

13 local films to look forward to in 2020

 By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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There are some great local films to look forward to in the New Year, with 13 films set for release on the big screen.

Poppie Nongena

The year kicks off on a high with the eagerly-anticipated release of *Poppie Nongena*, written and directed by Christian Olwagen, based on the award-winning novel by Elsa Joubert. It features Clementine Mosimane as a South African isiXhosa mother whose life revolves around finding stability for her family during a period of insufferable upheaval in the country when African women were forced, by arrests, fines and forced removal, to leave their homes and resettle in remote areas designated as black homelands.

When her husband, Stone, became too ill to work, Poppie was deemed by the law to be an “illegal” resident in her own country. Caught in the crossfire of her children’s needs, her husband’s illness, community anger and repressive laws, she was finally forced to give in just as the 1976 riots for freedom erupted.

The film also stars Anna-Mart van der Merwe, Chris Gxalaba, Rolanda Marais, David Minaar and Lida Botha. It will be released on 31 January.

Bhai's Cafe

Bhai's Cafe centres on the Patel Family and their cafe, the cornerstone of the Wynberg community in Cape Town. The cafe comes under threat from a ruthless property developer, as Bhai's daughter, Rashmi, is swept off her feet, in true Bollywood fashion, by Patrick, the son of the property magnate.

At the same time, Bhai and his family rally the community to square off with the property developer to stave off the bulldozers and save the café. Directed by Maynard Kraak from a screenplay by Darron Meyer and Aaron Naidoo, based on a story by Rawoot and executive producer/actor Mehboob Bawa.

It will be on show from 14 February.

Vergeet My Nie

Vergeet My Nie is based on a '90s love story of Mardaleen Coetzer and Hugo Derks, featuring Marguerite Van Eeden and Sean-Marco Vorster as the lovebirds, who were introduced to one another on the North West University's campus in Potchefstroom.

He falls head over heels in love, but she doesn't return his affections. Years later they run into each other again in the United Kingdom, and here their journey to love starts again but not without a few hurdles on their way.

Directed by André Felts and scripted by Tarryn-Tanille Prinsloo. Showing from 14 February.

Knuckle City

Jahmil XT Qubeka's *Knuckle City* tells the story of Dudu Nyakama (Bongile Mantsai), an aging, womanising, professional boxer from the township and his career-criminal brother Duke (Thembekile Komani) who take one last shot at success and get more than they've bargained for. Qubeka says the energy of the Mdantsane landscape and the visceral fight for survival that is palpable on the streets inspired in him a deep yearning to chronicle the lives of its people through film.

“It is my intention to capture the essence of life in Mdantsane, and the restless pursuit of being a champion within a society that often dictates you are a failure. I am determined to give audiences a glimpse into a world rarely seen, and a deeper understanding of the multi-faceted individuals inhabiting our land.”

Showing from 28 February.

Moffie

Oliver Hermanus’s *Moffie* is based on the memoir of the same name by André-Carl van der Merwe and tells the story of a conscript who embarks on his military service in 1981 South Africa.

It will be showing from 13 March.

Griekwastad

Griekwastad tells the tale of the search to find the truth behind the murders that shocked and divided a community. The film stars Arnold Vosloo as Colonel Dick De Waal, the meticulous investigating officer of the strange and sinister murder case.

Directed by award-winning director and producer Jozua Malherbe, written by Tertius Kapp. It is based on the bestselling true crime novel by Jacques Steenkamp.

Showing from 27 March.

Flatland

Questioning issues of race, class and gender, *Flatland* is a portrait of femininity set against the backdrop of a hostile frontier land that interrogates what it means to be a woman today – in South Africa and the world at large. Directed by Jenna Bass and starring Faith Baloyi, Nicole Fortuin and Izel Bezuidenhout.

The unique, contemporary drama, which opened Berlin Film Festival's Panorama section at the beginning of 2019, is a journey of self-discovery for three different but equally trapped women – a pregnant teenager, a young bride, and a middle-aged cop – played out against the backdrop of the Karoo.

Showing from 10 April.

Sodium Day

The drama/comedy/tragedy slice-of-life *Sodium Day* deals with a tumultuous day in the life of a mixed bag of students at a poor government school on the Cape Flats called John Shelby High. Grade 12Y (the class letter is after the surname of the class teacher) is the only class doing mathematics at a matric level at the school.

The class is made up of a cynical and disenfranchised mixed group of black and coloured students, and the latent racism that still exists in this environment often rises to the surface. A newly-qualified white substitute teacher arrives to teach

maths, though he isn't a maths teacher. He's qualified as a history and English teacher. Through his eyes we are introduced to the characters in the class.

Directed by Riaz Solker. Showing from 24 April.

Toorbos

Toorbos explores the Afrikaner feminine, through her fragility and power, this magical-realist period drama, set in South Africa's Knysna forest of the 1930s, and follows the free-spirited Karoliena as she is coaxed into marriage to a townsman and has to navigate the realities of progress, oppression of society, denying her true self, love and war back to her own personal freedom.

An accomplished and assured feature from novelist Rene Van Rooyen, who adapted renowned writer Dalene Matthee's 2003 best-selling novel. It stars Elani Dekker and Stiaan Smith in the lead roles as Karoliena Kapp and Johannes Stander, respectively.

Showing from 1 May.

Seriously Single

Seriously Single is a romantic comedy that centres on Dineo, who is the definition of a serial monogamist. She dates to fall in love. She falls in love to get married. But she never gets married. She always ends up dumped.

When she meets Lunga Sibiya, he seems to be the man she's waited her whole life for, a man who shares her values when it comes to love and relationships. Or so she thinks.

After a messy breakup with Lunga, her commitment-phobic bestie, Noni, helps Dineo face what she dreads most: life as a single woman. The film stars Fulu Mugovhani (*Ayanda*), Tumi Morake (*3 Days to Go*), Bohang Moeko (*Housekeepers*) and Yonda Thomas (*Isidingo, Saints and Sinners*).

“The film is essentially a quirky, witty, comedy about what it means to be black and female in the South African dating world,” say co-directors Katileho and Rethabile Ramaphakela. The screenplay was written by Lwazi Mvusi (*Farewell Ella Bella*).

Showing from 1 May.

Letters Of Hope

This Xhosa film, *Letters Of Hope*, is set in 1976 apartheid South Africa and tells the story of 16-year-old Jeremiah, who really wants to be a policeman and can't understand why his father won't let him. His father is the local postman and expects Jeremiah to take after him.

When his father is killed, Jeremiah is exposed to the real reason why he did his job – he was operating a secret courier service that delivered letters from exile and prison. Will Jeremiah step up to take over from where his father left off – delivering letters of hope to the families of freedom fighters? Directed by Vusi Africa.

Showing from 29 May.

The Tree

Louw Venter's *The Tree* focuses on Grace, a homeless refugee who is kidnapped on the streets of Cape Town after she sets out to earn some money to buy medicine for her child. The child, now lost, wanders the city streets alone. A policeman and his girlfriend drift apart. A nurse yearns for motherhood.

The film looks at how five wildly disparate lives begin to intersect in painful and surprising ways. Showing from 28 August.

Material 2

Hilarity continues in *Material 2* as we follow the Kaif family as they balance family values and personal choices, whilst bringing in elements of comedic satire. It stars Riaad Moosa, Joey Rasdien, Denise Newman.

Showing from 2 October.

[Read more](#) about 2020 film releases in South Africa.

ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

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