

Firestarter, Everything Everywhere All At Once, Indemnity

By  Daniel Derksen

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It's Friday the 13th, and this week, a girl with extraordinary pyrokinetic powers fights to protect her family from sinister forces in *Firestarter*, *Everything Everywhere All At Once* is a kung-fu sci-fi dramedy that hops around multidimensional universes, and the local film *Indemnity* is a paranoid conspiracy thriller.



Firestarter

For more than a decade, parents Andy (Zac Efron) and Vicky (Sydney Lemmon) have been on the run, desperate to hide their daughter Charlie (Ryan Kiera Armstrong) from a shadowy federal agency that wants to harness her unprecedented gift for creating fire into a weapon of mass destruction.

Andy has taught Charlie how to defuse her power, which is triggered by anger or pain. But as Charlie turns 11, the fire becomes harder and harder to control. After an incident reveals the family's location, a mysterious operative (Michael Greyeyes) is deployed to hunt down the family and seize Charlie once and for all. Charlie has other plans.

When the idea to reimagine Stephen King's best-selling classic, *Firestarter* for the 21st century (more than 30 years after the 1984 film adaptation), producers Jason Blum and Akiva Goldsman knew that the time was right.

“There’s a new generation of horror movie fans who have maybe heard of the first film, but they haven’t seen it,” Blum says. “We thought it was a great opportunity to make the story a bit more contemporary and discover new faces.”

“I think the key with this book – which is a little different from other novels of King’s that have more supernatural and horror elements – is that it’s very grounded,” says director Keith Thomas. “I believe Stephen King wrote it when his daughter was roughly the same age as the protagonist, so it was about parenting and personal experience, and also about his fascination with mental powers and conspiracies. I believe it speaks very much to our time now. The late 70s, when he wrote this book, were very paranoid times regarding conspiracy theories, and it feels like we are in similar times today; but what he does that makes him so special, is to write these believable characters that are so relatable.”

Read more [here](#).

Everything Everywhere All At Once

For Daniel Kwan and his filmmaking partner, Daniel Scheinert—the auteur duo otherwise known as Daniels, the film is a “project [that] came out of our own anxieties about living in the modern world.”

Evelyn Wang (Yeoh), a harried laundromat owner, living above her business in a cramped apartment and facing a mountain of paperwork amid an audit from the IRS. She is stressed about her ageing father (James Hong) coming to stay and struggles to listen to both her grown daughter Joy (Stephanie Hsu) and her tender-hearted husband Waymond (Ke Huy Quan).

But while meeting with an IRS agent (Jamie Lee Curtis), a strange occurrence involving her own husband pulls her into a multidimensional adventure that puts the fate of every universe in her hands—and also forces her to confront who she is to herself and her family.

The film, as with Daniels' previous work, rushes headlong into unruly anarchy: Evelyn is plunged into the metaphysical world of "verse-jumping," veering from the mundane dreariness of an IRS building to the palatial lair of a nihilistic villain named Jobu Tupaki, from the flashing lights of Hong Kong red carpets to a deserted canyon where sentient rocks manage to have a heart-to-heart.

But this sense of an unhinged imagination, of endless mayhem, ultimately serves to transform the universal, or the multi-universal, into something intimate—an earnest meditation on truly seeing those near us in a time when it feels as if the centre will not hold.

In 2022, in an era of information overload, extreme polarization, and mass existential dread, the struggle to connect between parents and children might feel less like a banal, everyday experience, and more like an increasingly confounding battle between a loved companion and a mortal enemy.

"In a lot of ways, the movie is just a family drama," Scheinert says, "and then we came up with some of the most insane, enormous, overcomplicated hyperbolic metaphors for generational gaps, along with communication errors and ideological differences within a family."

Read more [here](#).

Indemnity

South African writer-director Travis Taute's debut feature *Indemnity* tells the story of Theo Abrahams (Jarrod Geduld), an ex-fireman suffering from severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) who, unable to return to work, turns to alcohol.

Becoming increasingly frustrated and volatile, Theo's world is rocked when his journalist wife Angela (Nicole Fortuin) is murdered – and he is the prime suspect. He soon finds himself on the run from the police for a murder he is positive he didn't commit. But was he framed? Or did one of his violent nightmares cause him to do something he didn't mean to do? As he is hunted by deputy chief Alan Shard (Andre Jacobs) and detective Rene Williamson (Gail Mababane), connections are revealed between his past, the origin of his PTSD, the murder of his wife, and a government conspiracy with chilling implications.

"When it comes to issues regarding mental health, there is such a terrible stigma attached to it. It's considered weak. This inability for men to converse in a constructive way about not being well emotionally and psychologically and being

supported in that conversation. This is an important and powerful issue and I wanted to speak about it in his film,” says Taute.

“I wanted to make an action film, and I was very fortunate that my producers bought into that vision and ambition. However, I wanted to combine that with a film that had a heart that was driven by a character. A story about a man who has this trauma and then weaves in the action sequences to his emotional journey.”

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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

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