

Despicable villains, disputing lovers and social media bullying

 By [Daniel Dercksen](#)

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This week we explore the true and untold story of prolific and charismatic rapper, actor, poet and activist, Tupac Shakur in *All Eyez on Me*; a woman is at a crossroads in her life in the romantic comedy *Paris Can Wait*; two different worlds collide in the romantic dance film, *Heartbeats*; the villainous Gru and his twin brother team up for a criminal heist in *Despicable Me 3*; the wickedly funny comedy *Outcasts* deals with the topical issue of social media bullying; when thugs steal a private detective's lovable dog, he teams up with their boss to get his pet back in the action-comedy *Once Upon A Time In Venice*; and the breakdown of the marriage of a middle-aged couple is erupts in Edward Albee's masterpiece *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf

In The NT Live broadcast of *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf* Imelda Staunton (*Gypsy*, *Vera Drake*, *Harry Potter* films), Conleth Hill (*Game Of Thrones*, *The Producers*), Luke Treadaway (*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *Fortitude*, *The Hollow Crown*) and Imogen Poots (*A Long Way Down*, *Jane Eyre*) star in James Macdonald's new production of Edward Albee's landmark play, filmed live at the Harold Pinter Theatre, London. In the early hours of the morning on the campus of an American college, Martha, much to her husband George's displeasure, has invited the new professor and his wife to their home for some after-party drinks. As the alcohol flows and dawn approaches, the young couple are drawn into George and Martha's toxic games until the evening reaches its climax in a moment of devastating truth-telling. It releases on Saturday, 1 July 2017, for four screenings only: on 1, 5, 6 July at 19:30 and on 2 July at 14:30 at Ster-Kinekor's Nouveau cinemas in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Cape Town, and at Ster-Kinekor Gateway in Durban.

All Eyez on Me

Shedding new light on the events behind his meteoric rise and tragic fall, the biopic was inspired by his activist mother (Danai Gurira) and close high-school friend Jada Pinkett (Kat Graham). In the film, Tupac (Demetrius Shipp Jr.) embarks on a prolific and turbulent career marked by hit records, film roles, violence, imprisonment, bitter rivalries and a complex relationship with music mogul Suge Knight (Dominic Santana). Packed with Shakur's incendiary music, *All Eyez on Me* tells the untold story of a prodigiously gifted artist cut down in the prime of life. It was directed by Benny Boom and written

by Jeremy Haft, Eddie Gonzalez and Steven Bagatourian, titled after Shakur's 1996 fourth studio album of the same name.

On her Twitter account, Jada Pinkett Smith stated that the film contained many inaccuracies about her relationship with Tupac and why he left for Los Angeles. Smith claimed that Tupac never read the poem he read to her character in the film and that she had no knowledge that it even existed until it was published in his book. She also stated that she never attended one of Tupac's shows at his request and that there was no backstage argument.

Heartbeats

Kelli (professional dancer Krystal Ellsworth), an aspiring dancer, gave up her passion to enrol in law school when her older brother passed away. Unbeknownst to her parents, her studies were short-lived and she quickly returned to pursue her dance career. When her parents (Paul McGillion and Daphne Zuniga) discover her secret, they force Kelli to drop out of dance and travel to India on a family trip to attend a wedding. What begins as a reluctant family trip turns into a journey of self-discovery when Kelli meets Aseem (Amitash Pradhan), a fellow aspiring dancer. As Aseem and Kelli fall in love, she learns more about herself than she ever imagined possible. *Heartbeats* takes us on a cross-cultural journey of love, courage and redemption.

"Dance has been coined the world's most beautiful form of non-verbal communication, while music can be easily be called the most beautiful aural form. These two international languages combined lend themselves to cinema like few other tools. As our world shrinks and we become a truly global planet, boundaries and doorways to exploring other cultures entice me as a storyteller, and that enticement led to the creation of *Heartbeats*, a cross-cultural love story set in India." Says writer director Duane Adler (*Save The Last Dance*, *Step Up*, *Step Up 2*, *Make Your Move*).

