

All the new film releases coming this festive season

By  Daniel Derksen

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What will the festive season be without escapism on the big screen?



Image supplied: Verdi's *La Traviata*

This December there are delicious dark Christmas comedies and action-adventures, Festive romance, feline shenanigans and heart-warming real-life stories.

2 December

The Estate is a deliciously dark comedy female-centric comedy featuring Toni Collette and Anna Faris as sisters who try to get back in the good graces of their estranged aunt before she passes to inherit some of her fortune.

When they arrive, they learn that several of their cousins had the same idea, and now the family is competing for Aunt Hilda's affection.

"I really wanted to do something where the female characters led the way in terms of behaviour that was interesting and funny, maybe a bit weird, and certainly morally challenging – characters that are flawed," says writer-director Dean Craig.

In *Violent Night*, a team of mercenaries breaks into a wealthy Lightstone family compound on Christmas Eve, taking everyone inside hostage, the team isn't prepared for a surprise combatant: Santa Claus (David Harbour) is on the grounds, and he's about to show why this Nick is no saint, combatting Emmy winner John Leguizamo as Scrooge, the leader of the mercenaries.

"I was intrigued doing a Christmas movie and contributing to creating something that people can watch every Christmas season," says director Tommy Wirkola. "I'm a big sucker for things that feel a little bit different and edgy. Things that have a unique tone—I'm a fan of mixing tones, where things can be funny, action-packed and have a big heart at the same time."

9 December

Detective Knight: Redemption (also known as simply *Christmas Knight*) is a Christmas action film directed by Edward John Drake, serving as the second instalment of the *Detective Knight* trilogy, and as a sequel to *Detective Knight: Rogue*, starring Paul Johansson and Bruce Willis.

After the events of *Rogue*, Detective James Knight is in prison for the murders of Winna and Brigga. During the Christmas season, Knight gets caught up in the middle of a jailbreak, led by a violent fanatic named The Christmas Bomber and his Santa Claus disciples. He strikes a deal to take out the terrorists in exchange for his reinstatement. With the bomber's

henchmen terrorizing the city, Knight must seek justice.

This Festive season, everyone's favourite leche-loving, swashbuckling, fear-defying feline returns. In *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish*.

For the first time in more than a decade, DreamWorks Animation presents a new adventure in the *Shrek* universe as daring outlaw Puss in Boots discovers that his passion for peril and disregard for safety have taken their toll. Puss has burned through eight of his nine lives, though he lost count along the way. Getting those lives back will send Puss in Boots on his grandest quest yet.

Antonio Banderas returns as the voice of the notorious PIB as he embarks on an epic journey into the Black Forest to find the mythical Wishing Star and restore his lost lives. But with only one life left, Puss will have to humble himself and ask for help from his former partner and nemesis: the captivating Kitty Softpaws (Salma Hayek Pinault).

In *The Good House*, Sigourney Weaver delivers a stellar performance as Hildy Good, a realtor in an idyllic New England town, whose wickedly funny tongue and seeming success mask her life's one dark truth: She enjoys her wine a bit too much.

But Hildy's good at keeping it together — until, that is, a rekindled romance with high school flame Frank Getchell (Kevin

Kline) sets in motion a chain of events that forces a decades-in-the-making confrontation with Hildy's buried past. Based on the best-selling novel, *The Good House* is a multifaceted portrait of a proud, resilient woman who wouldn't think of asking for help...and whose life won't change until she does.

It is directed by Maya Forbes and Wally Wolodarsky from a screenplay by Thomas Bezucha and Maya Forbes and Wally Wolodarsky, based on the novel by Ann Leary.

Featuring Oscar winners Mira Sorvino and the screenwriter of *Crash*, the thrilling, high-speed biopic *Lamborghini – The Man Behind The Legend* tells the story of genius auto inventor Ferruccio Lamborghini (Frank Grillo).

All his life, Ferruccio has dreamed of beating his long-time rival Enzo Ferrari (Gabriel Byrne)--and the upcoming Geneva grand prix could be his chance to blow past Ferrari for good. But can Ferruccio get his untested vehicle prepped for victory with the competition just months away? The race is on!

Written and directed by Robert Moresco.

With *Avatar: The Way of Water* the cinematic experience reaches new heights as James Cameron transports audiences back to the magnificent world of Pandora in a spectacular and stirring action-packed adventure.

