

Thrills! Chills! Lava spills! Hang on, film fans! It's the...

SPRING MOVIE PREVIEW

By **GERRY BELTZ**
Film Critic

Another semester, another season of cinema to salvage or sicken the soul. What's good and what's bad? Who knows!?

One thing is for sure in Lincoln: Release dates are subject to change with all the predictability and logic of the weather.

Obviously, there will be other movies besides these, but these should be some of the bigger releases.

And don't forget, Academy Award nominations will be here in about a month.

January



"Beverly Hills Ninja" (Jan. 17) — Minus usual smarmy sidekick David Spade, Chris Farley stars as a young man who wants to follow in his father's footsteps to become a great martial artist. Unfortunately, Farley's character has absolutely no aptitude for martial arts whatsoever.

It's comedy for people who thought the humor in "Airplane" was too cerebral. Still, with Chris Rock as a co-star, it may be worth a look-see.



"Metro" (Jan. 17) — It's another Eddie Murphy cop movie, but it ain't "Beverly Hills Cop."

A fast-talking hostage negotiator (Murphy) tries to balance a brash new partner (Michael Rapaport) and his love life while chasing down a master criminal (Michael Wincott).

Can Murphy keep success rolling after "The Nutty Professor"?

"Portrait of a Lady" (Jan. 17) — The stars come out of the woodwork for this one, which has already been in limited release since late December.

In 19th-century Europe, a strong-willed woman (Nicole Kidman) finds herself stuck in an arranged marriage to a total scumbag. Other stars of the film include John Malkovich and Barbara Hershey.

"Fierce Creatures" (Jan. 24) — The cast for "A Fish Called Wanda" reassembles for another madcap comedy.

A British company buys a zoo, and while the ambitious executive (Jamie Lee Curtis) and lecherous partner (Kevin Kline) launch their own plans, the new zoo director (John Cleese) stocks the zoo with only dangerous animals, and the peaceful insect wrangler (Michael Palin) tries to save the zoo itself.

"Hamlet" (Jan. 24) — Originally more than four hours long, we may be getting a slightly trimmed-down version (for better or worse).

Kenneth Branagh directs and stars in this Shakespeare tragedy, and he's brought along more stars than you could believe, including Robin Williams, Billy Crystal and Jack Lemmon.

This one looks to be Branagh's grandest Shakespeare film yet, including a flashback of Yorick, whom he knew so well. ...

"Star Wars" (Jan. 31) — The waiting is done. The talking is done. After 20 years, "Star Wars" hits the

big screen again, but for only three weeks.

Additional footage and souped-up special effects highlight the anniversary for a film that revolutionized the movie industry.

The two other "Star Wars" films — "The Empire Strikes Back" and "Return of the Jedi" — will each open on Feb. 21 and March 7, respectively, but each will run for only two weeks.

"Mother" (sometime in January, probably) — Albert Brooks once again directs a film about what he does his best work with — real life. Brooks also co-wrote the script for "Mother" and co-stars with Rob Morrow ("Quiz Show").

After his second divorce, John (Brooks) decides to fix up his relationship with his mother (Debbie Reynolds) once and for all. Otherwise, his future with women is doomed.

Don't be surprised if you see a little of your life in this film; that's one of Brooks' gifts as a director.

February



"Dante's Peak" (Feb. 7) — Team up frustrated seismologist (Pierce Brosnan) and the skeptical mayor (Linda Hamilton) to help a town of blithering idiots escape certain death, and you have "Dante's Peak."

With "Twister" out of the way, it's time for new natural disasters, and "Dante's Peak" is one of two volcano-oriented films coming out this semester.

With the success of "Independence Day," disaster films may be finding their way back into the theaters.

"Absolute Power" (Feb. 7) — Clint Eastwood is back in the White House, but this time he's a criminal.

(And just HOW do we tell him from the other ones?)

The president's mistress is mur-

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Ross fits indie gems into full schedule

By **GERRY BELTZ**
Senior Reporter

So many movies, so little time. It's another typical semester for Dan Ladely, director of the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater, 12th and R streets.

"It's always tough every time we put together a schedule because there are more good films than we have time to show," Ladely said.

The time for movies at the Ross is also restricted because classes use the facility and Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery holds events there, he said.

"This limits us quite a bit," he said.

To pare down the list of films to play for a given semester, Ladely said, he often just checked the video

"*It is possible that, in the near future, we will be seeing more independent films nominated for Oscars than Hollywood-based films.***"**

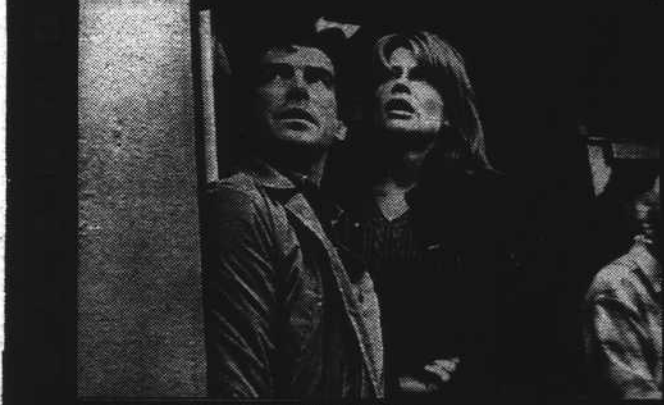
DAN LADELY
Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater director

release date.

"In the past, we have sometimes scheduled films that ended up playing at the same time it was hitting the video shelves," Ladely said. "We're trying to avoid this as much as possible."

Oscars announcements are coming next month, and Ladely said he expected several of the films from last semester's and this

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THIS SEMESTER'S FILM HIGHLIGHTS include (from top to bottom) Eddie Murphy and Michael Rapaport try to stop a terrorist in "Metro," Jim Carrey is a lawyer who is forced to tell the truth for 24 hours in "Liar Liar," Pierce Brosnan and Linda Hamilton face a volcano in "Dante's Peak," Chris Farley is a would-be martial arts expert in "Beverly Hills Ninja," Debbie Reynolds and Albert Brooks are a dueling mother and son in "Mother" and the cast of "A Fish Called Wanda" returns in "Fierce Creatures."