

Fifty Shades of Lego

 By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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This week a young black man grapples with his own sexuality and finds love in the most unexpected place in the not-to-be-missed *Moonlight* (nominated for eight Oscars); obsessive love whips up more passion in *Fifty Shades Darker*; a Holocaust denier reveals the truth in *Denial*, big changes brew in Gotham city in *The Lego Batman Movie*, and the month of love is celebrated with opera's classic lovers in Gounod's lush Shakespeare adaptation of *Roméo et Juliette*.

Moonlight

A consummate masterwork from writer-director Barry Jenkins, this not-to-be-missed film takes you on an emotional journey into the heart and soul of humanity and will live in your heart forever.

The film opens with Chiron (Alex Hibbert) at age 10 (nicknamed Little in the movie), fleeing from bullies in his housing project until he is rescued by the drug dealer Juan, who becomes his mentor and unofficial guardian with the help of his saintly girlfriend Teresa. In the second chapter, Chiron (Ashton Sanders) grapples with young love in the form of his teenage schoolmate Kevin, the declining state of his mother Paula and a traumatic schoolyard incident that changes the course of his life. The third chapter follows Chiron in adulthood - now known by his street name Black (Trevante Rhodes) - contending with the thwarted love that has hindered his identity through his inability to express his feelings. In a virtuoso sequence set in a Miami diner, Chiron reunites with Kevin in a thoroughly unforgettable and unexpected way. A timeless story of human connection and self-discovery

Written and directed by Barry Jenkins, it is based on the play *In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue* by Tarell Alvin McCraney. One of the most powerful aspects of *Moonlight* is that it was conceived in cinematic form by a straight man working from material rooted in the personal experiences of an openly gay man, yet the film's sexuality is not its centerpiece or defining feature, owing to Jenkins' penchant for subtlety and introspection over telegraphed moments or sermonising. Ultimately, *Moonlight* transcends labels and definitions, telling a universal story through one young man's cathartic personal struggles.

Says Jenkins: "The title *Moonlight* refers to shining light in the darkness or illuminating things you're afraid to show. Everybody in life has had a struggle like Chiron's at some point, whether it's for a short period of time or an entire lifetime. Anyone who insists they haven't put up a façade is living in some kind of darkness."

Fifty Shades Darker

The second chapter based on the worldwide bestselling "Fifty Shades" phenomenon invites audiences to slip into something a shade darker.

Jamie Dornan and Dakota Johnson return as Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele in the highly anticipated sequel to *Fifty Shades Of Grey*. Following the events of *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Anastasia "Ana" Steele tries to move on from her relationship with Christian Grey. A wounded Christian convinces her to resume their romance under Ana's conditions. As the couple begins their normal relationship, Christian's past threatens to tear the couple apart.

The film gives fans a taste of what to expect when a fairy tale doesn't play by the rules. It is directed by James Foley (*Fear, House of Cards*) from a screenplay by EL James' husband, Niall Leonard, based on the novel by James. With her "author" hat squarely on her head, EL James reasserts: "All of the 'Fifty Shades' books are romance books, full stop - they should be, and hopefully will be, romantic films. In this one, we discover more, go deeper, and there's also the first hint of Christian's old life, with that coming back and infecting the couple as they try to get it together. That's one of the reasons why it's darker because there are these threats in the wings that come in to destabilise what should be a happy romance."

Note: *Fifty Shades Darker* and *Fifty Shades Freed* were lensed simultaneously, resulting in two successive Valentine's Day weekend releases in 2017 and '18, further exploring the compelling romantic tango of Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele.

Denial

Based on the acclaimed book *History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier*, Denial unmask the historical truth of the Holocaust and recounts Deborah E. Lipstadt's (Rachel Weisz) legal battle for historical truth against David Irving (Cannes Award winner Timothy Spall), who accused her of libel when she declared him a Holocaust denier. In the English legal system, the burden of proof is on the accused, therefore it was up to Lipstadt and her legal team to prove the essential truth that the Holocaust occurred.

