

# Oscar fever brews: Here's what's at the cinemas this February

 By [Daniel Dercksen](#)

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As Oscar fever brews, here's February's big screen releases.



Image supplied

## 2 February

The greater the spy, the bigger the lie in *Argylle*. Elly Conway (Bryce Dallas Howard), the reclusive author of a series of best-selling espionage novels, whose idea of bliss is a night at home with her computer and her cat, Alfie. But when the plots of Elly's fictional books — which center on secret agent Argylle and his mission to unravel a global spy syndicate— begin to mirror the covert actions of a real-life spy organisation, quiet evenings at home become a thing of the past.

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In the fantastic animated *Dogs at the Opera*, a street dog named Samson, in his attempts to hide from stray dog catchers, finds himself at the Metropolitan Opera. There, he meets charming Margot. Margot is a pet of Anastasia, the theatre's prima ballerina.

The plot thickens as the unique tiara that belonged to the queen of Great Britain and that Anastasia has to wear in the fourth act of the ballet, is stolen from the dressing room. Without the tiara, the show cannot go on and must be canceled. Now Margot and Samson have to find the thief, retrieve the tiara, and save the day to the sounds of the music by the great Georges Bizet.

In director Jonathan Glazer's controversial *The Zone Of Interest*, the commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolf Höss, and his wife Hedwig, strive to build a dream life for their family in a house and garden next to the camp.

"It was about creating an arena," says Glazer, whose rigorous and intensely physical production process involved building and shooting on location in Poland and utilizing a network of surveillance-style cameras to capture multiple sequences being staged simultaneously in the same building.

"The phrase I kept using was 'Big Brother in the Nazi house,'" says the 58-year-old filmmaker, who was awarded the Grand Prix at Cannes in 2023 for his fourth feature. The film received Oscar Nominations for Best Picture as well as Best International Feature, Jonathan Glazer for Best Director and Best Adapted Screenplay, Tarn Willers and Johnnie Burn for Sound

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## All the 2024 Academy Award nominations

24 Jan 2024



Ancient Babylon comes to life in this classic Met Opera's staging of Verdi's opera *Nabucco*, a stirring drama about the fall of ancient Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. Baritone George Gagnidze stars as the imperious king Nabucco, alongside soprano Liudmyla Monastyrskaya, reprising her thrilling turn as his vengeful daughter Abigaille. Mezzo-soprano Maria Barakova and tenor SeokJong Baek are Fenena and Ismaele, whose love transcends politics, and bass Dmitry Belosselskiy repeats his celebrated portrayal of the high priest Zaccaria.

Daniele Callegari conducts Verdi's exhilarating early masterpiece. In a remarkable career spanning six decades in the theater, *Nabucco* catapulted the 28-year-old composer to international fame. Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) composed 26 operas, at least half of which are at the core of today's repertoire. His role in Italy's cultural and political development has made him an icon in his native country. Will be screened exclusively at Nouveau cinemas on 2, 3, 4 and 6 February 2024..

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#### 4 February

The celebrated English synth-pop duo Pet Shop Boys' concert film of their greatest hits tour, *Dreamworld: The Greatest Hits Live*, celebrates the duo's 40th anniversary. Directed by the renowned leading live performance director David Barnard, the 14-camera 4K shoot ensures an immersive big-screen experience.

Captured from the Royal Arena in Copenhagen on 7 July 2023, it features primary vocalist, Neil Tennant, and keyboardist, Chris Lowe. The concert film includes all of Pet Shop Boys' classic songs from the catalogue of hits they have released since their first single in 1984, including *West End Girls*, *Suburbia*, *Opportunities (Let's Make Lots of Money)*, *Left to My Own Devices*, *Rent*, *Domino Dancing*, *Love Comes Quickly*, *Always on My Mind*, *What Have I Done to Deserve This* and *It's a Sin*.

Pet Shop Boys, formed in London in 1981, has sold more than 50 million records worldwide and has been cited as one of the most successful pop duos in UK music history. The concert film will be screened on Sunday, 4 February at 15:30 at Ster-Kinekor's Rosebank Nouveau in Johannesburg, Brooklyn Mall in Tshwane, Gateway in uMhlanga and V&A Waterfront in Cape Town.

#### 9 February

*In Land Of Bad*, Reaper, a USAF drone pilot, provides air support from a General Atomics MQ-9 Reaper to a US Army Delta Force team on the ground in the Philippines. After a mishap, Kinney, a young JTAC officer attached to the Delta Force team finds himself part of an extraction team relying only on Reaper's remote air support. This action thriller is directed by William Eubank, who co-wrote the script with David Frigerio. The film stars Liam Hemsworth, Russell Crowe, Luke Hemsworth, Ricky Whittle, and Milo Ventimiglia.

