

What to watch on the big screens this August

By  Daniel Dercksen

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There's some thrilling and captivating entertainment for everyone to escape into during August.



4 August

In Disney's comedy, *Haunted Mansion*, a woman and her son enlist a motley crew of so-called spiritual experts to help rid their home of supernatural squatters. They each arrive at this home for different reasons, unaware that whoever enters will be unable to leave without one of its ghosts forever joined at the hip with them.

Once they learn the gravity of the situation the hard way, they realise they must find a way to work together as a team to free themselves and the mansion from the grip of the spirits.

Inspired by the classic theme park attraction, the film is directed by Justin Simien and stars Rosario Dawson, Chase W. Dillon, LaKeith Stanfield, Tiffany Haddish, Owen Wilson, Danny DeVito, and Jamie Lee Curtis.

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Get ready for the ultimate adrenaline rush in *Meg 2: The Trench* that takes the action to higher heights and even greater depths with Jason Stratham leading a research team on an exploratory dive into the deepest depths of the ocean.

Their voyage spirals into chaos when a malevolent mining operation threatens their mission and forces them into a high-stakes battle for survival. Pitted against colossal, prehistoric sharks and relentless environmental plunderers, they must outrun, outsmart, and outswim their merciless predators.

This sci-fi-horror is directed by Ben Wheatley and is based on the novel *The Trench* by Steve Alten. It also stars Wu Jing, Sophia Cai, Page Kennedy, Sergio Peris-Mencheta, Skyler Samuels, and Cliff Curtis.

11 August

In Neil Blomkamp's sports drama *Gran Turismo*, a teenage Gran Turismo player whose gaming skills won him a series of Nissan-sponsored video game competitions aspires to be an actual professional race car driver. It is based on the Polyphony Digital racing simulation video game series, while inspired by the true story of Jann Mardenborough. The film stars Archie Madekwe as Mardenborough alongside David Harbour, Orlando Bloom, Darren Barnet, Geri Halliwell Horner and Djimon Hounsou.

The re-release of *Sarafina!* in cinemas pays homage to the vital role women performed during the struggle.

Sarafina is a young Black South African struggling for freedom during the apartheid. While she has remained relatively silent in her opposition of the racist government in her country, the movement to make the language of Afrikaans the official language in her school leads her to protest in the streets with her fellow students. Her anti-government views become even more intense when her favourite teacher is arrested for protesting.

“*Sarafina!* is known for its association with the student uprising of 16 June 1976, but what the film shows is that the youth of that era were largely supported by strong and resilient women who inspired and motivated their activism,” says producer Anant Singh.

Through a partnership with Imax, the film has been digitally remastered and additional scenes have been included. It was screened at the Cannes Film Festival last month where it participated again in the Cannes Classics Section, 31 years after its world premiere at this prestigious festival.

The film stars Leleti Khumalo; Whoopi Goldberg; Miriam Makeba; Mbongeni Ngema; John Kani and Somizi Mhlongo with the screenplay by Mbongeni Ngema and William Nicholson. The film is produced by Anant Singh and directed by Darrell James Roodt.

The heroes in a half shell first cowabunga-ed onto the big screen back in 1990 and returns in the animated adventure *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem*. After years of being sheltered from the human world, the Turtle brothers set out to win the hearts of New Yorkers and be accepted as normal teenagers through heroic acts. Their new friend April O’Neil helps them take on a mysterious crime syndicate, but they soon get in over their heads when an army of mutants is unleashed upon them.

18 August

Blue Beetle marks the DC Super Hero's first time on the big screen. Recent college grad Jaime Reyes returns home full of aspirations for his future, only to find that home is not quite as he left it. As he searches to find his purpose in the world, fate intervenes when Jaime unexpectedly finds himself in possession of an ancient relic of alien biotechnology: the Scarab.

When the Scarab suddenly chooses Jaime to be its symbiotic host, he is bestowed with an incredible suit of armour capable of extraordinary and unpredictable powers, forever changing his destiny as he becomes the super hero, Blue Beetle. Directed by Angel Manuel Soto, it stars Xolo Maridueña in the title role as well as his alter ego, Jaime Reyes, alongside Damían Alcázar, Harvey Guillén and George Lopez co-star, with Susan Sarandon as the movie's villain, Victoria Kord.

Bram Stoker's literary classic, *Dracula*, has fascinated audiences, both on the page and the screen, for more than a century. Based on a single chilling chapter from Stoker's classic novel, *The Last Voyage of the Demeter* tells the terrifying story of the merchant ship Demeter, which was chartered to carry private cargo — 50 unmarked wooden crates — from Carpathia to London.

