

u3a P&D FILM GROUP - PROGRAMME – Sept 2026 – June 2027

Date	Film	Running Time	Genre
2026			
4 Sep	The Bridges of Madison County	129 mins	Romantic Drama
18 Sep	Burn After Reading	96 mins	Comedy Thriller
2 Oct	Being There	124 mins	Satirical Comedy Drama
16 Oct	Conclave	120 mins	Political Thriller
6 Nov	Hope and Glory	113 mins	Comedy Drama
20 Nov	San Andreas	114 mins	Disaster Action
4 Dec	The Glen Miller Story	116 mins	Biographical Drama
18 Dec	Die Hard	126 mins	Action Thriller
2027			
1 Jan	No film – New Year's Day		
8 Jan	The Devil Wears Prada	109 mins	Comedy Drama
22 Jan	Carmen	98 mins	Flamenco/Musical Drama
5 Feb	The Proposal	108 mins	Romantic Comedy
19 Feb	Assault on Precinct 13	109 mins	Crime Action Thriller
5 Mar	Get Smart	110 mins	Spoof Action Comedy
19 Mar	The Shape of Water	123 mins	Romantic Dark-fantasy
2 Apr	Letters to Juliet	105 mins	Romantic Drama
16 Apr	The Mercy	101 mins	Biographical Drama
7 May	Airplane!	88 mins	Disaster-movie Spoof
21 May	Under the Greenwood Tree	93 mins	Romantic Period Drama
4 Jun	We Are the Millers	110 mins	Comedy Road Movie
18 Jun	Shirley Valentine	108 mins	Comedy Drama

Friday 4 September 2026 – The Bridges of Madison County

Starring: Meryl Streep, Clint Eastwood

Director: Clint Eastwood

Running time: 129 minutes

The Bridges of Madison County is a tender and deeply reflective romantic drama directed by Clint Eastwood. Released in 1995 and based on the novel by Robert James Waller, the film tells the story of Francesca Johnson, an Iowa housewife whose quiet life is interrupted by a brief but life-changing encounter with travelling photographer Robert Kincaid. Rather than relying on melodrama, the film explores the emotional intensity of a connection that is both sudden and impossible.

Much of the film's power comes from its restrained performances. Meryl Streep is exceptional as Francesca, conveying longing, conflict, and quiet intelligence with remarkable subtlety. Clint Eastwood gives one of his gentlest performances as Robert, creating a character who feels calm, sincere, and deeply observant. Their chemistry is convincing, and the film allows their relationship to unfold slowly, making every conversation and silence feel meaningful. This patience gives the story its emotional weight.

Although the premise is simple, the film becomes a moving study of love, sacrifice, and the choices that shape a life. It is not fast-paced, and some viewers may find its deliberate style too quiet, but that stillness is also what makes it so affecting. Overall, *The Bridges of Madison County* is a mature and beautifully acted romance that lingers in the mind long after it ends, especially for viewers who appreciate emotional realism and thoughtful storytelling.

Awards and nominations: 8 wins, 19 nominations; includes 1 Oscar nomination.

Friday 18 September 2026 – Burn After Reading

Starring: George Clooney, Frances McDormand, Brad Pitt, John Malkovich, Tilda Swinton

Directors: Joel Coen, Ethan Coen

Running time: 96 minutes

Burn After Reading is a sharp, chaotic black comedy from Joel and Ethan Coen that turns espionage into farce. Released in 2008, the film begins with a misplaced disc containing material from a former CIA analyst and quickly spirals into a web of misunderstandings involving vain gym employees, unhappy spouses, and deeply incompetent schemers. Rather than building suspense in a traditional thriller style, the film thrives on confusion, coincidence, and the absurdity of people who have no idea what they are doing.

The ensemble cast is one of the film's greatest strengths. Frances McDormand and Brad Pitt are especially entertaining as Linda and Chad, two characters whose confidence is wildly out of proportion to their intelligence. John Malkovich brings fury and self-importance to Osborne Cox, while George Clooney delivers an amusing performance that highlights the film's fascination with paranoia and vanity. The humour is dark, awkward, and often deliberately uncomfortable, which may not appeal to everyone, but it is handled with precision and confidence.

