

## 5 new film releases for the weekend

By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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This week there are five new film releases: *The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent* imagines an alternative existence for a Hollywood legend, *The Lost City* offers epic escapism and the animated *Chickenhare & The Hamster Of Darkness* follows the adventures of young hero born half chicken and half hare. Also released are two South African films, the ecological horror fantasy *Gaia* and *Sodium Day*, shining a spotlight on South Africa's education system.



### *The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent*

From filmmakers Tom Gormican and Kevin Etten comes a sincere, authentic and hilarious love letter to Nicolas Cage – as you know and love him... and as you've never seen him before. It's the role he was born to play.

Nicolas Cage stars as, well, Nick Cage, in the action-comedy *The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent*. Creatively unfulfilled and facing financial ruin, the fictionalized version of Cage must accept a \$1m offer to attend the birthday of a dangerous superfan (Pedro Pascal).

Things take a wildly unexpected turn when Cage is recruited by a CIA operative (Tiffany Haddish) and forced to live up to his own legend, channeling his most iconic and beloved on-screen characters in order to save himself and his loved ones. With a career built for this very moment, the seminal award-winning actor must take on the role of a lifetime: Nick Cage.

“Nick has become something that transcends being an actor,” says Gormican. “He’s become a cultural figure. As culture gets stranger and stranger and fashion choices get more outlandish, you can trace like a direct line back to the patron saint of strangeness, Nicolas Cage. Just seeing his face makes people happy. That’s really interesting and made me want to dig in further and find out who he actually is.”

Read more [here](#).

## ***The Lost City***

Brilliant but reclusive author Loretta Sage (Sandra Bullock) has spent her career writing about exotic places in her popular romance-adventure novels featuring handsome cover model Alan (Channing Tatum), who has dedicated his life to embodying the hero character, ‘Dash’.

While on tour promoting her new book with Alan, Loretta is kidnapped by an eccentric billionaire (Daniel Radcliffe) who hopes that she can lead him to the ancient lost city’s treasure from her latest story. Wanting to prove that he can be a hero in real life and not just on the pages of her books, Alan sets off to rescue her. Thrust into an epic jungle adventure, the unlikely pair will need to work together to survive the elements and find the ancient treasure before it’s lost forever.

Channing Tatum notes, “I’ve loved popcorn movies my entire life. With *The Lost City*, we wanted to provide epic escapism through two characters you really care about.”

Sandra Bullock closes with her hopes and thoughts for a big-scale entertainment on which she served in two key roles.

“You could make a ride out of this film at Disneyland, with its scope and scale. It transports you, makes you feel like you're flying, and makes you feel like you're there with Loretta and Alan in the vastness of this jungle. So, if we can't go on vacation just yet, hopefully you'll be able to go into the movie theaters and feel like you've been on a vacation with us.”

## ***Chickenhare & The Hamster Of Darkness***

Set in a lush fantasy world, the film follows the adventures of Chickenhare, a young hero born half chicken and half hare, who was adopted by King Peter, a famous hare adventurer. Eager to fit in and feel loved in spite of his differences, Chickenhare is obsessed with adventuring - no matter how clumsy he is.

When the Kingdom's greatest villain - his own uncle - escapes from jail and threatens to overthrow his father, Chickenhare embarks on an epic and initiatory quest along with Abe, a sarcastic turtle, and Meg, a martial arts expert skunk, to stop him.

Read more about upcoming film releases [here](#).

## **Local film releases**

There are two local films releasing this week: the ecological horror fantasy *Gaia* and *Sodium Day*, shining a spotlight on South Africa's education system.

### ***Gaia***

The outstanding *Gaia* is not about a loving earth mother. It's a riveting ecological horror fantasy that makes human history irrelevant – the flowers at the end of the Anthropocene.

In the depths of an ancient forest, something has been growing. Something older than humanity itself, and perhaps greater too. When a park ranger discovers a strange man and his son living wild, she stumbles onto a secret that is about to change the world

Park ranger (Monique Rockman) encounters two survivalists following a post-apocalyptic lifestyle. The boy (Alex van Dyk) and his philosophical father (Carel Nel). seem to have their own religion and a mysterious relationship with nature. There are many suspicious aspects to their existence, but when the cabin is attacked by strange, post-human beings one night, she learns that there is a greater threat in this emergent wilderness.

Says director Jaco Bouwer, “*Gaia* became a portrait of theological paranoia: what is to become of humanity once it discovers it has been expelled from Eden? Or, even more: that Eden itself has expelled it, turned against it, and is taking its revenge? In a sense, it’s a reverse horror film – the outside world is scary, but the real enemy is inside. Straddling the line between fantasy and reality, we are left to wonder how much of the characters’ monstrous vision of nature is real, and how much is a psychotic vision.”

Directed by Jaco Bouwer from a screenplay by Tertius Kapp, *Gaia* has a limited cinema release and Dstv Box Office release from 22 April.

Read more [here](#).

## ***Sodium Day***

Written and directed by the award-winning Riaz Solker, *Sodium Day* is a comedy-drama with tragic undertones that features uncanny humour and absurd, but often true-to-life scenarios, telling the story of a neglected Matric class in a dilapidated school on the Cape Flats as they navigate their way through absent teachers, racial tensions, and the threat of local gangsters.

In *Sodium Day*, a day starts with pupils setting off an explosion with a chunk of sodium they stole from the science lab and ends with a different kind of eruption – one coming from a volatile mix of racism, culture clash, gangster invasion, and the impending bad news about Simone, as the last strained strands of the youthful innocence and optimism of 12Y are put to the test.

“I had always wanted to make a film set in a South African government high school, I guess ever since my first year of teaching, which was in the mid-nineties,” says Solker. “I think that this type of school environment is such an integral part of the South African psyche, and has such a wealth of situations and stories which inform how South Africans see themselves and the world, that it felt like an important story to tell.”

“It’s an environment that I know well and that I loved being in. I think it’s of vital importance for us as South Africans to engage with the shortcomings in our education system, especially for the disadvantaged youth who have no other options except what the government is providing, as this directly influences the state of our nation going into the future. The Cape Flats is the environment I know best, but I think the story reflects the situation in many poverty-stricken areas in South Africa and the rest of the world, wherever education is neglected,” Solker concludes.

*Sodium Day* releases on 22 April.

Read more [here](#).

**Read more about the latest and upcoming South African films [here](#).**

## 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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