

Scene

10
NEW SONGS YOU
NEED TO HEAR

BY TIFFANY BAKKER

FORGET Jason Bourne and Ethan Hunt, Kate McKinnon and Mila Kunis may just be the action heroes we need right now but didn't know we deserved.

"I think we should just be in every action film from now on," yelps the energetic McKinnon, as Kunis cracks up — the pair laughs a lot — at a downtown New York hotel where they are promoting their new flick, *The Spy Who Dumped Me*.

"I mean, Tom Cruise has got nothing on us. What can The Rock do that we can't?"

"I think women should be the heroes in every action movie."

True, McKinnon and Kunis are an unexpected delight as best mates caught up in an international espionage ring in *The Spy Who Dumped Me*, an action movie-meets-comedy-caper, which also stars Justin Theroux, Gillian Anderson and *Outlander* favourite Sam Heughan.

Saturday Night Live star McKinnon plays Morgan Freeman (yep, there's a bad joke in there somewhere) an aspiring actor whose career is going so well the best she can hope for is a callback on a TV insurance ad gig, while *Bad Moms* star Kunis plays Audrey, a supermarket checkout operator who is utterly miserable after her often-absent boyfriend, Drew (a perfectly smarmy Justin Theroux), dumps her via text.

But as these things go, Drew is not your run-of-the-mill sleazeball, he's actually a CIA secret agent sleazeball, and soon enough Audrey and Morgan find themselves hurtling from Vienna to Paris to Prague to Berlin, unwittingly caught up in the gigantic mess Drew has left behind. Throw in a ridiculously good-looking agent (Sam Heughan, surely auditioning for James Bond here) who may or may not be on their side, a Russian assassin (Ivanna Sakhno) who seems to have taken a few cues from *Killing Eve*'s excellent Jodie Comer, and you have a movie that's a bit like a sugar hit — great in the moment but leaves you feeling a tiny bit queasy later.

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PLUS

KEITH
URBAN
KEEPING
YOUNG AT
HEART

LADIES IN
BLACK
ON SET FOR
AN AUSSIE
CLASSIC

Power COUPLE

Why Mila Kunis and
Kate McKinnon are the
action-comedy duo
we need right now

COVER STORY

Funny girls on a wild ride

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"The comedic engine of the thing is that it's these two quite normal, relatable people who get sucked into this outlandish situation, so I just tried to imagine what it would be like if this happened to me, and I wouldn't survive it," grins McKinnon. "I would immediately out myself to everyone I spoke to, and I would break down crying in a bathroom somewhere."

"I'd survive it," chimes in Kunis, matter-of-factly.

"You definitely would," nods McKinnon. "I'd be dead in the first five minutes."

Cue more laughter.

Stunts aside, *The Spy Who Dumped Me* is at its best when McKinnon and Kunis are simply riffing off each other.

Director Susanna Fogel encouraged the pair to improvise; a diddle for the sublime comedic talents of McKinnon. "OK, I got to throw a few things in there," says McKinnon, sheepishly.

"The script was perfect as it was but then you hire somebody like Kate McKinnon," adds Kunis, "and you just let them be Kate McKinnon and then f--- the script and see what happens."

As such, Kunis found herself wanting desperately to impress her co-star.

"I wanted her to think I was funny. Kate has these two very particular laughs — one that's genuine and one that's not as genuine," says Kunis. "I was so happy that I got the genuine laugh because the other is like,

'Oh, you think you're funny'. You don't want the fake one."

The two, who do have a genuinely easy chemistry on screen, had never crossed paths before filming started.

"No, we'd never met, but we fell in love very quickly," recalls Kunis. "We didn't have to live in a weird campervan with no electricity for it to spark."

Shooting in Europe had its challenges. "I wanted to master the Hungarian language, but it was a bridge too far," cackles McKinnon.

Language, though, had nothing on the persistent *Outlander* fans who infiltrated the set. One morning, Kunis was accosted by a Swedish fan asking where Heughan was.

"She was like, I flew down here from Sweden and he was supposed to show up at our convention and he didn't show up," remembers Kunis, raising her eyebrows. "She was so upset with me that Sam did not go to this convention. I was like, 'er, security' ..."

"Well, Jamie Fraser is a legend, let's call a spade a spade," continues McKinnon, a massive *Outlander* fan.

"God, Sam told me not to watch it," moans Kunis. "I'm going home to start watching season one."

And with that McKinnon starts singing the *Outlander* theme song as Kunis laughs. The door closes behind me, and Kunis is still laughing.

The Spy Who Dumped Me opens Thursday



KATE MCKINNON (LEFT) AND MILA KUNIS IN THE SPY WHO DUMPED ME

COUNTER MOVES



LADIES' C

A VOLUPTUOUS woman in a bathrobe and a headscarf, worn 1950s style over an elaborate pinned-up hairstyle, stands alone outside the imposing Stage 6 building at Sydney's Fox Studios.

"Are you lost?" asks the woman, bringing a cigarette to her lips, the moment of contact a perfect partnership of matching cherry red lips and nails.

