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MAY 13, 2026

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20° C

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22° C

REVIEWS

*Electric Kiss* page 50

*Once Upon a Time in Harlem* page 52

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## UNDER PRESSURE

### Can Cannes Keep Politics Offstage?

With Gaza, Iran and Russia all in the mix, insiders wonder if the fest can avoid the controversy that derailed Berlin  
BY SCOTT ROXBOROUGH

Nine days into the 1968 Cannes Film Festival, Jean-Luc Godard and a band of New Wave insurgents brought the Croisette to a halt, shuttering the world's most glamorous movie showcase in solidarity with student protests sweeping France. Nearly six decades on, the question hanging over this year's edition is whether geopolitics — from Gaza to Iran — could again hijack the narrative, or if Cannes will once more prove it can absorb the shock without losing control.

This year's Berlin Film Festival provides a cautionary tale. Fierce debate over the war in Gaza ignited a political firestorm that nearly cost festival director Tricia Tuttle her job. Jury president Wim Wenders' insistence that "we have to stay out of politics" was swiftly overtaken by filmmakers who refused to do any such thing. Onstage statements on Gaza — Syrian-Palestinian director Abdallah Al-Khatib, winner of the Berlinale Perspectives section for his drama *Chronicles From the Siege*, called out the German government as being "partners in the genocide in Gaza by Israel" — triggered an institutional

(Continued on page 2)



#### ACTOR Q&A

### Put Some Respect on Barry Keoghan's Name

On the days he's not needed on the set of Sam Mendes' Beatles biopics, the mercurial Irish star wants to spotlight the best of European cinema and comes to Cannes with Kantemir Balagov's *Beanpole* follow-up *Butterfly Jam*  
BY LILY FORD



READ ON PAGE 20

For all the latest coverage of the Cannes Film Festival, go to [THR.COM/CANNES](https://www.thr.com/cannes)

**POLITICS**

Continued from page 1

backlash. It all played out in public, generating far more headlines than any of the films in competition.

Producer **Mike Downey**, the former head of the European Film Academy, sees the similar political fault lines running through Cannes this year. “I think something like [what happened in Berlin] could happen in Cannes, if Cannes doesn’t take control of the narrative,” he says. “Neutrality is sort of impossible, as Berlin and Wim found out.”

There is no shortage of combustible material. The war in Gaza remains a rallying point for artists and activists (Palestinian director **Rakan Mayasi** will be in Cannes to screen his latest, *Yesterday the Eye Didn’t Sleep*, in Un Certain Regard), while escalating tensions around Iran — and a festival lineup heavy with Iranian voices, including **Asghar Farhadi**, **Pegah Ahangarani**, **Karim Lakzadeh** and **Mahsa Karampour** — are certain to add another geopolitical layer. With two prominent Russian directors in the official selection, **Andrey Zvyagintsev’s** *Minotaur* is in competition, and **Kantemir Balagov’s** *Butterfly Jam* will open Directors’ Fortnight, Russia’s war on Ukraine could also prove a flashpoint.

At Cannes last year, politics were there from the start. The opening ceremony featured a tribute to slain Gaza photo-journalist **Fatima Hassouna**, the subject of **Sepideh Farsi’s** documentary *Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk*, from jury president **Juliette Binoche**, while **Robert De Niro** used his honorary Palme d’Or moment to attack **Donald Trump**. Offstage, more than 300 filmmakers, including



Wim Wenders (center) sparked a backlash during the Berlin Film Fest in February when he said, “We [filmmakers and actors] have to stay out of politics.”

**Binoche**, **Javier Bardem**, **Joaquin Phoenix** and **Pedro Pascal**, signed an open letter condemning the industry’s “silence” on Gaza. The temperature was high but, unlike in Berlin, the festival never lost its footing. The political debate never overtook the discussion about the films.

**Salma Abu Ayyash** of the Palestinian Film Institute draws a sharp distinction between Berlin, where she says felt Palestinian directors and their supporters “felt threatened” — some in the German media called for Al-Khatib to be arrested and charged with “hate speech” — and Cannes, where “we feel very safe and very appreciated. It’s not an institutional thing, but there’s a network of people in Cannes that make us feel heard. It makes a lot of difference for us when we go to a festival where we feel the police are chasing us, versus a festival where doors are open, and speech is protected.”

Cannes, says Downey, remains “one of the last bastions for cultural integrity” in an increasingly

compromised festival landscape. “It’s always a great place for voices to be heard, whether they’re environmental, or LGBTQ, whether it’s about what’s happening in Iran or Gaza, or it’s about the electricians going on strike, Cannes has always been a place for troublemakers. It’s probably why I like it.”

But, in contrast to Berlin, Cannes, post-’68, has been adept at keeping the troublemakers from taking over. The festival has spent years refining a playbook that allows dissent but contains it. A strict “no protest” rule governs the red carpet — security shuts down political demonstrations as quickly as they do selfie shots — and the festival’s tightly choreographed premieres and ceremonies leave little room for disruption. The emphasis, always, is on the show — the spectacle of cinema as a global industry and cultural event. Political debates are largely found within the films themselves, or in demonstrations and discussions held a safe distance

from the Palais.

“I’ve just been struck by the fact that the last two years I was in Cannes, there weren’t any scandals in the way that Berlin is finding it impossible to avoid at the moment,” says **Philip Oltermann**, European culture editor for *The Guardian*. “Cannes is still show business [and] I get the impression that people who go there end up sort of following the rules. They might make very challenging films, but you don’t have the situation where, at the awards ceremony, the artists clash with the organizers.”

Politics, from Gaza to Iran, from Russia to the White House, will be everywhere on the Croisette this year. The question is whether it will remain embedded in the films — and the conversations around them — or break through and take center stage, sparking the kind of institutional crisis that engulfed Berlin. If history is any guide, Cannes will let the noise in, but keep the focus where it wants it: on the films, and on the show. **VIIA**

**Meanwhile, in the Real World ...**

➔ **BuzzFeed** sold a majority stake to **Byron Allen** for \$120 million. The *Comics Unleashed* CBS late night host and mogul behind some Weather Channel assets and a collection of syndicated shows, channels and TV stations will take over the CEO role.

➔ A Southern California mayor resigned and agreed to plead guilty to acting as an illegal agent for the Chinese government. **Eileen Wang**, the mayor of Arcadia, was charged in April with one count of doing the bidding of Chinese officials.

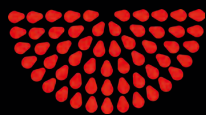
➔ **President Trump** said the ceasefire with Iran was “on life support” after calling the country’s list of demands “garbage.” Iran’s proposal included an end to fighting in Lebanon, sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz and compensation for damage from bombing.

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NEON SIGNS

## Matt Johnson Reteams With Neon for Untitled Finn Wolfhard Project

The *Stranger Things* alum will star in the project that is inspired by true events behind the bust of a Vice Canada editor

BY MIA GALUPPO

After releasing *Nirvana: The Band — the Show — the Movie* stateside, Neon has nabbed the rights to **Matt Johnson's** next film, *The Hollywood Reporter* has learned. Johnson will direct the project, currently known as the *Untitled Matt Johnson Film*, with **Finn Wolfhard** set to star.

The story is inspired by true events that saw a Vice Canada editor recruit drug mules for an international cocaine smuggling operation, including out of the media giant's offices. Wolfhard will play the Canadian investigative journalist who helped break the story.

Neon has acquired worldwide rights and will release the film in the US. The company will handle international sales out of this year's Cannes film market.

Department M is exec producing the film. **Matthew Miller** and **Matt Greyson** will produce for Zapruder Films, in association with Rhombus Media. Telefilm Canada is helping to finance the feature. Elevation Pictures will be handling Canadian distribution.

Johnson, repped by WME, directed the critically acclaimed movie *BlackBerry* and was last in theaters with *Nirvana: The Band — the Show — the Movie*, which is based on his Canadian television series of the same name. His other credits include indie features *The Dirties* and *Operation Avalanche*, the latter of which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.

Up next, he directs the **Anthony**

**Bourdain** movie *Tony*, starring **Dominic Sessa**, that is being released by A24 this summer. Johnson is also developing a **Magic: The Gathering** feature film for Legendary. Wolfhard, who worked with Neon on his directorial debut *Hell of a Summer*, recently wrapped up his run on Netflix juggernaut *Stranger Things*. He is repped by CAA, Venture Entertainment Partners and Jackoway Austen.

For its part, Neon will premiere multiple films out of the Cannes Film Festival, including competition titles *Paper Tiger*, **James Gray's** latest feature, and *Fjord*, the **Sebastian Stan** and **Renate Reinsve** family drama. **VIII**

Matt Johnson (left) and Finn Wolfhard



Colony follows a biotech professor who gets trapped at a conference when a rapidly mutating virus is unleashed.

UNDEAD HEADS

## Yeon Sang-ho's Zombie Thriller Colony Sells Wide

BY PATRICK BRZESKI

Korean studio Showbox has lined up distribution deals across more than 120 international territories for *Colony*, the new zombie thriller from *Train to Busan* director **Yeon Sang-ho**, the company announced Tuesday ahead of the film's world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival this Friday.

