

Amadeus, Wolverine and Kennedy

 By [Daniel Derksen](#)

3 Mar 2017

There are seven new films released this week: Jackie is a searing and intimate portrait of one of the most important and tragic moments in American history, seen through the eyes of the iconic first lady, then Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy; matriarchal rivals of neighbouring families in Chatsworth try despite their best efforts to keep their kids from falling in love in the local comedy Keeping Up With The Kandasamys; in the near future, a weary Logan's attempts to hide from the world and his legacy are up-ended when a young mutant arrives, being pursued by dark forces in Logan: The Wolverine; when a woman discovers a secret room in their once-grand southern mansion it unleashes unexplainable events that test her sanity and slowly reveal the home's terrifying past in the psychological thriller The Disappointments Room; a struggling NYC artist is forced to navigate the small middle-American town he left behind in the hilarious and heart-breaking The Hollars; in the animated film Rock Dog, a wide-eyed Tibetan Mastiff leaves home to fulfil his dream of becoming a musician; and the National Theatre production of Peter Shaffer's Amadeus is screened at Nouveau.

Jackie

Natalie Portman delivers an Oscar-worthy performance in this searing and intimate portrait of one of the most important and tragic moments in American history, seen through the eyes of the iconic first lady, then Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy (Natalie Portman). This touching and insightful film places us in her world during the days immediately following her husband's assassination. Known for her extraordinary dignity and poise, here we see a psychological portrait of the first lady as she struggles to establish her husband's legacy and the world of "Camelot" that she created and loved so well.

Chilean director Pablo Larraín (Neruda, No) gives a boldly unconventional spin to the biopic genre, mixing historical footage with complete fictional re-creations, and excavating just one critical moment in Jackie's life, but in all its intricately woven layers.

Portman explores the haunting territory of a woman juggling her incomprehensibly vast yet contained sorrow with a world watching, remembering and making meaning out of her every move. The result is an intimate portrait that provides a portrait of Jackie as we've not seen her: a deeply human, vulnerable woman confronted at once with the power of loss, love, self-preservation, public consciousness and history.

"In the beginning all that I knew about Jackie was really quite superficial," Larraín notes. "I knew her as the woman always seen in pictures next to JFK, the woman known for her fashion, taste and style. I think that's how most people know her in America and around the world. But I wanted to change up that point-of-view and dig further. The more I looked, the more I found a woman who was very sophisticated, very smart and who had an incredible political sense of her own. Most importantly, she was a woman who understood communication in a way very few people did in those times."

Keeping up with the Kandasamys

A family comedy directed by Durban filmmaker Jayan Moodley (White Gold).

Set in Chatsworth, the rib-tickling family comedy opens a window into the lifestyle and subculture of modern-day Indian South Africans; their aspirations, dreams, challenges and the things that make them laugh and love.

Keeping up with the Kandasamys stars Jailoshni Naidoo and Maeshni Naicker as the matriarchal rivals of neighbouring families, whose young adult children become romantically involved despite their best efforts to keep them apart, with hilarious results, they are forced to acknowledge that in the end "love will always prevail".

Shanti Naidoo (played by Maeshni Naicker) is a typical type-A personality. Always on the move, going out of her way to please people, and overcompensating for her own perceived inadequacies by constantly cooking up a storm in her kitchen. Her life would be just fine, except that her neighbour Jennifer Kandasamy (Jailoshni Naidoo) always seems to have the upper hand.

When Jennifer realises her daughter Jodi (Mishqah Parthiephal) is in love with Shanti's son Prinesh (Madhushan Singh), she is determined to break them up. But in order to do that she will have to enlist her rival's help. Together the two women

scheme and plot, recruit prospective partners and generally interfere with their kids wherever they can. Just how far will one go to serve one's own selfish needs? And will they learn that in the end, it really is just happiness that matters.

It's a case of "love thy neighbour... but don't get caught".

Logan

From visionary writer-director James Mangold comes the defining chapter in the cinematic saga of one of the greatest comic book heroes ever created. Logan sees Hugh Jackman reprise his iconic role as The Wolverine for one, final time in a raw, powerfully dramatic standalone story of sacrifice and redemption.

Twenty years after the future events of X-Men: Days of Future Past, a now-older Logan is past his prime. His healing factor is still functioning but at a substantially lesser degree, allowing his face and body to be scarred from past injuries and battles. The X-Men have long since vanished, and the remaining mutants are being hunted by Nathaniel Essex and his Reavers, lead by Donald Pierce. Charles Xavier has survived in the care and company of Logan and Caliban, while slowly being affected by Alzheimer's disease. Now, Logan and Xavier must protect a young girl named Laura, as she is being hunted by the Reavers.