What makes *Burn After Reading* memorable is its cynical view of human behaviour. The film suggests that foolishness, selfishness, and miscommunication can be just as destructive as any genuine conspiracy. It is not an emotionally warm or reassuring film, and its sudden bursts of violence can be jarring, but its boldness is part of its appeal. Overall, it is an intelligent and darkly funny satire that rewards viewers who enjoy offbeat humour, strong performances, and stories driven by chaos rather than heroism.

Awards and nominations: 4 wins, 17 nominations.

Friday 2 October 2026 – *Being There*

Starring: Peter Sellers, Shirley MacLaine, Melvyn Douglas

Director: Hal Ashby

Running time: 124 minutes

Being There is a subtle and sharply intelligent satirical drama directed by Hal Ashby. Released in 1979 and based on the novel by Jerzy Kosiński, the film follows Chance, a sheltered gardener whose simple remarks are repeatedly mistaken for profound wisdom after he is drawn into elite political and social circles. The premise is quietly absurd, but the film uses that absurdity to expose how easily power and status can be shaped by appearances rather than understanding.

Peter Sellers gives one of his finest performances as Chance, playing the role with remarkable restraint and precision. His calm expression and measured speech make the character both funny and strangely compelling, while the supporting cast, including Shirley MacLaine and Melvyn Douglas, help ground the satire in a believable world of wealth and influence. The humour is understated rather than exaggerated, and much of the film's brilliance comes from the growing gap between what Chance actually means and what others choose to hear.

What makes *Being There* so memorable is its elegant simplicity. Beneath its gentle surface lies a pointed critique of politics, media culture, and the human tendency to project meaning where there may be very little. It is a deliberately quiet film, so viewers expecting broad comedy or dramatic intensity may find it too restrained, but for those who appreciate thoughtful satire, it is deeply rewarding. Overall, *Being There* is a sophisticated, original, and enduring film that remains strikingly relevant.

Awards and nominations: 14 wins, 15 nominations; includes 1 Oscar win and 1 Oscar nomination. 4

Friday 16 October 2026 – *Conclave*

Starring: Ralph Fiennes, Stanley Tucci, John Lithgow, Isabella Rossellini

Director: Edward Berger

Running time: 120 minutes

Conclave is a tense and intelligent political thriller set within one of the world's most secretive institutions. Directed by Edward Berger and released in 2024, the film follows Cardinal Lawrence as he oversees the election of a new pope after the sudden death of the previous one. As rivalries, hidden motives, and ideological divisions emerge behind the closed doors of the Vatican, the story turns a solemn religious process into a gripping drama about power, faith, and human ambition.

Much of the film's strength comes from its atmosphere of quiet pressure and controlled suspense. Ralph Fiennes gives a deeply measured performance as Lawrence, conveying intelligence, uncertainty, and moral seriousness without ever losing the audience's attention. The supporting cast, including Stanley Tucci and John Lithgow, adds further weight to the political tensions at the heart of the story. Edward Berger's direction is elegant and precise, using the enclosed setting, formal rituals, and carefully composed visuals to create a sense of mystery and intensity.

Although *Conclave* is more restrained than a conventional thriller, its thoughtful pacing and layered conflicts make it absorbing throughout. It succeeds not through spectacle, but through dialogue, performance, and the gradual revelation of competing loyalties and convictions. Overall, it is a sophisticated and engrossing film that will appeal especially to viewers who enjoy intelligent drama, strong acting, and stories about institutions under pressure.

Awards and nominations: 95 wins, 327 nominations; includes 1 Oscar win and 8 Oscar nominations.