The action thriller — Yeon's return to

the zombie genre, which

he helped reinvent

globally with 2016's

breakthrough hit *Train*

to *Busan* — has gone to

Well Go USA in North

America, StudioCanal

in the U.K., Gaga Corporation in Japan,

ARP Sélection in France, and Plaion

Pictures in Germany and Italy. Showbox

also closed deals for Australia and

New Zealand (K-Movie Entertainment

UK), Latin America (BF Distribution),

Scandinavia (Mis Label), Spain

(Energia), the CIS and Baltics (The

World Pictures), Poland (Media4Fun),

Turkey (Mars), Hong Kong (Edko

Films), Taiwan (MovieCloud), Indonesia

(PT Primacinema Multimedia), the

Philippines (Pioneer Films), India

(Multivision Multimedia), Thailand

(Sahamongkolfilm International), Mongolia (Izalur Media) and broader Southeast Asia (Purple Plan).

*Colony* will screen at the Palais on May 15 in the Cannes Midnight Screenings section, out of competition. The slot is a homecoming for Yeon: *Train to Busan* also debuted in the Midnight section in 2016, the launch pad for what became the global breakout and made him one of his country's most prolific directors of screens large and small.

**Gianna Jun** (*Kingdom: Ashin of the North, Assassination*) stars as Se-jeong, a biotechnology professor attending an industry conference when a rapidly mutating virus is released, plunging the venue into chaos as the infected begin to transform and the authorities seal the building. The ensemble includes **Koo Kyo-hwan** (*Escape, Netflix's Parasite: The Grey*), **Ji Chang-wook** (*Revolver, The Worst of Evil*), **Shin Hyun-been** (*The Ugly, Reborn Rich*), **Kim Shin-rock** (*Hellbound, Sweet Home*) and **Go Soo** (*Parole Examiner Lee, The Fortress*). Yeon and the principal cast will walk the red carpet for the premiere. **VIII**



Yeon

VIVE LA RÉSISTANCE!

## Juliette Binoche, Adèle Haenel, Swann Arlaud Protest Billionaire's Bid for French Cinema Chain UGC as 'Fascist Takeover'

Over 600 film professionals sign an open letter opposing Vincent Bolloré's plan to take control of France's third-largest cinema chain

On the eve of the Cannes Film Festival, some 600 French film professionals, including acclaimed actors **Juliette Binoche**, **Adèle Haenel**, **Swann Arlaud** and **Damien Bonnard**, have signed an open letter opposing plans by right-wing billionaire **Vincent Bolloré** to take full control of UGC, France's third-largest cinema chain.

The letter, published in left-leaning French newspaper *Libération*, warned that the takeover deal by Bolloré, whose media empire has been accused of promoting reactionary and far-right ideas, would amount to a "fascist takeover of the collective imagination."

Through his media company Vivendi, Bolloré already owns Canal+, France's largest pay TV company, and its subsidiary StudioCanal, Europe's leading film production company. Through Canal+,

Bolloré holds a 34 percent stake in the UGC cinema chain, but he has announced plans to take full control of UGC by 2028. Bolloré's media empire includes CNews, a popular French news channel that figures on the left have attacked for allegedly giving a platform to far-right voices.

The film industry backlash against Bolloré follows a protest by more than 100 writers, who in April quit the historic French publishing house Grasset, another Bolloré asset, accusing him of promoting reactionary and far-right ideas. In a French senate hearing in 2022, Bolloré denied any political or ideological motive in his media acquisitions, saying his interest in the film and TV business was financial and about expanding French cultural soft power.

In the letter, the French film professionals, who include producers, distributors, exhibitors, filmmakers, technicians and

crew, said they all, to varying degrees, "now depend on Vincent Bolloré's money for our projects as well as our salaries," but that they felt compelled to "break the silence insidiously imposed on our

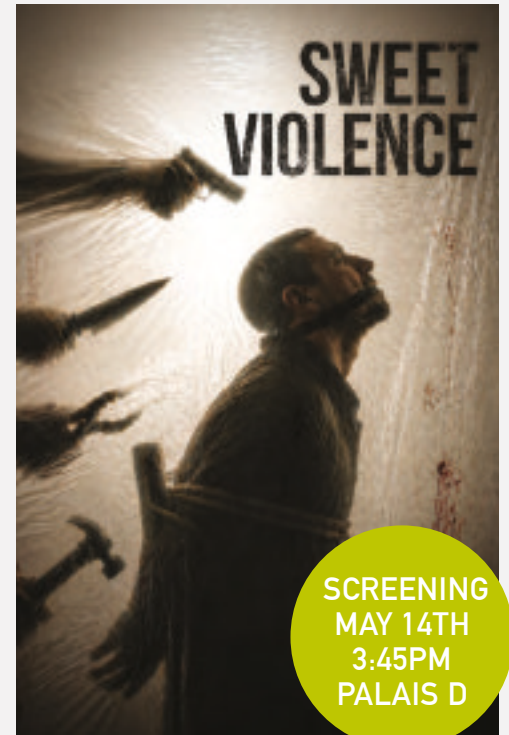
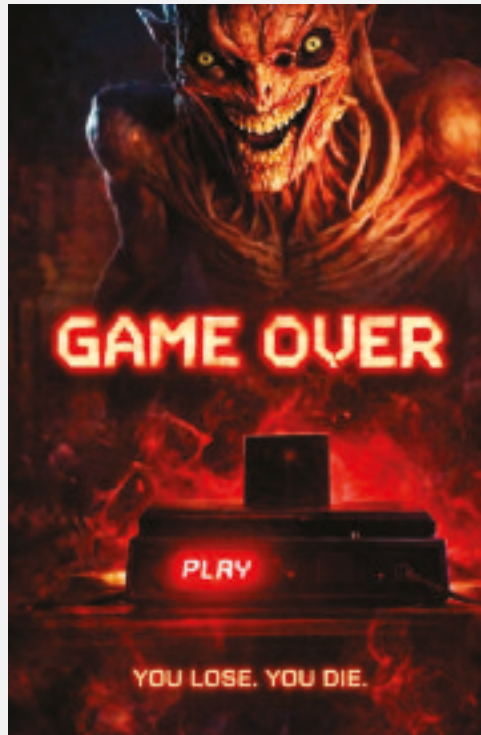
From left: Adèle Haenel, Juliette Binoche and Swann Arlaud



industry." They accuse Bolloré of leading "a reactionary, far-right civilizational project" through his television channels like CNews and his publishing houses. "While the influence of this ideological offensive on film content has been discreet so far, we are under no illusions: it won't last."

The group warns that the UGC deal will give Bolloré an "unprecedented concentration" of financial power within the French film industry, giving him "complete freedom to act when the time comes. We won't be able to say we didn't know."

Noting that France's far-right National Rally party has called for the dismantling of key institutes in the French film industry, including the national film board CNC, and the French public broadcasting system, the letter asks: "Do we want to risk a future where only propaganda films serving an ideology are funded?" — SCOTT ROXBOROUGH



# The Woman Who Learned to Stop Disappearing

*All the Lovers in the Night* uses a fragile café romance and meditations on the physics of light to explore how the self becomes visible — to others and to itself **BY PATRICK BRZESKI**



In director Yukiko Sode's *All the Lovers in the Night*, freelance proofreader Fuyuko (Yukino Kishii) lives a life of urban anonymity.

For a film preoccupied with the mechanics of light, **Yukiko Sode's** *All the Lovers in the Night* unfolds mostly in shadow — in the muted glow of a Tokyo apartment window at sunrise or in empty city streets walked at midnight on a birthday no one else celebrates.



Sode

Adapted from **Mieko Kawakami's** celebrated novel, the Japanese filmmaker's quietly transfixing fourth feature uses the halting rhythms of a first romance to pose expansive philosophical questions: How does the self become visible, and how much of what we feel is genuinely our own?

Premiering in Un Certain Regard, *All the*

*Lovers in the Night* came to Sode by way of her producer, who handed her Kawakami's book — her first encounter with this novel despite being a longtime fan of the author's work.

"My interpretation of the book was that it was about light," Sode says. "And of course, as a filmmaker, light being a motif was an irresistible challenge. How could I not make it?"

The story follows Fuyuko (**Yukino Kishii**), a freelance proofreader who lives a near-monastic life of urban anonymity: long days of solitary work in her quiet apartment, occasional outings with her one outgoing colleague, Hijiri (**Misato Morita**), and a single, annual self-indulgence — a midnight walk through the city on her birthday. But Fuyuko's inner life is not nearly as placid as

her self-effacing exterior suggests, and the cracks begin to show when she mysteriously takes up the habit of heavy, surreptitious day drinking. The subtle sea change in her life begins to build when she meets Mitsutsuka (*Shogun* star **Tadanobu Asano**), a reserved high school physics teacher. He speaks in a gentle, almost cryptic register, responding to her questions about the subject he teaches with gnomic musings on the counterintuitive mechanics of light. A series of hesitant café meetings ensues — but even as a genuine connection begins to take shape, each carries secrets they don't know how to reckon with and reveal.

