

# Top 10 films released in cinemas in 2021

 By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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It's been a remarkable year where independent voices in filmmaking triumphed creatively with themes of redemption, forgiveness, freedom and love. Here's my top 10 films of 2021 that were released in cinemas in South Africa.

## **The Father**

Celebrating the unbreakable bond between parent and child, this masterwork by French novelist, playwright and director Florian Zeller is unforgettable. With Anthony Hopkins and Olivia Colman in a heart-rending account of what happens when a relationship which has coloured their every waking moment for decades suddenly and irrevocably changes.

The film poignantly offers a glimpse into the world through the prism of a character whose dementia sets in motion a gradual decline affecting every part of his reality.

Read more [here](#).

## **The Last Duel**

From visionary filmmaker Ridley Scott comes this gripping tale of betrayal and vengeance set against the brutality of 14th century France. Based on actual events, the historical epic unravels long-held assumptions about France's last sanctioned duel between Jean de Carrouges and Jacques Le Gris - two friends turned bitter rivals.

It's a cinematic and thought-provoking drama told from three distinct perspectives, with outstanding performances by Matt Damon, Adam Driver and Jodie Comer as the woman caught in a deadly love triangle.

Read more [here](#).

## **Nomadland**

Frances McDormand is captivating in Chloé Zhao's sweeping panoramic portrait of the American nomadic spirit, an astounding portrait of a woman who has lost a husband and in fact her whole former life and finds herself in the nomad community and "evolves - in the wilderness, in rocks, trees, stars, a hurricane - this is where she finds her independence.

The film offers outstanding performances from real-life nomads Bob Wells, Linda May, and Swankie as Fern's mentors and comrades in her exploration through the vast landscape of the American West.

Read more [here](#).

## The French Dispatch

Writer-director Wes Anderson's French love letter to internationalism, culture and the blessed art of independent journalism is an absolute delight. The film is imaginative, innovative, and masterfully showcasing the art of filmmaking and storytelling.

It offers a bounty of stories within stories that converges into one organic whole, a cabinet of cinematic wonders of all shapes and sizes in constant dynamic motion, a love letter to the printed word in general. *The New Yorker* magazine, in particular to France and to French movies, a moving meditation on living far from home.

Excellent performances by an ensemble cast that includes Owen Wilson, Tilda Swinton, Fisher Stevens, Griffin Dunne, Adrien Brody, Bill Murray and Timothée Chalamet.

Read more [here](#).

## Spencer

A powerful, emotionally and character-driven survival story about an iconic woman's own declaration of independence. An imagining of what might have happened during those few fateful days when Princess Diana decided to leave Prince Charles.

With *Jackie* (2016) and now *Spencer*, Chilean director Pablo Larraín offers a revealing and intimate portrait of a woman who changed the face of the 20th century, with Kristen Stewart delivering a mesmerising performance.

Read more [here](#).

## My Son

Driving in the heart of the highlands, Edmond Murray receives a call from his ex-wife, in tears. Their seven-year-old son went missing from a campsite. Soon it becomes clear that the child was kidnapped and the parents give way to despair. The film is writer-director Christian Carion's English-language remake of his own 2017 French production *Mon Garçon*.

Although the cast, setting and script were all changed, *My Son* was made using the same distinctive methodology as the French original, what Carion calls "orchestrated improvisation." The key element of this approach is to keep the story and script concealed from lead actor James McAvoy, delivering an astounding performance.

Read more [here](#).

## Breaking News in Yuba County

Offering a rich tapestry of satire, sass, sympathy and mystery, *Breaking News in Yuba County* Tate Taylor's deliciously wicked, dark and humorous dissection of America's fixation on fame, notoriety and victimhood.

Features Allison Janney in a superb performance as an underappreciated suburban wife in pastel-painted Yuba County who gets no attention. When her husband goes missing, she gets a taste of being a local celebrity and stumbles into hilarious hijinks as her world turns upside down.

Read more [here](#).

## Gunpowder Milkshake

This rip-roaring, female-focused thriller from Israeli film-maker Navot Papushado was inspired by the movies of Sergio Leone, Akira Kurosawa and Alfred Hitchcock, where a spaghetti western, film noir and Samurai/Ronin movies blend together in one of the most action-packed films of the year.

The story focuses on a mother who discovers that the daughter she was forced to abandon as a child has followed her into the same dangerous profession as a hitwoman.

Read more [here](#).

## Music

In our torn world of chaos, upheaval and misplayed emotions, we definitely need a film like *Music* to remind us of the power of love, being loved and loving unconditionally.

Visual artist, storyteller, music maker and filmmaker, Sia, who cemented her role as one of today's most groundbreaking artists, sought after songwriters and captivating live performers, has crafted a masterwork of incredible beauty and extraordinary insight into the human condition, shining a vibrant and colourful light on to humanity, particularly on those who live with disabilities and flawed imperfections.

Sia's vivacious and pulsating journey into the mindscape of those who see the world differently, especially people like *Music*, who is nonverbal and on the autism spectrum, will change your worldview and allow us to heal our sorrows and misfortunes. Maddie Ziegler playing *Music* is a revelation and force to behold.

Read more [here](#).

## Malignant

Definitely not for the faint-hearted, the mind-blowing horror-thriller from James Wan is a terrifying tale about a young woman who finds out that her nightmares about gruesome murders are, in fact, real. That's all you need to know before taking the plunge into a full-blooded horror.

Read more [here](#).

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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](http://www.writingstudio.co.za)

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