

The surprise box office hit 'Ellen: Die storie van Ellen Pakkies' is now streaming on Showmax

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Ellen: Die Storie van Ellen Pakkies, South Africa's entry for the foreign film category of the 2019 Golden Globes, is now streaming on Showmax.



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Here are five reasons to add this local classic to your watchlist:

#1. *Ellen* is based on a heart-breaking true story

In 2007, the death of 20-year-old tik addict Abie Pakkies created a stir in South Africa and the world. The most disturbing part of the case was that the murderer was his mother, Ellen.

Based on this heart-rending true story, *Ellen* explores how this loving mother became desperate enough to take her own son's life, and why a judge let her off with a three-year suspended sentence and 280 hours of community service.

Ellen Pakkies consulted on the film, which was partly shot in her own home in Lavender Hill.

#2. *Ellen* became a surprise box office phenomenon

South Africa has a notoriously escapist movie-going culture: of the most successful South African films of the last five years, two were Leon Schuster comedies (*Frank & Fearless* and *Schuks! Pay Back The Money*) and three were rom-coms (*Vir Altyd*, *Pad Na Jou Hart* and *Keeping Up With The Kandasamys*).

So no one was expecting *Ellen*, which is harrowing rather than hilarious, to make over R6m at the South African box office as the third-highest-grossing local film of 2018 (at a much higher per-screen rate than either *Frank & Fearless* or *Stroomop*).

A true word-of-mouth phenomenon, *Ellen* clearly struck a nerve with everyone who saw it.

#3. Jill Levenberg and Jarrid Geduld give award-winning performances

As Ellen and Abie, Jill Levenberg (aka Mymoena Samsodien in *Suidooster*) and Jarrid Geduld (aka Twist In *Boy Called Twist* and Randall in *Dwaalster*) won both The South African Film and Television Awards and Silwerskermfees prizes for Best Actress and Best Actor respectively.

As Margaret Gardiner wrote on Goldenglobes.com, "Much of the power of the film is provided by the subtle interpretation of the titular character by Jill Levenberg. The emotions of love, desperation, hurt and unceasing hope... are palpable."

While Levenberg and Geduld give career-defining performances, they're well-supported by the likes of Clint Brink (*Binnelanders*) as Ellen's lawyer Adrian Samuels and Elton Landrew (*Suidooster*) as her husband Odneal.

#4. *Ellen* is directed by rising star Daryn Joshua

Ellen is the second film from Daryn Joshua, who directed South Africa's 2018 Oscar entry, [Noem My Skollie](#); produced and wrote the original story for Nosipho Dumisa's gripping Cape Flats thriller [Nommer 37](#); and is a writer on Netflix's upcoming African Original *Blood & Water*.

Joshua won Best Director at this year's South African Film and Television Awards, where *Ellen* also took home Best Score for Quinn Lubbe.

Raised on the Cape Flats himself, Joshua is clearly a talent to watch, as is screenwriter Amy Jephta, who took home her second Best Script award in two years at Silwerskermfees 2018 for *Ellen*, having won in 2017 for her short film [Soldaat](#).

#5. *Ellen* is more topical than ever

In July 2019, The South African National Defence Force were deployed to the Cape Flats - an area that Western Cape community safety MEC Albert Fritz labelled a war zone just weeks earlier.

"War is commonly defined by the UN and other such institutions as an act of conflict that has claimed more than 1,000 lives. In the Western Cape, 1,875 people were murdered in the past six months alone," he said in [a statement](#) in June. "This means that many of our most vulnerable residents in the province are living in a war zone."

Ellen makes it clear the system failed Ellen Pakkies in 2007; statistics like this make it clear the system is still failing mothers on the Cape Flats, 12 years later.

Watch the trailer:

Stream *Ellen: Die storie van Ellen Pakkies*, in Afrikaans with English subtitles, on Showmax:

<https://www.showmax.com/eng/movie/nk9gbjrc-ellen-the-ellen-pakkies-story>

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