Threaded through *All the Lovers in the Night* is a portrait of a particular contemporary Tokyo type, Sode says — the solitary 30- or 40-something urbanite who has built a life of emotional self-protection so well fortified that it precludes the usual, natural desires for romance or family-making.

"The metropolis allows people to blend in and to disappear within it," she says. "If you choose not to associate with anybody and just live your life, that means there's less possibility that you'll be hurt. But at the same time, we as people, as humanity, cannot exist without others — and so there is that yearning, that longing as well."

For all the film's quiet sorrow, Sode insists Fuyuko's arc evolves into something like grace. Her solitude was always a private mythology of specialness — and what she trades by the end is self-defense for a more authentic identity.

Says Sode: "Whether her love has been fruitful or not, Fuyuko, by virtue of having experienced a romance, is able to say she is one of the many, many people around the world who have experienced a great love. So in a way, she's found *nakama* — companionship — in a community where everybody feels a little bit alone." **VTR**

## Cannes, According to ... The Mogul



**Ben Ross**  
CEO, Image Nation

### Best bargain in Cannes?

I don't consider bargains to necessarily be how much something costs. I consider the experience to be the bargain. That being said, the Hotel du Cap is really an experience. And worth the price of admission.

### Favorite meal in Cannes?

Fouquet's for breakfast. I know it sounds cliché, but it delivers every time.

### Most overrated restaurant?

Any place that tells me "it's not possible" for me to sit

when it's clearly possible and not full.

### Biggest Cannes faux pas?

When someone tries to be a big shot. "Do you know who I am?" should be banned and criminalized.

### Best place to grab a drink after 3 a.m.?

I'm never really up that late. ... Nothing good happens at 3 a.m. or later ...

### Place to avoid during the festival?

Any place having a party you're not invited to.

### Your "only in Cannes" moment?

I love walking the marketplace floor. So many movies, so many people with so much passion trying to get their movies out into the world. The aura is palpable.

### Biggest Cannes pet peeve?

People who fake being on the phone.

### Cannes guilty pleasure?

The fresh croissants that draw you in due to their smell permeating the street outside of their bakery.

### Strangest request you have ever received in Cannes?

Some random person asked to take a picture with me once. I think they thought I was famous, as they said, "I'm such a huge fan of yours." Must've been my sunglasses.

### Most interesting celeb encounter?

I took my mother to a red carpet event once, and she was wide-eyed at everyone there. Seeing her having that experience was priceless for me.

KELTA

BOB

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FILMFESTIVAL

# I See Buildings Fall Like Lightning's Lola Petticrew

The nonbinary Belfast-born actor tackles our universal need for community and the newfound festival trend that sees talent separating film from politics: 'It's a disgrace' **BY LILY FORD**

There's a long list of reasons why **Lola Petticrew** jumped at the chance to read for **Clio Barnard's** stirring kitchen sink drama *I See Buildings Fall Like Lightning*, and **Anthony Boyle's** name sits at the top of it.

Honoring Petticrew's loving nickname for their fellow countryman, "Anto," star of Netflix hit *House of Guinness*, was already attached to the project. The Northern Irish duo have known each other since they were 11 years old — they performed together in an amateur drama group called The Rainbow Factory in Belfast — and became, as Petticrew puts it, "the best of friends."

After years spent leaning on one another through drama school, Petticrew's first job (in which they played brother and sister) and back-to-back auditions, Boyle and Petticrew now find those two kids from west Belfast are about to premiere what will undoubtedly be one of the Croisette's most talked-about films: Barnard's fifth feature, written by **Enda Walsh** (*Die My Love*) and adapted from **Keiran Goddard's** book of the same

name, is a tender deep-dive into class mobility, identity and existentialism.

"I got a message from my agent being like, 'Clio Barnard wants you to read for this film,'" Petticrew, best known for their BAFTA-nominated performance in FX's *Say Nothing*, remembers

ever to go in to work every day and just be looking at your best mate," Petticrew tells *THR*.

It also helps that Barnard enlisted an almighty batch of Britain and Ireland's brightest young stars: **Joe Cole**, **Daryl McCormack** and **Jay Lycurgo** round out the core five, all of

**"There are a lot of actors — many whom I really admire — [that] are now coming out and saying they don't want to be political."**

about the initial call. "So Enda Walsh has written it, Clio's directing it, and my best pal is the lead? Like, tick, tick, tick!" they bellow over the phone to *THR*. "Do you know what I mean?"

That chemistry read with Boyle — their characters in *I See Buildings*, Patrick and Shiv, are married — was, figuratively and a little literally, child's play for the pair. "It's the biggest gift

them anchoring Walsh's script with a frailty and authenticity you'd expect from talent twice their age. The Birmingham-set indie follows five childhood friends who, as they hit 30, tackle the bleak reality of life in varying ways.

"I think it's British independent film at its best," declares Petticrew. "This is just completely the type of project I want to be a part of. It feels like they're caught on this hamster wheel, and they just can't get out of it. They can't see the forest for the trees, and all of the emotions are up," they say about the boys' roles. "Shiv is kind of like a seer. She's in the middle of it all, and she's grounded. I remember reading a part in the book where it was talking about how much Shiv loves her flat, and it just made me cry my eyes out — I just thought how wonderful it was that she could see the beauty in it all, because that's absolutely the way I felt about my house and my community growing up, and it's the way that I still feel about it now."

Petticrew is a self-proclaimed activist. They speak up on the intergenerational trauma

Lola Petticrew's castmates in *I See Buildings* include (clockwise from lower left): Jay Lycurgo, Daryl McCormack, Anthony Boyle and Joe Cole.





still rife in Northern Ireland post-Troubles, west Belfast's poverty problem and Palestine. "I wouldn't be interested in being an artist if I couldn't talk about those things. For me, they're intrinsically linked," they say, railing against the creatives who choose to separate politics from their work. For them, *I See Buildings'* community-focused narrative — about one's loyalty to their origins, the resentment that simmers when you can't escape it, and the guilt when you leave it behind — tapped into that thirst for change. "There are a lot of actors — many whom I really admire — [that] are now coming out and saying they don't want to be political," says Petticrew, who considers it a privilege to be apolitical. "It's a sorry state of affairs when artists don't really believe in anything ... But when they want their BAFTA or their Oscar or their Golden Globe for playing somebody poor or, fucking God forbid — please, no more — playing a trans person, or playing somebody queer, then they'll talk about it. It's a disgrace."

*I See Buildings* was an antidote. The cast embedded themselves in Shard End, east Birmingham, where the film was shot. The locals spilled onto the call sheet as pub-goers, parents and school children. It undoubtedly helped all five of them — three of them Irish, remember — nail that Brummie accent. "It's a really tough accent," Petticrew admits, "and I know how much of your identity is locked into your accent. So I really, really, really wanted to get it right."

They're due back in Rome straight after the festival to continue shooting Netflix's *Assassin's Creed* series, and have a Hulu show, *Furious*, coming soon with **Jake Lacy** and **Emmy Rossum**. But Petticrew is prioritizing platforming British film, and with Antoinette in tow, hopes their performance can provide solace to any lost souls in Cannes this week: "We're all just trying our best with everything that's against us," Petticrew adds. "It's OK to give yourself a bit of credit, take a breath, and just see what's in front of you." **THR**

## My Cannes Moment

### Anaïs Demoustier



↑ The French actress, star of 2026 Cannes opening night film *The Electric Kiss*, on her first festival red carpet with (from left) director Michael Haneke, Isabelle Huppert and 2003's jury president Patrice Chéreau.

I've been back to Cannes something like 15 times, but the one that stands out is from my very first time. I was 15 and I was in Cannes with a **Michael Haneke** film [2003's *Time of the Wolf*]. I was so young, so light-hearted. I didn't really understand the craft of an actor, or the stress and joy of attending the Cannes Film Festival. I still remember people telling me: "You don't know if you'll ever make another film ... So enjoy it while it lasts." I remember the red carpet. I didn't expect the photographers to yell so loudly. When **Isabelle Huppert**, who was the star of the film, walked up, it was just: "Isabelle! Isabelle! Isabelle!!!" Then the screening itself, in the Grand Theatre, felt almost like a religious ceremony. But, because it was a Haneke film, it was also controversial. During the screening, people were whistling and shouting at the screen. Others were clapping. It was incredible. Looking back, and returning again to open the festival, I consider myself very lucky still being in the business 20 years later. And to still be coming to Cannes. Because we aren't in competition [with *The Electric Kiss*] there's no extra stress and no extra pressure, just extra pleasure.

For all the latest coverage of the Cannes Film Festival, go to **THR.COM/CANNES**

# Why France Is Making *Les Mis* Again — and Why This Time Feels Different

French producers Richard Grandpierre and Olivier Delbosc on their \$47 million bet that audiences are ready for a reimaging of Victor Hugo's epic as a propulsive action thriller — with the original politics very much intact **BY SCOTT ROXBOROUGH**



"It's a story of inequality and social misery that unfortunately is still very contemporary," says Olivier Delbosc (left, with Richard Grandpierre) of *Les Misérables*.