As I start to respond, I recognise the woman. It's British actor Julia Ormond. My impromptu envoy directs me inside to director Bruce Beresford's set for his new movie, *Ladies In Black*.

The set is a duck-egg blue suite of rooms filled with plastic mannequins wearing vintage gowns of lilac, burnished pink and dark blue taffeta. One wall is lined with racks of sensible mid-century shoes. To the right hangs a large sign making a promise it could be hard to keep

Bringing a friend's book to the screen has been a 20-year mission

— "Model Gowns". Strategically placed fur stoles and wooden hat blocks dressed with impractical frothy brimless sprays complete the scene along with a group of tidy ladies in conservative black dresses.

This is the ladies' cocktail frocks department of F.G. Goode's, a fictional outlet that has "been serving the people of Sydney since 1895".

It's suddenly 1959 and though it's not possible, one can almost detect the smell of burning light filaments, floor wax, plastics and flowery perfume of the period.

Actors Rachael Taylor, Alison McGirr and the film's leading lady, 17-year-old ingenue Angourie Rice — three of the women referenced in the film's title — stand patiently awaiting instruction from the film's acclaimed director.

Ormond will soon join them. Australian film legend Beresford, director of *Driving*

Miss Daisy, *Mao's Last Dancer*, *Puberty Blues*, *Breaker Morant* and more than 30 other feature films, is watching a monitor with the movie's director of photography, Peter James.

Having collaborated on 11 films together, the men don't waste words and have, says one of the film's producers, an "unspoken language".

Beresford has been planning this shoot since he optioned the film rights to Madeleine St John's book, *The Women In Black*, with producer, co-writer and friend Sue Milliken — producer of three other Beresford films — in 1994.

"Bruce is immaculate," Allanah Zitserman, the film's co-producer, tells me later. "He is meticulously planned. I've never seen anybody work like this. He walks in here, everyone knows what he wants. He communicates it beautifully across the crew, and he moves like a pro. That's what happens

when you know your craft like he does. He's a master."

When the direction for "action" finally comes, it comes not from Beresford but from first assistant director Charles Rotherham, whose voice is a rich theatrical British boom.

Beresford, 77, James, 71, and Rotherham, who appears to be in his sixties, are the film's "holy triptych", explains Zitserman.

The project is a highly personal one for the director, so he's taking no chances with it. He has surrounded himself with the best cast and crew, among them American editor Mark Warner, who was nominated for an Oscar for his work on Beresford's 1989 hit, *Driving Miss Daisy*.

Beresford and novelist St John met at Sydney University in the late 1950s when St John's story, about a middle-class Australian girl who takes a summer job at a department store, is set.

WEEKLY PLANNER HIGHLIGHTS

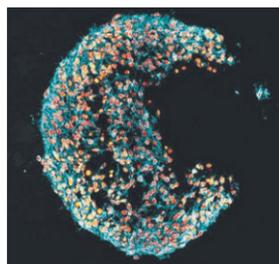
PLENTY TO DO, SEE, WATCH & HEAR AROUND TOWN

heraldsun.com.au/goingout



EVENT MELBOURNE GUITAR SHOW

See the Triple M Finale Jam with Jack Jones, Brett Garsed, James Ryan, Shannon Bourne and Charlie Bedford (above left). The slickest pickers and rifiers will come together on stage at 2.15pm. At the Winners Circle Workshop Room, there's a Boss Tone Design Masterclass and Diesel demos on a Stratocaster. / **Caulfield Racecourse, Station St. Today, 10am-4pm. \$20/\$25. trybooking.com**



EXHIBITION ART OF SCIENCE

Behold, a croissant (above). The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute's annual exhibition presents stunning images/videos by Australian researchers tackling some of the pressing challenges facing global health. / **The Atrium, Fed Square. From Fri until Aug 19. Daily, 10am-6pm. Free. wehi.edu.au/artofscience**



CONCERT CHOIR OF HARD KNOCKS

This is for a fantastic cause. Conductor Jonathon Welch (above) will host two fundraiser concerts: *Street Requiem* and *Tattoo*. This will help bring much-needed visibility and awareness in Homelessness Week. / **Deakin Edge, Fed Square. Today, 2.30pm. \$15/\$25. fedsquare.com**



DRINKING CENTRAL BEER DISTRICT

Everyone needs to blow off steam and a fine way to do that is blowing the froth off brews from Brewmanity, Hop Nation, Two Birds Brewing, Stomping Ground, Coldstream Brewery. The beers rotate. Food trucks too! / **QVM, A-Shed, Peel St, city. Until Sept 9. Sat-Sun, noon-9pm. Free. qvm.com.au**



CONCERT MOJU JUJU

Local singer Mojo Juju (above) is having a moment. Through the telling of her family history and her savage experiences, this indigenous Australian Filipino singer-songwriter will explore her relationships with ancestry in this show *Native Tongue*. / **Fairfax Studio, The Arts Centre. Wed-next Sat, 8pm. \$28/\$40. artscentremelbourne.com.au**