From a filmmaking perspective, Mangold says the rating freed him to take Logan in a more mature direction, to explore human frailty, mortality and the complicated bonds that bind families together. "I didn't want to make a more violent, sexier, more explicit, more obscene movie," Mangold says. "I wanted to make an adult movie. This is not a movie for nine-year-old children. When your movie is rated R, you suddenly are making a movie about more grown-up themes. You're not under the pressure to make a movie for everybody."

But there's no question that the movie absolutely will speak to those long-time fans of Wolverine, those who have followed Jackman's portrayal over the last 17 years. In fact, it was critical for Jackman, as he said farewell to his extensive X-Man past, to put everything on the screen for this, his last mutant adventure.

"There was a moment that I came to terms with the fact that this was my last one," Jackman says. "I love this character, and he's been amazing to me. I'd be lying if I said that I would have been okay if I didn't feel everything was left on the table. And I mean everything. Every day, every scene was a kind of battle to get the best out of that character, to get the best out of me."

Concludes Jackman: "There was an element of life and death about it — I know that sounds dramatic, but that's how it felt."

The Disappointments Room

In this psychological thriller from the director D.J. Caruso (Eagle Eye and Disturbia), Dana (Kate Beckinsale), her husband David and their five-year-old son Lucas start a new life after moving from the hustle and bustle of Brooklyn, NY, to a stately old manor in the quiet countryside. After settling in, Dana starts to experience terrifying visions and dreams that she cannot explain. The mystery grows when she stumbles upon a secret room in the attic. After finding the key and unlocking the door, Dana discovers the dark history of the family that lived there in the 19th century.

In the mid-to-late 19th century, disappointments rooms were a tragic reality for some as there simply weren't many resources for the mentally or physically disabled. These rooms were typically created by families of note or wealth who utilised a secluded part of a house where physically or mentally handicapped children led out their lives in isolation, thereby sparing the family from being politically or socially ostracised.

Escalation in emotion and terror is Caruso's ultimate goal: "We go to these movies because, as Hitchcock always said, we love to be scared," he remarks. "We love to scream, and so we project ourselves into the movie, asking, 'If this was me, what would I do?' Knowing that the audience is discovering this room and what is going on there as Dana unpeels the mystery makes it very interesting and, at times, horrifying."

The Hollars

John Hollar, a struggling NYC artist is forced to navigate the small middle-American town he left behind when news of his mother's illness brings him home. Back in the house he grew up in, John is immediately swept up in the problems of his dysfunctional family, high school rival, and an over-eager ex-girlfriend as he faces impending fatherhood with his girlfriend in New York.

From a script by Jim Strouse that is at turns hilarious and heart-breaking, John Krasinski's second feature is a poignant look at the bonds of family and friendship.

Amadeus

The next National Theatre Live broadcast to screen at Cinema Nouveau nationwide is the 2016 National Theatre production of Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus*. The production stars Fresh Meat's Adam Gillen and Misfit's Karla Crome as Mozart and his wife, and Game of Throne's Lucian Msamati as the composer's great rival Salieri.

The stage production of *Amadeus*, directed by Michael Longhurst, was filmed live for broadcast into cinemas globally at the National Theatre in London, with orchestral accompaniment by the 30-piece Southbank Sinfonia orchestra.

Shaffer's iconic play follows Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (Gillen), a rowdy young prodigy, who arrives in Vienna, the music capital of the world – and he's determined to make a splash. Awestruck by his genius, court composer Antonio Salieri (Msamati) has the power to promote his talent or destroy his name. Seized by obsessive jealousy, he begins a war with Mozart, with music and, ultimately, with God.

After winning multiple Olivier and Tony Awards when it had its premiere at the National Theatre in 1979, *Amadeus* was later adapted into Milos Forman's Academy Award-winning film.

Amadeus releases on South African screens from Saturday, 4 March, for four screenings only: on 4, 8 and 9 March at 7.30pm and on 5 March at 2.30pm at Cinema Nouveau theatres in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town. The running time of this production is approximately 210 mins, including an interval.

Rock Dog

When a radio falls from the sky into the hands of a wide-eyed Tibetan Mastiff, he leaves home to fulfil his dream of becoming a musician, setting into motion a series of completely unexpected events.

Directed by Ash Brannon, the animated film features the voices of J.K. Simmons, Luke Wilson, Eddie Izzard, Mae Whitman, Sam Elliott.

Read more about the latest film releases: www.writingstudio.co.za

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

- 3 new local films and more at cinemas this May - 29 Apr 2024
- Get ready for some great escapism in cinemas this April - 3 Apr 2024
- What to expect at the cinema this March - 27 Feb 2024
- Oscar fever brews: Here's what's at the cinemas this February - 29 Jan 2024
- Top 10 films of 2023 - 28 Dec 2023

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>