

Hitmen, Head hunters and Angels in America



By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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A strip joint janitor, a club patron and their lucky fish are on the run in the zany local comedy *Finders Keepers*, a possessed doll terrorises a nun and six girls in the horror *Annabelle: Creation*, in the action-comedy *The Hitman's Bodyguard* the world's top protection agent is called upon to guard the life of his mortal enemy, *Detroit* explores the events that transpired one terrifying evening during the civil unrest that tore apart the city of Detroit, a cutthroat head hunter is pitted against his polar-opposite rival in *A Family Man*, and the first part of the new staging of Tony Kushner's Pulitzer Prize winning masterwork *Angels in America* follows the lives of a group of New Yorkers as they grapple with life and death, love and sex and heaven and hell against the backdrop of the AIDS crisis in Reagan's America in the mid-1980s.

Finders Keepers

In the local comedy *Finders Keepers*, a strip joint janitor and a club patron strike up an unlikely friendship as they evade gangsters and Russian mobsters, and try to secure the release of a kidnapped stripper, by trading her for a lucky fish they had stolen. Both the Russian brothers and Jackie's gang are after Lonnie and by association, Brian. The two unlikely buddies are on the run, whilst hatching a plan to repay the Russians. They learn of a valuable fish at the aquarium and decide to steal it. They then have to keep the fish alive while evading their pursuers for two days until the big horse race. However, Jackie kidnaps Sonja and blackmails Brian. Will Brian throw his new-found friend Lonnie under the bus to save the woman of his dreams?

The film stars rapidly rising comedy star Dalin Oliver (*I came, I taught, I left*), star of Afrikaans film and television Neels van Jaarsveld (*Knysna, Man Soos My Pa, Sonskyn Beperk, Bang Bang Club*), the smouldering Lise Slabber (*Black Sails*), the effervescent veteran award-winning actor Grant Swanby (*Beyond the River, Modder en Bloed*), award-winning stand-up comedian Stuart Taylor, and star of screen and social media, Siv Ngesi.

Finders Keepers is the pilot film project of the Emerging Black Film Maker initiative, run by the NFVF and the IDC. The film is directed by Maynard Kraak (*Vrou Soek Boer, Sonskyn Beperk*). The screenplay is an original work, with the story by Maynard Kraak and Strini Pillai.

Annabelle: Creation

Annabelle is coming to theatres again, and this time audiences will be taken through the infamous doll's very beginnings – from her first home in a little girl's room to her first possession of a little girl's soul. After a chilling cameo in *The Conjuring*, followed by a starring role in her own film, it became clear to filmmakers that moviegoers were ready to uncover the origins of the doll that has both terrified and captivated them.

In *Annabelle: Creation*, several years after the tragic death of their little girl, a doll maker and his wife welcome a nun and six girls from a shuttered orphanage into their home. They soon become the target of the doll maker's possessed creation, Annabelle.

David F. Sandberg (*Lights Out*) directed *Annabelle: Creation* from a screenplay done by Gary Dauberman.

To craft the story, the filmmakers turned to scribe Gary Dauberman, who had written *Annabelle* and was eager to dive back in.

"The first film I wrote extended the mythology of the doll. For this one, we wanted to dig into her history and see if we could find out how the evil started.

Dolls are things that bring people joy, right? They're given as gifts, passed down through generations. So, I wanted to set that up for Annabelle by starting her out from a place of love – a happy family – in order to sort of lay the groundwork for a nice contrast to all the bad stuff that would follow.

These films are a great example of why we love to go to the movies," Sandberg says. "It's a safe, shared environment where we can experience such a great range of emotions, from fear to excitement and more. And in this case, we get to find out how another piece of this 'Conjuring' and 'Annabelle' world is tied together... and maybe, even get a hint at what's

to come,” said Dauberman.

The Hitman Bodyguard

In the action-comedy, *The Hitman's Bodyguard* the world's top protection agent, Michael Bryce (Ryan Reynolds) is called upon to guard the life of his mortal enemy, one of the world's most notorious hitmen, Darius Kincaid (Samuel L. Jackson). The relentless bodyguard and manipulative assassin have been on the opposite end of the bullet for years and are thrown together for a wildly outrageous 24-hours. During their raucous and hilarious adventure from England to The Hague, they encounter high-speed car chases, outlandish boat escapades and a merciless Eastern European dictator, Vladislav Dukhovich (Gary Oldman), who is out for blood. Salma Hayek joins the mayhem as Jackson's equally notorious wife, Sonia Kincaid.

Featuring a hilarious “bromance” between blockbuster stars Ryan Reynolds and Samuel L. Jackson, creatively choreographed fight scenes and exhilarating high-speed chases, it offers a non-stop mashup of laughs and outrageous action.

“I love the bond between Bryce and Kincaid. These two guys couldn't be more polarised but as we move through the story they start to acquire begrudging love and respect for each other. There's a bromance and several love stories all wrapped up in this incredible, crazy action story,” says Reynolds.

“Ryan and I go on a crazy fun jaunt through the roads of Europe, and it's full of chaos and humour between two characters who have a very unusual chemistry,” adds Jackson.

Tom O'Connor's screenplay for *The Hitman's Bodyguard* took some of the most popular tropes of hit action thrillers – including the freewheeling hitman who can't miss and the dreamy bodyguard whose protection never fails, and irreverently crashed them right into one another.

“Balancing the comedy and the action was really tricky, and that was something I played with a lot in the very beginning of the script because I knew I wanted it to be funny without being goofy or wacky,” recalls O'Connor.

