

Killers and heroes



By [Daniel Derksen](#)

30 Mar 2017

Scarlett Johansson plays a cyber-enhanced killing machine devoted to stopping the world's most dangerous criminals in *Ghost in the Shell*. Three college friends stumble upon the horrific origins of *The Bye Bye Man*, a chilling horror-thriller that exposes the evil behind the most unspeakable acts committed by man. Jessica Chastain plays a real-life working wife and mother who became a hero to hundreds during WWII in *The Zookeeper's Wife*. The Smurfs discover the biggest secret in Smurf history in *The Smurfs: The Lost Village*. Lastly, the acclaimed National Theatre production of Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's classic *Hedda Gabler* is screened from 1 April.

Ghost in the Shell

In the near future, Major (Scarlett Johansson) is the first of her kind: a human saved from a terrible crash, who is cyber-enhanced to be a perfect soldier devoted to stopping the world's most dangerous criminals. When terrorism reaches a new level that includes the ability to hack into people's minds and control them, Major is uniquely qualified to stop it. As she prepares to face a new enemy, Major discovers that she has been lied to: her life was not saved, it was stolen. She will stop at nothing to recover her past, find out who did this to her and stop them before they do it to others. Based on the internationally acclaimed Japanese Kodansha Comics manga series *The Ghost in the Shell* written and illustrated by Shirow Masamune. Screenplay by Jamie Moss and William Wheeler and Ehren Kruger. Directed by Rupert Sanders (*Snow White and the Huntsman*).

Ultimately, *Ghost in the Shell* is a story about how people may have to change to survive in the future, according to producer Ari Arad. “Technology is already penetrating our lives in different ways. Here we are literally mixing man and machine together. But however little of Major’s original physical self is left, she is still profoundly human. Rather than a story about fearing the future, it is a film about finding a way through a complicated future.”

Sanders saw an even broader message in the idea that as hard as they try, the Hanka Corporation scientists can’t destroy Major’s humanity. “Technology can’t just override the soul. Our self will still exist in some form. Major’s character goes through a subtle metamorphosis, a process of understanding and coming to terms with whatever’s happened to her, the good and the bad. There’s a really strong message in that and I wanted to put it out there: whoever we are and whatever’s happened to us, that is what has forged us. That is our strength and that is our power.”

The Bye Bye Man

From the producer of *Oculus* and *The Strangers* comes this chilling horror-thriller that exposes the evil behind the most unspeakable acts committed by man. When three college friends stumble upon the horrific origins of The Bye Bye Man, they discover that there is only one way to avoid his curse: don’t think it, don’t say it. But once the Bye Bye Man gets inside your head, he takes control. Is there a way to survive his possession? Inspired by actual events, it is about Elliot, Sasha and John, three friends on the cusp of what should be the most exciting time of their lives. The brilliant but insecure Elliot (Douglas Smith) has always been driven by a desire for family and community — ever since he was orphaned as a child and raised by his older brother Virgil (Michael Trucco). Now, Elliot, his beautiful and empathetic girlfriend Sasha (Cressida Bonas), and their hard-partying but good-natured friend John (Lucien Laviscount) are moving in together and sharing their first house. But they soon discover that the house leads to the remnants of the Bye Bye Man, a supernatural force that terrorised unsuspecting victims decades earlier. As the Bye Bye Man preys on their minds and souls, he drags friends, family, and the community into his web of horror. For Elliot and the people he loves, life and death soon hinge on knowing what is real and what is not.

The Bye Bye Man is directed by Stacy Title (*The Last Supper*, *Let the Devil Wear Black*) from a screenplay by Jonathan Penner (*Let the Devil Wear Black*), based on the “The Bridge to Body Island” by Robert Damon Schneck.

“To me, most scary movies aren’t really scary. They’re going to make you jump, but they’re not actually dealing with what’s scary in the world,” reveals Penner, who spent three years developing the screenplay alongside Title, his wife of nearly 25 years. Drawing on his expertise and love of the genre, Penner set out to ground the film’s supernatural evil in something real. “The Bye Bye Man is like any debilitating entity, whether it’s an addiction or a bad lover, or an illness. It weakens you and plays on your worst self,” he says. “You become your worst self.”

The Zookeeper's Wife

Two-time Academy Award nominee Jessica Chastain stars in the title role of Antonina Żabińska, a real-life working wife and mother who became a hero to hundreds during WWII. Niki Caro (Whale Rider, North Country) directs the movie from a screenplay by Angela Workman, adapted from Diane Ackerman's non-fiction book of the same name which was based on Antonina's diaries.

The Zookeeper's Wife is a film written and directed by women, about an unheralded female heroine. The project made it to the big screen after a decade as all concerned took inspiration from the real-life woman whose story they would be telling.

Producer Diane Levin comments, "This story celebrates life in all forms. Diane Ackerman showed us a world where humans, animals, the spirit of all living things, are valued. Specifically, it's about the heroism of a woman living in a time of unmitigated fear and destruction. Antonina's instincts were both scientific and spiritual, truly a rare combination. She knew how to spot a predator and how to defuse their aggression, but she also knew how to tend to a wounded animal and how to heal them. Overcoming her natural shyness, she applied her innate understanding of animal psychology to humans, and so was able to help even the most damaged escapees to heal and feel hope for the future.

The Smurfs: The Lost Village

Best friends Smurfette (Demi Lovato), Brainy (Danny Pudi), Clumsy (Jack McBrayer) and Hefty (Joe Manganiello) use a special map that guides them through the Forbidden Forest, an enchanted wonderland that's filled with magical creatures. Their adventure leads them on a course to discover the biggest secret in Smurf history as they race against time and the evil wizard Gargamel (Rainn Wilson) to find a mysterious village. It is based on The Smurfs comic book series created by the Belgian comics artist Peyo and is a reboot film, unrelated to Sony's previous live-action/animated films. Written by Stacey Harman and Pamela Ribon, and directed by Kelly Asbury.

Hedda Gabler

Tony Award-winning director Ivo van Hove (A View from the Bridge, The Crucible on Broadway) returns to NT Live cinema screens with a modern production of Ibsen's masterpiece in a new version by Patrick Marber (Notes on a Scandal, Closer). In the play, new bride Hedda (Ruth Wilson) and her husband, Tesman (Kyle Soller), return from their honeymoon to find their relationship already in trouble. Trapped but determined, Hedda tries to control those around her, only to see her own world unravel. It stars Olivier and Golden Globe winner Ruth Wilson (Luther, The Affair, Jane Eyre) in the title role, and also features Prometheus's Rafe Spall and Poldark's Kyle Soller, with Nigerian-born actor Chukwudi Iwuji in the role of Lovborg.

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