Strange events befall the doomed crew as they attempt to survive the ocean voyage, stalked each night by a merciless presence onboard the ship. When the Demeter finally arrives off the shores of England, it is a charred, derelict wreck.

There is no trace of the crew. This supernatural horror film is directed by André Øvredal and written by Bragi F. Schut[a] and Zak Olkewicz. It is an adaptation of *The Captain's Log*, a chapter from the 1897 Bram Stoker novel *Dracula*. The film stars Corey Hawkins, Aisling Franciosi, Liam Cunningham, and David Dastmalchian.

The Korean neo-noir action thriller *Oldboy* is not only considered one of the best revenge thrillers of all time but is also widely regarded as one of the best films of all time. Now Park Chan-wook's cinema classic is headed back to cinemas for its 20th Anniversary.

South Africa will release the fully restored and remastered version of the film. In the film, Oh Dae-Su (Choi Min-sik), an obnoxious drunk abducted on a rainy night in 1988, wakes up in a strange, windowless hotel room. Kept under lock and key for an unknown reason, Oh Dae-Su's invisible captors keep him fed and systematically sedated to avert suicide, providing only a colour television to keep him company.

And, after 15 long years in captivity, perplexed Oh Dae-Su finds himself released. Now, his pitiless abductors encourage Oh Dae-Su to track down the ones behind the mysterious kidnapping and finally get his brutal, longed-for revenge on the unknown tormentor. However, who would hate Oh Dae-Su so much that he would deny him a quick and clean death?

Sound of Freedom is based on the incredible true story and shines a light on even the darkest of places. After rescuing a boy from ruthless child traffickers in, a federal agent learns the boy's sister is still captive and decides to embark on a

dangerous mission to save her. With time running out, he quits his job and journeys deep into the Colombian jungle, putting his life on the line to free her from a fate worse than death. Directed and co-written by Alejandro Monteverde, the film stars Jim Caviezel, Mira Sorvino, and Bill Camp.

25 August

Golda is a biographical drama. The film depicts the life of Golda Meir, Prime Minister of Israel. During the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir must navigate overwhelming odds, a sceptical cabinet, and a complex relationship with U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger as millions of lives hang in the balance. Directed by Guy Nattiv and written by Nicholas Martin, the film stars Helen Mirren, Zed Josef, Claudette Williams, Henry Goodman.

After losing the woman of his dreams, Merlin moves to Las Vegas to pursue work as a magician, only to get hired as the front man in a revival of the notorious Black male stripper crew, The Chocolate Chips in *Back On The Strip*. Led by Luther - now broke and broken - the old, domesticated, out-of-shape Chips put aside former conflicts and reunite to save the hotel they used to perform in while helping Merlin win back his girl. It stars Spence Moore II, Tiffany Haddish, JB Smoove, Faizon Love, Wesley Snipes, and Kevin Hart, and is directed and co-written by Chris Spencer in his feature film directorial debut

In the action-packed thriller *Retribution*, a bank executive receives a bomb threat while driving his children to school that his car will explode if they stop and get out. This remake of the 2015 Spanish film *El Desconocido*. Is directed by Nimród Antal and stars Liam Neeson, Noma Dumezweni, Lilly Aspell, Jack Champion, Embeth Davidtz and Matthew Modine

26 August

Puppetry, magic, and storytelling combine in a unique, Olivier Award-winning stage adaptation of the best-selling novel *Life of Pi*. After a cargo ship sinks in the middle of the vast Pacific Ocean, a 16-year-old boy named Pi is stranded on a lifeboat with four other survivors – a hyena, a zebra, an orangutan, and a Royal Bengal tiger. Time is against them, nature is harsh, and who will survive?

Filmed live in London's West End and featuring state-of-the-art visuals, the epic journey of endurance and hope is brought to life in a breath-taking new way for cinema screens. Written by Yann Martel, it was adapted by British actress and writer Lolita Chakrabarti, and directed by Max Webster.

Dates of Screenings in South Africa: 26, 27, 30 and 31 August 2023. Screenings are at Brooklyn Commercial, Gateway Commercial, Rosebank Nouveau, and at the V&A Waterfront

[Read more.](#)

Recommended viewing on the streaming platforms, *Shotgun Wedding* and *The Black Phone* on Showmax, *Run* and *The Light House* on Netflix and *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol.3* on Disney+.

Read more about the [latest and upcoming films](#).

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

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