

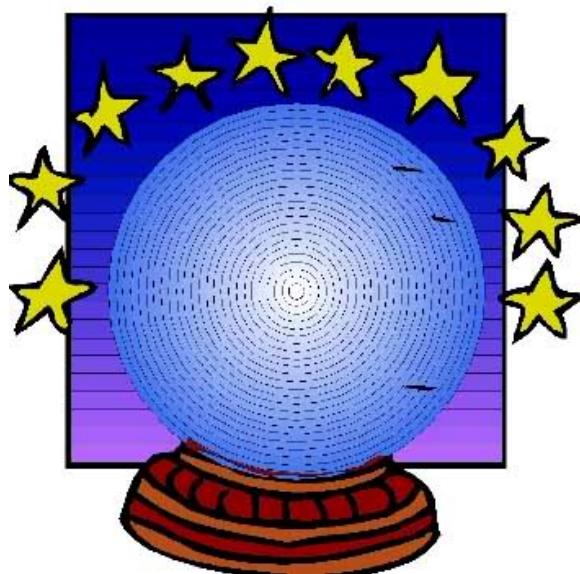
## The Crystal Ball - January 9 Releases

Written by {ga=mitch}

Thursday, January 08 2009 7:00 PM -

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This isn't just a good sports weekend, with Cavs/Celtics tonight and NFL Playoff football Saturday and Sunday. Clint and Jack are back. Clint Eastwood, in the much anticipated film "Gran Torino". And Jack Bauer, in the hit television show "24". "American Idol" and "Lost" also get going soon here, and there are a slew of new movies now available on DVD. Mitch makes sense of it all for us in this week's "Crystal Ball".



Welcome to the new year, and with it the continuee slloooowwwww release of some of the better movies that had only previously been seen in NY or LA...along with the normal January tradition of dumping some really crappy new releases on us as well.

But this is not just a good weekend for NFL Football, Cavs-Celtics basketball, and catching Clint at the movies. January also signals the re-ignition of the television seasons, including several series about to kick off their new seasons.

I am well aware that "American Idol" starts back up this week...but that over-hyped freak show just needs to go away.

Nope. We're talking quality here. "Lost" starts again January 21<sup>st</sup>. "Battlestar Galactica" begins its final 10 episodes next Friday on the SciFi Channel.

William Peterson will be making his final appearances in CSI, and ushering in Laurence Fishburne as the new head of the team.

HBO will start airing new episodes of the excellent "Big Love" next Sunday, the same night Showtime premieres their bold new series "The United States of Tara", starring Toni Collette as your typical housewife and mother...who happens to have multiple personalities that pop up from time to time.

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Oh yeah...and one more I hadn't mentioned.

JACK

IS

BACK

That's right...a new season of "24" kicks off this Sunday night. And due to popular demand (or is it in spite of desperate pleas?), I will once again be posting recaps of each episode. So we'll have more snarky comments about the absurdity of it all, more Jack Bauer Is God commentaries, and of course we'll be back with the standard weekly features of the Bauer Body Count and the Odds of Survival.

## News and Rumors

~ This whole thing with "Watchmen" keeps getting weirder. As you may or may not have heard, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox sued Warner Bros regarding the film, as Fox contended they still owned the rights to the story...and a judge agreed.

But no one seems to know what the resolution of this will be; although the best guess is some sharing of the profits.

In any case, it is still completely unknown if the movie will be released on March 6th, as planned, although Warner Bros is proceeding as if it will.

Stay tuned.

~ Leo DiCaprio is in line to play a hitman-turned-doctor in a new movie. In "Beat the Reaper", DiCaprio will portray a New York ER doctor in the witness protection program,

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who is forced to confront his past when a fellow mobster recognizes him.

~ McG, director of "We Are Marshall" and the upcoming Terminator series, is set to direct a prequel to the Disney classic "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea". It will be called "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea: Captain Nemo", and will focus on Nemo's earlier days as he is building his warship Nautilus.

No casting announcements at this point.

