

# Action heroes and deadly rivals

 By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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Two local films are released this week: a pacifist primary school teacher is hunted down in the taut thriller *Jagveld*, and a young professor consumed by alcoholism is saved from self-destruction in *The Tribe*. In other new releases, a formidable lobbyist in D.C. faces powerful new enemies who threaten her career and the people she cares about in the superb political thriller *Miss Sloane*; legendary hitman John Wick squares off against some of the world's deadliest killers, and a young country girl declares a bloody mission in the NT Live broadcast of George Bernard Shaw classic play *Saint Joan*.

## **Jagveld**

Written by bestselling author Deon Meyer and directed by Byron Davis, this local film takes on a genre that hasn't been seen in South Africa for decades, and especially not in Afrikaans – the action thriller. With this movie, the team behind *Jagveld* is breaking new ground and opening new possibilities for the South African film industry as a whole.

Leandie du Randt, South Africa's sweetheart, who usually plays the beautiful romantic leading lady, becomes an action hero that isn't afraid to get her hands dirty, and is someone you definitely don't want to mess with. Neels van Jaarsveld, Tim Theron, Bouwer Bosch, Danie Putter, Luan Jacobs and Edwin van der Walt, famous for their roles in some of South Africa's most popular romantic comedies and heartfelt dramas, show off their talent and versatility by transforming

themselves into a murderous and cold-blooded gang of criminals.

When looking at Du Randt's role, it's also obvious that Jagveld isn't afraid to break down gender stereotypes. Emma le Roux isn't a damsel in distress, waiting for a 'big strong man' to come to her rescue. She stands on her own two feet, looks danger straight in the eye, takes the blows, and hits back twice as hard. Emma is a character that women of all ages can look up to, a strong woman that can stand her ground, and not give an inch.

## **Murder witness**

Emma le Roux is on her way home to the family farm in the Great Karoo. Pretty, soft little Emma, the pacifist primary school teacher, has made this trip numerous times without incident, but not today... Today her path will cross with Bosman, Baz and Jay. And Boela, AJ and Piet. Bosman is the mastermind of a drug syndicate and a psychopath; he is savage and violent. Baz and Jay are his henchmen – murderers, monsters. AJ and Boela, spoiled brats looking for validation, are on board to make a quick buck in the criminal underworld. And then there's Piet, the weakling, who is willing to do just about anything for his cousin Bosman. Emma witnesses the murder of a policeman at their hands, and they see her seeing them.

Now they're hunting her down like an animal... she's easy prey after all – it'll all be over soon. The problem is Emma is the daughter of Jacques le Roux, who taught her everything he knows, and Jacques le Roux was a recce. Nothing about this hunt is going according to plan; everything is falling apart, and fast. At first they were driven by hate and revenge. Suddenly, it's survival.

## **John Wick: Chapter 2**

In this next chapter following the 2014 hit, legendary hitman John Wick (Keanu Reeves) is forced back out of retirement by a former associate plotting to seize control of a shadowy international assassins' guild. After unleashing mayhem on the criminals who killed his dog, retired super assassin John Wick retrieves his beloved 1969 Mustang from the Russian mobsters who stole it, only to be pursued in a spectacular high-speed car chase through crowded New York City streets.

Returning home, John's plans to resume a quiet civilian life are cut short when Italian gangster Santino D'Antonio (Riccardo Scamarcio) shows up on his doorstep with a gold 'marker' compelling him to repay past favours and is forced back out of retirement by a former associate plotting to seize control of a shadowy international assassins' guild. Bound by a blood oath to help him, John squares off against some of the world's deadliest killers.

A man of few words, Wick flips back and forth between two states of mind.

“When John Wick fell in love, he was like, ‘I have to stop killing people,’ but when his old life comes back at him, he becomes like the Superman of compartmentalisation. In the assassin persona, he doesn’t feel remorse. The difference is that John Wick used to fight for other people. And now John Wick is fighting for his own independence,” says director Chad Stahelski (John Wick), who directs from a screenplay by Derek Kolstad (John Wick, The Following).

“It’s a joy to work with Keanu because he always goes full throttle,” says Stahelski. “For the Matrix movies Keanu learned every different kind of Kung Fu you could learn. For 47 Ronin he learned laido and Japanese swordsmanship and Kenjutsu. Now, with John Wick: Chapter 2, he switches right into three-gun tactical work, training with SWAT guys, getting into Brazilian jiu-jitsu and of course taking the car stunts to a whole new level. Whatever the action calls for, Keanu embraces it wholeheartedly and that’s a very rare quality. I just know people are going to love seeing that intensity on screen again in John Wick: Chapter 2.”

## Miss Sloane

In the high-stakes world of political power-brokers, Elizabeth Sloane (Jessica Chastain) is the most sought-after and formidable lobbyist in D.C. Known equally for her cunning and her track record of success, she has always done whatever is required to win. But when she takes on the most powerful opponent of her career, she finds that winning may come at too high a price. When asked to help oppose a bill that imposes regulations on firearms, she instead joins a scrappy boutique firm that represents the backers of the law. Her defiant stance and determination to win now makes her the target of powerful new enemies who threaten her career and the people she cares about.

Miss Sloane is one of those rare films that cunningly manipulates its audience just as a master lobbyist can, and when a vicious twist is ultimately revealed, we fully understand how politics work, and awaken to realise that the art of politics is the art of manipulating, where you cannot believe anything or trust anybody.

One thing you can absolutely trust is that Miss Sloane is a well-crafted film with top performances that provides first rate entertainment for discerning audiences seeking savvy viewing that leaves plenty food for thought.

*Read a full review [here](#)*

## The Tribe

A young professor consumed by alcoholism is saved from self-destruction by a former school mate and begins a journey to save his house, his marriage and his life. Smanga (Charlie Vundla) is a celebrated young professor at a prominent South African university, whose life quickly unravels when his wife, Laura, leaves him. He spirals into an alcohol, marijuana and

sex induced tailspin that places the status of both his career and house in jeopardy. Smanga's path of self-destruction is interrupted when he meets an old school mate, Jon (Louis Roux), who is a failed motivational speaker. Taking pity on him, Smanga invites Jon back to his place and a friendship quickly develops. Through their emotionally honest communication Smanga begins the process of healing himself.

Having arrested his mental and physical decline, Jon convinces Smanga that he must get on with his life: priority number one being saving his house, for which he has received a 'final notice' on his bond repayments. Jon sees an opportunity to boost his friend's income by dealing the marijuana that Smanga grows in his backyard. But then Smanga's wife abruptly returns after being battered by another man. Laura moves back into the house and the three misfits begin a unique living experiment. However, things become complicated by an unexpected pregnancy. As the tensions in the house rise, a newly clean Smanga faces a complex decision that will define the lives of his tribe. This local film was produced, written, and directed by Charlie Vundla.

## **Saint Joan**

The acclaimed production of the George Bernard Shaw classic play filmed live at London's Donmar Warehouse is the next National Theatre Live broadcast to be screened only at Ster-Kinekor's Nouveau cinemas from Saturday, 18 March, for limited screenings. Directed by The Donmar Warehouse artistic director Josie Rourke (*Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Coriolanus*) and starring Gemma Arterton (*Quantum of Solace*, *Nell Gwynn*, *Made in Dagenham*) in the lead role, this production puts a modern twist on this 100-year-old play that follows the life, times and eventual trial of Joan of Arc – a young country girl who declares a bloody mission to drive the English from France.

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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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