

Faith, garden gnomes, and postpartum blues

 By [Daniel Derksen](#)

11 May 2018

I Can Only Imagine, *Traffik*, *Tully*, *Beirut*, *Sherlock Gnomes* and *Luisa Miller* open at local cinemas this week.

I Can Only Imagine

The inspiring, incredible, and unknown true story behind MercyMe's beloved song *I Can Only Imagine*, the most popular contemporary Christian song in history, is brought to life on the big screen by the Erwin Brothers, a directing team that focuses on creating faith-based and inspirational feature films.

Michael Finley stars as Bart Millard, the Christian band MercyMe lead singer who wrote the song. Growing up in Texas, Bart Millard suffers physical and emotional abuse at the hands of his father. His childhood and relationship with his dad after overcoming an abusive childhood, holding to his faith, and seeing God's miracle of redemption, inspired him to write the hit song *I Can Only Imagine* as the singer of Mercy Me.

The phrase *I Can Only Imagine* first occurred to Millard when leaving his father's gravesite, as he wondered what his dad might be seeing in heaven. "For me, the thought was very therapeutic because it was just too overwhelming to think of him being gone. And so I started thinking more about what he was seeing, more than him just not being in my life."

Traffik

When writer-director Deon Taylor conceived *Traffik*, he was confronting his own lack of knowledge about a threat that he had assumed happened elsewhere, but realised could happen anywhere: girls and women lured from the safety of their homes, from anywhere they feel comfortable, into forced sex slavery.

In the action-packed thriller, plans for a romantic weekend getaway at a secluded mountain estate turn to terror when Brea (Paula Patton), a hard-charging investigative reporter, and her boyfriend John (Omar Epps) accidentally discover the hidden world of a brutal biker gang. Joined unexpectedly by their friends Darren (Laz Alonso) and Malia (Roselyn Sanchez), the foursome is forced into a deadly fight for their lives against a ring of criminals who will stop at nothing to protect their secretive operation.

“When I started researching human trafficking, I understood it’s a domestic problem, not just an international problem,” says Taylor. “Then, when I realised that 85-90% of the people who are trafficked in the US are inner city kids, my eyes were opened, and I started to think about how to write a story about this.”

Tully

A new comedy from Academy Award-nominated director Jason Reitman and Academy Award-winning screenwriter Diablo Cody.

Charlize Theron plays a mother of three including a newborn, who is gifted a night nanny by her brother (Mark Duplass). Hesitant to the extravagance at first, Marlo comes to form a unique bond with the thoughtful, surprising, and sometimes challenging young nanny named Tully (Mackenzie Davis).

“This is definitely a mid-life crisis movie, no question about it,” Cody comments. “I think that we’re all familiar with the male mid-life crisis, with the red Corvette and the young girlfriend. But you don’t see a lot of depictions of what women might be dealing with in mid-life. In a way, it almost feels like a loss of currency because you’re getting older and you’re getting less attractive by the day. And women live in a world where they’re judged on their appearances.”

Beirut

The fictional political thriller is set in 1980s Beirut and tells of Mason Skiles (Jon Hamm), a former US diplomat who is called back into service to save a colleague from the group that is possibly responsible for his own family’s death. Meanwhile, a CIA field agent (Rosamund Pike) who is working undercover at the American embassy is tasked with keeping Mason alive and ensuring that the mission is a success.

A taut action thriller from director Brad Anderson and writer-producer Tony Gilroy, *Beirut* takes an unflinching look at the cost of freedom.

Sherlock Gnomes

The beloved garden gnomes from *Gnomeo And Juliet* are back for a whole new adventure in London. When Gnomeo and Juliet first arrive in the city with their friends and family, their biggest concern is getting their new garden ready for spring. However, they soon discover that someone is kidnapping garden gnomes all over London.

When Gnomeo and Juliet return home to find that everyone in their garden is missing – there's only one gnome to call, Sherlock Gnomes. The famous detective and sworn protector of London's garden gnomes arrives with his sidekick Watson to investigate the case. The mystery will lead our gnomes on a rollicking adventure where they will meet all new ornaments and explore an undiscovered side of the city.

Luisa Miller

The exhilarating Met Opera The 2017-18 Live in HD is drawing to a close, but as opera fans know, "it's not over until the fat lady sings"! Ster-Kinekor Cinema Nouveau will release Luisa Miller (Verdi) on 12 May for limited screenings. Showing for the first time in HD, Italian opera music composer Giuseppe Verdi's Luisa Miller isn't just a classic tale of lovers torn apart. It explores Walter Miller's (Tenor Plácido Domingo) love for his daughter Luisa Miller (Soprano, Sonya Yoncheva) and the lengths he will go to protect his child and how a daughter will go to the ends of the earth to save her father. The opera set flits between a humble, village house and a palace. Conductor Bertrand de Billy hits every note perfectly, with a musical pulse that both syncs with, and adds depth to the emotive narrative.

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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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