

# VideoHound's GOLDEN MOVIE RETRIEVER



2008

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**GOLDEN**  
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# **VideoHound's<sup>®</sup> GOLDEN MOVIE RETRIEVER<sup>®</sup>**

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# Introduction

“What are you reading?”

“*Great Expectations.*”

“Is it any good?”

“It’s not what I’d hoped for.”

Just to be clear, we’re not opening the introduction of our 2008 edition of the *VideoHound’s Golden Movie Retriever* with a quote from *Hot Shots! Part Deux* because we desperately want Charlie Sheen to return to his slapstick comedy roots. (Honest to God, Chuck, don’t do it.) But we did want to open with a quote about “expectations” because, more than almost any other movie year in recent memory, 2006 defied, confused, and exploded all preconceived notions when it came to what worked and what didn’t up on the big screen. Yes, the big, epic summer/winter blockbusters still dominated the box office—the two highest grossing films were the eye-candy favorites *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest* and *Night at the Museum*—but 2006 was filled with surprise hits that came out of nowhere and sure things that fell flat on their faces.

Don’t believe us? Take a look at 2006’s roster of releases. Let’s start with the stinkers, the movies so bad that you stay during the end credits just to see if Joel Schumacher had anything to do with them. Who could ever have predicted that a sequel to one of the biggest movies of the 1990s (*Basic Instinct 2*), a Harrison Ford action-drama (*Firewall*), an Ivan Reitman superhero-comedy (*My Super Ex-Girlfriend*), and a new M. Night Shyamalan movie (*Lady in the Water*) would stink quite so badly? Okay, Disney had an inkling about that last one. Sharon Stone’s performance in *BI2* made us hope that the AARP offers a discount at the Actor’s Studio, apparently no one woke Han Solo up to let him know that he was filming a movie, Ivan Reitman should go on a quest with John Landis to find out who stole their ability to be funny, and M. Night ... you HAVE to stop casting yourself in your own films. No more showing up in your movie as the “guy who offers up an obnoxious amount of exposition” for you.

There were lots of other bad movies in 2006—*Wicker Man*, *Larry the Cable Guy: Health Inspector*, *Little Man*, to name a few—but no one was surprised by those. The previous four examples didn’t have to be bad, never should’ve been bad,

particularly with the level of talent behind them. We wouldn’t be nearly as upset with someone like, oh say, German wunderkind Uwe Boll who, predictable as always, delivered another cast-iron stinker with *BloodRayne*, a movie so terrible Ben Kingsley is going to have to bribe someone to keep it off his obituary. However, we were surprised that Boll held a contest in 2006, offering to box his legion of outspoken critics. Get ready for Round 2, Ewe. After your next opus—if you find a distributor, that is—there’ll be people lined up to punch you in the face.

Just above the stinkers were the mild disappointments, the movies that everyone was really looking forward to, the ones that had everything in the world going for them, but then moviegoers showed up on opening night and collectively went “Meh.” After his fantastic X-Men films, everyone expected that Bryan Singer would be the perfect candidate to bring the Man of Steel back to the big screen, but instead we got *Superman Returns*, a mediocre mediation on loneliness where Kal-El spent the whole movie looking mopey and messianic. Hey, maybe they *should* have let Nic Cage play him, after all! It was a bad year for comic book movies all around. While James McTeague’s *V for Vendetta* had some great moments, *X-Men: The Last Stand* and *Zoom* were almost worse than the 1990 direct-to-video *Captain America* movie where Cap’s mask had plastic ears glued to the side.

Brian De Palma directing film noir and Michael Mann directing hi-tech police action sound like sure things, but instead we got the underwhelming and over-long *Black Dahlia* and *Miami Vice*. And, true to form, Ron Howard took the most exciting, best-selling novel in decades, *The Da Vinci Code*, and turned it into a movie so dull that all anyone wanted to talk about was Tom Hanks’ haircut.

But perhaps the biggest example of “not living up to your own hype” in 2006 was the perfectly titled, though terribly executed, *Snakes on a Plane*. Once the title of this goofy genre thriller was announced, film fans went rabid in anticipation, starting a grassroots viral marketing campaign for the movie solely based on its hilarious high concept (snakes + plane = awesome) and every moviegoer’s secret desire to see Samuel L. Jackson exclaim, in the parlance of The Hound’s grandmother, “I’m tired of these mother-hubbard snakes on this mother-hubbard plane!” Unfortunately, the marketing turned out to be 100 times more clever than the

final product. There were other disappointments in 2007—*All the King's Men*, *American Dreamz*, *Blood Diamond*—but none were quite as heartbreaking as the lost potential of Jules from *Pulp Fiction* versus a 747 full of rattlesnakes.