Friday 6 November 2026 – Hope and Glory

Starring: Sarah Miles, David Hayman, Sammi Davis, Sebastian Rice-Edwards

Director: John Boorman

Running time: 113 minutes

Hope and Glory is a warm, unusual, and deeply personal war film that looks at World War II through the eyes of a child. Written and directed by John Boorman and released in 1987, the film follows young Billy as he grows up in suburban London during the Blitz, witnessing bombings, family tensions, and social change with a mixture of curiosity, excitement, and confusion. Rather than focusing on battlefield heroism, the film explores the strange overlap between danger and adventure in childhood.

One of the film's greatest strengths is its perspective. By presenting wartime life from Billy's point of view, it captures both the fear felt by adults and the excitement that chaos can hold for children who do not yet fully understand its consequences. Sebastian Rice-Edwards gives a natural and engaging performance as Billy, while Sarah Miles brings emotional depth to the role of his mother. The film is also rich in atmosphere, balancing humour, nostalgia, and sadness without losing its sense of authenticity.

Although *Hope and Glory* is quieter and more episodic than many war dramas, that loose structure suits its memoir-like quality. It is less concerned with plot than with memory, feeling, and the contradictions of growing up during extraordinary times. Overall, it is an intelligent and touching film that stands out for its originality and emotional honesty, and it remains one of the most distinctive cinematic portraits of life on the home front during the war.

Awards and nominations: 0 wins, multiple major nominations; includes 5 Oscar nominations.

Friday 20 November 2026 – San Andreas

Starring: Dwayne Johnson, Alexandra Daddario, Hugo Johnstone-Burt

Director: Brad Peyton

Running time: 114 minutes

San Andreas is a large-scale disaster film that delivers exactly what its title promises: destruction on an enormous scale. Directed by Brad Peyton and released in 2015, the film follows rescue pilot Ray Gaines as he travels across California after a series of devastating earthquakes strike along the San Andreas Fault. The story focuses on his attempt to save his estranged wife and daughter, giving the spectacle a straightforward emotional centre.

The film's greatest strength is its visual scale. Collapsing buildings, tsunamis, and wide scenes of destruction are presented with impressive energy, and the action rarely slows down for long. Dwayne Johnson brings a dependable screen presence to the lead role, while Carla Gugino and Alexandra Daddario help keep the family storyline engaging enough to support the spectacle. The characters themselves are fairly simple, but the film does not pretend to be deeply complex; its main goal is excitement, and in that respect it is effective.

At the same time, *San Andreas* relies heavily on familiar disaster-film clichés, and its plot often asks the audience to ignore realism in favour of momentum. Some dialogue is predictable, and the emotional moments are not always as powerful as the film intends them to be. Still, for viewers who enjoy fast-paced action, survival drama, and spectacular special effects, it remains an entertaining watch. Overall, *San Andreas* is a thrilling but conventional blockbuster that succeeds more as spectacle than as drama.

Awards and nominations: 2 wins, 10 nominations.

Friday 4 December 2026 – The Glen Miller Story

Starring: James Stewart, June Allyson, Harry Morgan, Charles Drake, George Tobias

Director: Anthony Mann

Running time: 116 minutes

The Glenn Miller Story is a polished and heartfelt musical biopic that traces the rise of the famous bandleader from struggle to success. Directed by Anthony Mann and released in 1954, the film follows Glenn Miller's efforts to develop his distinctive sound while balancing ambition, marriage, and the pressures of public life. As a portrait of a musician, it is less interested in controversy than in presenting dedication, romance, and the power of music. 6

James Stewart gives an appealing and sincere performance as Glenn Miller, bringing warmth and determination to the role, while June Allyson provides strong support as Helen, the wife who stands beside him through hardship and success. The film's greatest strength, however, is its music. The jazz and big-band performances give it energy and charm, and they help explain why Miller's work left such a lasting impression. Even for viewers unfamiliar with his career, the soundtrack makes the film engaging. At the same time, *The Glenn Miller Story* reflects the polished style of classic Hollywood biography films, which means it can feel idealised and emotionally restrained by modern standards. It does not dig deeply into complexity or historical ambiguity, but it succeeds as an affectionate tribute to both the man and his music. Overall, it is an elegant and enjoyable film that will particularly appeal to viewers who appreciate classic cinema, musical nostalgia, and gentle, inspiring storytelling.

