

# Holiday break filled with Oscar-worthy movies

## Hanks, Foster star in films studios hope are Academy Award worthy

BY SAMUEL MCKEOWN  
Senior editor

For two months, "American Beauty" has been kicking back, basking in the Oscar glow.

It opened in October, and the Kevin Spacey vehicle is still the only film out there that seems to be a lock for Academy Award nominations.

Maybe "Three Kings" steals a few votes. Maybe "Being John Malkovich" gets a nod. Maybe somebody out there realizes how good "The Insider" is or remembers "The Blair Witch Project" and "Eyes Wide Shut."

But when the snow starts to fall, the game heats up for real.

Holiday season usually means the studios come out with their statue heavies. The final year of the century isn't any different. A lot of movies, though, will have "Oscar engagements," which means they'll play after Jan. 1 but have been shown once or twice before then to be officially Oscar worthy.

And it starts with Mr. Oscar, Tom Hanks. Forrest, the nominee please.

December 10

**"The Green Mile"** — Hanks is a prison guard in director Frank Darabont's follow-up to "The Shawshank Redemption." Adapted from the Stephen King serialized novel, Hanks' guard goes through revolutionary changes when a gigantic death row inmate (Michael Duncan) starts to perform miracles in the prison. Buzz says to expect graphic scenes of electrocution, a mighty smart mouse and Hanks in a *Southern* accent.

Oh, and it's three hours long.

December 17

**"Anna and the King"** — Jodie Foster and Chow Yun-Fat star in the live-acting, no-singing version of "The King and I." The locales ought to be stunning, and Foster, though she's not in too many must-see movies, is a fave with the Academy Award folks.

December 22

**"Any Given Sunday"** — It's a professional football movie with Oscar clout because Oliver Stone directed it and Al Pacino — the coach — acts in it. Stone couldn't get clearance with the NFL, so he created a fictional team that swirls with controversy after the old star (Dennis Quaid) goes down, and a brash newbie (Jamie Foxx) takes over as quarterback. Cameron Diaz ditches the wig and plays the team's owner.

**"Man on the Moon"** — Jim Carrey is Andy Kaufman, the wholly misunderstood (he liked it that way) song and dance man from "Saturday Night Live," wrestling shows, seedy lounges and "Taxi." The movie is directed by Milos Forman, and word has it Carrey never came out of character on the set.

December 24

**"The Talented Mr. Ripley"** — Matt Damon is the title character — a man skilled in impersonating young, successful males in the 1950s. Jude Law ("Gattaca") and girlfriend Gwyneth Paltrow are his next targets. There's even a bit of old homoeroticism from Damon, which ought to get Oscar voters in a tizzy.

December 25

**"Angela's Ashes"** — The movie tells the story of writer Frank McCourt, who grew up in poverty in Ireland in the middle of the century. With Robert Carlyle and Emily Watson, one of the best actresses you've never heard of, expect a few nominations for acting.

December 25

**"The Cider House Rules"** — Buzz is strong around this adaptation of a John Irving novel starring Tobey Maguire and Michael Caine. It's a long-winding journey covering, among other things, abortion, war, apples and racism. The movie is directed by Lasse Hallstrom, who made the powerful "What's Eating Gilbert Grape."

**"Titus"** — Julie Taymor moves from directing stage to screen in the revisionist look at one of Shakespeare's darkest



JIM CARREY stars as the eccentric comic Andy Kaufman in "Man on the Moon." The movie is a biography of Kaufman, who, after appearing on TV's "Taxi," went on to gain fame as an inter-gender wrestling champ.

plays, starring Anthony Hopkins and Jessica Lange. The visuals, first seen last summer in an issue of Vanity Fair, are stunning. Consider this a sleeper worth seeing.

Jan. 1 (if the computers don't shut down)

**"Fantasia 2000"** — The film is an updating of a Disney classic for the Imax screen. Hard to say if the Hastings or Omaha screens will show it from the get-go, but they will eventually. It ought to be a wonder to see in that format.

Jan. 7

**"Snow Falling on Cedars"** — Director Scott Hicks ("Shine") takes on a complex story involving the

internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. Actually, the film takes place about five years after that and flashes back to 10 years before the internment. And there's a trial, forbidden love, newspapers to be sold... see, said it was complicated. Ethan Hawke and Max Von Sydow star.

**"Magnolia"** — From complicated to downright labyrinthine, director P.T. Anderson follows up "Boogie Nights" with this three-hour opus set in L.A., starring Julianne Moore, William H. Macy and Tom Cruise as one of the motivational gurus. Word out there says Cruise has never been this good. It's the most anticipated movie out there outside of "The Green Mile."

There are Oscar contenders, which opened earlier this year, that have yet to make it to the Omaha-Lincoln area. They include: Steven Soderbergh's stylish crime drama "The Limey," Atom Egoyan's "Felicia's Journey," Barry Levinson's "Liberty Heights," "A Map of the World," starring Julianne Moore again and "The End of the Affair" starring — you guessed it — Julianne Moore.

There are other movies playing over the holiday season that aren't widely considered Oscar fodder. These would be: "Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo" (Dec. 10), "Stuart Little" (Dec. 17), "Bicentennial Man" (Dec. 17) and "Galaxy Quest" (Dec. 25).

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