

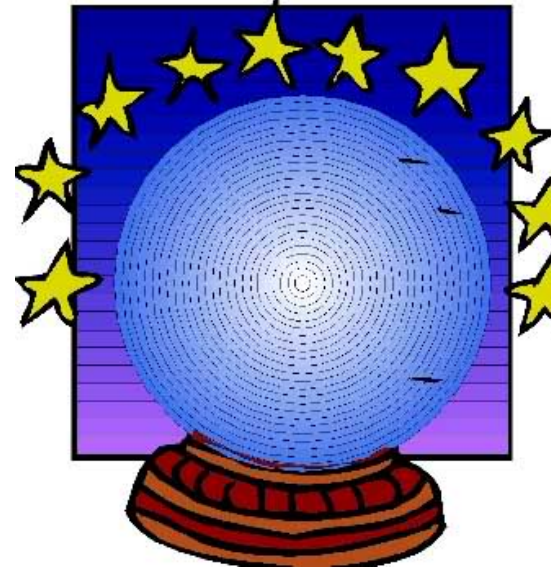
## The Crystal Ball - January 15 Releases

Written by {ga=mitch}

Thursday, January 14 2010 7:00 PM -

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Let's get down to it...there is only one important non-football thing to know about this weekend. Jack. Is. Back. That's right. "24" starts its eighth day...er...season Sunday night with a two hour kick-off, followed by another two hours Monday night (since we won't have football to watch that evening for the first time since July). Mitch's "24" recaps will be back as well, starting on Wednesday. Mitch hits on the return of Jack Bauer, as well as all of this week's new movie releases at the theater and on DVD in this week's "Crystal Ball".



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Which means that on Sunday, I'll have two football games to watch, two hours of watching "24" (which will probably translate to around three hours, since I often stop the DVR as I'm watching to make sure my notes are caught up and I'm not missing anything)...PLUS catching the highlights of the Golden Globe awards. To say nothing of Band of Brothers and Big Love on HBO...which will be taped for later.

Red Bull will be my friend this weekend.

### News and Rumors

~ Robert Zemeckis (&quot;Forrest Gump&quot;, &quot;Back to the Future&quot;) is going to be making a feature about the Beatles...remaking &quot;Yellow Submarine&quot; using the 3D performance-capture technology he used in &quot;Beowulf&quot;, &quot;The Polar Express&quot;, and &quot;A Christmas Carol&quot; (to note: the man hasn't done a &quot;real life&quot; film since &quot;Cast Away&quot; in 2000). His cast of mostly unknowns will be Dean Lennox Kelly as John Lennon, Peter Serafinowicz as Paul McCartney, Cary Elwes (yes, we all know him) as George Harrison, and Adam Campbell as Ringo Starr.

The actual Beatles music will be used for the 16 songs in the film, so no, these guys won't be playing it themselves.

And don't worry that they don't look that much like the originals, per se...the performance capture technology will transform them (think of pudgy Ray Winstone playing super-buff Beowulf).

~ I get the feeling this is the Beginning of the End for the Spider-Man franchise. Sam Raimi and Tobey Maguire are out, and the plan now is to do the infamous &quot;reboot&quot;, taking Spidey back to his high school days.

My assumption is that they won't again go through the &quot;how he got his powers&quot; bit, since that story was just told in 2002, but nothing would really surprise me.

Doesn't look good, no matter what.

~ I always thought one of Bill Murray's best roles was in the overlooked film &quot;Mad Dog and Glory&quot; where he played a sadistic mobster. Looks like we may get to see it again as he'll play the murderous mobster Happy Shannon in &quot;Passion Play&quot;.

Mickey Rourke and Megan Fox will star in the movie, set in 1950s Los Angeles, with Rourke playing a down and out trumpet player and Fox as an angel who Rourke evidently tries to save from the mobster.

I don't know why an angel would have to be &quot;saved from a mobster&quot;, but I guess

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we'll find out.

~ Robert Downey Jr. has dropped out of the screen adaptation of the comic book series &quot;Cowboys & Aliens&quot;, the concept being that in the Old West, Indians and Western settlers lay aside their differences when an alien spaceship crash lands in their city. Daniel Craig is in negotiations to replace Downey in the lead role.