From the disappointments, we move to the pleasant surprises, movies that either we never saw coming or never thought would work. A hard-boiled detective mystery set in a high school? It sounded like *Bugsy Malone*, but Rian Johnson's debut film, *Brick*, turned out to be one of the coolest works of crime noir in recent memory. Horror movies almost never live up to their hype, but Eli Roth's *Hostel* and Neil Marshall's *The Descent* were both legitimately claustrophobic, tense, and terrifying, making us believe that scary movies can actually be scary again in a post-*Scream* world. Despite a limited release and a Vin Diesel lead performance, Sidney Lumet's *Find Me Guilty* was a tremendously fun courtroom mob movie and, even with Tom Cruise's recent public wackiness (Do you know the history of psychiatry? Maverick does, apparently), thanks to new director J.J. Abrams, *Mission: Impossible 3* was a terrific spy thriller. Also we never would've thought that a blonde James Bond could be anything but lame (*Legally Blonde 3: License to Kill*), but then Daniel Craig knocked it out of the park in the Bond reboot *Casino Royale*, drawing almost universal praise as the best 007 since Connery. And, possibly most surprising of all, *Rocky Balboa* (i.e. *Rocky 6: The Quickenings*) wasn't all that bad.

And from the pleasant surprises, we move, finally, to the best of the best. Now, the amazing thing about most of 2006's top films isn't that there was so many great movies, but that, on the surface, most of them don't necessarily sound like "four bones" material. For example, whoever would've thought that Greg Kinnear and Alan Arkin spending 90 minutes in a VW bus would result in one of the most insightful, legitimately funny family comedies in years? Sounds pretty hacky, but *Little Miss Sunshine* was anything but. A big-screen *Candid Camera* movie sounds boring as heck, but few movies have ever dissected American culture better (and more wickedly) than Sasha Baron Cohen's *Borat*. Need more examples? Well, who could've predicted that a trio of filmmakers who named themselves after a cheesy 1980s John Landis comedy (*The Three Amigos*) could've produced three of the most profoundly moving dramas of the year—Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu's overlapping melodrama *Babel*, Guillermo del Toro's bloody good Spanish fairy tale *Pan's Labyrinth*, and Alfonso Cuarón's obscenely-overlooked dystopian thriller *Children of Men*.

Even some of the most well known directors in the world defied our expectations—in brilliant ways—in 2006. Clint Eastwood shocked Hollywood when he announced, during the production of *Flags of Our Fathers*, a fictionalized account of the battle of Iwo Jima, that he was also going to shoot a companion film in Japanese to tell the other side of the war story. While *Letters from Iwo Jima* was, at first, seen

as an art-house experiment, after *Flags of Our Fathers* was received coolly by audiences and critics, Clint released *Letters* to wide acclaim, snagging a Best Film Oscar nomination in the process. Spike Lee abandoned his more overt politics for the popcorn bank robbery flick *Inside Man* and, surprisingly, delivered one of his coolest, cleverest, and most confident films in years. And, in what was probably the biggest moment in film all year, who could've imagined that a relatively mainstream gangster film, *The Departed*, would finally, FINALLY, give the legendary Martin Scorsese his first Best Director and Best Picture Oscar? It may have seemed surprising on paper—hasn't Marty exhausted the gangster genre yet?—but anyone who saw *The Departed* recognized that Scorsese delivered a tour-de-force genre thriller with a cast to die for (DiCaprio, Damon, Nicholson, Baldwin, Sheen, the list goes on and on). However, we should note that not every critical hit in 2007 was a blind-siding surprise, as evidenced by the vast talent and pedigree behind such not-at-all-shocking award-winning favorites as *Dreamgirls*, *The Queen*, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, *The Last King of Scotland*, and many others.

So, what did we learn from the year in film 2006? First and foremost, to quote screenwriting legend William Goldman, "Nobody Knows Anything." 2006 was a year of longshots, last minute surprises, and dropped jaws in Hollywood. While some truths are almost universal—people love Johnny Depp as a pirate, kids love penguins, be they CGI or otherwise—there is a lot of uncertainty about what works and what doesn't in Hollywood. If there was such a thing as a movie industry fantasy league, everyone who chose Michael Mann, M. Night, and the Man of Steel as their first-round draft picks would've spent the year crying into their popcorn, while the third-string Baron Cohens, Abigail Breslins, and Boston gangsters cleaned up at the box office. As we move through 2007, just remember to expect the unexpected. Yes, anyone can predict that *Spider-Man 3* is going to make a billion dollars, but you've always got to keep your eye out for the next *300* or *Disturbia*, the next-gen game-changers who are going to alter the way we all think about film industry or, at the very least, make a whole lot of money for the Hollywood elite.

Speaking of elite, you hold in your hands (or hand-cart, forklift, whatever) one of the premier movie resources around, if we do say so ourselves. We try to keep it up to hip, dig what the kids are into. And who isn't into all reviews of the big (and not so big) movies that are out in various forms of home media? You may notice more documentaries, foreign, and niche films than in the past. Well, that's just us keeping up with what's going on. More of those films are getting stateside video releases than ever before, and we thought you should know about 'em. Of course we came through with more subject and kibbles categories, too. So if you were wondering how many "stuntmen" or "killer clown" flicks there are, wonder no more!