In the action-comedy tradition, the script offered a story of escalating stakes – but where one extreme situation after the next somehow brings the hitman and his bodyguard closer to the International Criminal Court... and each other. That's where Patrick Hughes came in; having worked with an all-star cast and plenty of action in *Expendables 3*, he had the high-adrenaline chops and was ready to try something different.

“Patrick was able to take the reins, be the field general with the actors and bring it all to life,” notes O'Connor.

A Family Man

In *A Family Man*, Dane Jensen (Gerard Butler) is a driven Chicago-based head hunter, working at a cut-throat job placement firm. When Dane's boss, Ed Blackridge (Willem Dafoe) announces his retirement, he pits Dane against Lynn Wilson (Alison Brie), Dane's equally driven but polar-opposite rival at the firm, in a battle for control over the company. As Dane gears up for the professional battle of his life, he learns his 10-year-old son Ryan (Max Jenkins) is diagnosed with an illness. Suddenly, Dane is pulled between achieving his professional dream and his family, who need him now more than ever.

First-time director Mark Williams was drawn to Bill Dubuque's script by the quality of the writing and the authenticity of its voices.

Simple, elegant, classic. A throwback movie. A family drama dealing with real-life dilemmas. The goal was to always respect the characters and the world in which they exist.

Detroit

From academy award-winning director Kathryn Bigelow (*The Hurt Locker*, *Zero Dark Thirty*), comes the dramatic thriller, *Detroit*, another vivid and all-too-relevant exploration of America's recent past. She and frequent collaborator, Oscar-winning screenwriter/producer Mark Boal, (*The Hurt Locker*) are no strangers to controversial subject matter.

"On film, history can be a little antiseptic, especially if you are fifty years removed from it. Only when you meet the people involved do you begin to appreciate that history is really the story of the individuals, and that became the focus of my script," says Boal.

Detroit focuses on the events that transpired one terrifying evening during the civil unrest that tore apart the city of Detroit, and its traumatic aftermath. The summer of 1967 was a pivotal moment in modern American history when the country was beset by growing political and social unrest: the escalation of the country's military engagement in the Vietnam War and decades of racial injustice and repression. The epicentres of all this discontent and simmering rage proved to be the nation's major cities with their systemic discrimination, racial disparities in housing and education, and growing unemployment in African-American communities.

Two nights after the Detroit rebellion began, a report of gunshots in the vicinity of a National Guard staging area prompted the Detroit Police Department, the Michigan State Police, the Michigan Army National Guard and a local private security guard to search and seize an annexe of the nearby Algiers Motel. Flouting procedural rules, several policemen forcefully and viciously interrogated motel guests, conducting a “death game” in an attempt to intimidate someone, anyone, into confessing. By the end of the night, three unarmed young men had been gunned down point blank, and several other men and women were brutally beaten. No gun was ever found.

According to Bigelow, “If the purpose of art is to agitate for change, if we are truly ready to start addressing the inequity of race in this country, we need to be willing to listen. I hope this film will encourage some small part of that dialogue, and we find a way to heal the wounds that have existed for far too long in this country.”

Angels in America: Millenium Approaches (Part 1)

Angels in America: Millennium Approaches (Part 1) and *Angels in America: Perestroika (Part 2)*, featuring an all-star cast, will be releasing on 19 August and 2 September 2017 respectively.

One of the theatre highlights of the year in the UK, the first instalment also marks the 60th National Theatre Live broadcast to screens worldwide. With cameras carefully positioned throughout the auditorium to ensure that cinema audiences get the ‘best seat in the house’, National Theatre Live broadcasts retain the feeling of live performance and a real sense of shared event.

Olivier and Tony award-winning director Marianne Elliott (*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *War Horse*) directs this new staging of Tony Kushner’s Pulitzer Prize winning work. *Angels in America* follows the lives of a group of New Yorkers as they grapple with life and death, love and sex and heaven and hell against the backdrop of the AIDS crisis in Reagan’s America in the mid-1980s.

Andrew Garfield (*Hacksaw Ridge*, *The Amazing Spider-Man*) plays Prior Walter, whose boyfriend Louis (James McArdle, *Young Chekov* trilogy) leaves him on discovering he has AIDS. Russell Tovey (*Being Human*, *Him & Her*) is Joe – a closeted Mormon married to Harper (*Denise Gough*, *Paula*, *People, Places & Things*) whose marriage is on the rocks due to his secret homosexuality. Nathan Lane (*The Lion King*, *The Birdcage*) plays Donald Trump's mentor Roy Cohn, who is about to receive some devastating news that will change his life forever.

Emma Keith, head of National Theatre Live, said the team is looking forward to the show being shown in cinemas worldwide:

"It seems fitting that *Angels in America* is our 60th broadcast, as it really sums up what National Theatre Live is all about – bringing world class theatre to those who may not otherwise have had the chance to see it.

An amazing cast, fantastic creative team and a play that has more than stood the test of time - which, in fact, seems more timely than ever - means that this broadcast really is unmissable," says Keith.

Angels in America: Millennium Approaches (Part 1) releases on Saturday, 19 August for four screenings only on 19, 23, 24 August at 7.30pm and on 20 August 2017 at 2.30pm at Ster-Kinekor's Nouveau cinemas in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Cape Town, and at Ster-Kinekor Gateway in Durban. The running time of Part 1 is 3 hours and 40 minutes, including two 15-minute intervals.

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ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

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