

1917, *Les Misérables* and *The Grudge*



By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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Films opening at South African cinemas, this week, include Sam Mendes's Oscar-nominated World War I epic, *1917*; Ladj Ly's Oscar-nominated full-length feature film debut, *Les Misérables*; and a reboot of *The Grudge*.

1917

Sam Mendes, the Oscar-winning director of *Skyfall*, *Spectre* and *American Beauty*, brings his singular vision to *1917*, a visceral new epic inspired by the experiences of his grandfather and others who served in World War I.

At the height of the First World War during Spring 1917 in northern France, two young British soldiers, Schofield (George MacKay) and Blake (Dean-Charles Chapman), are given a seemingly impossible mission to deliver a message which will warn of an ambush during one of the skirmishes soon after the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line during Operation Alberich.

The two recruits race against time, crossing enemy territory to deliver the warning and keep a British battalion of 1,600 men, which includes Blake's brother, from walking into a deadly trap. The pair must give their all to accomplish their mission by surviving the war to end all wars.

This British war film is directed by Mendes and written by Mendes and Krysty Wilson-Cairns, based in part on an account told to Mendes by his paternal grandfather, Alfred Mendes. It was nominated for 10 Oscars and nine Baftas.

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Les Misérables

Les Misérables is inspired by the Ladj Ly's own experiences as the son of a Malian immigrant and inspired by the 2005 Paris riots that erupted at the foot of the filmmaker's building. It's a film that's at least 15 years in the making, with roots that stretch back to Ly's activist teenage years.

It gives provocative insight into the tensions between neighbourhood residents and police. Stéphane (Damien Bonnard) has recently joined the Anti-Crime Squad in Montfermeil, in the suburbs of Paris, France, where, Victor Hugo set his famed novel *Les Misérables*.

Alongside his new colleagues Chris (Alexis Manenti) and Gwada (Djebril Zonga) – both experienced members of the team – he quickly discovers tensions running high between local gangs. When the trio finds themselves overrun during an arrest, a drone captures the encounter, threatening to expose the reality of everyday life.

Screenplay by director Ladj Ly and Giordano Gederlini.

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The Grudge

At least 15 years have passed since one of America's most successful producer/directors, Sam Raimi (*A Simple Plan*, *Spider-Man*, *Drag Me to Hell*), first introduced American audiences to *The Grudge*. Now, the creator of the *Evil Dead* series is excited to return to one of his favourite stories in an R-rated version. "When we made the original in 2004," Raimi says, "horror was still on the outside, and it was still for the cult audience. But it has now moved into the mainstream."

A single mother and young detective, Muldoon (Andrea Riseborough), discovers that a suburban house is cursed by a vengeful ghost that dooms those who enter it with a violent death. Now, she runs to save herself and her son from demonic spirits from the cursed house in her neighbourhood.

This supernatural horror film written and directed by Nicolas Pesce and produced by Sam Raimi, Rob Tapert and Taka Ichiue. It's a reboot of the 2004 American remake of the Japanese horror film *Ju-On: The Grudge* (both of which were directed by Takashi Shimizu) and the fourth instalment in *The Grudge* film series.

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