



Alliance Française de Penang

MOVIES LIST

25. ROBOCOP

This much-publicised remake has plenty going against it, not least the weight of history: Paul Verhoeven's RoboCop is rightly regarded by many as being among the best films of the 1980s, with its heady cocktail of graphic violence, black comedy and corporate satire. Now, we certainly don't expect next year's Robo remake to better the original, but there's at least one reason to look forward to it with some sense of optimism: the track record of Brazilian director Jose Padilha.

If you haven't heard of him, Padilha began his career with the documentary *Bus 174*, which told the remarkable true story of a man who took a busload of passengers hostage and ended up in the middle of a media circus. His next two feature films, *Elite Squad* and its sequel *The Enemy Within*, mixed action and suspense with a thought-provoking account of life and death in the slums of Rio de Janeiro.

Whether Padilha can (or will even be allowed) to bring the sense of realism and intensity of *Elite Squad* to his *RoboCop* remake remains to be seen, but we await the results with cautious enthusiasm.

24. NOAH

Truth be told, we're a bit torn on Noah. There are two biblical epics arriving in cinemas next year, with Ridley Scott's *Exodus* the other, and we're in two minds about both of them. Noah in particular has been in the news due to apparent disagreements between its director and Paramount over the final cut. That director? Darren Aronofsky, and it's his name that sneaks Noah onto our countdown.

Darren Aronofsky is comfortably one of the most interesting directors working in America right now, and Noah marks his belated move into big budget filmmaking (after he pulled out of making *The Wolverine*). His cast features Russell Crowe, Emma Watson, Jennifer Connelly, Logan Lerman and Anthony Hopkins, and the scale of the story - and presumably the film - suggests that we're going to get a big screen spectacle at the very least. However, if Aronofsky gets his cut, then it's going to be quite something to see what the man behind *Pi*, *Black Swan* and *The Fountain* can do with an awful lot more money to spend.

23. CALVARY

The last time John Michael McDonagh made a film, we got the exceptional - and very funny - *The Guard*. His follow-up, *Calvary*, reunites him with the star of that movie, Brendan Gleeson, but we're getting a very different movie here. This one seems a lot darker for a start, although it's still being described in some quarters as a comedy/drama.

Gleeson headlines as a priest who's threatened while taking a confession. The crux of the film is that said priest is a good man, who finds himself in the midst of not so good things. In fact, the character's arguably a reversal of the *The Guard*'s Gerry Boyle.

The cast is rounded out by Aidan Gillen, Kelly Reilly and Chris O'Down, amongst others. We'd be lying if we said that it wasn't the reunion of Gleeson and McDonagh that sold us on the movie, though...



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22. NEED FOR SPEED

In most instances, movies based on videogames are shot, released and then despatched straight into the nearest cultural landfill site. But while Need For Speed is based on EA's long-running and ever-changing racing game franchise, it has a better pedigree than most. For one thing, it stars the great Aaron Paul as a street racer on a mission of vengeance across the highways of America, and he's backed up by a supporting cast which includes Dominic Cooper, Imogen Poots and Michael Keaton.

The script's by George Nolfi, who wrote Ocean's Eleven, Ocean's Twelve, and both wrote and directed The Adjustment Bureau. And while it's seldom a good idea to judge a movie by its trailer, the first promo for Need For Speed really does look exciting - and there's even a bit of drama and artistic lighting in evidence between all the requisite tyre squealings, crashes and bangs.

21. SELFLESS

Tarsem Singh's visually ornate movies - The Cell, The Fall, Immortals, Mirror Mirror - could be described as an acquired taste, but his style is immediately recognisable and, whether you like them or not, his films are seldom dull. We don't know a great deal about Selfless yet, but we do know that it's a science fiction thriller, and appears to be about a dying man whose consciousness is put into the body of a younger, healthier man (possibly the one belonging to Ryan Reynolds, who's the star). Unfortunately, that younger, healthier body has a murky past that has something to do with a murderous secret organisation.

Matthew Goode - who was marvellous in Park Chan Wook's Stoker this year - Natalie Martinez and Sir Ben Kingsley round out the supporting cast. If nothing else, we're intrigued to see how Singh's unique, often surreal filmmaking style will affect what sounds like a futuristic action thriller.

20. MUPPETS MOST WANTED

The job doesn't get easier for the team behind The Muppets. The wide success of the 2011 movie makes this follow-up of sorts an even bigger challenge. After all, how do you top the last film and keep the momentum going?

