

MOVIES

Director Joel Edgerton has a creepy 'Gift' for you

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USA TODAY

Just as the horror movie *Child's Play* did for dolls and Stephen King's *It* did for clowns, Joel Edgerton is giving the gift of creepiness with unwelcome friendly presents in *The Gift*.

The Australian actor writes, directs and stars in the thriller (in theaters Friday) as a socially awkward guy named Gordo who recognizes high school classmate Simon (Jason Bateman) at a store. Simon and his wife, Robyn (Rebecca Hall), initially get innocent drop-bys, a TV installation and koi for their new house, but it turns out Simon and Gordo have a bit of a complicated history and things quickly go from genial to tense.

The concept for Edgerton's directorial debut came from wondering what it would be like twentysomething years after graduation if someone tapped you on the shoulder and said: "Hey, I think I know you. We went to school together."

"It was such an electrified, potentially terrifying idea, particularly when you look back and



MATT KENNEDY, STX ENTERTAINMENT

Gordo (Joel Edgerton) has something special in store for Simon (Jason Bateman) and Robyn (Rebecca Hall) in *The Gift*.

ask, "Was I really a nice person in high school?" says Edgerton, 41, a native of New South Wales.

"I remember I spent some time being a mean kid and had people being mean to me, so I can understand both characters pretty well."

With hits under his belt including the *Paranormal Activity* franchise and last year's Oscar-

nominated *Whiplash*, *The Gift* producer Jason Blum habitually fosters microbudgeted gems that cost less than \$5 million, but doesn't usually work with first-time filmmakers. But Blum was impressed with Edgerton's methodical approach and his take on Gordo, who "walks that really fine line of someone who's just weird enough to give you a doubt but

not too weird where you hang up the phone on them."

He's the kind of character Edgerton would naturally gravitate toward when reading a script, and his misunderstood but overbearing onscreen alter ego was a custom job for the actor.

"I started writing with the intention of creating a character for myself, which is a lot of what my writing is about: What do I want to play, what would I like to do, what sort of challenge would I like to have that other people really aren't offering to me?" Edgerton says.

Best known on these shores as young Owen Lars, stepbrother to Anakin Skywalker and uncle to Luke, in two *Star Wars* prequels and as a Navy SEAL team leader in *Zero Dark Thirty*, Edgerton wrote the first draft of *The Gift* in 2010 while filming *The Thing*. He had also just finished two movies that would boost his status in Hollywood: as a mixed-martial-arts fighter in *Warrior* and an armed robber in the crime drama *Animal Kingdom*.

"I really wasn't sure where my career was headed next," Edgerton says. "In many ways, if I could write movies and get them off the ground, I figured I

could steer my own ship."

He also enjoyed crafting a slow-burn thriller that had one foot in the genre while also subverting it. For example, Edgerton put in a particular incident with the family dog that's a wink toward older films such as *Fatal Attraction* (1987) and its boiling bunny.

"I wanted it to be elevated in some fashion," he says. "I didn't want it to revert to people running around in corridors with butcher knives."

Edgerton wants to get back in the director's chair in the next few years, but for now he says he's ready "to go back to my day job for a little while." He has a busy upcoming slate, playing alpha-male FBI agent John Connolly opposite Johnny Depp's gangster Whitey Bulger in *Black Mass* (out Sept. 18) and starring alongside Michael Shannon and Kirsten Dunst in the sci-fi film *Midnight Special* (2016).

Instead of the stress and on-set responsibility of directing, Edgerton figures, "I'm very relaxed about the idea that I get to go to work and then in between takes just sit in a chair and drink tea, probably with a blanket over my lap."

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CROSSWORD

EDITED Timothy Parker
BY Kenneth Holt

P-TO-P NETWORK

- ACROSS**
- 1 Deep-six
 - 6 Cool
 - 11 Historic beginning?
 - 14 Drama set to music
 - 15 They're brilliant
 - 16 Mantra of an electrician?
 - 17 White-collar crime investigators follow them
 - 19 Small fruit seed
 - 20 Brings about, biblical-style
 - 21 Emulate a ghost
 - 23 Have an effect
 - 27 Send out, as troops
 - 28 Low pair
 - 29 Neurological disorder
 - 31 In accordance with
 - 32 Grocery-store section
 - 33 Line of seats
 - 36 Jumps on one leg
 - 37 Full of energy
 - 38 Economy, for one
 - 39 It has four quarters
 - 40 Drug smuggler's measures
 - 41 Clowns
 - 42 Radio host's exhortation
 - 44 Mum
 - 45 Heavy overcoat
 - 47 Lives
 - 48 Giggle sound
 - 49 Dickens' Heep
 - 51 Altar avowal
 - 52 Sherlock Holmes and the like
 - 58 Deep, as a voice
 - 59 Stopped lying?
 - 60 Baby grand, e.g.
 - 61 Funny duet?
 - 62 Auto damage
 - 63 Scarecrow stuffing