Set more than a decade after the events of the first film, tells the story of the Sully family (Jake, Neytiri and their kids), the trouble that follows them, the lengths they go to keep each other safe, the battles they fight to stay alive and the tragedies they endure.

Directed by James Cameron it stars Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldña, Sigourney Weaver, Stephen Lang and Kate Winslet. Screenplay by James Cameron, Rick Jaffa, and Amanda Silver.

In love and eager to explore their future together, Vivien (Bella Thorne) and Roy (Benjamin Mascolo) find themselves unexpectedly travelling to Sicily, Roy's homeland in *Game Of Love*. A place which, however, hides people and secrets not entirely connected to the past, that will seriously challenge the couple. They will be confronted with many questions about their feelings, their desires and, above all, their future.

The film follows Vivien and Roy on this formative journey of theirs: they are young and have dreams and desires to follow, but at the same time they must come to terms with their emotional journey, with how they function as a couple when goals change, and they try to build a future together. As they grow together, Vivien and Roy must confront their fragilities and prepare to face the conflicts of the transition to adulthood.

Will love once again manage to overcome all obstacles?

Directed and co-written by Elisa Amoruso.

23 December

The biographical musical *I Wanna Dance With Somebody* explores the life and career of cultural icon Whitney Houston. From New Jersey choir girl to one of the best-selling and most awarded recording artists of all time, audiences are taken on an inspirational, poignant—and so emotional—journey through Houston's trailblazing life and career, with show-stopping performances and a soundtrack of the icon's most beloved hits as you've never heard them before. Don't you wanna dance?

It is directed by Kasi Lemmons and written by Anthony McCarten, with Clive Davis serving as a producer. The film stars Naomi Ackie, Stanley Tucci, Ashton Sanders, Tamara Tunie, Nafessa Williams, and Clarke Peters.

In the computer-animated fantasy-comedy *The Amazing Maurice*, Maurice, a streetwise cat, has the perfect money-making scam. He's found a stupid-looking kid who plays a pipe, and his very own plague of rats – rats who, strangely, are educated and literate, so Maurice can no longer think of them as “lunch”.

And everyone knows the stories about rats and pipers...

However, when Maurice and the rodents reach the stricken town of Bad Blintz, their little con goes down the drain. For someone, there is playing a different tune. A dark, shadowy tune. Something very, very bad is waiting in the cellars. But Maurice wouldn't be Maurice if he and his friends didn't manage to save the day in the end!

Inspired by the Grimm Brothers' fairy-tale about the *Pied Piper of Hamelin*, it is based on the 2001 book *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents* by Terry Pratchett and stars Hugh Laurie, Emilia Clarke, David Thewlis, Himesh Patel, Gemma Arterton, and Hugh Bonneville.

30 December

In the romantic action-comedy *Shotgun Wedding*, Darcy (Jennifer Lopez) and Tom (Josh Duhamel) get their lovable but very opinionated families for the ultimate destination wedding just as the couple gets cold feet but suddenly everyone's lives are in danger when the entire party is taken hostage. The couple must work together to save their loved ones if they don't end up killing each other first.

It is directed by Jason Moore and written by Mark Hammer.

A deeply personal portrait of a 20th-century American childhood, Steven Spielberg's *The Fabelmans* is a cinematic memory of the forces, and family, that shaped the filmmaker's life and career. A universal coming-of-age story about an isolated young man's pursuit of his dreams, the film is an exploration of love, artistic ambition, sacrifice and the moments of discovery that allow us to see the truth about ourselves, and our parents, with clarity and compassion.

"Most of my movies have been a reflection of things that happened to me in my formative years," Spielberg says.

"Everything that a filmmaker puts him or herself into, even if it's somebody else's script, your life is going to come spilling out onto celluloid, whether you like it or not. It just happens. But with *The Fabelmans*, it wasn't about the metaphor; it was about the memory."

Verdi's *La Traviata* continues The Met: Live in HD, the Metropolitan Opera's award-winning series of live high-definition cinema simulcasts at Cinema Nouveau cinemas. Soprano Nadine Sierra stars as the self-sacrificing courtesan Violetta—one of opera's ultimate heroines—in Michael Mayer's vibrant production of Verdi's beloved tragedy. Tenor Stephen Costello is her self-centered lover Alfredo, alongside baritone Luca Salsi as his disapproving father and Maestro Daniele Callegari on the podium. *La Traviata* screens on 2, 3, 4, 6 and 12 December.

Read more about the latest and upcoming films [here](#).

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

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