~ We do have casting news about another sequel. Mickey Rourke and Sam Rockwell will be the villains in "Iron Man 2". No definitive details are out yet, but it does appear that Rourke will play Iron Man's adversary from Russia, Crimson Dynamo.

No news about Rockwell's character.

~ Simon Pegg and Nick Frost, who worked so well together in both "Shaun of the Dead" and "Hot Fuzz" are scheduled to play the Thompson Twins in Steven Spielberg's "Tintin". Since they are supposed to be identical twins, I'm not sure how this will work out. On the other hand, the movie is to be a combination of live action and animation, similar to "The Polar Express" and "Beowulf", so we'll see how it goes.

## Stupid Remakes and Sequels

~ I've mentioned the stupid plan to make another "Tron" movie. First casting news from it; Garrett Hedlund ("Troy", "Friday Night Lights") will star as a computer geek that follows the footsteps of Jeff Bridges' character from the first film.

Bridges is also set to make an appearance in the film.

~ Adam Shankman, the hack responsible for the atrocious "Hairspray", is ready to pump his sewage back onto the screen with a remake of the campy 50s musical "Bye, Bye Birdie". Bye-bye lunch.

## This week's new movie releases:

### Bride Wars

Starring: Anne Hathaway, Kate Hudson, Candice Bergen

Plot: Two best friends become rivals when a clerical error results in their respective weddings being held at the same place on the same day

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: This one is going to make a ton of money as it's a direct decendent from previous chick-flick films like Hathaway's &quot;The Devil Wears Prada&quot;. Decent buzz on the film in general, but only in terms of the women who are its targeted audience; as it's getting slammed by the critics.

In other words, if you're a guy and you get drug to it...you are going to be miserable.

And I am so happy that my wife is too busy preparing for my daughter's wedding reception this week, and we won't have time to see it.

Darn.

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### Gran Torino

Starring: Clint Eastwood (no one else matters)

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Plot: When his prized 1972 Gran Torino is stolen, a disgruntled Korean War veteran looks to clean up his neighborhood, which has been taken over by gangs.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: Clint is hinting that this will be his last ever performance in front of the camera, and if it is, he's going out with a bang. Well received so far, and Clint appears to be a near-lock for another Oscar nomination. I'll be checking it out this weekend as well, and I'll get back to you to see if it's Something Special, or just a cross between Clint's crotchety old man from "Million Dollar Baby" and Charles Bronson from "Death Wish".

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## The Unborn

Starring: Odette Yustman, Gary Oldman, Cam Gigandet

Plot: A woman haunted by strange dreams turns to a spiritual advisor, and they find that a twin brother who died in the womb is the key to a curse.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: When David S. Goyer works as a screenwriter...he is excellent ("The Dark Knight", "Dark City", "Blade"). When he directs, he stinks ("Blade: Trinity", "The Invisible").

Well, he's directing this very typical January fright-fest, so guess what that means?

It does have two cast members from "Dexter" in it, however (James Remar, who

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plays Harry, and C.S. Lee, who plays the perverted Masuka in the Showtime hit).

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### **Not Easily Broken**

Starring: Morris Chestnut, Taraji P. Henson

Plot: A car accident threatens to sever the already fragile relationship between a woman and her husband.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: Rather poor reviews coming out for this mushy mess. So bad that the studio is only releasing it to 750 theaters nation-wide.

Expect to see it drop entirely off the radar next week, and be available on DVD by mid-February.

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### **The Reader**

Starring: Kate Winslet, Ralph Finnes, Bruno Ganz

Plot: In post WWII Germany, a decade after his affair with an older woman came to an end, a

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lawyer is reunited with his former lover as she defends herself in a war-crime trial.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: Being released this weekend to 500 theaters nationwide, so you should be able to find one playing it somewhere in your area. One of three WWII based movies recently being released ("Defiance" and "Good" being the others), this one may be getting Kate Winslet another Oscar nod. This is a dark and intellectually intense film that's not going to be high on entertainment.

