

Opinion: Four Sacramento sequels to 'Lady Bird'

By Joe Mathews

Good news, Sacramento! "Lady Bird," a coming-of-age film set in Sacramento—and written and directed by local product Greta Gerwig—has been nominated for five Academy Awards, including best picture.

Here's the better news, Sacramento! Gerwig says she will make three more films about her hometown.



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"I would like to make a quartet of films in Sacramento," Gerwig, told the Sacramento Bee. "I have three more before the quartet is done."

What will these films be about? No one, perhaps not even Gerwig herself, knows. But here's hoping Gerwig explores Sacramento's severe challenges, from soaring housing prices to a weak jobs market, just as "Lady Bird" takes on the city's relatively low levels of college graduates.

The title character—a teenager named Lady Bird—is so disappointed with Sacramento's second-tier cultural and higher-education offerings that she leaves for a private college in New York. This brain drain is all too common. Sacramento ranks 58th out of 102 American metro areas in

educational attainment.

So—in the spirit of civic renewal—I offer the Oscar-nominated director my own treatments for four sequels.

1. “Lady Bird Gets Her Tree”

A homesick Lady Bird, in her late 20s, moves back and visits coffee shops for six months before deciding that Old Soul best fits her aura.

She and her artist boyfriend (Michael B. Jordan) fall behind on the \$1,500 monthly rent on an Oak Park one-bedroom, because their only steady job is driving for Lyft. After their landlord evicts them so he can rent to richer Bay Area refugees, Lady Bird relocates to the American River homeless encampment. But then, inspired by the beauty of the regional tree canopy, Lady Bird builds a treehouse in West Sacramento, and the housing-friendly council lets her keep it.

2. “Lady Bird Returns: Hired Liar”

In this black comedy, Lady Bird returns from the East Coast to lobby for children’s groups. She discovers not only that legislators don’t care about children—but also that, in a horror movie turn, they keep millions of children in a secret, off-budget city beneath the Capitol. She tells local media, but they don’t have enough reporters to cover the story.

Lady Bird falls into despair. But then she meets a wealthy British-born telecommunications lobbyist, who is a British-born graduate of Stanford (Tom Hiddleston). They carry out a torrid love affair in his San Francisco pied-à-terre and his Tahoe chateau. She likes the fine life, and becomes a lobbyist for developer Angelo Tsakopolous.

When her beau proposes in a luxury box at a Kings game, Lady Bird replies: “Yes, on one condition. Promise me we’ll never have children. Because the schools here suck.”

3. "Lady Bird in the Swamp"

After eating a deep-fried, bacon-wrapped peanut butter cup at the State Fair, Lady Bird becomes disoriented on her way home and drives into a Delta slough.

She's rescued by an improbably handsome seventh-generation pear farmer (Chris Pine), who makes her his wife. The film becomes a climate change pastoral, as Lady Bird observes the worsening cycles of flood and drought in the swamp, struggles with subsidence, and takes on the DIY job of putting her home on stilts.

Then mysterious engineers appear on the property. Powerful water agencies are secretly drilling an underground water tunnel that was abandoned after a court fight long ago.

In a final act straight out of "Erin Brockovich," Lady Bird investigates and digs a hole that puts her body in front of the tunneling machine. She is killed, but so is the tunnel project. Finally.

Sacramento Film 4: "Lady Bird versus the Apocalypse"

Yes, Gerwig is only doing three more films, but I'm sure her agent will want her to do a bigger payday action film—set in Sacramento, of course.

In 2050, years after her death in the Delta tunnel, new technology brings Lady Bird back as a part-human-part-machine cyborg. She settles happily in Sacramento—until a Pineapple Express system arrives and rains over the city for months, collapsing levees and completely flooding her hometown.

Searching for higher ground, she heads first to the foothills, but a vigilante squad of gun-toting locals shoots at her and other city refugees, because they vote too Democratic. So, after building a raft from old wood furniture, she heads west across the flood waters to Davis. There, NIMBYs express

sympathy for Sacramento's dispossessed but refuse to accept the refugees, saying they cannot possibly support any more development.

Out of options, Lady Bird swims through the floodwaters south to downtown Stockton, where she takes shelter in the abandoned Federal Building. Inside, she discovers an old, rugged man who is also part machine (Harrison Ford). He takes her on his catamaran back to Sacramento, where they restore order and kick some serious butt.

After that, everything is OK in California's capital.

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