

Greatest Showman, Jumanji and Beatriz at Dinner

By  Daniel Derksen

29 Dec 2017

Inspired by the legend and ambitions of America's original pop-culture impresario, P.T. Barnum, comes *The Greatest Showman*, an inspirational rags-to-riches tale of a brash dreamer who rose from nothing to prove that anything you can envision is possible. In the brand-new adventure *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*, the tables are turned as four unlikely friends are sucked into the world of Jumanji. And at an elegant dinner party in a swanky hilltop home, conversation between a soft-spoken holistic healer and a hard-nosed businessman explodes into a bitter clash of cultures in the comedy *Beatriz at Dinner*.



The Greatest Showman

Australian filmmaker Michael Gracey makes his feature film directorial debut with *The Greatest Showman*, a story that, in the larger-than-life spirit of Barnum, bursts into a boldly imagined fictional realm, one full of infectious pop tunes, glam dances and a celebration of the transformative power of showmanship, love and self-belief.

Gracey directs from a screenplay by Jenny Bicks and Bill Condon and a story by Jenny Bicks, and braids together original songs by Academy Award winners Benj Pasek and Justin Paul (*La La Land*) with a multi-talented cast headed by Hugh Jackman to immerse audiences in the very origins of mass entertainment and mega-celebrities in the 70s... the 1870s that is. The result is a chance to enter the newly electrified world of America's post-Civil War Gilded Age — through the viscerally contemporary lens of the pop culture just igniting then.

Says Jackman, who devoted himself for years to bring the film to the screen: "It's not exaggerating to say that Barnum ushered in modern-day America – and especially the idea that your talent, your imagination and your ability to work hard should be the only things that determine your success. He knew how to make something out of nothing, how to turn lemons

into lemonade. I've always loved that quality. He followed his own path, and turned any setback he had into a positive. So many things I aspire to in my life are embodied in this one character."

Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle

In the brand-new adventure *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*, the tables are turned as four unlikely friends are sucked into the world of Jumanji. When they discover an old video game console with a game they've never heard of, they decide to play and are immediately thrust into the game's jungle setting, in the bodies of their avatars, played by Dwayne Johnson, Jack Black, Kevin Hart, and Karen Gillan.

What they discover is that you don't just play Jumanji – Jumanji plays you. They'll have to go on the most dangerous adventure of their lives, or they'll be stuck in Jumanji forever...

"The spirit of Jumanji flows through this continuation of the story," says Johnson. For the actor/executive producer and so many of his generation, the original *Jumanji* film captured a spirit of imagination that became the spine of the new film. "We wanted to bring that spirit of wonderment, of overcoming fears and discovering who you are – it's all woven through *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*. Every once in a while, a movie comes down the road that you just know in your gut, has a special quality to it."

For Johnson, one of the keys to achieving that was to approach the new film as a continuation – another Jumanji adventure in the same universe as the first film. "We all have tremendous love and reverence for the original movie – I've always been a huge fan of Robin Williams and his performance and that movie meant a lot to me and my family at that time," he says. "So, while the jungle came into our world in the original *Jumanji*, we go into Jumanji in this film."

Directed by Jake Kasdan from a screenplay by Chris McKenna and Erik Sommers and Scott Rosenberg and Jeff Pinkner. Screen story by Chris McKenna. Based on the book *Jumanji* by Chris Van Allsburg.

Beatriz at Dinner

In the comedy *Beatriz at Dinner*, a Los Angeles massage therapist and holistic healer (Salma Hayek) drives to the seaside mansion of her client Cathy. When her old Volkswagen breaks down, she receives a friendly invitation from Cathy to stay for a seemingly innocent business dinner. As the guests arrive and the wine starts to flow, Beatriz finds herself in an escalating war of words with Doug Strutt (John Lithgow), a ruthless real estate mogul who cares more about money than people.

Exploring the widening gulf between the world's haves and havenots with fierce insight and unexpected humour, from economic inequality and conservation to the necessity of simple human kindness. At an elegant dinner party in a swanky hilltop home, conversation between a soft-spoken holistic healer and a hard-nosed businessman explodes into a bitter clash of cultures.

The project began when Mike White, an outspoken supporter of animal rights and a committed vegan, was outraged by the 2015 killing of Cecil the lion by an American trophy hunter in Zimbabwe.

What, he wondered, would he do if he were ever to meet that man? He began to build a script around that idea. Before he had a single scene on paper, White knew that his friend and colleague Miguel Arteta would be an ideal director for the project.

In *Beatriz at Dinner* White has created two vastly different outliers — altruistic healer Beatriz and self-satisfied real-estate developer Doug Strutt — who represent opposite ends of the American spectrum.

“They stand for ‘winners’ vs ‘losers’ if you will,” says White. “The rich vs the poor, hunters vs healers, male vs female. I put two people with opposite beliefs in conflict in a very relatable and everyday type of situation — a dinner party. It begins as a comedy of manners and turns quickly into a battle of ideas with a great deal at stake.”

Read more about the latest film releases: www.writingstudio.co.za.

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

- 3 new local films and more at cinemas this May - 29 Apr 2024
- Get ready for some great escapism in cinemas this April - 3 Apr 2024
- What to expect at the cinema this March - 27 Feb 2024
- Oscar fever brews: Here's what's at the cinemas this February - 29 Jan 2024
- Top 10 films of 2023 - 28 Dec 2023

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>