But with this cast, I'm certain to check it out soon.

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## New DVD Releases

Since I skipped my normal column last week, I'm including DVDs that were released last Saturday in addition to what's coming out on Tuesday...and there are a ton of them.

**Righteous Kill** - The long anticipated re-pairing of Robert DeNiro and Al Pacino wasn't exactly the critical or financial hit that was expected, but it's still not a bad rent as the chemistry between the two legends is excellent, and can make up for a rather pedestrian script.

**Pineapple Express** - Seth Grogan and James Franco do are hilarious as a stoner and his dealer on the run from the police after witnessing a cop committing murder.

**Bankok Dangerous** - Major bomb for a weird looking Nicolas Cage as a hitman on the run. Skip it.

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**Babylon A.D.** - Major bomb for Vin Diesel as a mercenary escorting a woman from Russia to America. Skip it.

**Disaster Movie** - Yes, it really was. Jason Friedberg and Aaron Seltzer are two of the worst &quot;creative minds&quot; in Hollywood. This movie is so bad that it currently rates as the second worst movie of all time on IMDB.

[Appaloosa](#) - Exceptional Western directed by Ed Harris, with Harris playing the lead role of a gunman brought into a lawless town to clean things up. Viggo Mortensen is his enigmatic partner and best friend.

The only bad part of this movie was Renee Zellweger as the love interest.

**My Best Friend's Girl** - Good thing Kate Hudson is about to have a hit on her hands with &quot;Bride Wars&quot;, as this movie could have sunk her career. It &quot;stars&quot; Dane Cook, which should tell you everything you need to know about it.

**Mirrors** - Kiefer Sutherland as a former cop whose family is targeted by an evil force using mirrors as a gateway into their home. Not too awful, as far as this genre goes.

**Swing Vote** - Another huge Kevin Costner bomb...this time he plays an average Joe (but not a plumber) who ends up being the one person whose vote will decide the presidential race between Kelsey Grammer and Dennis Hopper. Given the cast, which includes George Lopez, Stanley Tucci, and Nathan Lane, this should have been a lot better.

## Calendar Watch

Next week:, [Defiance](#) , *Hotel for Dogs*, *My Bloody Valentine 3-D*, *Notorius*, *Paul Blart: Mall Cop*

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

[Frost / Nixon](#) - January (unannounced wide release date) - 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 wide release date) - 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 ("American Beauty") directs the "Titanic"; stars in their on-screen reunion.

[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 - 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 - The screen version of what is arguably graphic novelist Alan Moore's greatest work.

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[Duplicity](#) - March 20 - 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 (&quot;Michael Clayton&quot;).

*The Lovely Bones* - March 27 - 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.

[X-Men Origins: Wolverine](#) - May 1 - Hugh Jackman goes it alone as the adamantium enhanced anti-hero. With Liv Schreiber as Sabertooth, and Ryan Reynolds as Deadpool.

[Star Trek](#) - May 8 - 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 - Tom Hanks and Ron Howard follow-up to &quot;The DaVinci Code&quot;

[Terminator: Salvation](#) - May 22 - Christian Bale as John Conner as the franchise moves into the apocalyptic future.

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

*Public Enemy* - July 1 - Johnny Depp as John Dillinger. Co-starring Christian Bale,

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and directed by Michael Mann

[2012](#) - July 10 - 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 - 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 - Denzel Washington, John Travolta, and James Gandolfini in a remake of the classic 1974 film about a hijacked subway car.

[9](#) - September 9 - Tim Burton's latest animated strangeness, with Elijah Wood and Jennifer Connelly voicing characters fighting aliens in a post apocalyptic world.

**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.

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

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*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

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prequel to &quot;Lord of the Rings&quot;;. Ian McKellen will return as Gandalf

*Fantastic Voyage* - 2010 - Roland Emmerich (&quot;The Day After Tomorrow&quot;;, &quot;10,000 B.C.&quot;,) 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, &quot;The Hobbit&quot;; and the start of LOTR.