**T**he French are betting audiences want their epics back.

For much of the 1980s and '90s, France regularly mounted sprawling prestige productions on a scale few European industries could match. Films like **Jean-Paul Rappeneau's** *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1990), **Claude Berri's** *Germinal* (1993), or **Patrice Chéreau's** *Queen Margot* (1994). But as production costs rose and financing grew more risk-averse, those ambitious historical spectacles gradually disappeared from the big screen, replaced by smaller auteur dramas, comedies and internationally portable genre films.

Now, after years in retreat, large-scale French period storytelling is mounting a comeback. Canal+ has found global audiences for glossy historical series such as *Versailles* and *Marie Antoinette*, while **Martin Bourboulon's** two-part *The Three Musketeers* adaptation demonstrated there was still

an appetite, at least in France, for muscular literary adventure made on a blockbuster scale. This year in Cannes, **Antonin Baudry's** *De Gaulle: Tilting Iron*, the first in an epic two-part biopic on the iconic French leader, premieres out of competition, another sign of renewed confidence in prestige French popular cinema.

Into that landscape comes **Fred Cavayé's** *Les Misérables*, a new action-skewed adaptation of **Victor Hugo's** classic about crime, justice and redemption, starring **Vincent Lindon** as Jean Valjean and **Tahar Rahim** as the relentless Inspector Javert. The film reframes Hugo's novel — adapted dozens of times throughout the decades but probably best known to modern audiences from the **Andrew Lloyd Webber** musical and **Tom Hooper's** 2012 film adaptation — as a propulsive chase thriller. Alongside Lindon and Rahim, and veteran actors **Camille Cottin** and **Benjamin Lavernhe**, the film boasts a supporting cast of 20- and 30-something

up-and-comers, including **Noémie Merlant** (*Portrait of a Lady on Fire, Tár*), **Megan Northam** (*Rabia*), **Vassili Schneider** (*The Count of Monte Cristo*), **Marie Colomb** (*The Beasts*), and **Louis Peres** (*The Sentinels*).

The 40 million euro (\$47 million) production was put together independently by **Richard Grandpierre** at Eskwad (*The Tuche* franchise, *Brotherhood of the Wolf*) and **Olivier Delbosc** at Curiosa Films (*8 Women, The Wizard of the Kremlin*) with backing from Canal+/StudioCanal, which is releasing the film theatrically across its global footprint and handling worldwide sales at the Cannes film market. Additional funding came from TF1 and Netflix in France.

In an exclusive interview with *The Hollywood Reporter*, Grandpierre and Delbosc discuss the high-stakes gamble behind reviving the grand French popular epic, why they believed audiences were ready for another *Les Misérables*, and why Victor

Hugo's 19th century classic still feels politically explosive today.

## Why make yet another version of *Les Misérables*?

**RICHARD GRANDPIERRE** We were expecting this question. You're absolutely right. I can speak for myself, but I'm sure Olivier agrees — in the lifetime of a producer, we all dream of doing something like *The Three Musketeers*, *Monte Cristo*, the major productions, the major books in French literature.

But I think what really prompted us to do this movie was our meeting with Fred Cavayé, the director, and hearing him talk about his idea. And the other reason is that for 35 years, nobody had done a version of *Les Misérables* in France. The last time was with **Lino Ventura** as Jean Valjean [in 1982, directed by **Robert Hossein**]. An entire generation has not experienced watching it onscreen. If you take people under 30, I'm sure most of them haven't read *Les*

*Inaugural Ceremony of*



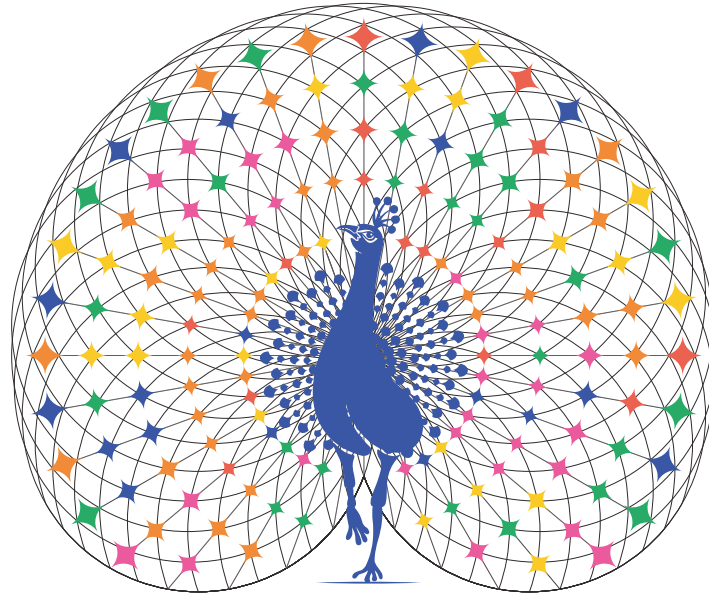
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*Misérables*. They only know it through [Hooper's 2012] musical.

The difference with Fred Cavayé's vision is that the characters are young. Before, it was just [middle-aged]. We've brought in a whole new universe of younger characters, the youth in Victor Hugo's story, people 15- to 20-year-olds can identify with.

**OLIVIER DELBOSC** We were very quickly convinced that Victor Hugo's story is completely timeless. It's a story of inequality and social misery that unfortunately is still very contemporary.

**GRANDPIERRE** The strength of the movie comes from the fact that it resonates in today's world and in today's life. You've probably heard about the Yellow Vest movement a few years ago, where people went into the streets to protest and demonstrate. It's the same thing as the barricades Victor Hugo described in the 19th century, when people couldn't afford bread.

If you watch the news, unfortunately it's exactly the same topics that Victor Hugo's brought up in his book.

**How does Fred Cavayé's approach make this adaptation distinct?**

**DELBOSC** He has done a lot of thrillers and action movies, and he's using those techniques to create tension. That is what brings modernity to Victor Hugo's masterpiece.

**We have big films about Charles de Gaulle and the Vichy regime screening in Cannes this year. Why do you think French cinema is returning to large-scale historical and period films at this moment?**

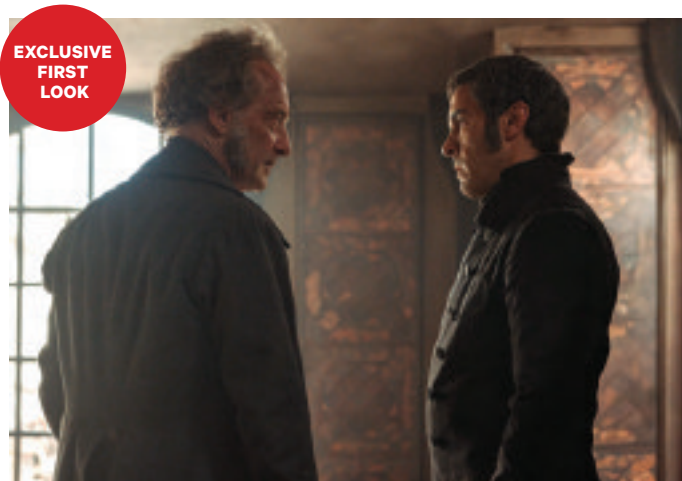
**DELBOSC** In the '60s, '70s and '80s, French cinema was producing a lot of period films, and that kind of disappeared after the '80s because they cost a lot of money and take a lot of time to make. Now they are coming back, with a modern twist but with the same themes of social inequality that were described 100 years ago. Because unfortunately history repeats itself and the same problems keep coming back.

**GRANDPIERRE** I think it's really the desire of producers to make these kind of movies. Olivier and

I are about the same generation, and we grew up with these great, popular French period movies. When we were starting in the industry, we watched Claude Berri's films [like *Jean de Florette* (1986), *Uranus* (1990) and *Germinal* (1993)] and loved them. So we had the desire to make a great popular French movie.

And I could ask you the same question: Why does American cinema continue to make Westerns? Because they speak to the country's collective history. **DELBOSC** And audiences around the world love period movies, historical stories, whether in series or cinema.

**Do you think historical films allow filmmakers to engage with contemporary political**



Vincent Lindon (left) as Jean Valjean and Tahar Rahim as Javert in Fred Cavayé's *Les Misérables*.

**tensions without directly dividing audiences?**

**GRANDPIERRE** That wasn't our goal, we simply wanted to make a great, popular French movie.

What is true, though, is that there is a resonance between what Victor Hugo wrote in his time and what is happening today. We didn't look for this political resonance, but it just happens that what Victor Hugo wrote is still current — not only in France, but in other countries as well.

**But once the film is released, won't audiences inevitably interpret it through today's political climate?**

**DELBOSC** That's the idea of art and cinema: to provide audiences

with different ways to read and understand a movie. Victor Hugo, by the way, was not only a great writer, he also became a politician. He fought against the death penalty and for women's voting rights.

**Can you talk about the scale of the production and how difficult it was to finance?**

**GRANDPIERRE** The budget is 40 million euros. The shoot took three months. We had four years of preparation between the casting, finding the stunt people and getting the technical team together.

We had ups and downs with the financing, but what really convinced people to invest was Fred Cavayé wrote a 40-page outline that made them see what the film would be and convinced

**Were you thinking about the international audience while making the film?**

**GRANDPIERRE** When you make a French movie, it's always complicated to sell into the English-speaking market, because there are very few examples of French movies that work, particularly in America. Usually genre films or smaller art house movies. But thanks to the musical, the English-speaking world knows what *Les Misérables* is.

