

# Mary Poppins Returns, Ben Is Back, and so is Robin Hood

 By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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2018 ends on a high with three films releasing on 28 December: The world's beloved nanny is back to help the next generation of the Banks family find the joy in *Mary Poppins Returns*; a mother's undying love for her son is tested in *Ben Is Back*; and Robin Hood reintroduces the iconic outlaw as the dark, compelling hero of a turbulent city in desperate need of one.



## Mary Poppins Returns

53-years ago Walt Disney's *Mary Poppins* changed the world. In *Mary Poppins Returns*, an all-new original musical and sequel, Mary Poppins is back to help the next generation of the Banks family find the joy and wonder missing in their lives following a personal loss.

Set in Depression-era London (when the books were originally written), Michael Banks (Ben Whishaw), now a grown man with a family of his own, has taken a temporary job with Fidelity Fiduciary Bank in London, the same financial institution that employed his father and grandfather before him. He lives with his three children, Annabel (Pixie Davies), John (Nathanael Saleh) and Georgie (Joel Dawson) at 17 Cherry Tree Lane, but times are tough. The city is in the midst of "The Great Slump" so money is tight and the accompanying stress, unavoidable. On top of that, the family is struggling to cope with the recent death of Michael's wife, and the house is rundown and in a constant state of chaos.

As Michael's relationship with his children continues to deteriorate, the bank's suspiciously congenial and seemingly altruistic Mr Wilkins (Colin Firth) begins foreclosure proceedings on the Banks' home, sending the already frazzled Michael into a further tailspin.

Fortunately, the wind begins to change, and Mary Poppins (Emily Blunt), the practically perfect nanny whose unique magical skills can turn any ordinary task into a fantastic adventure, enters their lives once again, having not aged a single day.

She teams up with an old friend, Jack (Lin-Manuel Miranda), a charming and eternally optimistic lamplighter, and together they take the Banks' children on a series of whimsical adventures and introduce them to colourful characters like Mary's eccentric cousin, Topsy (Meryl Streep), bringing life, love and laughter back into their home

Directed by Rob Marshall from a screenplay by David Magee and a screen story by Magee and Rob Marshall and John DeLuca based upon the *Mary Poppins Stories* by PL Travers, *Mary Poppins Returns* features all new original songs with music by Shaiman and lyrics by Scott Wittman and Shaiman.

Read more [here](#). [Click here](#) to win a Mary Poppins Returns movie hamper!

## Ben Is Back

Nineteen-year-old Ben Burns (Lucas Hedges) unexpectedly returns home to his family's suburban home on Christmas Eve morning. Ben's mother, Holly (Julia Roberts), is relieved and welcoming but wary of her son staying clean. Over a turbulent 24 hours, new truths are revealed, and a mother's undying love for her son is tested as she does everything in her power to keep him safe.

Affluent, attractive and loving, with their talented teenage daughter singing in the choir and their adorable younger children dressed up for a Christmas pageant, the Burnses evoke a modern version of a Norman Rockwell painting.

But the deeply conflicted look on Holly Burns' face when she arrives home to find her oldest son Ben on her doorstep makes it instantly clear that this family faces a profound challenge of its own — one that cuts across economic and social strata.

Oscar-nominated writer and director Peter Hedges has made a career of telling compelling and complex stories about flawed families of all shapes and sizes and the unique struggles they face. In films including the 1993 cult classic *What's*

*Eating Gilbert Grape*, which he adapted from his own novel; his feature directorial debut, *Pieces of April*; and *About a Boy*, which he co-wrote based on Nick Hornby's novel, Hedges has presented audiences with moving, often funny tales of imperfect families doing their best in an imperfect world.

Hedges' latest film, *Ben Is Back*, opens on a family that seems at first glance to have little in common with the ones populating his previous films.

Read more [here](#).

## Robin Hood

Taking off at a breathless pace that does not let up, *Robin Hood* reintroduces the iconic outlaw as the dark, compelling hero of a turbulent city in desperate need of one.

In this thrilling action-adventure of our times, directed by Otto Bathurst from a screenplay by Ben Chandler and David James Kelly, Robin's first-ever revolt against a corrupt Kingdom erupts into gritty battles, kickass fight choreography, an irreverent friendship and timeless romance.

Robin of Loxley (Taron Egerton) a war-hardened Crusader and his Moorish commander (Jamie Foxx) mount an audacious revolt against the corrupt English crown in a thrilling action-adventure packed with gritty battlefield exploits, mind-blowing fight choreography, and a timeless romance.

At the movies, Robin Hoods have been myriad: Douglas Fairbanks was a silent Robin Hood; Errol Flynn was a swashbuckling Robin; Margaret Rutherford was the first female Robin; Frank Sinatra was a gangster Robin; Sean Connery was a romantically fueled Robin; Kevin Costner was a quick-witted Robin and John Cleese and Cary Elwes were outright comic Robins — to name just a few.

Director Otto Bathurst wanted to start anew, and remake the mould with all the furious pace and contemporary action filmmaking.

"To me Robin Hood had the makings of an utterly contemporary and relevant story," Bathurst explains. "Here's a guy who seemingly has the perfect and comfortable life and goes off to war, full of ideals, beliefs and passion, but then his eyes are opened to the corruption and evil of the people who are running the world — and it breaks him. It dissolves his faith in his nation and his religion and leaves him disillusioned. We see Robin as a hero, but I wanted to see why and how he became this legend, what it is that burns inside of him and what inspires him to set out to fight with such commitment to the truth."

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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