Awards and nominations: 1 win, 3 nominations; includes 1 Oscar win.

Friday 18 December 2026 – Die Hard

Starring: Bruce Willis, Alan Rickman, Bonnie Bedelia

Director: John McTiernan

Running time: 126 minutes

Die Hard is one of the defining action films of the 1980s, combining suspense, humour, and spectacle with remarkable confidence. Directed by John McTiernan and released in 1988, the film follows New York police officer John McClane as he becomes trapped inside a Los Angeles skyscraper during a hostage crisis on Christmas Eve. What begins as a familiar action setup is elevated by tight pacing, inventive set pieces, and a hero who feels vulnerable as well as resourceful.

Bruce Willis gives a charismatic performance that helped redefine the action hero, making McClane seem witty, exhausted, and human rather than invincible. Alan Rickman is equally memorable as Hans Gruber, a villain whose intelligence and calm menace make him far more engaging than a typical antagonist. The film also benefits from John McTiernan's direction, which keeps the action clear and exciting while maintaining a strong sense of place inside the building. Every confrontation feels purposeful, and the tension builds effectively from one scene to the next.

Although later action films copied many of its ideas, *Die Hard* still feels fresh because of its energy, sharp writing, and memorable characters. Some aspects are unmistakably tied to its era, but that does little to weaken its entertainment value. It succeeds not just through explosions and gunfire, but through strong storytelling and a clear understanding of tension. Overall, *Die Hard* is an exciting, expertly made thriller that remains a benchmark for the genre and a favourite for many viewers.

Awards and nominations: 8 wins, 8 nominations; includes 4 Oscar nominations. 7

Friday 8 January 2027 – *The Devil Wears Prada*

Starring: Meryl Streep, Anne Hathaway, Emily Blunt, Stanley Tucci

Director: David Frankel

Running time: 113 minutes

The Devil Wears Prada is a stylish and sharply entertaining comedy-drama set in the demanding world of high fashion. Directed by David Frankel and released in 2006, the film follows Andy Sachs, an aspiring journalist who takes a job as assistant to the intimidating editor Miranda Priestly at a top fashion magazine. What begins as an opportunity for career advancement soon becomes a test of ambition, endurance, and personal identity.

Much of the film's appeal comes from its performances. Meryl Streep is outstanding as Miranda, creating a character who is controlled, intimidating, and unexpectedly layered, while Anne Hathaway gives Andy a believable mixture of awkwardness, determination, and growth. Emily Blunt and Stanley Tucci provide memorable support, adding wit and energy to the workplace environment. The film balances glamour and satire effectively, showing both the attraction and the cost of success in a world built on image and pressure.

Although some of its character dynamics follow familiar comedy-drama patterns, *The Devil Wears Prada* rises above formula through strong writing, polished direction, and its sharp observations about work, ambition, and self-respect. It is funny, visually appealing, and surprisingly thoughtful beneath its glossy surface. Overall, it is an engaging and memorable film that continues to resonate with audiences because it captures the tension between professional success and staying true to oneself.

Awards and nominations: 21 wins, 53 nominations; includes 2 Oscar nominations.

Friday 22 January 2027 – *Carmen*

Starring: Antonio Gades, Laura del Sol, Paco de Lucía

Director: Carlos Saura

Running time: 98 minutes

Carmen (1983), directed by Carlos Saura, is a hypnotic and visually arresting Spanish film that blends drama, music, and dance with unusual intelligence. Rather than presenting a straightforward adaptation of the familiar story, the film follows a troupe of flamenco performers rehearsing a production of *Carmen*, while the emotions of the dancers begin to mirror the tragedy they are staging. This merging of performance and reality gives the film a distinctive structure and a powerful sense of inevitability.