**What was the single most difficult sequence to shoot?**

**DELBOSC** The barricades. That was a three-week shoot in Bordeaux in the middle of a heat wave. It was 40 degrees [107 F], with 300 extras. And I should note, nothing was done with AI. We did it the old-fashioned way. The hot, sweaty, old-fashioned way.

**GRANDPIERRE** We use VFX in postproduction of course, but no AI. Look at us, we're obviously old-generation people. We don't use AI.

**Where does the film stand now in postproduction, and what are the release plans?**

**GRANDPIERRE** The film is at the end of the editing process right now. It will be released on October 14 in France. We weren't ready for Cannes, and StudioCanal, which is selling the movie, will decide whether to show it at a festival before release.

**For younger audiences who mainly know *Les Misérables* through the musical, what will they discover in your version that feels new?**

**GRANDPIERRE** In France, we have a great asset in Fred Cavayé and Victor Hugo, of course, but we also have an incredible modern cast. All generations can identify with someone in the cast — Vincent Lindon for some people, the younger actors for others: Benjamin Lavernhe, Noémie Merlant, Megan Northam, Vassili Schneider, Louis Peres. It's one of the best casts we can have in France today.

**As long as you don't have Russell Crowe singing in it, I'll be happy.**

**GRANDPIERRE** No, definitely not. **VTR**

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THE GRAPE ESCAPE

## Provence's Best-Kept Secret: A Hidden Luxury Getaway

Château de Berne offers guests a secluded stay at its 1,200 acres with a vineyard, Michelin-starred restaurant and the most priceless amenity: privacy **BY CHRIS GARDNER**

**Q**uiet luxury is still very much en vogue at France's Château de Berne.

Located about 45 minutes by car from the hustle and bustle of the Cannes Film Festival is the five-star hideaway, which is truly hidden away inside 1,200 acres of a preserved forest near Flayosc, France. The sprawling property is home to 34 rooms and suites, along with seven private villas and another in final stages of construction that is set to open in early summer. The new seven-bedroom luxury villa is on its own 25 acres of land, half of which is a private vineyard, complete with a pool house and available to be staffed with a private butler, chef, car service and custom experiences for a tab of approximately 50,000 euros for a weeklong stay.

It's cause for celebration, and there's plenty of rosé (and red and white wines) on site with 370 acres of organically farmed vineyards

that produce namesake pours. That's just a sip of what's on offer at the **Mark Dixon**-owned Château de Berne, cited as the top hotel in France and Monaco by the Condé Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Awards.

There's the relaxing and meditative Cinq Mondes & Vinésime Spa, cooking classes, a fully equipped gym, tennis, padel and pickleball courts, yoga and pilates classes, fishing, vineyard safaris, cellar tours, sommelier master classes, seasonal truffle hunting, mountain biking and more. If animals are your thing, they have horses, Corsican sheep, Alpine goats and sheepdogs.

"We are a quiet luxury place," explains **Maxime Mathon**, director of sales and

From top: Château de Berne, set within a preserved forest in Provence, offers 34 rooms and suites, seven private villas and an organically farmed vineyard; Villa Vanado, one of seven private villas currently on offer; activities include sommelier master classes and more.



marketing for MDCV Provence, the French wine group behind four signature estates including Château de Berne, Ultimate Provence, Château des Bertrands and Château Saint-Roux. “This is not the most fancy, gold-ish place you can find on earth, that’s for sure. That’s not what we are delivering to the customer. We offer something unique.”

It’s all in the details, per Mathon. “Everything we do is organic, not just because it’s fancy to do so but because that’s what we are trained to do by nature. It’s farm-to-table with olive oil from the property’s orchards and vegetables from our garden.”

Speaking of which, Château de Berne boasts three restaurants on property, including the Michelin-starred Le Jardin de Berne, “the estate’s flagship gastronomic table” steered by chefs **Louis Rameau** and **Éric Raynal**.

Mathon is quick to point out that the restaurant was also awarded a Michelin Green Star for its sustainability efforts.

While summer may be peak season, Mathon says guests flock there year-round, aside from the four weeks at the start of the year when the property is closed for refurbishments and enhancements. “Summer is literally packed, and the Cannes Film Festival is the kickoff of the season,” he says, noting that demand is peaking and the property is practically fully booked for the rest of the year. Other key moments that are “wonderful,” Mathon adds, are the tail end of winter into early March or harvest time in September.

It’s also just quiet. The property didn’t land on so many best lists by whispering the number of bold-faced names who have stayed there — “they are in privacy mode when they are here,” Mathon teases — but he would confirm that guests hail from entertainment, business, music and tech sectors. We do know one: **Post Malone** has stayed there and done a collaboration with Château de Berne on his own wine label. It also wouldn’t be a surprise to see **George** and **Amal Clooney** strolling about, as the famous couple bought a nearby vineyard estate in Provence.

“Most of the time celebrities come, they come with family, friends and staff for extended stays at one of the villas for three to five days, two weeks or even a month,” Mathon explains, adding that concierge and activity managers help keep the itineraries as packed or relaxing as guests prefer. “We developed the property while keeping the same level of excellence across Château de Berne. It’s tailor-made and built for full privacy.”

While their VIPs are protected, Mathon points out that there is no gate on the property, both figuratively and literally. “We are the keepers,” he said. “The philosophy of the owner is to say that we are here for a short period of time and the whole idea is to pass Château de Berne on to the next generation as something better.” **THR**



**BRIGHT IDEA**

## Rossy de Palma Is Très Chic for New Rimowa Campaign

**B**old, creative and starring **Rossy de Palma** in bright colors. That describes many of Spanish auteur **Pedro Almodóvar**’s films, but it also works for Rimowa’s newest campaign of luxury luggage featuring orange and magenta pieces as part of its Essential and Groove collection. The two bold shades are meant to “celebrate individuality, creative expression and the joy color brings to everyday life,” per Rimowa.

The new campaign — debuting in time for the Cannes Film Festival, where Almodóvar will present the world premiere of his latest, *Bitter Christmas*, starring **Bárbara Lennie** and **Leonardo Sbaraglia** (and de Palma in a supporting turn) in the story of a woman who is abandoned by her partner during the holiday season — places de Palma in a scene reminiscent of an Almodóvar flick. She moves through a vibrant home complemented by the colorful pieces.

De Palma unpacks one in the accompanying film, going so far as to speak into a stiletto like a telephone. “Magenta is a wonderful color, it empowers the soul,” says de Palma, who has starred in Almodóvar’s *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, *Broken Embraces*, *Kika*, *Julietta* and *Parallel Mothers*. “It’s a mix of red and blue. But it doesn’t look like either of them.”

For the travel inclined, Rimowa’s Essential collection, featuring cases and bags, is crafted from premium polycarbonate and carries the brand’s lifetime

guarantee. The new orange and magenta cases (available in carry-on and check-in sizes from 750-1,190 euros) feature stage-free telescopic handles, TSA-approved locks and a complimentary leather address tag. Inside, there’s a fully zipped compartment for belongings on one side while the other boasts Rimowa’s signature flex divider, a compression system that allows travelers to pack more for their adventures — onscreen and off.

The Rimowa collection also features a cross-body bag in orange made in Italy from calf leather, a shopping bag, a trifold toiletry pouch and packing cubes. Available now on [Rimowa.com](http://Rimowa.com) and in the brand’s stores worldwide. —c.g.

Above: Rossy de Palma’s latest starring role is in the campaign for Rimowa’s new luggage collection. Below: The brand’s iconic aluminum luggage is pictured with new essentials including toiletry bags and a leather tote.



For all the latest coverage of the Cannes Film Festival, go to [THR.COM/CANNES](http://THR.COM/CANNES)

Tom Sturridge (left) and Rami Malek in Ira Sachs' *The Man I Love*.

EXCLUSIVE  
FIRST  
LOOK



# 'I'M THE ONLY PERSON WHO COULD MAKE THIS FILM'

Ira Sachs on *The Man I Love* — his Cannes competition entry about art, mortality and queer life in 1984 New York — and why Rami Malek was exactly the kind of 'dangerous' choice the film required **BY DAVID GANFIELD**

Ira Sachs had been talking about making some version of *The Man I Love*, his vividly sad but vibrant drama set in New York circa 1984, for more than a decade by the time the moment to do it had arrived — and yet it was only well after production when he realized where it all came from. This was an instinctual work, mined from decades of memory. Sachs took on his first job in New York in 1984, then lived through a decade or so of “deep, painful and also transcendent experiences of gay life.” That informed the texture of *The Man I Love* as much as the aftermath of the pandemic, during which Sachs confronted his increasingly intertwining relationships to art and mortality. And

he was thinking a lot about pleasure, too: “emotion and drama and story and color and skin and sex.” Sachs threw this charged mix into a pot, started editing and saw something profoundly autobiographical unfold.

“I was struck by the loss in the film, and I was struck by the sadness within that loss, but I was also struck by the strength,” Sachs says now, in his first interview about his new movie. “I’m certainly the only person who could make this film.”

