

# What to expect on your screens in January 2024

By  Daniel Dercksen

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There are some thrilling and captivating films, documentaries, musicals, and opera for everyone to escape into during January 2024 in South African cinemas and on streaming platforms.



## 5 January – *One Life*

This British biographical drama is based on the true story of British humanitarian Nicholas Winton as he looks back on his past efforts to help groups of Jewish children in German-occupied Czechoslovakia to hide and flee in 1938–39. Directed by James Hawes, the film stars Anthony Hopkins and Johnny Flynn as Winton, with Lena Olin, Romola Garai, Alex Sharp, Jonathan Pryce, and Helena Bonham Carter.

## 5 January – *Florencia en el Amazonas* (MET Opera)

Inspired by the magical realism of Gabriel García Márquez, this Spanish opera tells the enchanting story of a Brazilian opera diva who returns to her homeland to perform at the legendary opera house of Manaus — and to search for her lost lover, who has vanished into the jungle.

The Met premiere stars soprano Ailyn Pérez as Florencia Grimaldi, with music director Yannick Nézet-Séguin on the podium to lead a spellbinding new production by Mary Zimmerman that brings the mysterious and magical realm of the Amazon to the Met stage.

5, 6, 7, 9 January 2024.

Read more about the [MET Opera season](#).

### **12 January – *Mean Girls***

From the comedic mind of Tina Fey comes a new twist on the modern classic. New student Cady Heron (Angourie Rice) is welcomed into the top of the social food chain by the elite group of popular girls called “The Plastics,” ruled by the conniving queen bee Regina George (Reneé Rapp) and her minions Gretchen (Bebe Wood) and Karen (Avantika).

However, when Cady makes the major misstep of falling for Regina’s ex-boyfriend Aaron Samuels (Christopher Briney), she finds herself prey in Regina’s crosshairs. As Cady sets to take down the group’s apex predator with the help of her outcast friends Janis (Auli’i Cravalho) and Damian (Jaquel Spivey), she must learn how to stay true to herself while navigating the most cutthroat jungle of all: high school.

It is based on the Broadway musical of the same name, which in turn was based on Mark Waters's 2004 comedy film, both written by Fey with Samantha Jayne and Arturo Perez Jr. making their film directorial debut.

### **12 January – *Noah's Ark***

This musical adventure is a fun and original take on one of the most iconic and well-known stories of all time, with an endearing combination of humour, charm, and lovable characters.

The film follows two mice: Vini, a charismatic poet with terrible stage fright, and Tito, a talented and charming guitarist. When the rains come, only one male and one female of each species are allowed on Noah's Ark.

With the help of an ingenious cockroach and fate's good luck, Vini and Tito sneak their way onto the Ark and together avert a showdown amongst the ship's carnivores and plant eaters. All the while, the animals perform a series of classic songs inspired by world-renowned poet, Vinicius de Moraes.

Can these talented stowaways use music to break the tension and help these cooped-up creatures survive the 40 days and 40 nights together?

### **18 January – *Queen Rock Montreal***

This exhilarating live concert from 1981 is a window into Queen in its most unalloyed form, giving audiences a larger-than-life, front-row immersive experience at IMAX cinemas.

Rock & roll royalty Freddie Mercury, Brian May, Roger Taylor, and John Deacon take to the stage in a historic and exhilarating performance of their greatest hits including *We Will Rock You*, *Somebody To Love*, *Under Pressure*, *Bohemian Rhapsody*, *Another One Bites the Dust*, *We Are The Champions*, and additional songs from the popular album *The Game* including *Dragon Attack*, *Play the Game*, and more.

Queen returned for the fourth time to Montreal's 18,000-seat Forum in November 1981, where this concert was recorded. It will be released in over 450 IMAX locations globally for four days only, beginning on 18 January. Participating territories include the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Australia, Brazil, and Mexico, to name a few.

### **19 January – *Poor Things***

There's an inherent absurdity to the premise of Yorgos Lanthimos's black comedy fantasy. A Frankenstein-like tale, it tells the story of Bella Baxter (Emma Stone), a woman who is brought back to life with the brain of an infant. Amidst the humour and bizarreness is an emotional edge as Bella is forced to grow up rather quickly to meet the expectations of an adult.

Her journey is an introduction to every part of the world, from its pleasures to the greed, cruelty, and cynicism that lie beneath, and she's left to discover who she is and find her liberation.

It is based on the 1992 novel of the same name by Alasdair Gray and also stars Mark Ruffalo, Willem Dafoe, Ramy Youssef, Christopher Abbott, and Jerrod Carmichael.

## **26 January – *All Of Us Strangers***

One night in his near-empty London apartment block, Adam has a chance encounter with his mysterious neighbour Harry, which punctures the rhythm of his everyday life.

As a relationship develops between them, Adam is preoccupied with memories of the past and finds himself drawn back to the suburban town where he grew up, especially the childhood home where his parents appear to be living just as they were on the day they died 30 years before.

