

The top-five South African films of 2015

 By [Daniel Dercksen](#)

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Daniel Dercksen chooses his top-five local films of 2015.

Abraham

Abraham is undoubtedly one of the best South African films ever made, a profound and consummate master work from industry legend Jans Rautenbach that marks his first film in 30 years. It tells an unforgettable tale that will break your heart - a story that connects with who we are as South Africans and how we fit into the bigger scheme of things.

Dann-Jaques Mouton delivers a riveting performance as Abraham, an artist and dreamer from Kannaland in the early 1980s. Abraham is grounded in an isolated reality that cuts you off from the rest of existence; like it's characters, you are imprisoned by the world they live in in Kannaland, with cars and trucks cutting across the highway as an only reminder of life outside its horizon. It is a film you feel, and one you contentedly succumb to with utter joy. An inspiring and tragic tale, filled with an evocative music score by Riku Lätti that richly underscores the intimate mindscape of its rich characters, Abraham offers an intimate and emotional viewing experience that is meaningful and will change your life, creating an awareness of how important it is to embrace our humanity and those who share our lives, even the strangers who dare to remind us of the unpleasant realities outside our comfort zones.

'n Man Soos My Pa

The deeply moving 'n Man Soos My Pa is one of those exceptional films steeped in the tradition of classic films like East Of Eden that grabs hold of you emotionally and never lets go, and with its powerful finale, makes its mark significantly as a spiritual cinematic experience you will remember long after watching the film.

Its epic intimacy is hushed and quiet, filled with a wonderful sense of nostalgia. It's a film that leaves you wanting more at the end of its rousing emotional journey. Writer-director Sean Else has a unique gift as storyteller and story maker: as a consummate storyteller he knows how to tell a story well, his vision as a filmmaker breathes life into his words, and his astute sensibility as director in making characters truthful is evident in the sincere and honest performances he draws from his talented cast.

In an age in which families are striving to heal festered wounds and unite peacefully, 'n Man Soos My Pa succeeds admirably, reminding us of how important it is to honour a past that informs our future and seals our respective destinies. Yes, it is a tearful (but not depressing) experience that will leave you with a lump in your throat and showering your loved ones with gifts of gratitude, but it is ultimately a fulfilling and uplifting film that will make you feel good about having the power to love wholeheartedly, and to right the wrongs that challenge your humanity. If ever there was a film to bring families together, it's 'n Man Soos My Pa, and even if you do not have a family, it's time to reflect without any regrets.

Seun

Darrell Roodt's Seun is one of the most important and relevant films ever made in South Africa, following in the tradition of his superb Faith's Corner, revealing the fragile disposition of a young man whose life is changed when he joins the army in 1981. Having met Darrell years ago and forever inspired by his fervent passion for storytelling and filmmaking, it was great to share a few thoughts with him on Seun: What inspired you to write Seun? "Strangely, the basic idea was one of the first things I ever wrote, way back in the day when I was conscripted into the army. I made The Stick instead, which was easier to get made because it had lots of shooting and horror in it. Then, at the beginning of last year, Diony Kempen, my friend and producer, said that instead of sitting around on our hands waiting for something to happen, let's go and make a movie. I wrote Seun in a week and a couple of weeks after that we were shooting it! But, in truth, it's been almost 30 years in gestation. Weird!"

Ballade Vir 'n Enkeling

Twenty-eight years after it wowed TV viewers, the big screen incarnation of *Ballade Vir 'n Enkeling* is here at last and it's been well worth the wait. It's a story that captured the hearts of many South Africans during its life on TV, and can now add a legion of new fans to its following, introducing a new generation to an ultimate romance of a love triangle that is guaranteed to break your heart.

It's a nostalgic local treasure and under the gifted and sensitive direction of Quentin Krog, writer Leon Van Nierop's story vividly burst to life with passionate performances, magnificently captured by cinematographer Tom Marais and scored by Benjamin Willem, and well paced by editor CA van Aswegen. The story centres on a journalist Carina Human (Donnalee Roberts), who reveals the truth behind the disappearance of a popular writer Jacques Rynhard (Armand Aucamp). If there's one reason to see *Ballade Vir 'n Enkeling*, besides its high production value and great script, it's for its performances, allowing the characters to crawl deep into our hearts.

Dis Ek, Anna

This is a powerful and relevant South African film about a woman who is imprisoned by the guilt of falling victim to a sexual predator as a teenage girl, and tormented by the memories of this tragic incident that results in her taking action to revenge the perpetrator. Charlené Brouwer delivers a heartbreaking performance as a woman who confronts the man who destroyed her innocence, with an equally superb performances by Morné Visser as her stepfather who is crucified in his sexual perversion, and Nicola Hanekom as her mother and silent witness to this tragedy. The film based on Anchien Troskie's best-selling fictionalised autobiographical novels *Ek, Anna* and *Die Staat Teen Anna Bruwer* and directed by Sara Blecher.

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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