"The film allows me to utilise music and dance to help tell the story of Kelli, a troubled American girl, and Aseem, a soulful, young Indian man. They fall in love over a shared language of dance, while their touching humanness sparks a courage and belief in their dreams and one another. I pride myself on the diverse stories I have been able to tell over my career."

Despicable Me 3

In the animated comedy, *Despicable Me 3* Gru (Steve Carell) and his wife Lucy (Kristen Wiig) must stop former '80s child star Balthazar Bratt (Trey Parker) from achieving world domination. Bratt, a former child star who grows up to become obsessed with the character he played in the '80s; gets into some sibling rivalry when he meets his long-lost twin brother, Dru. When Gru meets his long-lost charming, cheerful, and more successful twin brother Dru, he wants to team up with him for one last criminal heist. Directed by Pierre Coffin and Kyle Balda, and co-directed by Eric Guillon, the film is written by Cinco Paul and Ken Daurio.

Outcasts

Described as *Mean Girls* meets *Revenge of the Nerds*, the teen comedy, *Outcasts* (also known as *The Outskirts*) follows best friends Jodi (Victoria Justice) and Mindy (Eden Sher), who have suffered years of torment under the thumb of the school's alpha female. They plan to ride out their senior year under the radar, but when they become the victim of a humiliating prank, the two hatch a plan to unite the outcasts of the school and start a social revolution. They join forces with

an affable slacker, a girl scout with a secret and an overachiever with dirt on everyone (Ashley Rickards). This wickedly funny comedy that also deals with the topical issue of social media bullying which infuses the story with rich and relevant subject matter.

For first time screenwriters, Dominique Ferrari and Suzanne Wrubel, the script originated from very personal experiences. Ferrari suspects that the idea first came to her in some form in seventh grade. "I was bullied pretty severely and I started plotting my revenge right then and there. It started as a comic book. My friends and I used to call ourselves 'The Outskirts' because we were very much on the outskirts of everything. I always had this fantasy, this wish fulfilment of, 'if the geeks could just get it together, we could rule this place', but we never did."

The notion of strength in numbers and what might happen if the nerds of the school unionise was something that Wrubel says they drew upon from what was being seen in the news. "I think the other thing that was going on at the time we were writing this was Occupy Wall Street. We didn't want to be too obvious about it, but it was definitely something that infused the script and those ideas of the 99% versus the 1% in high school. The bullying thing is universal throughout generations."

Once Upon A Time In Venice

In the action comedy, *Once Upon A Time In Venice* Bruce Willis plays a private detective in Venice Beach, California, who's good with the ladies, bad with the punches and wild about his dog Buddy. When local thugs steal Buddy, Ford turns to the gang's drug lord Spider (Jason Momoa), who forces the detective to do some jobs before getting the dog back. It marks the directorial debut of screenwriters Mark and Robb Cullen.

Paris Can Wait

In the romantic comedy, *Paris Can Wait* Anne (Diane Lane) is at a crossroads in her life. Married to a successful but inattentive movie producer (Alec Baldwin), she unexpectedly finds herself taking a car trip from Cannes to Paris with her husband's business associate (Arnaud Viard). What should be a seven-hour drive turns into a carefree two-day adventure replete with diversions involving picturesque sights, fine food and wine, humour, wisdom and romance, reawakening Anne's senses and giving her a new lust for life.

Written, directed and produced by Eleanor Coppola, who is the wife of Francis Ford Coppola, it is both her first produced screenplay and her first narrative feature. Six years in the writing, the film reflects both the pleasures and vexations which stem from hours of close contact between an American woman at something of a crossroads in her life, and a charming Frenchman who utilises charm and erudition to camouflage life "issues" of his own.

Eleanor Coppola is the author of two notable non-fiction books, *Notes: The Making of Apocalypse Now* (1979 - still in print) and *Notes on a Life* (2008). More importantly – in terms of film knowledge – she has made nearly a dozen documentaries. Best known of these is *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse* (1991).

"The process of making a fiction film is exactly the opposite of a documentary," says Coppola. "For a documentary, you have to be very quiet and observant, look for moments when something interesting might happen, and hope you have your camera turned on and in focus when it does. A fiction film is just the opposite. You have to decide how everything will happen and this was difficult, being by nature an observer of what is 'already there.'"

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ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

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