## Stupid Remakes and Sequels

~ &quot;Four Brothers&quot; wasn't necessarily a bad movie...it just wasn't a very good one. No matter, Paramount is looking to bring back Mark Wahlberg, and possibly the surviving &quot;brothers&quot;.

So do they call it &quot;Three Brothers and a Second Cousin Twice Removed&quot;?

Just not feeling it here, especially given the fact that Marky Mark hasn't had a decent role since &quot;The Departed&quot;.

~ Rumors of an upcoming &quot;Jurassic Park 4&quot;. Pass.

## This week's new movie releases:

### The Book of Eli

Starring: Denzel Washington, Gary Oldman, Mila Kunis

Plot: In a post-apocalyptic United States, a lone man fights his way across the

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country in order to protect a sacred book that holds the secrets to saving humankind.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: Mixed reviews so far...but I'm guessing that the bad reviews are coming from uptight, overly &quot;artsy&quot; critics, and critics like me who enjoy kick-ass movies are the ones recommending it. I got tickets for the 5:30 show, so I'll know for certain by the time this is posted.

One thing I do know is that Denzel Washington and Gary Oldman are two actors who I'd find fascinating to watch even if they were sitting there reading the phone book.

This might be the movie to finally knock &quot;Avatar&quot; out of first place for the weekend (although the experts don't think it will).

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## The Lovely Bones

Starring: Mark Wahlberg, Rachel Weisz, Saoirse Ronan

Plot: Young Susie Salmon watches over her family from &quot;the in-between&quot; as they deal with the aftermath of her brutal rape and murder.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: I had such high hopes for the Peter Jackson directed movie...but it is getting positively killed by everyone. Released in NY and LA last month in hopes of garnering Awards notice, it's gone in the opposite direction, and is being almost universally reported as a boring bomb.

Good thing PJ is about to go back to just dealing with Hobbits.

## **The Spy Next Door**

Starring: Jackie Chan, Billy Ray Cyrus

Plot: A former CIA spy takes on his toughest assignment to date: looking after his girlfriend's three kids, who haven't exactly warmed to their mom's beau. And when one of the youngsters accidentally downloads a top-secret formula, Bob's longtime nemesis, a Russian terrorist, pays a visit to the family.

[View Trailer](#)

The BeerBuzz: Look at the names of the two people I have listed as "stars". This tells you everything you need to know about this movie. Want more?

OK...it's hitting at a bottom-of-the-barrel 5% approval rate on Rottentomatoes.

My condolences to you if your spouse forces you to take the kids to go see this.

My advice: smuggle in booze.

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## January 19<sup>th</sup> DVD Releases:

### Not a good week for DVDs

***Gamer* - Death Row inmates are forced to be the real life players in video war games where their bodies are controlled by geeky kids. □ Gerard Butler had an interesting 2009, starring in a mediocre romantic comedy that still did pretty decent at the box office &quot;The Ugly Truth&quot;; and a revenge fantasy that was very successful &quot;Law Abiding Citizen&quot;.**

**Here?**

**Not so lucky, as this rip-off of &quot;The Running Man&quot;; failed to connect with audiences.**

***The Invention of Lying* - Ricky Gervais keeps trying to be as big of a star in America as he is in the UK...but he keeps falling a bit short. □ Here, Ricky stars as a man living in a world where no one has ever lied...until his character seizes the opportunity for personal gain.**

**Not even a cast with Jennifer Garner, Rob Lowe, Jonah Hill and Louis C.K. can help this clunker.**

***Whiteout* - There are some rotten films that can be helped out by the addition of someone who looks as hot as Kate Beckinsale (see also; Underworld). □ But that won't help when she's wrapped up in thirty pounds of parkas playing a U.S. Marshall investigating the first ever murder in Antarctica.**

**Skip it.**

***Smokin' Aces 2: Assassins' Ball* - This is the first time I've ever included a Direct-to-Video release of a movie in this column. □ Why this one?**

**Because I think it's funny as hell that they decided to do**

**a sequel to what I thought was one of the worst movies of the decade, and then after making it, their testing audiences convince the studio brass that they had a total bomb on their hands...hence the direct-to-video release.**

## Calendar Watch

Next Week, [Legion](#), *Extraordinary Measures*, *The Tooth Fairy*

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

[\*The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus\*](#) - January expansion TBD - A story-telling doctor's deal with the devil sends him scrambling to save his daughter on the eve of her 16th birthday.

