

A city on wheels, the Spider-Verse, and the littlest reindeer

 By [Daniel Dercksen](#)

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Films releasing on 14 December 2018: *Roma* is an emotional portrait of domestic strife and social hierarchy amidst political turmoil; outcasts confront a city on wheels in *Mortal Engines*; a 40-year-old woman struggles with frustrations from unfulfilled dreams in *Second Act*; a teenager explores the limitless possibilities of the Spider-Verse in the animated *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*; and a good-hearted miniature horse dreams of pulling Santa's sleigh in the animated *Elliot: The Littlest Reindeer*.

Roma

Four years after *Gravity* won him the Oscar for best director, the 56-year-old filmmaker Alfonso Cuarón make a remarkable return to the big screen with *Roma*; a project he calls the “most essential movie” of his career. *Roma* is set in Mexico City in the early 1970s. The story follows Cleo (Yalitza Aparicio), a young domestic worker for a family in the middle-class neighbourhood of Roma in Mexico City.

Delivering an artful love letter to the women who raised him, Cuarón draws on his own childhood to create a vivid and emotional portrait of domestic strife and social hierarchy amidst the political turmoil of the 1970s.

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Mortal Engines

Hundreds of years after civilisation was destroyed by a cataclysmic event, a mysterious young woman, Hester Shaw (Hera Hilmar), emerges as the only one who can stop London - now a giant, predator city on wheels - from devouring everything in its path. Feral and fiercely driven by the memory of her mother, Hester joins forces with Tom Natsworthy (Robert Sheehan), an outcast from London, along with Anna Fang (Jihae), a dangerous outlaw with a bounty on her head.

It is directed by Oscar-winning visual-effects artist Christian Rivers (*King Kong*), from a screenplay by the three-time Academy Award-winning filmmakers of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogies, Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens, and Peter Jackson, based on the award-winning book series by Philip Reeve.

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Second Act

A comedy in the vein of *Working Girl* and *Maid In Manhattan*. Jennifer Lopez stars as Maya, a 40-year-old woman struggling with frustrations from unfulfilled dreams. Until that is, she gets the chance to prove to Madison Avenue that street smarts are as valuable as book smarts and that it is never too late for a second act.

Directed by Peter Segal and written by Elaine Goldsmith-Thomas and Justin Zackham.

Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse

Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, the creative minds behind *The Lego Movie* and *21 Jump Street*, bring their unique talents to a fresh vision of a different Spider-Man Universe, with a groundbreaking visual style that's the first of its kind. *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* introduces Brooklyn teen Miles Morales, and the limitless possibilities of the Spider-Verse, where more than one can wear the mask. It is set in an alternate universe from Sony's other Spider-Man properties but introduces a shared multiverse.

The film is directed by Bob Persichetti, Peter Ramsey, and Rodney Rothman, from a screenplay by Phil Lord.

Elliot: The Littlest Reindeer

A good-hearted miniature horse (voice of Josh Hutcherson) dreams of pulling Santa's sleigh. He gets the chance to audition when a reindeer retires, but troubles on his farm force him to choose between saving Christmas or helping his best friends.

Jennifer Westcott wrote and directed this animated film, which also features the voices of Samantha Bee, Martin Short, John Cleese, Morena Baccarin, and Jeff Dunham.

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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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