Director Alexander Payne's sensational *The Holdovers* is an absolutely delightful story of three lonely, shipwrecked people at a New England boarding school in the 70s. It follows a curmudgeonly instructor (Paul Giamatti) at a prestigious American school who is forced to remain on campus during Christmas break to babysit the handful of students with nowhere to go. Eventually he forms an unlikely bond with one of them — a damaged, brainy troublemaker (Dominic Sessa) — and with the school's head cook, who has just lost a son in Vietnam (Da'Vine Joy Randolph).

The film received 5 Oscar nominations: Best Picture, Paul Giamatti for Actor in a Leading Role, Da'Vine Joy Randolph in a Supporting Role, screenwriter David Hemingson for Best Original Screenplay, Kevin Tent for Film Editing.

*Dune: Part One* is released in cinemas. Set in the far distant future, the film follows Paul Atreides as his family, the noble House Atreides, is thrust into a war for the deadly and inhospitable desert planet Arrakis.

Directed by Denis Villeneuve, who co-wrote the screenplay with Jon Spaihts and Eric Roth. It is the first of a two-part adaptation of the 1965 novel of the same name from Frank Herbert's Dune franchise. Part 2 releases on 1 March in local cinemas. Paul Atreides unites with Chani and the Fremen while on a warpath of revenge against the conspirators who destroyed his family.

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## 14 February

The biographical musical drama <> is based on the life of reggae singer and songwriter Bob Marley, from his rise to fame up until his death in the early 1980s. Directed by Reinaldo Marcus Green and written by Green, Terence Winter, Frank E. Flowers, and Zach Baylin, from a story by Winter and Flowers. It The film stars Kingsley Ben-Adir as Marley, alongside Lashana Lynch as Rita Marley, and James Norton as Chris Blackwell.

For more, go to <https://www.onelovemovie.com/>

## 16 February

In *Madame Webb*, Cassandra “Cassie” Webb is forced to confront her past while trying to survive with three young women with powerful futures who are being hunted by a deadly adversary. It stars Dakota Johnson in the title role, alongside Sydney Sweeney, Celeste O'Connor, Isabela Merced, and Tahar Rahim

## 23 February

In the local film *Frankie En Felipé*, Franklin Blaze (Bradley Olivier) is a hard-working, successful man from a poor background, which he hides from his fiancée, Kim Fortuin (Kim Syster), and colleagues. When his half-brother, Felipé Baadjies, sneaks out of his house, his impending wedding and work reputation are in jeopardy. The desperate Felipé (Solomon Cupido) threatens to expose his brother Frankie's secret if he does not help him with money he owes a cruel loan shark. Frankie tries to appease Felipé by including him in the wedding, a decision he soon regrets. Felipé is not the kind of fool the wealthy, sophisticated Fortuin family wants near their daughter.

Read more about [South African filmmaking](#).

In *Miller's Girl*, a talented young writer (Jenna Ortega) embarks on a creative odyssey when her teacher (Martin Freeman) assigns a project that entangles them both in an increasingly complex web. As lines blur and their lives intertwine, professor and protégé must confront their darkest selves while straining to preserve their individual sense of purpose and the things they hold most dear. Written and directed by Jade Halley Bartlett.

Oppenheimer, a sprawling examination of the dawn of the Atomic Age, kicked off the race for the 96th Academy Awards on Tuesday, earning 13 nominations and deserves a re-release. Inspired by the Pulitzer Prize-winning book *American Prometheus* by Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherman, Oppenheimer chronicles the life and legacy of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the father of the atomic bomb.

The film stars Cillian Murphy as J. Robert Oppenheimer and Emily Blunt as his wife, biologist and botanist Kitty Oppenheimer. Matt Damon portrays Leslie Groves, director of the Manhattan Project, and Robert Downey, Jr. plays Lewis Strauss, a founding commissioner of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission.

It received Oscar nominations for Best Picture, Christopher Nolan for Best Director and Adapted Screenplay, Cillian Murphy for Actor in a Leading Role, Robert Downey Jr. and Emily Blunt in a Supporting Roles, Hoyte van Hoytema for Cinematography, Ellen Mirojnick for Costume Design, Willie Burton, Richard King, Gary A. Rizzo and Kevin O'Connell for Sound, Ludwig Göransson for Original Score, Luisa Abel for Make-up and Hairstyling, Production Design for Ruth De Jong and Claire Kaufman. And Jennifer Lame for Editing. The 2024 Oscars will be held on Sunday, 10 March 2024.

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### **Top films of January**

*All Of Us Strangers* is a profound exploration of familial and romantic love, but also the distinct experience of a specific generation of gay people growing up in the 80s from British filmmaker Andrew Haigh.

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Acclaimed Spanish director-writer J.A.Bayona adapted Pablo Vierci's book *Society Of The Snow*, written 36 years after the Andes flight disaster, to give a voice to the survivors and to those who didn't make it out alive. The film was nominated for an Oscar for Best International Feature and Make-up and Hairstyling

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## ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit [www.writingstudio.co.za](http://www.writingstudio.co.za)

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