Jason Segel isn't on board this time around, but Nicholas Stoller, who co-wrote the last film, shares scripting duties with James Bobin. Bobin is directing once again (before he heads off, it seems, to direct Alice In Wonderland 2, with Johnny Depp).

This time, it's a crime caper we're getting, one that sees the Muppets heading across Europe in the midst of a dastardly plan by the world's number one criminal. We'll keep the identity of said criminal secret (although it won't be by the time the film comes out), but perhaps the biggest bone of contention surrounding this new film is the decision to cast Ricky Gervais as said criminal's sidekick. Gervais is the human lead in the film, and his casting has already proven divisive. From what we've seen, he fits his specific role well (he's hardly reprising the kind of role that Segel took on in the first movie), although it'll be March 2014 before we see if we're proven right there.

Alongside Gervais are Ty Burrell and Tina Fey, with plenty of cameos still yet to be confirmed. Walter leads the familiar felted faces who will also be back. You don't need us to tell you we're looking forward to this a lot.



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19. THE LEGO MOVIE

Chris Miller and Phil Lord are the only directors to have two films on this list, and they're two of the three helmers of the eagerly-awaited LEGO Movie. Chris McKay makes up the rest of the trio, and between them, they're bringing the visual style of LEGO to the big screen for the first time.

The film will feature lots of DC characters in LEGO form, with Wonder Woman, Superman, Green Lantern and Batman all present and correct. But the focus will be on a character by the name of Emmet, voiced by Chris Pratt, who finds himself unwittingly recruited to help save the world from a foe with predictably dastardly plans.

The visual style alone lends itself to lots of fun here, but then you factor in that Lord and Miller previously gave the world the first Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs movie, and what a comedy treat that turned out to be. The LEGO Movie is certainly shaping up to follow in its path, and don't be surprised if this turns out to be a sizeable hit.

Please note: in those three paragraphs we didn't do one brick joke. You don't know how much restraint that took.

18. STRETCH

Joe Carnahan's *The Grey* gave Liam Neeson arguably his best big screen role of the last few years. And whilst Carnahan's attempts to reboot *Daredevil* got caught up in rights expiration (bah), his next film nonetheless looks like it could be a 2014 surprise.

It's called *Stretch*, and follows a chauffeur who takes a job for a very, very rich man. Said rich man proceeds to make his life a living hell. Patrick Wilson is taking on the role of *Stretch*, and interestingly, Chris Pine is taking a less pleasant turn by playing the billionaire. Ed Helms and James Badge Dale are also in the cast.

Few directors can blend action, drama and comedy in quite as stylish a way as Joe Carnahan can, and when it works, you get no shortage of value for your ticket price. *Stretch* might just be the latest evidence of that.

17. FURY

Having first established himself as a writer of thrillers - *Training Day*, *The Fast And The Furious*, *S.W.A.T.* - David Ayer then moved into directing, with the so-so *Harsh Times* (2005) and *Street Kings* (2008) followed up by the excellent police drama *End Of Watch*. With that film proving such a critical and financial success, Ayer now has two films coming up in 2014: the first is *Sabotage* (formerly known as *Ten*), an action thriller starring Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The second - and the one we're most looking forward to - is *Fury*, a World War II action drama about the final days of the battle in Europe. Brad Pitt stars as a tank commander in a hopeless situation behind enemy lines, with Shia LaBeouf, Logan Lerman and Jon Bernthal among his crew. We like Ayer. We like tanks. Both reasons enough to be excited about an increasingly rare entry in the war film genre.



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16. GONE GIRL

Since he adapted *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, David Fincher has been concentrating more on the small screen, with the successful Netflix-backed US take on *House Of Cards*. While he's been doing that, the promised English language version of *The Girl Who Played With Fire* hasn't come to light, and Fincher has instead opted to adapt another novel, the hugely successful, unpredictable thriller, *Gone Girl*.

The book in question is written by Gillian Flynn, and she's also penned the screenplay. Fincher has cast Ben Affleck in the pivotal role of Nick Dunne, the narrator of the book and one of its main characters. It's arguably a far trickier role than the Bruce Wayne/Batman combo he has coming up, although there was less notable controversy when he landed this particular job.

Rosamund Pike co-stars (hopefully in better fitting clothes than she was made to wear in *Jack Reacher*), alongside Tyler Perry and Neil Patrick Harris, and the plan is for Fincher's tenth film to be in cinemas around October 2014. Given that even Fincher's less interesting movies have much to recommend about them, *Gone Girl* should be a grown-up, uncompromising thriller, from a man who's very, very good at making them.