Terry Gilliam's wild tale is the last movie from Heath Ledger, who passed during shooting.

In his place, Colin Farrel, Jude Law, and Johnny Depp all play the same character as Ledger, in a "Doctor Who" type manner.

[\*Edge of Darkness\*](#) - January 29 - Mel Gibson returns to acting as a Boston detective investigating a cover-up in the murder of his daughter.

[\*The Wolfman\*](#) - February 12 - Lots of date changes for this remake of the classic horror tale, starring Benicio Del Torro and Anthony Hopkins. Let's hope that doesn't mean that this is a stinker.

[\*Percy Jackson and the Olympians: Lightning Thief\*](#) - February 12 - The next attempt at establishing a franchise to take over the audience once Harry Potter concludes.

This is about teenage children of the Olympic gods and their adventures.

[Shutter Island](#) - February 19 - Martin Scorsese working once again with Leonardo DiCaprio in this mystery set in 1954. Pushed back from 2009 due to marketing concerns...this still looks like an incredible movie.

[Alice in Wonderland](#) - March 5 - Tim Burton and Johnny Depp in a film that seems meant for them.

A 3D acid-trip about Alice's return to Wonderland at age 19 to fight the Red Queen.

[Green Zone](#) - March 12 - Paul Greengrass and Matt Damon team up again in a Bourne-like film about an Army officer going rouge in Iraq while looking for weapons of mass destruction.

[Clash of the Titans](#) - March 26 - Re-imaging of the campy Harry Hamlin sword-and-sandals film from the 80s. The trailer looks intriguing, at least

*Wall Street 2: Money Never Sleeps* - April 23 - Oliver Stone brings Michael Douglass back as Gordon Gecko, teaming him with Shia LaBeouf in a film that looks to be quite different in tone than the last one.

*Nightmare on Elm Street* - April 30 - Jack Earle Haley (&quot;Watchmen&quot;) takes over the Freddy Krueger role.

[Iron Man 2](#) - May 7 - Downey Jr. is back, this time dealing with Whiplash (Mickey Rourke) and Black Widow (Scarlet Johansson).

[\*Robin Hood\*](#) - May 14 - Ridley Scott and Russell Crowe in what is supposed to be a more "historic" account of the legendary hero.

[\*Shrek Forever After\*](#) - May 21 - 3D entry into the series that is seemingly the only way Michael Myers or Eddie Murphy can make any money

[\*Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time\*](#) - May 28 - Might this finally be the first video game that translates to a huge hit at the box office?

Depends on whether or not you can buy Jake Gyllenhaal as an action hero.

Why not?

It worked for Tobey Maguire, Matt Damon, and Robert Downey Jr.

*The A-Team* - June 11 - Based on the campy TV series...but the makers of this film are trying to sell it more as an action film with no camp. With Liam Neeson playing Hannibal Smith as their leader, they may have a chance.

[Toy Story 3D](#) - June 18 - It looks like a big year for 3D films in 2010. In this one, Buzz, Woody, and the rest of the toys are dumped into a day care after Andy grows up and goes to college.

*The Twilight Sage: Eclipse* - July 2 - More Wussy Vampires! I can't wait! (sorry...sarcasmectomy isn't scheduled for a few months yet).

[Inception](#) - July 16 - Leonardo DiCaprio and Ellen Page in a Christopher Nolan sci-fi mind bender that looks to be in the mode of "Memento";

*The Sorcerer's Apprentice* - July 16 - Live action remake of the Disney classic short, starring Nicolas Cage.

*Salt* - July 18 - Angelina Jolie as a CIA operative accused of being a Russian spy.