Lipstadt believes the film provides an opportunity for her to take her life's work another step forward. "I'd like people to understand that the Holocaust is the best-documented genocide in the world. There is no denying it. You can debate aspects of it – why it happened, how it happened, but not the fact that it happened. It is incontrovertible fact. It can't be debated. And that's not being closed-minded, it's acknowledging the truth."

The Lego Batman Movies

In the irreverent spirit of fun that made "The LEGO® Movie" a worldwide phenomenon, the self-described leading man of that ensemble – LEGO Batman – stars in his own big-screen adventure. But there are big changes brewing in Gotham, and if he wants to save the city from The Joker's hostile takeover, Batman may have to drop the lone vigilante thing, try to work with others and maybe, just maybe, learn to lighten up.

Directed by Chris McKay, the writers on "The LEGO Batman Movie" have roots in a range of comedic and/or animated projects. Seth Grahame-Smith's novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* was made into a successful feature; writing partners Chris McKenna and Erik Sommers have been recognised for their work on "Community" and "American Dad"; Jared Stern counts "Toy Story 3" and "Wreck-It Ralph" among his feature animation credits; and John Whittington is a staff writer on the upcoming series "Green Eggs and Ham," based on the classic Dr. Seuss children's book.

“Because it’s a LEGO movie, there are built-in themes about creativity and play, teamwork and sharing,” says McKay. “That’s inherent in the property and will always be a part of what we do. And because it’s a Batman movie, there are underlying ideas about family and connection. But we also wanted to say something about the nature of happiness. Can a guy who’s based his image on being that dark silhouette on a rooftop, bearing all the responsibility of keeping Gotham City safe, make happiness a choice? I think it’s interesting to recognise that there will always be obstacles and conflicts in life, good days and not-so-good days, but that maybe choosing happiness as a philosophy isn’t a bad way to go.”

Roméo et Juliette

Hailed by the New York Times for singing “with white-hot sensuality and impassioned lyricism,” Diana Damrau and Vittorio Grigolo star as the tragic star-crossed lovers in this operatic adaption of Shakespeare’s classic love story. This new Met production of Charles Gounod’s *Roméo et Juliette* is directed by Bartlett Sher, with Gianandrea Noseda conducting the sumptuous score.

Sher’s staging of *Roméo et Juliette* is a co-production with La Scala and was initially presented at the Salzburg Festival in 2008. It features set design by Michael Yeargan, costume design by Catherine Zuber, lighting design by Jennifer Tipton, choreography by Chase Brock in his Met debut and fight direction by B.H. Barry.

Roméo et Juliette opened to great success in 1867, and the opera premiered at the Met in 1884, where it was sung in Italian and starred Italo Campanini as Roméo and Marcella Sembrich as Juliette. Since its Met premiere, the opera has been staged 329 times to date. Famous sopranos who have sung Juliette include Lucrezia Bori, Nellie Melba, and Anna Netrebko. Notable tenors who have sung the role of Roméo include Franco Corelli, Jean de Reszke, and George Shirley.

The exclusive backstage content and behind-the-scenes interviews during *Roméo et Juliette*, hosted by soprano Ailyn Pérez, include:

- Live backstage interviews with Vittorio Grigolo and Diana Damrau, who star as Romeo and Juliette
- Live interviews with *Roméo et Juliette* conductor Gianandrea Noseda, director Bartlett Sher, costume designer Catherine Zuber, and set designer Michael Yeargan

- GalleryMet short film: “Roméo et Juliette” (artist Rachel Feinstein)

The running time of Roméo et Juliette is approximately 3 hours 20 minutes, including an interval. Screening times at Nouveau and select Ster-Kinekor cinemas are as follows: 11 February at 5pm, 12 February at 2.30pm, 14 and 22 February at 11.30am, and 21 February at 6pm.

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