

## The Crystal Ball - December 5 Releases

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If you live in New York or Los Angeles, you are starting to be able to see what will be the frontrunners for the Oscars. For the rest of us? Another weekend to skip the theaters. Luckily, last week and this coming Tuesday were pretty good for DVD releases. Mitch hits on all the new releases at the theater and on DVD, as well as scooping our readers on some of the biggest rumors and developments in the worlds of film and television.



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## News and Rumors

~ The new Thor has been announced for the 2010 blockbuster based upon the Marvel comic about the Norse God. Kevin McKidd will take up the Magic Hammer. McKidd has been seen recently in the theaters in "Made of Honor" and on TV in the shortlived series "Journeyman" and now in "Grey's Anatomy". But he's best known as Lucius Vorenus in HBO's superlative series "Rome". Ironically, he's the second star of that series to be cast in the title role in a Marvel comic adaptation; as Ray Stevenson is

playing The Punisher. More on that later.

~ OK, how about some more of it right now (I'll still talk about "Punisher" later on). The creator of the TV series "Rome", Bruno Heller, is looking to do a theatrical film of his series; presumably taking us through the early years of the Roman Empire. I always found it interesting that although they implied that Vorenus died in the last episode...they never showed it, and never actually said that he died. I would certainly hope that all the principals would be available.

~ Johnny Depp's production company have acquired the movie rights to the novel "In the Hands of Dante". The book tells of Dante and his struggles to finish the book "The Divine Comedy" in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, along with a parallel story set in current times of an author being asked to verify what could have been Dante's original manuscript. Depp is slated to play the modern day author.

~ More Johnny Depp news...and this one doesn't get classified into the "stupid" category. Depp and frequent collaborator Tim Burton are looking to team up to do a movie adaptation of the 1970s Gothic soap opera "Dark Shadows". Depp would play the central role of vampire Barnabas Collins.

~ Shia LaBeouf will become the latest star to appear in the

adaptation of a John Grisham novel when he starts filming &quot;The Associate&quot;. In it, LaBeouf will play a student about to graduate from Yale Law School when he's manipulated into accepting a job at a prestigious law firm, and given privileged information about a multi-billion dollar lawsuit.

## Stupid Remakes and Sequels

We have a full slate in this week's segment.

~ 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox wants to do a modern version of &quot;Romancing the Stone&quot;. Ugh

~ Another sequel to &quot;Speed&quot; is in the planning stage. It definitely won't involve Keanu Reeves...but they're not saying anything about Sandra Bullock's presence in it. And we all know how well &quot;Speed 2&quot; did with that same combination, don't we?

~ Russell Brand, the hyperactive boor who was only moderately tolerable in &quot;Forgetting Sarah

Marshall&quot;, wants to do a remake of &quot;Arthur&quot;. Just what we need. Someone to make Dudley Moore look dignified in comparison.

~ &quot;Streetfighter: The Legend of Chun-Li&quot;. Yeah, because that first Streetfighter movie in 1994 with Jean-Claude Van Damme really kicked tail at the box office.

~ Debbie Allen, Charles S. Dutton, Kelsey Grammer, Megan Mullally, and Bebe Neuwirth (Mrs. Frasier Crane) have all signed on to play faculty members in the upcoming remake of &quot;Fame&quot;. What? No Shelly Long?

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

### **Punisher: War Zone**

**Starring:** Ray Stevenson, Dominic West, Julie Benz

**Plot:** Continuing his crusade to punish violent criminals, former FBI agent Frank Castle arrives in NYC to take on the city's underworld bosses.

[\*View Trailer\*](#)

The BeerBuzz: It's been called a slasher film using bullets instead of knives. What I find interesting is that the three leads I've listed above all played central roles on three of the best cable series of all time; Stevenson in "Rome", West in "The Wire", and Benz playing Rita in "Dexter". Let's just hope that this movie isn't as big of a flop as the last "Punisher" adaptation...the one that almost ruined Thomas Jane's career.

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## Cadillac Records

Starring: Adrien Brody, Beyoncé Knowles, Jeffrey Wright, Mos Def

Plot: A chronicle of the rise and fall of Chase Records, the Chicago-based record label that fostered the careers of Etta James, Muddy Waters, and Chuck Berry

[\*View Trailer\*](#)

The BeerBuzz: Pretty positive buzz coming out about this film...enough to make you want to remember to put it on your &quot;must see&quot;

list when it comes out on DVD...but not necessarily rush out to the theater. Beyoncé is said to be so good in this that she could be receiving a Best Supporting Actress nomination come Oscar time. Mos Def and Jeffrey Wright are also said to be excellent as Chuck Berry and Muddy Waters.

