film that the producers hoped would be an Oscar contender, it just never caught fire with the audience. Maybe it was just Tim Robbins strange South African accent.

### Calendar Watch:

Next week, *The Messengers*, *Because I Said So*

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

[Hannibal Rising](#) – February 9<sup>th</sup> - Tale of how the young Hannibal Lecture became the cretin we all know and love. As you know, February release dates normally indicate a bomb. The trailer is finally it, and it makes it look interesting...but you know that trailers could even make "The Black Dahlia" look to be worth a rent.

[Ghost Rider](#) – February 16<sup>th</sup> - Nicholas Cage turns into a motorcycle riding superhero with a flaming skeleton head. The closer we get to the actual release on this one, the more I'm convinced it's going to bomb big time.

[The Number 23](#) – February 23<sup>rd</sup> – Mystery/ Supernatural Thriller with Jim Carrey and Virginia Madsen. I'm hoping this is the exception to the "February Stinker" rule, but I'm seeing in some places where they are calling this a "mystery comedy"...which doesn't sound good.

[Zodiac](#) – March 2<sup>nd</sup> - Jake Gyllenhaal and Robert Downey, Jr star in the tale of the Bay Area serial killer.

[Wild Hogs](#) – March 2<sup>nd</sup> - John Travolta, Tim Allen, Martin Lawrence and William H. Macy as four middle aged buddies take off for the open road on motorcycles, only to end up crossing paths with a Hell's Angels gang. Might be the Movie to Beat when it comes to next year's "Razzies" for "Worst Picture".

[300](#) – March 9<sup>th</sup> - 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".

## The Crystal Ball - Jan 26 Releases

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Thursday, January 25 2007 7:00 PM -

---

[Reign Over Me](#) - March 9<sup>th</sup> – First major fictional piece dealing with the effects of 9/11 on the families, starring Adam Sandler in an impressive looking dramatic role (if you can believe it) and Don Cheadle.

[Shooter](#) – March 16<sup>th</sup> - Political thriller with Mark Wahlberg as a sniper trying to stop an assassination.

*Sunshine* – March 16<sup>th</sup> – A team of eight scientists are sent off in a spaceship to try to re-ignite part of the dying sun.

[Lucky You](#) – March 16<sup>th</sup> – Long delayed film centered around the World Series of Poker with Eric Bana and Drew Barrymore.

[Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles](#) – March 23<sup>rd</sup> – They're baaaacccckkkk. Supposedly a little more adult oriented than the campy films from the 80s.

*Rescue Dawn* – March 30<sup>th</sup> – Christian Bale as a pilot shot down in Laos in the early years of the Vietnam War, and his efforts to escape captivity.

[Grind House](#) – April 6<sup>th</sup> - Two one-hour short horror stories, one from Robert Rodriguez, the other from Quentin Tarantino. (April). I may hate slasher films, but this one looks too good to miss.

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[\*The Kingdom\*](#) – April 20<sup>th</sup> – Jamie Foxx, Chris Cooper, and Jennifer Garner in a story about an American team sent into the Middle East to investigate a terrorist attack on Americans in Riyadh.

[\*Spider-Man 3\*](#) – May 4<sup>th</sup> - The webslinger versus Venom, Sandman, and Harry Osborne picking up his father's GoblinGear.

[\*Shrek the Third\*](#) – May 13<sup>th</sup> – Shrek & Donkey...together again. This time with the jolly green Scottish ogre trying to push off the king's crown onto a young Arthur.

*1408* – May 13<sup>th</sup> – John Cusack as a famed debunker of paranormal activities encountering real terror in this adaptation of a Steven King tale.

*Pirates of the Caribbean: At the World's End* – May 25<sup>th</sup> - Captain Jack goes for the hat trick.

*Ocean's Thirteen* – June 8<sup>th</sup> – Ellen Barkin replaces Julia Roberts and Catherine Zeta-Jones in this edition. Talk about a “Brian Giles for Ricardo Rincon” level trade. Will someone please stick a fork in this franchise?

[\*Fantastic Four: The Rise of the Silver Surfer\*](#) – June 15<sup>th</sup> – This time the quartet go up against the Silver Surfer and the return of Dr. Doom. Please be better than the first one! (the trailer does look awesome).

[\*Evan Almighty\*](#) – June 22<sup>nd</sup> – Steve Carell's Evan Baxter from “Bruce Almighty” is now a Congressman chosen by God (Morgan Freeman) to receive His powers. A reported budget of

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over \$200 million on this will either make it this year's "DaVinci Code" (big budget, big box office) or this year's "Poseidon".

[Live Free or Die Hard](#) – June 29<sup>th</sup> - John McClane strikes again (probably with his walker).

[Transformers](#) – July 6<sup>th</sup> – Michael Bay (hack, spit) tries to spin a former children's cartoon into an "Independence Day" type Armageddon movie. As much as I hate to admit it...the teaser trailer looks good.

[Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix](#) – July 13<sup>th</sup> – These movies keep getting darker and better as they go. Voldemort (aka "relative of Art Modell") is back and targeting Harry and his friends for some nasty payback.

[The Simpsons Movie](#) – July 27<sup>th</sup> - ummmm...beeeerrrrr

*The Bourne Ultimatum* – August 3<sup>rd</sup> - Superspy Jason Bourne (Matt Damon) is back and looking for his roots.

*The Invasion* – August 17<sup>th</sup> – Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig in a sci-fi flick about an alien epidemic.

*3:12 to Yuma* – October 12<sup>th</sup> – Russell Crowe and Christian Bale in a remake of a classic Western with Bale as a farmer volunteering to escort a criminal (Crowe) to Yuma by train, with a battle of wits ensuing.

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*American Gangster* – November 8<sup>th</sup> – Denzel Washington as a heroin kingpin from the Vietnam War era (he smuggled it back in the body bags of dead soldiers) and Russell Crowe as the investigator on his trail.

*Beowulf* – November 16<sup>th</sup> - Robert Zemeckis gets all medieval on us with a motion capture (like “Polar Express”) adaptation of the epic poem.