Culture



The marquee of the Los Feliz Theatre features the films "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer," on July 28 in Los Angeles. The films both premiered the same weekend. (AP/Chris Pizzello, file)



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As 2023 comes to a close, moviegoers are reflecting on their most exciting cinema experiences of the year, despite the complications of the SAG-AFTRA strike. "Barbie'' smashed box offices and women's hearts as stereotypical Barbie (played by Margot Robbie) journeyed from Barbieland into the real world. Spiderman enthusiasts enjoyed another adventure in "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse'' as teenage Miles Morales teamed up with Spider-Woman, Gwen Stacy. Faith-based movies surprised many people, as "Jesus Revolution" and "Sound of Freedom" exceeded expectations at the box office, proving that faith-based films are just as wanted in theaters as secular movies.

The new year will bring more anticipated movies filled with joy, laughter, endurance, conversational topics and the light of God. If you're wondering what to watch in 2024, we have you covered.



Anthony Hopkins plays Sigmund Freud and Matthew Goode portrays C.S. Lewis in "Freud's Last Session." (Courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics/Sabrina Lantos)

"Freud's Last Session"

End the year by witnessing two great minds debate the existence of God and human nature. The film depicts a fictional debate set in 1939 between Sigmund Freud (Anthony Hopkins) and C.S. Lewis (Matthew Goode). "Freud's Last Session" was originally a play by Mark St. Germain. The film is directed by Matt Brown, known for "London Town," "Ropewalk" and "The Man Who Knew Infinity."

"Freud's Last Session" is an undeniably serious film, but thoughtful moviegoers will appreciate the father of psychoanalysis debating the nature of God with the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The film debuted on Oct. 27 at the 2023 AFI Film Festival.

"The Book Of Clarence"

"The Book Of Clarence" is certain to be a topic of conversation among Christians and secular people alike this January. This fictional period piece is set during the time of Jesus' ministry and follows Clarence, a down-on-his-luck Jerusalemite who attempts to profit from the Messiah's fame and power. His journey takes him down an unexpected road of faith and self-discovery.

The movie is directed by Jeynes Samuel, who also directed the smash 2021 hit "The Harder They Fall." Clarence is played by LaKeith Stanfield, who recently acted in Disney's "Haunted Mansion." Other cast members include Teyana Taylor, James McAvoy, Benedict Cumberbatch, Omar Sy and RJ Cyler.

Director Samuel has always believed that great stories can be told around biblical times.

"I've always loved those things where they kind of take a bit of liberty with the Bible because the story runs alongside it," Samuel said in a Deadline Q&A. "A man trying to prove he's a nobody, a man that believes he can do anything. And this belief gets him in trouble with the neighborhood terrorists, so to speak. Then he ends up on a path of self-discovery, redemption, and awakening. I know I could tell a great story like that, but set in a biblical era, it would just be something to marvel at."

The film will be released in theaters Jan. 12.



Kingsley Ben-Adir plays Bob Marley in Paramount Pictures' "Bob Marley: One Love," set for release Feb. 14. (NCR screenshot/Paramount Pictures)

"Bob Marley: One Love"

The story of the King of Reggae is coming to the big screen. "Bob Marley: One Love" will cover the legendary singer's life from 1976 to 1978, celebrating, as Paramount Pictures puts it, "the iconic artistic work that has inspired love and unity for generations."

Reinaldo Marcus Green directs the movie. Kingsley Ben-Adir ("Barbie," "Secret Invasion") plays Bob Marley. Lashana Lynch, who held roles in "The Woman King" and "The Marvels,"

plays Rita Marley, the wife of Bob Marley. This movie is a family affair; the film's producers include members of the Marley family: wife Rita Marley, son Ziggy Marley and daughter Cedella Marley all contributed to the film.

"We talk all the time. Every step of the way, the script, the casting, the hair, the makeup," Green said in an interview. "I want this to be for people who know and love Bob and who can still find out things about his life that they didn't know, as well

as introducing him to a new generation."