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## **Nobel Son**

Starring: Alan Rickman, Eliza Dushku, Shawn Hatosy

Plot: A chemistry student throws a wrench into the existence of a Nobel Prize winning scientist by first kidnapping his son, and then by exposing the scientist to his family and friends as the pompous,

unscrupulous egomaniac he has become since his triumph.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: Nobody can do pompous, unscrupulous egomaniacs better than Alan Rickman. That said, this indie thriller isn't exactly charming the critics, as the plot is said to be mediocre, the direction atrocious, and the whole thing an exercise in smugness. But the acting is said to be good. (which goes hand in hand with the old line, "other than THAT, how was the play, Mrs. Lincoln?"&quot;)

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## **New DVD Releases**

I'm not sure...but I think there might be a DVD coming out this week that has gotten some major buzz about it.

**Batman: The Dark Knight** - What else can be said about the biggest smash movie of the century? Great film, great acting, great visuals...other than some minor quibbling, this is a near perfect movie. Buy it...don't rent it.

**Wanted** - This came out on Tuesday...but I didn't mention it last week due to a complete brain-lock on my part, and incompetence of one of the sites that I use to verify release dates. Mea culpa aside, this is a fun movie to watch for the visual effects, the coolness factor, for James McAvoy being cast perfectly in the role of an apprentice super-assassin, and for Angelina Jolie as the sexiest anorexic bad-ass

killer ever seen onscreen. It's not Art...but it is fun.

**Horton Hears a Who** - Unlike the mess that was "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas", this Dr. Seuss adaptation with Jim Carrey actually is faithful to the original material. If you have younger kids, you need to get this for them.

**The Longshots** - The "true" story of an eleven year old girl who became the first girl to ever play for a Pop Warner football team, coached here by Ice Cube. Pretty standard formula "sports/kids" movie that did pretty much nothing at the box office.

## Calendar Watch

Next week:, [\*The Day the Earth Stood Still\*](#),  
*Delgo*, *Nothing Like the Holidays*, *Humboldt*  
*County*,  
[\*Milk\*](#)

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

[\*Seven Pounds\*](#) - December 19<sup>th</sup> - Will Smith weep-fest as a man with a mysterious past vows to help seven complete strangers.

[\*The Spirit\*](#) - December 25<sup>th</sup> - Frank Miller's next comic book adaptation, done in the same style as &quot;Sin

City&quot;.

[Valkyrie](#) - December 25<sup>th</sup> - Evidently some good editing has been performed on this film once destined for the scrap heap. Very positive buzz about Tom Cruise's performance as the German colonel who attempted to assassinate Hitler. We shall see.

[The Curious Case of Benjamin Button](#) - December 25<sup>th</sup> - Fantasy tale about a man (Brad Pitt) who is born old and ages backwards.

From director David Fincher  
(&quot;Fight Club&quot;;  
&quot;Se7en&quot;)

[Gran Torino](#) - January 9 - Clint Eastwood, in what he says will be his last acting role, as a man dealing with gang violence and prejudice in his own way.

[The Reader](#) - January 9 - Kate Winslet and Ralph Fiennes in a

period drama about a woman on trial for war-crimes in post WWII Germany.

[Doubt](#) - January (unannounced) - The principal (Meryl Streep) of a Catholic school in the Bronx grows suspicious of a priest (Philip Seymour Hoffman) who might have molested a student.

[Frost / Nixon](#) - January

(unannounced) - Ron Howard's latest Oscar attempt, adapting the stage play of the disgraced president's attempt to re-habilitate his image on David Frost's TV show, and Frost's attempt to drag out the truth from Tricky Dick

[The Wrestler](#) - January

(unannounced) - Mickey Rourke is picking up early Oscar buzz in this character study of a professional wrestler nearing the

end of his performing days.

[Revolutionary Road](#) - January  
(unannounced) -Leonardo  
DiCaprio and Kate Winslet as a  
young couple raising a family in a  
Connecticut suburb during the  
mid 1950s. Sam Mendes  
(&quot;American Beauty&quot;)  
directs the &quot;Titanic&quot;  
stars in their on-screen reunion.

*Defiance* - January 16 - Daniel Craig and Live Schreiber as Jewish brothers in WWII Russian, leading a band of refugees in striking back at the Germans. A major early Oscar contender

*Taken* - January 30<sup>th</sup> - Liam Neeson goes against type as a former special ops leader hot on the trail of slave traders who abducted his daughter.