The film's greatest strength is its use of flamenco as both storytelling and emotional expression. Antonio Gades and Laura del Sol give intensely physical performances that communicate desire, rivalry, and danger as much through movement as through dialogue. Carlos Saura's direction is disciplined and elegant, allowing rehearsals, performances, and personal conflicts to blur together without losing focus. The music and choreography create an atmosphere that feels passionate, stylised, and at times almost dreamlike. 8

At the same time, *Carmen* is not a conventional narrative film, and viewers expecting a more traditional plot may find its self-reflective style challenging. Yet that complexity is also what makes it so rewarding. It becomes not only a retelling of a tragic love story, but also a meditation on performance, obsession, and artistic identity. Overall, *Carmen* is a striking and original film that will particularly appeal to viewers who appreciate dance, visual experimentation, and emotionally charged cinema.

Awards and nominations: 9 wins, 10 nominations; includes 1 Oscar nomination and 1 BAFTA win.

Friday 5 February 2027 – The Proposal

Starring: Sandra Bullock, Ryan Reynolds, Betty White

Director: Anne Fletcher

Running time: 108 minutes

The Proposal is a polished romantic comedy that blends workplace tension, family warmth, and a familiar opposites-attract storyline. Directed by Anne Fletcher and released in 2009, the film follows Margaret Tate, a demanding book editor who pressures her long-suffering assistant Andrew into a fake engagement when she faces deportation from the United States. The premise is deliberately far-fetched, but the film embraces that artificiality in the service of humour and charm.

Much of the film's success depends on its two leads, and Sandra Bullock and Ryan Reynolds give energetic performances that make the central relationship entertaining even when the plot becomes predictable. Bullock balances control and vulnerability effectively, while Reynolds brings an easy charm that keeps the film light on its feet. The supporting cast, particularly Betty White, adds warmth and comic timing, and the Alaska setting helps the story feel more expansive than a typical office-based romantic comedy. Although *The Proposal* follows a very familiar formula, it remains enjoyable because of its pace, cast, and playful tone. Some of its emotional turns are easy to see coming, and the script does not attempt much originality, but the film understands exactly what kind of entertainment it wants to provide. Overall, it is a lively and crowd-pleasing romantic comedy that will appeal especially to viewers who enjoy witty banter, attractive settings, and feel-good endings.

Awards and nominations: 7 wins, 20 nominations; includes 1 Golden Globe nomination. 9

Friday 19 February 2027 – Assault on Precinct 13

Starring: Ethan Hawke, Laurence Fishburne, Gabriel Byrne, Maria Bello, John Leguizamo

Director: Jean-François Richet

Running time: 109 minutes

Assault on Precinct 13 (2005) is a tense action thriller that reworks John Carpenter's cult favourite into a darker, more contemporary siege film. Directed by Jean-François Richet and written by James DeMonaco, the remake shifts the setting to a snowbound Detroit precinct on New Year's Eve, where a small group of police officers and prisoners must work together when corrupt officers surround the building. The premise remains simple and effective, but the remake places more emphasis on distrust, moral compromise, and the uneasy alliances formed under pressure.

The film benefits from a strong cast. Ethan Hawke brings weariness and vulnerability to Sergeant Jake Roenick, a policeman still shaken by a traumatic operation, while Laurence Fishburne gives Marion Bishop a cool intelligence that makes him both threatening and oddly charismatic. Gabriel Byrne adds further tension as the corrupt officer leading the assault, and Maria Bello provides emotional balance in a role that helps humanise the increasingly desperate situation. The performances give the film more psychological weight than a straightforward action picture, even though the script still relies on familiar thriller conventions.

Although it lacks some of the raw minimalism and cult edge of Carpenter's 1976 original, the 2005 version works well as a brisk, entertaining remake. Its snowy setting, enclosed location, and shifting loyalties create a steady atmosphere of tension, and the action is staged with enough clarity to keep the story gripping throughout. It may not be especially original, and some characters are sketched more broadly than deeply, but it succeeds as a solid modern thriller. Overall, *Assault on Precinct 13* (2005) is an effective and well-acted remake that should appeal to viewers who enjoy siege dramas, morally ambiguous characters, and tightly contained suspense.

Awards and nominations: 1 win, 2 nominations.

