

Romance, Revenge and Dystopia



By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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This week, five new films and an opera releasing: the local comedy drama *Catching Feelings*, Clint Eastwood's heist drama, *15:17 To Paris*, the revenge thriller, *Death Wish*, the sci-fi adventure, *Downsizing*, the captivating human drama, *Final Portrait*, and South Africa's very own Pretty Yende debuts a new role at the Met in the opera, *L'Elisir d'Amore*.

Catching Feelings

This deliciously dark South African romantic comedy from writer-director Kagiso Lediga follows an urbane young academic (Kagiso Lediga) and his journalist wife (Pearl Thusi); as their lives get turned upside down when a celebrated and hedonistic older writer (Andrew Buckland) moves into their Johannesburg home with them. Despite their love for each other, their relationship has hit a rut.

Lacking excitement, the couple have settled into a routine that neither agrees with. Max now spends his time at dinners and events, musing over his frustrations with his key conspirator and sounding board, Joel (Akin Omotoso), who himself has his hands full with an illicit affair.

The film also features Zandi Tisani, Precious Makgaretsa and Kate Liquorish.

15:17 To Paris

Clint Eastwood brings audiences a tense real-life story of three men whose brave act turned them into heroes during a high-speed railway ride.

In the early evening of 21 August 2015, the world watched in stunned silence as the media reported a thwarted terrorist attack on Thalys train #9364 bound for Paris – an attempt prevented by three courageous young Americans traveling through Europe.

The film follows the course of the friends' lives, from the struggles of childhood through finding their footing in life, to the series of unlikely events leading up to the attack. Throughout the harrowing ordeal, their friendship never wavers, making it their greatest weapon and allowing them to save the lives of the more than 500 passengers on board.

The heroic trio is comprised of Anthony Sadler, Oregon National Guardsman Alek Skarlatos, and U.S. Air Force airman first class, Spencer Stone who play themselves in the film, which Eastwood directed from a screenplay by Dorothy Blyskal, based on the book by Anthony Sadler, Alek Skarlatos, Spencer Stone and Jeffrey E. Stern.

Death Wish

In director Eli Roth's action-packed re-imagining of the classic 1974 revenge thriller, Dr. Paul Kersey (Bruce Willis) is a trauma surgeon who only sees the aftermath of Chicago violence when it is rushed into his ER, until his wife (Elisabeth Shue) and college-aged daughter, (Camila Morrone) are viciously attacked in their suburban home. With the police overloaded with crimes, Paul, burning for revenge, hunts his family's assailants to deliver justice. As the anonymous slayings of criminals grabs the media's attention, the city wonders if this deadly avenger is a guardian angel or a grim reaper.

Paul Kersey becomes a divided person: A man who saves lives, and a man who takes them; a husband and father trying to take care of his family, and a shadowy figure fighting Chicago crime; a surgeon extracting bullets from suspects' bodies, and a man seeking justice whom the public calls "The Grim Reaper" that detectives are quickly closing in on.

The story was first told in Brian Garfield's 1972 novel of the same name, and then in director Michael Winner's 1974 landmark action drama, starring Charles Bronson and adapted by Oscar nominee Wendell Mayes.

Downsizing

This mind-bending sci-fi adventure imagines what might happen if, as a solution to over-population, Norwegian scientists discover how to shrink humans to five inches (13 cm) tall and propose a 200-year global transition from big to small, but with one catch: the procedure cannot be reversed.

People soon realise how much further money goes in a miniaturised world, and with the promise of a better life, Paul Safranek (Matt Damon) and wife Audrey (Kristen Wiig) decide to abandon their stressed lives in Omaha in order to become small and move to a new downsized community – a choice that triggers life-changing adventures.

To Paul's horror and outrage, he finds out that Audrey backed out at the last second. After the couple understands that they do not have a future together, they divorce and Paul must now figure out how to start his life over in a completely different world.

Directed by Alexander Payne and written by Payne and Jim Taylor.

Final Portrait

This captivating human drama is a portrait of a genius, and of a friendship between two men who are utterly different, yet increasingly bonded through a single, ever-evolving act of creativity.

It is a film which shines a light on the artistic process itself, by turns exhilarating, exasperating and bewildering, questioning whether the gift of a great artist is a blessing or a curse.

In 1964, while on a short trip to Paris, the American writer and art-lover James Lord (Armie Hammer) is asked by his friend, the world-renowned artist Alberto Giacometti (Geoffrey Rush), to sit for a portrait. The process, Giacometti assures Lord, will take only a few days. Flattered and intrigued, Lord agrees. So begins not only the story of an offbeat friendship, but, seen through the eyes of Lord, an insight into the beauty, frustration, profundity and, at times, downright chaos of the artistic process.

The film marks a 10-year passion project for writer-director Stanley Tucci.

L'Elisir d'Amore

South Africa's very own Pretty Yende debuts a new role at the Met as the spirited Adina opposite Matthew Polenzani in the opera L'Elisir d'Amore.

Bartlett Sher's production is charming, with deft comedic timing, but also emotionally revealing.

L'Elisir d'Amore has been among the most consistently popular operatic comedies for almost two centuries. The story deftly combines comic archetypes with a degree of genuine character development rare in works of this type. Its ending is as much a foregone conclusion as it would be in a romantic comedy film today - the joy is in the journey, and Donizetti

created one of his most instantly appealing scores for this ride.

The running time is 2 hours 39 minutes with one interval. It is showing from 10 March for limited screenings.

Meerkat Maantuig

The internationally acclaimed local film Meerkat Maantuig is releasing on 16 March and there will be sneak previews on Saturday, 10 March at the 17:00 shows in selected cinemas. Written and directed by Hanneke Schutte it tells the story about a fearful 13-year-old girl who believes in a family curse that has been passed down from generation to generation. Scared and desperate she's unable to escape this story that has shaped her identity. Ultimately, it's only by facing her fears that she's able to transcend it. [Click here](#) to see the list of cinemas screening the film.

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ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

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