For those of you who missed the fun of answering questions

the last time around, and for those who enjoyed it so much the first time around, here are some things we sit around the office wondering about, when we aren't busy under-rating your favorite movies.

What do you usually use *VideoHound* for?

(Examples: picking out a movie to watch/rent; help on puzzles/games/trivia/wagers; finding a specific actor/actress's name or films)

What is your favorite feature/element of *VideoHound* ?

What is your least favorite feature/element of *VideoHound* ?

What feature/element/index do you use most?

What feature/element/index do you use least?

When searching for a specific movie (without benefit of the title), which index are you most likely to check first?

Send your answers to the email address below. Please put 'VGMR answers' in the subject line.

Thanks for your continued support and assistance.

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P.S. For those of you who have asked, Robert De Niro is indeed listed in the Cast Index. He is under De(space)N, not DeN.

# Using VideoHound

## Alphabetization

Titles are arranged on a word-by-word basis, including articles and prepositions. Leading articles (A, An, The) are ignored in English-language titles. The equivalent foreign articles are not ignored, however: *The Abyss* appears under “A” while *Les Misérables* appears under “L.” **Other points to keep in mind:**

- Acronyms appear alphabetically as if regular words. For example, *C.H.U.D.* is alphabetized as “Chud”; *M\*A\*S\*H* as “Mash.”
- Common abbreviations in titles file as if they were spelled out, so *St. Elmo’s Fire* will be found under “Saint Elmo’s Fire” and *Mr. Holland’s Opus* will be alphabetized as “Mister Holland’s Opus.”
- Proper names in titles are alphabetized beginning with the individual’s first name; for instance, *Monty Python’s The Meaning of Life* is under “M”; *Eddie Murphy: Raw* is under “E.”
- Titles with numbers (*2001: A Space Odyssey*) are alphabetized as if the number were spelled out under the appropriate letter, in this case “Two Thousand One.” When numeric titles gather in close proximity to each other (*2000 Year Old Man*, *2001*, *2010: The Year We Make Contact*), the titles will be arranged in a low (*2000*) to high (*2010*) numeric sequence.

## Indexes

**Alternate Title Index.** A number of videos, particularly older, foreign, or B-type releases, may have variant titles. Alternate titles are listed alphabetically and refer the reader to the title under which the entry is listed. The alternate titles are also noted within the review.

**Category Index.** Subject categories ranging from the orthodox to slightly eccentric permit you to video sleuth from broad type to significant themes to signature scenes. The mix, arranged alphabetically by category, includes hundreds of traditional film genres and sub-genres as well as a feast of *VideoHound* exclusives. Integrated into the index are cross references, while preceding the index is a list of definitions. Release year will help differentiate between titles of the same name. **A tipped triangle (▶) indicates a movie rated three bones or above.**

**Kibbles and Series Index.** Not your everyday categories, Kibbles span the literary side of movie-making (Adapted from a Play, Books to Film: Ernest Hemingway) and point out key producers and special effects masters. Yearly box-office winners (that are now on video) since 1939 are listed, along with classic movies, four-bone delights, trash films, modern Shakespeare, Disney fare, significant on-screen and director/actor pairings. The Series portion of this index provides listings of major movie series, ranging from James Bond to National Lampoon to Indiana Jones. Recurring cinematic collaborations and partnerships of note are also listed, including Hope & Crosby, Abbott & Costello, De Niro & Scorsese, and Rafelson & Nicholson. A complete list of the categories precedes the index. Release year will help differentiate between titles of the same name. **As in the Category Index, tipped triangles (▶) indicate quality views.**

**Awards Index.** The Awards Index lists almost 7,000 films honored by national and international award bodies, representing some 90 categories of competition. This information is also contained in the review following the credits. Nominations are once again (thanks to popular demand) included in this index. A star (?) denotes the winner. **Only features available on video and reviewed in the main section are listed in this index; movies not yet released on video are not covered.**

As award-winning and nominated films find their way to video, they will be added to the review section and covered in this index. Awards listed include the American Academy Awards; British Academy of Film and Television Arts; Golden Globe; Directors Guild of America; Screen Actors Guild; Writers Guild; Independent Spirit; National Film Registry; and the Golden Raspberries.

**Cast/Director Indexes.** The Cast Index provides full videographies for all actors and actresses listed in *VideoHound* with more than two movies on their resume. The Director Index lists the works of any director who has made it to video and to *VideoHound*. Although listed in a first name, last name sequence, the names are alphabetized by last name. Film titles, complete with initial year of release, are arranged in chronological order, starting with their most recent. A (V) designation after a film title indicates that the actor lent only vocal talents to that movie, as in animation