Friday 5 March 2027 – Get Smart

Starring: Steve Carell, Anne Hathaway, Dwayne Johnson, Alan Arkin, Terence Stamp

Director: Peter Segal

Running time: 110 minutes

Get Smart is a light and energetic spy comedy that blends action spectacle with deliberately clumsy humour. Directed by Peter Segal and released in 2008, the film follows Maxwell Smart, an eager intelligence analyst who finally gets the chance to become a field agent after his organisation is compromised by the villainous KAOS. Paired with the highly capable Agent 99, he is thrown into a mission that allows the film to parody traditional spy adventures while still delivering plenty of genuine action. Much of the film's appeal comes from Steve Carell, who gives Maxwell Smart an appealing mixture of confidence, awkwardness, and sincerity. Anne Hathaway provides a strong contrast as Agent 99, bringing elegance and control to a partnership built on comic imbalance. The supporting cast, including Alan Arkin and Dwayne Johnson, helps maintain the film's lively pace. The humour is broad and accessible rather than subtle, but it works because the film never loses its sense of fun and keeps the action moving briskly. Although *Get Smart* does not have the wit or originality of the finest spy spoofs, it succeeds as an easy, entertaining crowd-pleaser. Some jokes are predictable, and the film relies more on charm than sharp satire, but its combination of action, comedy, and likable performances makes it enjoyable. Overall, it is a playful and good-natured film that will particularly appeal to viewers looking for a light-hearted take on the spy genre.

Awards and nominations: 3 wins, 6 nominations.

Friday 19 March 2027 – The Shape of Water

Starring: Sally Hawkins, Doug Jones, Michael Shannon, Richard Jenkins, Octavia Spencer

Director: Guillermo del Toro

Running time: 123 minutes

The Shape of Water is a hauntingly beautiful fantasy romance that combines fairy-tale imagination with Cold War tension. Directed by Guillermo del Toro and released in 2017, the film follows Elisa, a mute cleaner working in a secret government laboratory in 1960s Baltimore, who forms a deep bond with an imprisoned amphibious creature. What could have become merely an unusual premise is instead transformed into a tender, lyrical story about loneliness, compassion, and the longing to be understood. Much of the film's power comes from its visual richness and remarkable performances. Sally Hawkins gives a deeply expressive performance as Elisa, communicating tenderness, humour, and determination with extraordinary subtlety, while Doug Jones brings grace and mystery to the creature. The supporting cast, including Richard Jenkins, Octavia Spencer, and Michael Shannon, strengthens the film's world, each representing different aspects of fear, kindness, and desire. Del Toro's direction is elegant and immersive, using colour, music, and production design to create a world that feels both magical and melancholy. Although its blend of romance, fantasy, and political allegory may not appeal to everyone, *The Shape of Water* is memorable precisely because it takes artistic risks. Some viewers may find its symbolism heavy or its story unconventional, but its sincerity and craftsmanship are difficult to deny. Overall, it is an imaginative, emotionally resonant film that stands out for its originality and visual beauty, and it remains one of Guillermo del Toro's most distinctive achievements.

Awards and nominations: 4 Oscar wins, 13 Oscar nominations. 11

Friday 2 April 2027 – Letters to Juliet

Starring: Amanda Seyfried, Vanessa Redgrave, Christopher Egan, Gael García Bernal, Franco Nero

Director: Gary Winick

Running time: 105 minutes

Letters to Juliet is a warm and visually appealing romantic drama set against the beautiful backdrop of Verona, Italy. Directed by Gary Winick and released in 2010, the film follows Sophie, a young writer who discovers a long-lost letter addressed to Juliet and becomes involved in a search for a woman's forgotten first love. It is a story built on the idea that love can endure across time, distance, and missed chances. One of the film's greatest strengths is its atmosphere. The Italian scenery gives the story a dreamy, postcard-like charm that suits the romantic tone perfectly. Amanda Seyfried brings sincerity and likability to Sophie, while Vanessa Redgrave gives the film much of its emotional depth as Claire, the older woman hoping to reconnect with the man she once loved. Their storyline is often more compelling than the younger romance, which can feel somewhat predictable at times.

