

Gear up for May film releases

By  Daniel Dercksen

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Big screen film releases in May feature unwavering superheroes, mind-blowing sci-fi action, explosive action-thrillers, raucous comedies, inspiring drama and live operas from the Met.



5 May

In this third and final film in the *Guardians of the Galaxy* trilogy, the superhero team are still reeling from the loss of Gamora. Peter Quill must rally his team to defend the universe and protect one of their own. If the mission is not completely successful, it could possibly lead to the end of the Guardians as we know them.

Guardians Of The Galaxy Vol. 3 is written and directed by James Gunn and stars an ensemble cast featuring Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista, Karen Gillan, Pom Klementieff, Vin Diesel, Bradley Cooper, Sean Gunn, Chukwudi Iwuji, Will Poulter, Elizabeth Debicki, Maria Bakalova, and Sylvester Stallone.

The Unlikely Pilgrimage Of Harold Fry is the story of an unremarkable man who sets off on a remarkable journey. Harold lives a life without purpose until he learns an old friend is dying and vows that in walking across England to see her, his journey can keep her alive.

A story of rediscovery and transformation, it is an uplifting reminder that you're never too old to take a chance, and that kindness is less rare than you think. Based on the 2012 *New York Times* and *Sunday Times* bestseller of the same name, this heartfelt and original take on the coming-of-age narrative will resonate with audiences of all ages. This British drama is directed by Hettie Macdonald and stars Jim Broadbent and Penelope Wilton.

The surrealist black comedy- horror *Beau Is Afraid* stars Joaquin Phoenix as the titular character, an anxiety-ridden man who embarks on a surreal odyssey home after his mother suddenly dies, confronting his greatest fears along the way. The film also includes a supporting ensemble cast that includes Nathan Lane, Patti LuPone, Amy Ryan, Kylie Rogers, Parker Posey, Stephen McKinley Henderson, Hayley Squires, Michael Gandolfini, Zoe Lister-Jones, and Richard Kind. It is written, directed, and co-produced by Ari Aster who induced nightmares with his films *Hereditary* and *Midsommar*.

South African actress Nomzamo Mbatha (who was born in Durban) stars opposite Bruce Willis in action-packed sci-fi thriller *Assassins*. A private military operation led by (Willis) invents futuristic microchip tech that enables the mind of an agent to inhabit the body of another person to carry out covert, deadly missions. But when an agent (Mustafa Shakir) is killed during a secret mission, his wife (Mbatha) takes his place in an attempt to bring the man responsible to Justice. The film is directed by Jesse Atlas who makes his directorial feature debut

The Met Opera's live screening of Verdi's Shakespearean comedy *Fallstaff* features a brilliant ensemble cast in Robert Carsen's celebrated staging. Baritone Michael Volle sings his first Verdi role at the Met as the caddish knight Falstaff, gleefully tormented by a trio of clever women who deliver his comeuppance.

Reuniting after their acclaimed performances in the production's 2019 run are soprano Ailyn Pérez as Alice Ford, soprano Jennifer Johnson Cano as Meg Page, and mezzo-soprano Marie-Nicole Lemieux as Mistress Quickly. Soprano Hera Hyesang Park and tenor Bogdan Volkov are the young couple Nannetta and Fenton, and Daniele Rustioni conducts. It screens exclusively on 5, 6, 7, 9 May at select Ster-Kinekor and Cinema Nouveau cinemas.

Read more about [The Met Opera Season](#).

12 May

What if a random text message led to the love of your life? In the romantic comedy *Love Again* dealing with the loss of her fiancé, Mira Ray sends a series of romantic texts to his old cell phone number... not realising the number was reassigned to Rob Burns' new work phone. A journalist, Rob is captivated by the honesty in the beautifully confessional texts.

When he's assigned to write a profile of megastar Celine Dion (playing herself in her first film role), he enlists her help in figuring out how to meet Mira in person... and win her heart. Written and directed by James C. Strouse. It is an English-language remake of the 2016 German film *SMS für Dich*, itself based on a novel by Sofie Cramer. The film stars Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Sam Heughan, and Celine Dion portraying a fictionalized version of herself in her first film role.