This romantic fantasy is written and directed by Andrew Haigh and based on the 1987 novel *Strangers* by Taichi Yamada. The film stars Andrew Scott, Paul Mescal, Jamie Bell, and Claire Foy. It is the second film adaptation of the novel, after the 1988 Japanese film *The Discarnates*.

## **26 January – *Beautiful Wedding***

In this sequel to *Beautiful Disaster*, Abby (Virginia Gardner) and Travis (Dylan Sprouse) wake up after a crazy night in Vegas confused, hungover, and — to their shock — married! the description reads. “So they do what any college-age newlyweds who barely know each other would do: they honeymoon in Mexico with their best friends and family! Is this marriage their destiny, or just another disaster?”

## **26 January – *The Color Purple***

Torn apart from her sister Nettie (Halle Bailey) and her children, Celie (Fantasia Barrino in her major motion picture debut, reprising her 2005 role from Broadway) faces many hardships in her life, including an abusive husband simply called Mister (Colman Domingo).

With the support of sultry singer Shug Avery (Taraji P. Henson) and stand-her-ground stepdaughter Sofia (Danielle Brooks, Tony-nominated for the role on Broadway), Celie ultimately finds extraordinary strength in the unbreakable bonds of a new kind of sisterhood.

Produced by Oprah Winfrey, Steven Spielberg, Scott Sanders and Quincy Jones, the film is a bold new take on the classic story of love and resilience, adapted from the beloved novel and the Broadway musical.

## **26 January – *The Beekeeper***

In this action-thriller, Mr. Clay is a former operative of a clandestine organisation called “Beekeepers”. After his friend and neighbour dies by suicide after falling for a phishing scam, Mr. Clay sets out to exact revenge against the company responsible.

Directed by David Ayer and written by Kurt Wimmer, it stars Jason Statham, Emmy Raver-Lampman, Josh Hutcherson, Bobby Naderi, Minnie Driver, Phylicia Rashad, and Jeremy Irons.

## Recommended viewing on the streaming platforms

### *Disney +*

Streaming exclusively on Disney, the origin story of *Echo* (10/1) the Marvel Cinematic Universe's next big superhero is also superhuman. Echo's superpower? The human ability to adapt. Maya Lopez/Echo is a Native American woman who rises to become boss of the New York street gang Tracksuit Mafia under the tutelage of crime lord Kingpin. Her ruthless behaviour in New York City catches up with her in her hometown. She must face her past, reconnect with her Native American roots, and embrace the meaning of family and community if she ever hopes to move forward.

*The Artful Dodger* (Jan 17) is set in 1850s Australia where Jack Dawkins, The Artful Dodger, is now a surgeon who still has a penchant for crime in this Australian original series, starring Thomas Brodie-Sangster, David Thewlis and Maia Mitchell.

*Cristóbal Balenciaga* (19/1) is an Original drama series is inspired by the life and legacy of the Spanish creator from Guetaria, Guided by his obsession for control in all aspects of his life, Cristóbal Balenciaga will define his style and eventually become one of the most important designers of all time. It stars Alberto San Juan and an international cast of actors who bring to life renowned characters of the 20th century. Among them are Cecilia Solaguren as his wife, Virgilia Mendizabal, and Thomas Coumans as Balenciaga's partner and business partner.

Inspired by the world of Disney and Pixar's *A Bug's Life*, the new Disney+ original series from National Geographic, *A Real Bug's Life* (24/1), is an incredible adventure into nine different micro bug worlds around the globe, where the forces of nature play out on a miniature scale, and where tiny creatures rely on amazing powers and extraordinary alliances to make it through each day.

### Showmax

In *Fantasy Football* (1/1), teenager Callie A. Coleman discovers she can magically control her father's performance on the

American football field through her gaming console, transforming him from a fumbly-plagued journeyman to a star running back bound for superstardom.

In *Shazam! Fury Of the Gods* (22/1) teenager Billy Batson (Asher Angel) and his adult superhero alter-ego, Shazam (Zachary Levi) have annoyed the wrong people and face off against the Daughters of Atlas.

The fifth-biggest movie in South Africa in 2023, *Transformers: Rise of the Beasts* (29/1) is set in 1994 and centers' on ex-military electronics expert Noah Diaz and artefact research intern Elena Wallace as they work with the Maximals and the Beasties to fight an invasion that threatens to consume Earth.

## Netflix

An artist grieving the loss of his beloved writer husband takes his two best friends on a trip to Paris, where they unpack messy secrets and hard truths in *Good Grief* (4/1), a comedy-drama film written, directed by and starring Dan Levy.

A professional thief and his expert crew attempt the ultimate heist: stealing \$500 million in gold from a vault on a plane — 40,000 feet in the air in *Lift* (12/1).

Caught in a spectacular race against time in *Sixty Minutes* (19/1), a mixed martial arts fighter makes dangerous enemies when he ditches a matchup to race to his daughter's birthday party.

Combining expert interviews with gripping reenactments, this docudrama *Alexander: The Making of a God* (31/1) transports audiences back in time and retell the life of the legendary Alexander the Great, the monarch of ancient Macedon.



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](http://www.writingstudio.co.za)

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