Although the film follows many familiar romantic-comedy conventions, its heartfelt message and gentle pacing make it enjoyable. It does not aim to be surprising or deeply complex, but it succeeds as a charming, feel-good film about second chances and taking risks for love. Overall, *Letters to Juliet* is a sweet and comforting watch that will especially appeal to viewers who enjoy romance, travel, and sentimental storytelling.

Awards and nominations: 0 wins, 6 nominations.

Friday 16 April 2027 – The Mercy

Starring: Colin Firth, Rachel Weisz, David Thewlis, Mark Gatiss, Ken Stott

Director: James Marsh

Running time: 101 minutes

The Mercy is a sombre and thoughtful drama based on the true story of Donald Crowhurst, the amateur sailor whose attempt to compete in the 1968 Golden Globe Race ended in deception and tragedy. Directed by James Marsh and released in 2018, the film follows Crowhurst as financial pressure, public expectation, and isolation at sea push him further into psychological distress. Rather than presenting the story as a conventional adventure, the film becomes a quiet study of ambition, desperation, and personal collapse.

Colin Firth gives a deeply sympathetic performance as Crowhurst, capturing both the character's optimism and his growing instability with sensitivity and restraint. Rachel Weisz brings warmth and emotional grounding as Clare, his wife, while David Thewlis adds energy and tension as the press agent caught up in the story's growing momentum. The film's pacing is measured and often subdued, which may make it feel distant for some viewers, but that calm surface helps underline the loneliness and unease at its centre. ¹²

Although *The Mercy* does not fully exploit the dramatic intensity of its extraordinary true story, it remains affecting because of its humane approach and strong performances. It is less a film of suspense than one of slow emotional erosion, and that may not appeal to everyone. Overall, it is a reflective and well-acted drama that offers a moving portrait of a man overwhelmed by his own ambitions and the impossible situation he created for himself.

Awards and nominations: no major awards or nominations.

Friday 7 May 2027 – Airplane!

Starring: Leslie Nielsen, Robert Hays, Julie Hagerty, Lloyd Bridges, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

Directors: Jim Abrahams, David Zucker and Jerry Zucker

Running time: 88 minutes

Airplane! is one of the most influential comedy films ever made, turning the disaster-movie formula into a relentless stream of absurd jokes, visual gags, and deadpan one-liners. Directed by Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, and Jerry Zucker and released in 1980, the film follows former fighter pilot Ted Striker as he is forced to land a passenger plane after the crew and many of the passengers are struck down by food poisoning. The plot is deliberately simple, but that simplicity allows the film to focus almost entirely on comic invention and timing.

What makes *Airplane!* so memorable is the precision of its humour. The cast plays the material with complete seriousness, which makes the ridiculous dialogue and situations even funnier. Robert Hays and Julie Hagerty work well as the central pair, but much of the film's comic legend comes from performers such as Leslie Nielsen, Robert Stack, and Lloyd Bridges, who deliver nonsense with absolute conviction. The jokes come so quickly that even weaker ones are overtaken by the next laugh, giving the film an infectious energy that rarely slows.

Some of the humour is unmistakably tied to its era, and not every joke lands equally well for modern audiences, but the film's inventiveness and confidence still make it hugely entertaining. More than many comedies, it changed the style of spoof filmmaking that followed. Overall, *Airplane!* remains a brilliantly silly and highly influential comedy that rewards viewers who enjoy wordplay, slapstick, and a film that never stops trying to make them laugh.

Awards and nominations: 3 wins, 7 nominations.