In the romantic comedy *Book Club: The Next Chapter*, four elderly best friends take their book club to Italy for the fun girls' trip they never had. When things go off the rails and secrets are revealed, their relaxing vacation turns into a once-in-a-lifetime cross-country adventure. Written and directed by Bill Holderman, and starring Diane Keaton, Jane Fonda, Candice Bergen and Mary Steenburgen, it is a sequel to 2018 film *Book Club*.

In the science fiction action thriller *Hypnotic*, a detective learns that his missing daughter and a string of high profile bank robberies might be connected. He must go on a mind-bending journey to find his daughter and stop the secret government agency behind the madness. Co-written and directed by Robert Rodriguez (El Mariachi), the film features an ensemble cast that includes Ben Affleck, Alice Braga, J. D. Pardo, Hala Finley, Dayo Okeniyi, Jeff Fahey, Jackie Earle Haley, and William Fichtner.

19 May

Over many missions and against impossible odds, Dom Toretto and his family have outsmarted and outdriven every foe in their path. In *Fast & Furious 10* (also known as *Fast X*) they must confront the most lethal opponent they've ever faced. Fueled by revenge, a terrifying threat emerges from the shadows of the past to shatter Dom's world and destroy everything -- and everyone -- he loves. This action film is directed by Louis Leterrier and is the sequel to *F9* (2021), serving as the tenth and penultimate main instalment, and the eleventh full-length film in the *Fast & Furious* franchise.

26 May

In the live-action musical fantasy *The Little Mermaid*, Ariel, the youngest daughter of the kingdom Atlantica's ruler King Triton, is fascinated with the human world but mermaids are forbidden to explore it. After saving Prince Eric from a shipwreck and falling in love with him, she becomes determined to be with him in the world above water. These actions lead to a confrontation with her father and an encounter with the conniving sea witch Ursula, making a deal with her to trade her beautiful voice for human legs so she can discover the world above water and impress Eric.

However, this ultimately places her life (and her father's crown) in jeopardy. It is directed by Rob Marshall and is an adaptation of Disney's 1989 animated film of the same name, which itself is loosely based on the 1837 fairy tale of the same title by Hans Christian Andersen. The film stars Halle Bailey in the titular role, alongside Jonah Hauer-King, Daveed Diggs, Awkwafina, Jacob Tremblay, Noma Dumezweni, Javier Bardem, and Melissa McCarthy.

In the comedy *About My Father*, Sebastian informs his traditional Italian immigrant father Salvo about his plan to propose to his American girlfriend, and Salvo insists on joining them for a weekend with her parents. Despite the clash between their two cultures and initial perception of having nothing in common, they eventually become a single, unified family by the end of the summer holiday weekend. Directed by Laura Terruso from a screenplay by Sebastian Maniscalco and Austen Earl. The film stars Maniscalco and is loosely based on his life and his relationship with his father, played by Robert De Niro.

In the action thriller *Kandahar*, an undercover CIA operative is stuck deep in hostile territory in Afghanistan. When an intelligence leak exposes his identity and mission, he must fight his way out, alongside his Afghan translator, to an

extraction point in Kandahar, all whilst avoiding the elite special forces unit tasked with hunting them down. It is directed by Ric Roman Waugh and stars Gerard Butler.

A stellar trio assembles to take on the lead roles of Strauss's comedic opera *Der Rosenkavalier*, with soprano Lise Davidsen in her Met role debut as the Marschallin, opposite mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard in her Met role debut as Octavian, and soprano Erin Morley as Sophie. Bass Günther Groissböck returns as Baron Ochs, and Markus Brück is Sophie's father, Faninal. Maestro Simone Young takes the podium to oversee Robert Carsen's fin-de-siècle staging.

It screens exclusively on 26, 27, 28, 30 May at select Ster-Kinekor and Cinema Nouveau cinemas.

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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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