15. 22 JUMP STREET

Who would have thought that a seemingly by-the-numbers remake of an 80s TV show would turn out to be one of the funniest films of 2012? Directors Phil Lord and Chris Miller (*Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs*) clearly had a great time making this high school comedy thriller, and Channing Tatum showed off his knack for comic timing alongside Jonah Hill in an improv-heavy, good-natured hit. Can the same team of actors and filmmakers pull off the same trick twice with next year's sequel? We certainly hope so.

14. THE MONUMENTS MEN

Delayed from a 2013 release, where it had a whiff of Oscar buzz about it, *The Monuments Men* is the latest directorial effort from George Clooney (he co-wrote the script as well). This one's been delayed for good reasons, too: Clooney wouldn't have had time to meet the original end of 2013 release date, and so all concerned agreed to put the release back to February 2014, to give him some valuable extra weeks.

Clooney's uncovered a fascinating story to tell, that of Roosevelt ordering a small platoon of soldiers being sent into Germany in World War II, with the aim of recovering artistic masterpieces deep behind enemy lines.

He's got some cast, too. As well as Clooney himself, the call sheet features Matt Damon, Bill Murray, John Goodman, Jean Dujardin and Hugh Bonneville. And all in a quest to save some cultural heritage. Clooney's an excellent director on his day - *Good Night And Good Luck*, *Confessions Of A Dangerous Mind* - and whilst *The Monuments Men* may have slipped out of awards season, there's still lots to be interested in.

13. CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE WINTER SOLDIER

Marvel has two terrific looking films lined up for 2014, and if *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* picks up some of the themes we saw so well explored in the first movie, this could be a real highlight. Marvel's already been talking about the movie as a political thriller of sorts, a tease backed up by the casting of Robert Redford as the head honcho of S.H.I.E.L.D. And it's also revealed that this is the film that does a good deal of the bridging work between *The Avengers* and 2015's *Avengers: Age Of Ultron*.

We're promised a sizeable role for Scarlett Johansson's *Black Widow* here, and there's also room in the film



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for Hayley Atwell, Samuel L Jackson, Toby Jones and Cobie Smulders to make return appearances. Plus, Chris Evans in the title role of course. Meanwhile, Anthony Mackie is Sam Wilson (aka Falcon), and Frank Grillo, Emily VanCamp, Georges St-Pierre and Sebastian Stan are all onboard.

Directors Joe and Anthony Russo have the underwhelming movie *Me, You And Dupree* to their name, but more interestingly, a whole bunch of brilliant *Community* episodes. Marvel deserves credit once more for working hard to find interesting directors, and count us amongst the many excited to see what the Russos have come up with here.

12. JUPITER ASCENDING

Ever since *The Matrix* put the Wachowskis on the Hollywood power list, the filmmaking duo have been using their clout to pursue their own unusual projects. Let's face it, few other filmmakers could have got the financing and cast together to make an adaptation of David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, and while the results weren't perfect, the movie had some unforgettably striking moments.

Jupiter Ascending sees the Wachowskis continuing to forge their own individual path. It's essentially a science fiction fairytale, with Mila Kunis playing a Russian toilet cleaner whose DNA somehow threatens the reign of someone called the Queen of the Universe. An eclectic cast has gathered, including Channing Tatum (whose character has "wolf DNA", we're told), Sean Bean, Tuppence Middleton, James D'Arcy and even Terry Gilliam, who shows up in a "small but vital part".

Jupiter Ascending sounds like it could be a work of madness, which is probably why we're genuinely looking forward to watching it.

11. THE IMITATION GAME

It feels like we've been talking about *The Imitation Game* for years, for it's certainly taken its time getting itself before the cameras. Originally a project in which Leonardo DiCaprio was set to star, this historical drama about the life and work of Alan Turing - who broke the German Enigma code during World War II, only to later be persecuted, and prosecuted, for his sexuality - now features Benedict Cumberbatch in the lead role.

He's joined in the cast by Keira Knightley and Matthew Goode, with Morten Tyldum - who made the wonderful movie *Headhunters* - now directing. There have already been accusations levelled at the film regarding how little prominence it apparently gives Turing's homosexuality, but the producers have been firm in insisting that's not the case.

We're fascinated to see how the final film pans out, and if it is indeed a quality testament to a man whose heroic acts were ultimately deemed less important than his sexuality.