Friday 21 May 2027 – Under the Greenwood Tree

Starring: Keeley Hawes, James Murray, Ben Miles

Director: Nicholas Laughland

Running time: 93 minutes

Under the Greenwood Tree is a gentle and charming period romance based on the novel by Thomas Hardy. Directed by Nicholas Laughland and released in 2005, the film is set in a quiet rural English village where the arrival of a new schoolteacher, Fancy Day, stirs both romantic interest and social tension. As several suitors compete for her attention, the story unfolds as a light-hearted study of love, class, tradition, and village life. 13

Much of the film's appeal lies in its warmth and simplicity. Keeley Hawes gives Fancy a quiet intelligence and poise, while James Murray brings sincerity and earnestness to Dick Dewy, the modest young man whose affection gives the story its emotional centre. The supporting cast helps create a convincing sense of community, and the rural setting, costumes, and gentle pacing all contribute to the film's comforting atmosphere. It captures the pleasures of classic British period drama without becoming overly heavy or solemn.

Although *Under the Greenwood Tree* is modest in scale and unlikely to surprise viewers looking for dramatic intensity, its understated style is part of its charm. It is more interested in atmosphere, character, and romantic feeling than in major conflict, and that makes it a soothing rather than a gripping watch. Overall, it is an affectionate and enjoyable adaptation that will particularly appeal to viewers who appreciate literary period pieces, pastoral settings, and quietly unfolding love stories.

Awards and nominations: no major awards or nominations.

Friday 4 June 2027 – We are the Millers

Starring: Jason Sudeikis, Jennifer Aniston, Emma Roberts, Will Poulter

Director: Rawson Marshall Thurber

Running time: 110 minutes

We're the Millers is a fast-moving comedy that combines road-trip chaos with a deliberately outrageous premise. Directed by Rawson Marshall Thurber and released in 2013, the film follows a small-time drug dealer who recruits three unlikely companions to pose as his family while smuggling a shipment across the border. The result is a film built on awkward situations, exaggerated personalities, and a constant stream of crude humour.

The cast plays a major role in making the film work. Jason Sudeikis brings relaxed comic timing to the lead role, while Jennifer Aniston, Emma Roberts, and Will Poulter each contribute strong comic moments that help the fake-family dynamic feel entertaining. The humour is broad, shameless, and often ridiculous, but the film benefits from the chemistry between its main characters. What begins as a purely selfish arrangement gradually develops into something warmer, which gives the comedy a little more heart than the premise might suggest.

At the same time, *We're the Millers* is not especially subtle or original, and much of its comedy depends on shock value and familiar stereotypes. Viewers who dislike crude jokes may find it repetitive, but those looking for an easy, unapologetically silly comedy will likely enjoy it. Overall, it is an energetic and crowd-pleasing film that succeeds more through its cast and comic momentum than through any real depth, making it a fun if uneven watch.

Awards and nominations: 4 wins, 17 nominations. 14

Friday 21 June 2027 – Shirley Valentine

Starring: Pauline Collins, Tom Conti, Alison Steadman, Joanna Lumley, Bernard Hill

Director: Lewis Gilbert

Running time: 108 minutes

Shirley Valentine is a warm, witty, and quietly moving comedy-drama about personal reinvention. Directed by Lewis Gilbert and released in 1989, the film follows Shirley, a middle-aged Liverpool housewife who feels trapped in the routines of marriage and domestic life. When an unexpected trip to Greece offers her a chance to step outside that routine, the story becomes not just a holiday romance, but a thoughtful exploration of freedom, self-worth, and the possibility of change at any stage of life.

Much of the film's success depends on Pauline Collins, who gives a richly engaging performance full of humour, vulnerability, and quiet strength. Her direct addresses to the camera, carried over from the stage play on which the film is based, create an unusual intimacy that draws the audience into Shirley's inner life. Tom Conti provides appealing support as Costas, but the heart of the film lies in Shirley's relationship with herself rather than with any romance. The balance of comedy and reflection gives the story both charm and depth.

Although some aspects of *Shirley Valentine* are unmistakably tied to the late 1980s, its central themes remain strikingly relatable. It is funny without being frivolous and uplifting without ignoring the disappointments that shape Shirley's life. Overall, it is an affectionate and intelligent film that stands out for its humanity, humour, and emotional honesty, and it continues to resonate as a story about reclaiming one's voice.

Awards and nominations: 4 wins, 9 nominations; includes 2 Oscar nominations.