[The International](#) - February 13, 2009 - Clive Owen and Naomi Watts in a thriller about an Interpol investigation of a world-wide bank funding murder and corruption. And you thought Wachovia was bad?

[Watchmen](#) - March 6, 2009 - The screen version of what is arguably graphic novelist Alan Moore's greatest work.

*Duplicity* - March 20, 2009 - Clive Owen again, this time teaming with Julia Roberts as corporate spies looking to pull a con job of their own. Directed by Tony Gilroy ("Michael Clayton").

*The Lovely Bones* - March 27, 2009 - Peter Jackson's latest, about the ghost of a young, murdered girl watching over her family and friends' reactions to

the event. Mark Wahlberg and Rachel Weisz star.

**Blockbusters on the Distant Horizon** (movies that would seem to be big hits...as soon as they get made or released).

*The Road* - (unannounced release date) - Viggo Mortensen as a man walking

with his son for months across a ravaged, post-apocalyptic landscape in search of civilization. Charlize Theron co-stars.

*X-Men Origins: Wolverine* - May 1, 2009 - Hugh Jackman goes it alone as the adamantium enhanced anti-hero. With Liv Ullmann as Sabretooth, and Ryan Reynolds as Deadpool.

[Star Trek](#) - May 8, 2009 - J.J. Abrams and a young cast reboot the franchise, going back to Kirk and Spock's days at Starfleet Academy.

[Angels and Demons](#) - May 15, 2009 - Tom Hanks and Ron Howard follow-up to &quot;The DaVinci Code&quot;

*Terminator 4* - May 22, 2009 -  
Christian Bale as John Conner  
as the franchise moves into the  
apocalyptic future.

*Transformers 2* - June 26, 2009  
- The next chapter of Robots In  
Disguise!

*Public Enemy* - July 1, 2009 -  
Johnny Depp as John Dillinger.

Co-starring Christian Bale, and  
directed by Michael Mann

[2012](#) - July 10, 2009 - Roland Emmerich's ("The Day After Tomorrow") tale of global cataclysm and the struggle of the survivors.

[Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince](#) - July 17, 2009 - The

sixth of J.K. Rowling's seven books, setting the stage for the two part conclusion in 2010 and 2011.

*The Taking of Pelham 123*- August 7, 2009 - Denzel Washington, John Travolta, and James Gandolfini in a remake of the classic 1974 film about a hijacked subway car.

*Shutter Island* - October, 2009 -  
Martin Scorsese working once  
again with Leonardo DiCaprio  
in this mystery set in 1954.

*Nottingham* - November, 2009 -  
Ridley Scot and Russell Crowe  
together again in a retelling of  
the Robin Hood legend, this  
time through the eyes of the  
Sheriff of Nottingham (Crowe).  
With Sienna Miller as Maid  
Marion.

*Avatar* - December 18, 2009 - James Cameron's sci-fi/CGI extravaganza. The C.I.A. should take lessons about secrecy from Cameron, as he's keeping info about this film very much to himself at this time.

*Iron Man 2* - May, 2010 - Right on the heels of the success of the first one, Marvel is quick to get Robert Downey Jr. back into his titanium suit.

*The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* - May, 2010 - The series goes off in a bit of a different direction, as those of you who love the books already know.

*Thor* - June 2010 - Another Marvel superhero...but the Nordic God is about as bland personality-wise as Superman, so we'll see how it goes.

*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part I* - 2010 - The start of the End for the boy wizard and his battle against He-Who-Shall-not-Be-Named

*Lincoln* - 2010 - Steven Spielberg directs the biographical film of the 16<sup>th</sup>

President (Liam Neeson)

*The Hobbit* - 2010 - Guillermo del Toro directs and Peter Jackson will produce the prequel to "Lord of the Rings". Ian McKellen will return as Gandalf

*Fantastic Voyage* - 2010 - Roland Emmerich ("The Day After Tomorrow", "10,000 B.C.") remakes the classic 1967

movie about a miniaturized sub and crew operating on a scientist from inside his brain.

*The Avengers* - 2011 - Iron Man, Hulk, Thor, and Captain America open up a can of whoopass on bad guys everywhere.

*Harry Potter and the Deathly*

*Hallows: Part II* - 2011 - The end of the line for what will be beyond doubt the most profitable series in the history of film making.

*The Hobbit 2* - 2011 - del Toro and Jackson again, this time covering the time between the end of Tolkien's book, "The Hobbit" and the start of LOTR.