10. X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST

Great though 2011's *X-Men: First Class* was, it's exciting to have Bryan Singer back in the chair for *Days Of Future Past*, an adaptation of the 1981 comic book run which aims to tie the two timelines in the X-Men cinematic universe. To this end, we'll have both James McAvoy and Patrick Stewart playing Professor X in two separate epochs, and Michael Fassbender and Ian McKellen playing Magneto.

Having a fight for mutant survival play out across two points in time could prove too much for some directors, but Singer's *The Usual Suspects* is evidence that he can handle complex storylines with ease.



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Among the expected cast, including Hugh Jackman as Wolverine and a returning Anna Paquin as Rogue, there's also Ellen Page as Kitty Pryde, and the great Peter Dinklage as scientist Bolivar Trask.

If Singer can make another comic book movie as good as X2, we should be in for a real treat. Certainly on the basis of the first trailer, he's heading very much in the right direction.

9. HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON 2

There are some terrific-looking animated movies that we simply didn't have space to squeeze into this countdown - Mr Peabody & Sherman and Big Hero Six chief amongst them. But our animated movie of choice for 2014 is the eagerly awaiting How To Train Your Dragon 2.

The first film was a triumph for DreamWorks Animation, and arguably one of its very best films. And whilst co-director Chris Sanders went off to make The Croods (and is now working on The Croods 2), the other co-director - Dean DeBlois - has been calling the shots on this sequel. In fact, he's also knee deep too in How To Train Your Dragon 3, which is scheduled to land in 2016.

For the purposes of chapter two, five years have moved on, so when we meet Hiccup and his friends again, they're late teenagers. But Hiccup is no ordinary teenager - he's not spending hours locked in his room looking at 'educational' YouTube videos - as he finds himself in the midst of a new conflict between humans and dragons. Oops.

We've already had a trailer for How To Train Your Dragon 2, and it went down a treat. Here's hoping the final cut of the film does when we finally get to see it June 2014.

8. GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

In truth, Guardians Of The Galaxy may not turn out to be the best Marvel movie of 2014. But on paper, it's comfortably the biggest gamble. Not for the first time, Marvel is taking a property that the mass audience isn't particularly familiar with, and giving it to a director who isn't the most obvious choice.

So, we get a space-based adventure, from the man who directed Slither and Super (films we like, we should point out), that includes a talking tree, Bradley Cooper voicing a raccoon, Karen Gillan with no hair, and a cast of characters that don't easily lend themselves to the shelves of Toys R Us.

Bluntly, we can't wait. Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana, Benicio del Toro and Michael Rooker are amongst the rest of the cast, and it seems clear that if you were looking for a comic book movie that's happy to resist the usual template, Guardians Of The Galaxy is looking like your best bet. How will it gel together with the broader Marvel Cinematic Universe? We're already getting clues and teases for that through mid-credits sequences. But we look forward to finding out more on August 1st.

7. THE RAID 2

When Gareth Evans' The Raid appeared in 2011, its effect felt like a solid punch between the eyes. With some lightning fast martial arts moves from Iko Uwais, a simple high-concept premise - about the storming of a drug lord's high-rise lair by a group of cops - and some incredibly intense, almost horror-like direction from Evans, The Raid was a truly thrilling action film.

The Raid 2 again stars Uwais - it's safe to say his former job in a call centre is now firmly behind him -

who this time goes undercover in a Jakarta gang. Only time will tell whether Evans can create the same air of menacing intensity as the previous film, but with characters listed on IMDb with names like Hammer Girl and Baseball Bat Man, we can't wait to see how it all turns out.

6. BIG EYES

Tim Burton stormed back into form with the wonderful *Frankenweenie* in 2012, and *Big Eyes* builds on that, as he reteams with his Ed Wood writers - Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski - for a biopic that could be one of 2014's standouts.

Made for a modest price, *Big Eyes* stars Christoph Waltz as Walter Keane, who came to fame in the 1950s and 1960s for paintings that featured big-eyed children. Only they weren't his paintings: they were the work of his shy wife, Margaret, who's played in the film by Amy Adams.

Burton's film will frame this through the divorce battle that eventually occurred between Walter and Margaret, where the latter accused the former of stealing her work. The last time Burton made a low budget biopic, the aforementioned Ed Wood, the result was his best film, and an Oscar for Martin Landau. Might *Big Eyes* be the movie to finally get Amy Adams a gong? Maybe, maybe not. But it's most definitely one of our must-sees of 2014, and - for the first time in a while - a Tim Burton live action film that we're absolutely aching to see.