Quietly, Sachs has built one of the steadyest, most well-regarded filmographies of his generation in American indies: He’s directed seven features over the past 15 years, four of which went on to receive Spirit Award

nominations for best feature — and that includes his two most recent efforts, the sexy *Passages* and the talky *Peter Hujar’s Day*. *The Man I Love* will premiere only 16 months after his latest at the Cannes Film Festival, his second placement in the main competition after the 2019 Isabelle Huppert vehicle *Frankie*. It stars Oscar winner Rami Malek as Jimmy George, a beloved queer entertainer who’s dying of AIDS — but remains determined to keep working, and specifically to mount a new play.

“Our intention was to make a film about life,” says Sachs, who co-wrote with his longtime collaborator Mauricio Zacharias. Adds Malek, a longtime fan of the director:

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“He is such a unique filmmaker with a very, very specific perspective and voice that I wish more people were aware of. Hopefully this film exposes so many to what that man is capable of and has created over his body of work.”

Jimmy was modeled after experimental artists like Ron Vawter, of The Wooster Group, and Frank Maya, a pioneering gay comedian — men who died young but fought to create until their last breath. Vawter, for instance, was onstage, unable to complete a theater piece, merely six days before he died on a plane. “There’s something quietly defiant about making art in moments of uncertainty, and that refusal to disappear felt so moving to me and striking — there was a driving force emanating from me given what I was feeling,” Malek says. “It began from somewhere very, very personal.”

Adds Sachs: “I think about all these radical people who did not seem consumed with bourgeois success, though they were all struggling with the idea of sustainability, and they were not trying to fit in. When I first described this film to a friend, I told him it was about a man who was trying to figure out what to do with the remainder of his life. If you imagine that you’re going to no longer be in the world, what would you miss most? I wanted the film to be filled with those things.”

If not a musical, *The Man I Love* is certainly Sachs’ most musically driven film, drawing from classics like *All That Jazz* and *A Star Is Born* in the way that live singing not only defines the movie’s sense of mood but propels it narratively. “That was really interesting — how do songs become dialogue even if it’s not a musical?” Sachs says. Malek gets a few showstoppers, including one heartrending scene where Jimmy performs Melanie’s “What Have They Done to My Song Ma” before his family. While most of these tunes predate the ’80s, for Sachs, it’s evocative of the time all the same.

That sense of a living past extends to the ensemble, which Sachs built out with casting director Avy Kaufman. Jimmy’s creative community is populated with dozens of real-life artists whom Sachs has known over the years. They’re often boisterously stuffed into the frame together in scenes of performing and partying. “I know this wide variety of artists who are here with the most essential passion, of making work that they care about,” he says. “I took very seriously the casting of the theatrical troupe in the film, to find people who came with enough history that they could embody the depth of what it is to make theater in New York City.”

Inspired by the likes of Robert Altman and Ken Loach, Sachs doesn’t make movies with protagonists, per se; in his world-building, he leaves room for spontaneity. *The Man I*

*Love* embodies this through its steamy but aching love triangle among Jimmy, his partner, Dennis (Tom Sturridge), and their cute new neighbor who pursues Jimmy, Vincent (Luther Ford). Jimmy guides us into the milieu, but Sachs’ camera will start following Dennis, say, out of one scene and into the next as he grapples with his dying lover’s appetite for life.

For Malek, the bond between him and Sturridge, a longtime friend, proved crucial: “When we first sat down to talk about this film in a pub in London, I just remember Tom putting his hand on top of mine, and I felt this sense of being cared for. ... It always existed in these beautiful moments where we would catch each other’s eye.” The star was then kept intriguingly off-balance by Ford (who makes a beguiling feature film debut here), as Jimmy launches into a complex affair with Vincent. “Luther has this ability to balance his youthful exuberance

James Gray’s *Paper Tiger*, a signal of the challenges faced by the U.S. indie market.

“If you live within the context of American independent cinema, you feel a little bit alone, to be honest,” Sachs says. “As soon as you start to think of yourself within a broader community of people all over the world — Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, Europe — it just becomes exciting. ... I feel excited because I feel in conversation with a lot of people but also anxious because I’m exposing myself in a world I really respect.”

Sachs talks a lot about the notion of “personal cinema” — it’s what he lives by in his filmmaking, and he’s open about how each of his movies is imbued with a different, sometimes abstract form of memoiristic sensibility. Even with that, though, *The Man I Love*’s autobiographical shades took him aback. “After I shot this, I looked at my first film, *Vaudeville*, which was a backstage

## “THERE’S SOMETHING QUIETLY DEFIANT ABOUT MAKING ART IN MOMENTS OF UNCERTAINTY, AND THAT REFUSAL TO DISAPPEAR FELT SO MOVING TO ME AND STRIKING. IT BEGAN FROM SOMEWHERE VERY, VERY PERSONAL.”

Rami Malek

with a sense of having more life experience than one would expect from someone at that age,” Malek says.

Jimmy remains the center of *The Man I Love*, of course, and Malek’s mercurial and impassioned turn is unlike any in his career. He and Sachs met after the director watched Malek’s Emmy-winning work in *Mr. Robot* for the first time. “This actually wasn’t a given,” Malek says of getting cast in *The Man I Love*. “Ira was essentially seeing if I was the right guy for it. ... I don’t think I’m ever the obvious choice, to be quite frank, and that’s nice. I choose quite carefully, and this felt like a very big risk worth taking. And to that, it’s a film about people who create and what that costs.”

Notes Sachs: “Rami makes the film dangerous. The story could change at any moment, and in that way, Rami aligns with Gazzara and Falk and Cassavetes. It’s possible that he’ll jump over the counter and steal the milk, like a scene from *Mikey and Nicky*.”

Sachs increasingly has worked outside of the American system to get his projects off the ground. *The Man I Love* is not only a New York story shot in New York but is representing its country in unusual fashion for Sachs — it’s one of just two American films in competition at Cannes this year, alongside

drama about a group of actors putting on a show with a narrative trajectory built around three men in a love triangle,” he says. “I was like, ‘Oh, I just remade my first film — from 1989.’”

He pauses, again considering the past-present continuum of this movie. He admits he’s a little nervous about our interview, pointing to his glass of wine with a grin. “I feel like I need to go into the world with this movie with as much of me as possible — and the fearlessness of Jimmy in the face of mortality is really beautiful,” he says. “It came from a very deep place for me.” **VIRAL**



Ira Sachs

# THE SCARIEST SLASHER TO MAKE

Jane Schoenbrun returns to Cannes with *Teenage Sex and Death at Camp Miasma* — a horror deconstruction about sex, gender and creative autonomy **BY DAVID GANFIELD**



Jane Schoenbrun tends to exhaustively shot-list their movies, arriving each day on set with a rigorously formalist philosophy of filmmaking. But in the making of their newest feature, the director had no real plan for the sex stuff. This was odd since the erotic-signaling title, *Teenage Sex and Death at Camp Miasma*, had been rolling around in Schoenbrun's brain for years — and the story itself was, in the director's own words, "about learning how to stop dissociating during sex." Turns out, this necessitated a meta lesson behind the camera. "I realized once we got to production that I had been really avoiding, if not dissociating, from having to direct those scenes," Schoenbrun says now, in their first in-depth interview about *Camp Miasma*. "Directing those scenes felt as scary as it felt directing for the first time."

Premiering as the opening *Un Certain Regard* film in Cannes before Mubi releases it in theaters Aug. 7, *Camp Miasma* hardly feels like a first film. Rather, it reveals a major rising filmmaker at their most assured and ambitious, if still bursting with the tremendously, wildly personal expression of their first two films, *We're All Going to the World's Fair* and *I Saw the TV Glow*. Schoenbrun sees this third feature as a natural artistic progression.

"I was very conscious of *TV Glow* as this moment, both for me as an artist and for me as a person, that came out of a very deep and emotional catastrophe — the early stages of [gender] transition are completely insane and require a feeling like your entire life is either ending or just beginning," says Schoenbrun, who is nonbinary. "Once I had gotten over the terror of coming out and

beginning transition, which is what *TV Glow* was birthed from, there was a new terror — and it was maybe a more fun terror — of getting to figure out how to be in my body and to have a healthy relationship to sex for the first time in my life."

Featuring aching, ferocious performances from Emmy winners Hannah Einbinder and Gillian Anderson, *Camp Miasma* imagines the resurrection of a dormant slasher franchise. The playful opening sequence races through the cultural lifespan of the titular series,



Hannah Einbinder (left) and Gillian Anderson in *Teenage Sex and Death at Camp Miasma*.

which launched as a commercial smash and cult critical hit before sequels delivered diminishing returns, then met all kinds of conflicting internet readings that revived interest — while also laying bare the property's problematic roots. Enter Kris, a budding queer director one might mistake for a Schoenbrun stand-in, who's been hired to bring *Camp Miasma* back from the dead — and give it some woke-friendly image rehabilitation in the process — and Billy, the original *Miasma*'s "final girl" who's since retired as a recluse, Norma Desmond style. Kris travels to Billy's cabin, which happens to be on the original abandoned *Miasma* lot, to convince her to return for the new movie — only to come away with a very different understanding of what it should be and of who she is.