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
14					15						16			
17					18						19			
				20					21	22				
23	24	25	26						27					
28						29	30							
31						32					33	34	35	
36						37					38			
39				40							41			
		42	43								44			
45	46								47					
48						49	50							
51					52	53					54	55	56	57
58						59					60			
61						62					63			

- DOWN**
- 1 Bread as a blotter
 - 2 Bean counter, for short
 - 3 Workout unit, briefly
 - 4 Don't just seem
 - 5 Cowpoke's pal
 - 6 Come to terms
 - 7 Grasslands
 - 8 "Don't bet ____!"
 - 9 Contents of some barrels
 - 10 Place for raising seafood
 - 11 Made likeable to the general public
 - 12 Horned African beast
 - 13 Drain
 - 18 Clothing, informally
 - 22 Animal that beats its chest
 - 23 State known for potatoes
 - 24 Particle in a quark model

- 25 Some kiddie entertainment
- 26 Frosts, as a cake
- 27 Flat-bottomed fishing boat
- 29 Castrated rooster
- 30 The last of 38-28-38
- 32 It may be kosher
- 34 Layer with a "hole"
- 35 Adam and Kanye
- 37 Dock
- 38 One-man band performances
- 40 Bit of football gear
- 41 Some chess pieces
- 43 Sport-____ (off-road vehicle)
- 44 A-line line
- 45 Useful
- 46 Deceived
- 47 Moves upward

Monday's Answer

S	C	A	M	A	R	A	B	M	A	O	R	I	
T	I	M	E	D	E	M	I	A	D	D	O	N	
A	V	I	S	O	L	E	O	A	L	D	E	N	
F	I	G	H	T	S	O	N	G	M	I	N		
F	L	O	U	R	A	D	E	N	B	U	R	R	
G	I	L	D	N	O	W	M	A	E				
B	A	H	A	M	A	T	I	N	E	B	I	N	
I	D	A	M	U	S	I	C	A	L	E	S	T	
P	O	I	E	R	A	S	G	L	A	R	E	S	
E	R	R	R	E	V	P	E	O	N				
D	E	P	T	L	I	R	A	F	A	M	E	R	
I	O	U	O	U	T	O	F	T	U	N	E		
C	L	E	W	S	U	N	I	X	O	L	A	F	
B	I	C	E	P	R	U	N	E	M	E	T	E	
S	E	E	R	S		S	P	A	N	Y	S	E	R

WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

- Find and Circle:
Ten words related to baseball
Two neighboring countries
A Beetle (first/last name)
Two of Columbus' ships
Large wooden box
- Monday's answer: POULTRY PORK BEEF / SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE / HISTORY SCIENCE MATH / APPLE PEACH MANGO / UNO DOS TRES

QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes

Bear's lair

Troop group

Actor Lugosi

Rams' mates

Sugar shape

Fresh

Foul or nasty

Greek letters

Monday's Answer

I	C	E	S
C	A	K	E
O	P	E	N
N	E	S	T

QUICKCROSS ON YOUR PHONE
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SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).

			8	7	5			
	7	3	1	4	2			
8			9		6			
5	4		6		8			
			4	7	9			
	9		5	3	7			
8			3					2
	2	3	4	5	8			
7	5		2					

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★☆☆☆

SUDOKU FUSION ON YOUR PHONE
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UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt

1. RICKY

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

SHORTAGE

Clues:
1. "Livin' la Vida Loca" singer
2. Canadian-born actor
3. Quick layover, e.g.
4. Remain motionless
5. Not down for the count
6. Puddle
7. Drought

Monday's Answer
LET / GO / GET / HAPPY / FACE / FORWARD / SLASH / PRICES

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).

		5	4		
4		2	3		1
	4		1		5
5		6		4	
3		4	6		2
		1	5		

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★☆☆☆

Monday's Answers

3	8	2	7	1	9	4	5	6	2
1	7	4	6	3	5	9	2	8	
9	6	5	8	4	2	3	1	7	
6	4	7	3	8	1	5	9	2	
8	1	9	2	5	4	7	6	3	
5	2	3	9	6	7	8	4	1	
4	9	8	1	2	3	6	7	5	
2	5	6	4	7	8	1	3	9	
7	3	1	5	9	6	2	8	4	

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★☆☆☆

TXTPERT-

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36

Across
1. 2624/2623
5. 7583
6. 2583
9. 22682
10. 363

Down
2. 6663
3. 26323693
4. 333328
7. 7325
8. 7568

Today's theme: **Literary terms**

Use the phone keypad to decode the clues. For example: 2 could be A, B or C... and 5/6/8 could be LOST

M	A	R	C	H			
A	S	O	N	A	T	A	M
S	I	R	A	G			
S	T	R	U	M	L		
T	O	O	M	F			
A	N	N	E				
R	E	E	D	Y			

DON'T QUOTE ME!

Naturalist Louis Agassiz stresses the importance of time.

Rearrange the words to complete the quote.
AFFORD CANNOT MONEY TIME WASTE

“ I _____ TO _____ MY _____ MAKING _____ ”

Monday's Answer: "When you have bacon in your mouth, it doesn't matter who's president." - Louis C.K.