

The Woman King, Hocus Pocus 2 and more

By  Daniel Derksen

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Female warriors fight for survival in *The Woman King*, a mob *Enforcer* turns against the hand that feeds him, adventure calls in *Tad, The Lost Explorer And The Emerald Tablet*, *Blonde* unveils iconic Marilyn Monroe, and ravenous witches wreak havoc in *Hocus Pocus 2*.



The Woman King

The Woman King is the remarkable story of the Agojie, the all-female unit of warriors who protected the African Kingdom of Dahomey in the 1800s with skills and a fierceness unlike anything the world has ever seen.

Inspired by true events, *The Woman King* follows the emotionally epic journey of General Nanisca (Oscar-winner Viola Davis) as she trains the next generation of recruits and readies them for battle against an enemy determined to destroy their way of life. Some things are worth fighting for...

"I felt *The Woman King* was an important story because I saw myself in it," says Davis. "I saw my femininity in it. I saw my Blackness in it. I saw a really important part of history in it. I always say any part of history is important, even the small parts. And I think that it is a story that the world is hungry for."

To adapt Agojie's story for the screen, producers selected screenwriter Dana Stevens, who was attracted by the idea of telling a true story that is not well known, despite it taking place in fairly recent history.

"I was struck by the photos of the real warriors, the eye-witness descriptions of their skill," says Stevens. "This story is not well-known—there are so many cultures we have overlooked and not portrayed in films. Here was a chance to tell a true, epic tale about these exceptional women."

It is directed by Gina Prince-Bythewood from a screenplay by Stevens, and a story by Maria Bello and Dana Stevens.

In cinemas from 30 September.

The Enforcer

Antonio Banderas plays Miami's top mob enforcer who discovers his femme fatale boss has branched out into cyber-sex trafficking, putting a young runaway he's befriended at risk, he decides to sacrifice everything to take out the deadly organization he's spent his life building.

In cinemas from 30 September.

Tad, The Lost Explorer And The Emerald Tablet

In this animated adventure, Tad's biggest dream is to be accepted by his archaeology colleagues, but his accident-prone nature gets in his way. When he inadvertently destroys a rare sarcophagus, a spell is cast, putting his friends' lives in danger. Saving them and his family triggers an adventure to the far corners of the world to find a way to stop the curse of the Emerald Tablet.

Director Enrique Gato says, "Tad is now a remarkable 23 years old. He was born long before he was known to the general public, and I have spent half my life with him. I treat him almost like a son. A son that you guide until he manages to walk on his own, but you never stop teaching him that every step is important... we have managed to take Tad to new heights of emotion, comedy and, of course, adventure. An adventure made for the audience, to be enjoyed in its purest form: at the cinema."

In cinemas from 30 September.

Blonde

Based on the bestselling novel by Joyce Carol Oates, *Blonde* boldly reimagines the life of Marilyn Monroe, exploring the split between her public and private selves.

From her volatile childhood as Norma Jeane, through her rise to stardom and romantic entanglements, *Blonde* blurs the lines of fact and fiction to explore the widening split between her public and private selves. The film boasts a cast led by Ana de Armas and featuring Bobby Cannavale, Adrien Brody, Julianne Nicholson, Xavier Samuel and Evan Williams.

Available to stream on Netflix.

Hocus Pocus 2

Bette Midler, Sarah Jessica Parker and Kathy Najimy make a welcome return in the live-action, long-awaited sequel which brings back the delightfully wicked Sanderson sisters for more comedic mayhem.

It's been 29 years since someone lit the Black Flame Candle and resurrected the 17th-century sisters, and they are looking for revenge. Now it is up to three high-school students to stop the ravenous witches from wreaking a new kind of havoc on Salem before dawn on All Hallow's Eve.

Available to stream on Disney+

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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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