The meat of the narrative — the dynamic between

“two people who match each other’s freak,” as Schoenbrun puts it — actually came last to the director. They’d started mulling the milieu before *TV Glow*’s 2024 release, following an even longer interest in helming a slasher their own way. Schoenbrun watched every *Nightmare on Elm Street* in fifth grade. They “lived and breathed” the *Scream* movies through high school. “That was half my identity — there was almost something festive about renting a slasher and cheering for the most extreme or creative bloody kill that could happen,” Schoenbrun says. As they started to transition, they read up on gender theory, prodding a radical reframing of those gorily cozy childhood faves.

“This image of the trans monster kept coming up, whether that be Norman Bates or Buffalo Bill or Frankenstein as a constructed body, and there was this lineage of trans people having really complicated feelings about those movies,” Schoenbrun says. “In one sense, those are the places where they saw representations that felt familiar or comforting in some way to their own experiences — but also, those movies are super fucking transphobic and problematic.” In *Camp Miasma*, the franchise monster is called “Little Death,” whose legend comes to consume Kris and spark her sexual reawakening. The role is played by Jack Haven, the breakout trans star of *TV Glow*.

“I want to have a continued collaboration with Jack for the rest of my life,” Schoenbrun says. “And the idea of them embodying the power of both the killer and the hermaphroditic embodiment of the orgasm — if I want to see that shit, someone else is going to want to!”

*Camp Miasma* stuffs the bloody thrills and jump-scares of a classic slasher into a funnier, weirder and richer deconstruction of their imagery and legacy. There are homages galore, as well as savvy throwback flourishes — from an extensive use of

matte backdrops to, good news for *TV Glow* fans, extensive glimpses of the original (and, OK, fictitious) *Camp Miasma* — that only enhance the thornier social commentary.

“This movie was very consciously designed to be fun ... and to bring in a lot of people to have a discussion about sex and gender and overcoming trauma,” Schoenbrun says. “I don’t know any other movies — certainly any other Hollywood movies — that are having that conversation this way, from this perspective.”

**T***VGlow* was, for its part, unlike anything else out there, blazing its way to wide critical acclaim and five Spirit Award nominations including best feature. Schoenbrun felt the need to “capitalize” on that movie’s success, eager to push their limits as a filmmaker and shift into a new tonal key. The industry shrugged in response. “Everyone except for Mubi passed on this movie, to be totally blunt,” they say. “Every major studio and distributor passed on the film, and I think it’s because of the limits of what kinds of queer and trans stories are deemed commercial or not commercial.”

Schoenbrun felt determined to cobble together whatever they could to combat that reality, given their post-*TV Glow* cachet. Coming from the worlds of nonprofit and microbudget indies, they knew “not to trust that the system will allow me freedom.” Rather than risking development hell for a budget befitting the film’s scope, they got scrappy with those who believed in the vision. (Mubi wound up backing the movie alongside Plan B.)

“When I look around in our ‘post-woke, post-Biden’ era, I don’t see any other trans artists getting budgets, and that’s a fucking shame,” Schoenbrun says. “I shouldn’t be the only one who’s making movies at this level of budget.” They fully expect to prove those finance doubters wrong: “I think this movie will be a hit.”

The character of Kris

inevitably represents Schoenbrun to some extent. In crafting her, the director says Einbinder was a close collaborator: “The role is deeply personal to her. ... I know that it’s helped her grow and think a lot about herself and her own life. It was kind of an immediate love between us.” Together, they then mined Schoenbrun’s own experiences. In one scene, Kris pitches an updated, enlightened, gay-ified version of her *Miasma* reboot idea on a Zoom filled with executives, which boasts similarities to a personal anecdote Schoenbrun told *The New Yorker* a few years back (“I’d say it’s loosely based on a number of Zoom calls,” they say with a smirk). Kris’ personal and artistic epiphanies crash against the mandates of the gig.

“I don’t think it’s friendly — I don’t think I’m trying to do *The Studio*,” Schoenbrun says of *Camp Miasma*’s take on Hollywood. “The movie represents the experience of somebody trying to find creative autonomy and maybe losing their fucking mind a little bit as they bash their head up against the limits of the highest Zoom rooms of capital.”

Within that dispiriting journey, though, there is liberation — bringing us back to those bloody, vivid sex scenes. “I’m really hoping that they are wrestled with culturally in the way that *Blue Velvet*’s sex scenes were wrestled with culturally, or the most troubling moments in my previous works

have been wrestled with,” Schoenbrun says. “Within those scenes are a lot of complex ideas and feelings that a lot of people share but don’t talk about.”

Einbinder and Anderson’s performances turn most explosive in these intimate encounters. “The reserve of emotional vulnerability that she’s able to tap into at a moment’s notice — I think only the great actors can do this, and I’ve seen it a few times, her ability to fully enter a space of incredibly heightened dramatic performance,” Schoenbrun says of Einbinder. As for Anderson? The director raves: “It almost feels like she’s like Jim Carrey in certain moments. It’s so funny and strange and a little bit grotesque and a little bit sad — so far from our traditional notions of high-fem sexuality, while also still being incredibly sexy and weird.”

Indeed, for a splashy Cannes premiere from an American filmmaker, nothing about *Camp Miasma* feels traditional. The significance is not lost on Schoenbrun, making their first-ever trip to the festival as a director — after previously attending a decade ago in a very different capacity. “I was working a day job that I hated and in a body that I hated, and that’s literally where I decided to quit my job and figure out how to live a life that felt better,” Schoenbrun says. “I said to myself, ‘I need a better reason to be at Cannes.’” Lucky for us, they found it. **THR**



Anderson (left) and Jane Schoenbrun on the set of *Teenage Sex and Death at Camp Miasma*.

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# PUT SOME RESPECT ON BARRY KEOGHAN'S NAME

In the days he's not needed on the set of Sam Mendes' Beatles biopics, the mercurial Irish star wants to spotlight the best of European cinema and comes to Cannes with Kantemir Balagov's *Beanpole* follow-up *Butterfly Jam* — the first Croisette-bound project backed by Keoghan's Wolfcub Productions **BY LILY FORD**

**B**arry Keoghan, now officially a Cannes regular, is weighing up the idea of one day taking to the Palais steps as a director.

"I'd love to," the 33-year-old tells *The Hollywood Reporter*. "Most of the time on set would be spent on me getting people to understand what I'm saying, though." The dulcet tones of that thick Irish accent are perfectly intelligible over the phone, *THR* puts to him. "Believe me," replies Keoghan, "I'm talking slow."

The superstar has given us 20 minutes of his time in between shooting Sam Mendes' much-anticipated Beatles biopics — a four-film cinematic event, coming in 2028 — to talk about his latest project, Kantemir Balagov's *Beanpole* follow-up, *Butterfly Jam*. It happens to be the first movie Keoghan's Wolfcub Productions has brought to the Croisette. The actor was last here (sans Wolfcub) with Andrea Arnold's *Bird* in 2024, and made his Cannes debut next to Yorgos Lanthimos with 2017's *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*. "There's an animal thing with Cannes, for me," he says about the intriguing pattern of titles trailing after him.

It's no over-exaggeration to say Keoghan's ascension since *Sacred Deer* has been astronomical. It's an apt descriptor given the vastness of the Irishman's résumé (the MCU's *Eternals*, HBO's *Chernobyl*, and Martin McDonagh's tragically comical *The Banshees of Inisherin*) and the A-list co-stars he's collected along the way (such as in Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk*,

Emerald Fennell's *Saltburn* and, recently, in Cillian Murphy's final *Peaky Blinders* outing *The Immortal Man*).

But Keoghan is keen to keep his slate eclectic, and with that comes an urge to work with the art house up-and-comers and the best that European cinema has to offer. "Along with making commercial movies, [I want] to make movies with directors who have one or two movies behind them," he tells *THR*. "I'm always trying to find that balance and not stay in one lane."

A long time ago now, he reached out to Balagov off the back of the prize-winning *Beanpole*, and mentioned he'd love to work with the Russian filmmaker. The product of that conversation is set to premiere in the fest's Directors' Fortnight. It follows newbie Talha Akdogan, whom Keoghan admits he felt a little protective over — "I felt like Colin Farrell did to me!" — as Pyteh, a 16-year-old living in New Jersey's Circassian community (following the Russian Empire's 18th century invasion of Circassia, the entire ethnic group was either exiled

or massacred). Here, Pyteh's father (Keoghan) and aunt (Riley Keough) run a diner specializing in Circassian cuisine, but the teen finds himself balancing the struggling business with his aspirations of becoming a wrestler.

The subject matter prompts Keoghan to talk candidly about tapping into his own tumultuous upbringing and journey to fatherhood — he spent many of his childhood years in foster care, and welcomed a son, Brando, in 2022 — while making *Butterfly Jam*: "It's OK to be you as a dad, and I've learned that by being me. This is how I do it, and this is how I show love."

Here, Keoghan catches us up on his Cannes plans, talks about the first-time writers, directors and projects he's willing to take a chance on at Wolfcub, and reveals what it's been like living life as the eccentric Sir Ringo Starr: "I can't wait for people to see it."

