

Critical Thinking and *The Little Things*



By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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Films entering the South African box office, this weekend, include the biographical drama, *Critical Thinking*, and *The Little Things*, which boasts an all-star cast with Denzel Washington, Rami Malek and Jared Leto, who has received Golden Globe and SAG Award nominations for his performance.

Critical Thinking

In 1988 Miami, where rampant poverty, broken families and a prejudiced system pushed underprivileged youth to the fringes of society Mr 'T' Martinez, a chess militant and passionate coach taught a magnetic group of teens that the power of critical thinking can not only save their kings but also their lives.

This biographical drama is based on the true story of the Miami Jackson High School chess team, the first inner-city team to win the US National Chess Championship, directed by John Leguizamo from a screenplay by Dito Montiel.

"I found the story proof that we Latinx and Black Americans can win any intellectual challenge put on us — even with every obstacle put in front us," says Leguizamo who also stars as Mr 'T' Martinez. "We just need to be given the chance and this true story proves it. These kids came from the most underprivileged of situations and beat the strongest odds."

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The Little Things

John Lee Hancock, directing and producing *The Little Things* from a script he wrote almost 30 years ago, wanted to approach the gritty nature of the job as a means of exploring both the intellectual and psychological sides of solving crimes.

Joe 'Deke' Deacon (Denzel Washington) and Jim Baxter (Rami Malek) are two cops at very different phases of their lives and careers when they unexpectedly find themselves working together to solve the ongoing case of a killer targeting women in the Los Angeles area. As the case unfolds, they become fixated on a particular suspect (played by Jared Leto), but tracking him causes them both to grapple with their own demons, and for Deke, long-buried secrets rise to the surface.

Baxter relies heavily on Deke's more seasoned instincts, but soon both cops obsess over questionable details, driving them both from suspicion toward certainty - a risky grey area that propels them to act in a manner that could destroy not only their case, but their lives.

Reflecting on the story, this internal exploration of the cop-suspect dynamic, Hancock says: "By the end of the movie, what I hope audiences will walk away wondering about Albert Sparma is, was he just kind of a creepy weirdo or a killer? But what I hope they also keep thinking about are the actions of Deke and Baxter and those little things they can't let go of as they do the dirty work no one wants to know about. Two guys trying to do the right thing but sometimes in the wrong way... But they do it anyway, and they live with the consequences."

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ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

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