The film is set to be released in theaters on Feb. 14.



Alan Ritchson portrays Ed Schmitt in "Ordinary Angels," which tells the story of the Schmitt family's struggle to find a liver transplant for their youngest daughter. (Lionsgate/Allen Fraser)

"Ordinary Angels"

Sometimes, ordinary people do extraordinary acts of good. The film "Ordinary Angels" depicts the true story of the Schmitt family's struggle to find a liver transplant for their youngest daughter with the help of a passionate and determined hairdresser, Sharon Stevens.

Oscar-winner Hilary Swank plays Sharon Stevens. The Schmitt patriarch is played by Alan Ritchson, who plays the lead in the hit Amazon Prime show "Reacher." Jon Gunn directed the film.

Kevin Downes, a producer on the film, told the Washington Examiner that he hopes the film inspires people to "not just talk about how we can love our neighbor, but actually show how we can love our neighbor in ways that put others in front."

Even the actors feel the hope radiating from the film.

"I was drawn to this beautiful true story because it's such a powerful reminder that angels reside everywhere among us," Swank said in a statement to today.com. "And that faith, hope, grit, and positivity are all powerful fuel for miracles."

This story will inspire hope and remind people that God still uses everyday people for extraordinary miracles.

"Ordinary Angels" will hit theaters on Feb. 23.



Simu Lu and Mark Wahlberg appear in "Arthur the King." (Courtesy of Lionsgate/Carlos Rodriguez)

"Arthur the King"

"Arthur The King" tells a story of endurance and a great friendship between a man and his dog. Michael (Mark Wahlberg) prepares for a tough race across the Dominican Republic with his team of adventure athletes. During the grueling race, Michael runs into the same stray dogs he had met hundreds of miles prior.

"Arthur the King" is based on the true story of Mikael Lindnord, told in his 2017 book Arthur: The Dog Who Crossed the Jungle to Find a Home. Lindnord was captain of the Swedish team Peak Performance in the 2014 Adventure Racing World Championship in Ecuador, where he met Arthur. Lindnord later adopted Arthur and took him back to Sweden.

The cast includes Simu Liu, Juliet Rylance, Nathalie Emmanuel, Ali Suliman and Paul Guilfoyle. Simon Cellan Jones directs the film.

Arthur has since passed away, but will never be forgotten by his family.

"Arthur's beautiful soul touched many people; for us in the family, he was the best family member you could dream about," Lindnord said in a statement. "He was like a guardian angel to our kids."

Moviegoers can catch this inspiring story in theaters on March 22.

Advertisement

"Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire"

Ghostbusters are back to fight off a chilling new ghost. Paul Rudd, Carrie Coon, McKenna Grace and Finn Wolfhard have reprised their roles from 2021's "Ghostbusters: Afterlife." The original cast also joined in the fight against this icy new ghost. Stars Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Ernie Hudson and Annie Potts are seen in the trailer. Gil Kenan directs the film.

"It's an absolute honor to pick up the proton pack and step behind the camera for the next chapter of the Spengler family saga," writer and exec producer Gil Kenan told Deadline. "I just wish I could go back to 1984 and tell the kid in the sixth row of the Mann Valley West that one day he was going to get to direct a 'Ghostbusters' film."

Fans of the Ghostbusters franchise can enjoy the newest installment in theaters on March 29.

"Beetlejuice 2"

Fans have been saying his name since 1988. Now, the wait is over. He's back! "Beetlejuice 2" will star Michael Keaton, Winona Ryder, Alec Baldwin, Geena Davis, Catherine O'Hara and Jenna Ortega. Tim Burton will direct the film.

Keaton, who plays Beetlejuice, is excited to keep aspects of the movie similar to the original.

"We both agreed, if it happens, it has to be done as close to the way we made it the first time," Keaton said of his discussions about the sequel with Burton. "Making stuff up, making stuff happen, improvising and riffing, but literally handmade stuff, like people creating things with their hands and building something."

Fans will be able to see the lovable and funny poltergeist again on Sept. 6.

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