**Were you familiar with Kantemir's work before *Butterfly Jam*?**

Yeah, so I'd seen *Beanpole* and absolutely loved it. I just love European cinema, and I think [Balagov] is incredibly talented. I'm always looking for someone that, if anything, can bring me outside my comfort zone, and along with making commercial movies, I want to make movies with directors who have one or two movies behind them. So I'm always trying to find that balance and not stay in one lane.

I think with Kantemir, I reached out to [him] ages ago. It could have been on Twitter or something like that. And I said, "I'm a massive fan and I'd love to meet and chat and see what you're interested in, and if we could bring something together." He got back to me, and he was a massive fan as well. [He said], "Barry, that's amazing. I've got nothing right now at the minute, but I will keep you in mind. And hopefully we'll work together on something." It was the same with [Crime 101 director] Bart Layton. I made that exchange with Bart. That's how it happens.

**How would you describe what *Butterfly Jam* is about and who your character is?**

It's a story about a family in America but we filmed it in France, so [we] kind of kept that European touch to it. I play a father and it follows my son, who is basically becoming a wrestler, and is in adolescence — that world of high school and the dramas that come with it, the fitting in. You know, thinking you know the world and you're of an age now that you can do things you want. It follows



Keoghan and Riley Keough in *Butterfly Jam*, in which they play the father and aunt of 16-year-old Pyteh (newcomer Talha Akdogan).



"It's a joy to be playing Ringo Starr, and it's another chapter in my life I'll be incredibly proud of," says Barry Keoghan of working on Sam Mendes' Beatles biopics.

that sort of thing, that Cillian [Murphy] felt [toward] me as well. You take pride in that you want to set standards ... You want to lead by example. And he's just incredible and very observant and wanting to learn and wanting to be part of [it]. We've a lovely, lovely crew and cast, to be honest.

**I read that, for your recent *Peaky Blinders* role, you could relate to Duke through your own complicated relationship with your father and fatherhood more generally. Did any of that come up again in this project?**

Yeah, definitely. Of course. This time, I just have a kid who can probably beat the shit out of me and wrestle me to the ground. (Laughs.) That's the difference, but Brando [Keoghan's 3 ½-year-old] could probably do that as well. Actually, to be honest, he's been boxing me already with boxing gloves! But no, you touch on a lot of your own stuff and chords and strings, and I think that's where I bring a new angle to it. I'm a father. There are new feelings, new emotions, there are new experiences and new chapters I'm approaching. It's sort of nice to play not the traditional dad and [challenge] the dads that people tend to have a version of, which doesn't always exist — dads and moms. But it's OK to be you as a dad, and I've learned that by being me. This is how I do it, and this is how I show love. And it mightn't be the way that we've all seen, or we're all used to, but this is how I show emotion, and I'm telling the truth. So I wanted to lean toward that.

It's also the first movie that my production company, Wolfcub Productions, has brought to Cannes.

**Congratulations.**

Ah, thank you. It's also another movie with another animal theme, because I went with *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*, I went with *Bird* and now I've gone with *Butterfly Jam* as part of Wolfcub Productions. There's an animal thing with Cannes, for me.

*Continued on page 54*

my son and brings us into a community, a Circassian family, and it's a tight community. I think they're based on a community in New Jersey, and it brings us there. We run a business, a restaurant. We sell Circassian [cuisine], it's this pancake-y potato. Sort of like an Irish stew. It's just proper traditional. We're famous for making them and I'm trying to get my business off the ground. And at the same time be respected as a father and battling that whole selfishness thing that you have trying to run a business — but also trying to raise a son. My sister, [played by]

Riley, she's just been there constantly, like a mom to my son, and I don't want to give it away too much, but basically, it's a community movie. If you've seen *Beanpole*, you'll be expecting the Kantemir touch to it.

**Was it quite an education for you, learning about the Circassian community?**

Yeah, because it's very, very specific, and you don't want to rock in and half-attempt it. But at the same time, if the director trusts what you're doing and you know the spirit of what you're doing is there ... I think you go certain

ways that sometimes might [not be rooted in] factual things. So once Kantemir and everyone on set — because there were a few people from the Circassian community — once they were all good, I felt in safe hands, totally.

**And you play father to Talha's character?**

Yeah. He's a newcomer and he's absolutely brilliant. He's such a lovely lad. We shot sort of in chronological order, and seeing him grow and hit his marks and become a professional was beautiful to see. I felt like Colin Farrell did to me, you know,

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#### **ALL OF A SUDDEN**

Japan's Ryūsuke Hamaguchi dazzled Cannes in 2021 with his symphonic meditation on grief, regret and human connection, *Drive My Car*, which went on to receive four Oscar nominations, winning for best international film. His French-language debut casts Virginie Efira as the director of a nursing home in the Paris suburbs who adopts the compassion-based "Humanitude" treatment method with her patients despite discord among her team. Her life changes when she meets a terminally ill Japanese theater director, played by Tao Okamoto. The two women develop a spiritual bond as they fight together to overcome systemic constraints and transform the care facility into a symbol of resistance.

#### **GOWARD**

After kick-starting his career with *Girl* and *Close*, two intimate contemporary queer

# DAVID ROONEY'S 10 MUST-SEE CANNES TITLES

THR's chief film critic highlights promising competition entries from some of world cinema's most highly regarded filmmakers

From top: Miles Teller (left) and Adam Driver in James Gray's *Paper Tiger*; Léa Seydoux in Arthur Harari's *The Unknown*.

stories that both took home awards from Cannes, Lukas Dhont tackles his first period drama and his most ambitious project to date. Described by the Belgian director as “a film about love and death, creation and destruction,” it’s set on the front lines of World War I. A newly arrived soldier eager to prove his valor meets a comrade who decides to lift the company’s spirits by putting on a theatrical show behind the trenches. In an atmosphere of violence and brutality, the two men find ways to escape — even if only momentarily. Newcomers Emmanuel Macchia and Valentin Campagne head the cast.

**FATHERLAND**

In what is becoming a major year for Sandra Hüller — a blockbuster hit with *Project Hail Mary*; a Berlin best actress win for her gender-switch role in *Rose*; Alejandro González Iñárritu’s Tom Cruise-led *Digger* coming in the fall — the brilliant German actress joins Hanns Zischler and August Diehl in Polish director Pawel Pawlikowski’s continuing exploration of post-World War II Europe. Following *Ida* and *Cold War*, and again shot in richly textured black-and-white, the new drama accompanies Thomas Mann and his daughter on a road trip across a Germany in ruins, marking the Nobel Prize-winning author’s first time back in the Fatherland since fleeing to safety in the U.S. during the war.

**FJORD**

One of the major figures to come out of the Romanian New Wave of the mid-2000s, Christian Mungiu won the Palme d’Or in 2007 for his breathless abortion drama, *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*. His new film promises to be another provocative piece of social realism in the director’s customarily rigorous style. Sebastian Stan and Renate Reinsve play a Romanian-Norwegian couple who relocate with their kids to the mother’s birthplace in remote Norway.

They form close friendships with a neighboring family but face severe scrutiny and legal entanglement when suspicions of child abuse arise. Mungiu reportedly drew inspiration from real-life stories relating to Norway’s controversial child-protection system and its family investigations.

**HOPE**

Ten years after launching his cult horror hit *The Wailing* in Cannes, Na Hong-jin returns with this large-scale science fiction thriller, reportedly the most expensive Korean film ever made. It’s set in the remote village of Hope Harbor, near the Demilitarized Zone, where alarmed locals alert the outpost police chief to sightings of a tiger on the outskirts of town. As the village erupts into full-scale panic, the emergency evolves into a darker mystery, forcing the cop to confront a

Tom Sturridge and Luther Ford as the respective old and new loves in Jimmy’s life, with Rebecca Hall and Ebon Moss-Bachrach as his sister and brother-in-law.

**PAPER TIGER**

It’s a sore point among many admirers of James Gray’s work that despite five previous competition entries, the writer-director has never won a major award in Cannes. Perhaps his sixth contender will change that. Miles Teller, Scarlett Johansson and Adam Driver star in the gritty 1980s-set drama about two brothers chasing the American dream who find their mutual loyalties tested as they navigate a dangerous world of corruption and violence, leading to the terrorization of their family by the Russian mob. While not strictly a sequel, the film is a continuation of sorts to Gray’s

neighbors across the street, which has unexpected consequences when fiction draws from real life but also starts to influence reality.

**SHEEP IN THE BOX**

A Palme d’Or winner in 2018 for *Shoplifters*, Hirokazu Kore-eda returns to the competition with an idiosyncratic take on the relationship between humanity and AI in this sci-fi-adjacent drama. The Japanese auteur reflects on parenthood and childhood, loss and grief, and the meaning of life and death through the story of a couple mourning the loss of their son when a mysterious package arrives, inviting them to participate in a new program designed to resurrect deceased loved ones as robotic clones. While the wife embraces their animatronic offspring, her husband keeps a wary distance, unconvinced that the android



From left: Sandra Hüller and Hanns Zischler in Pawel Pawlikowski’s *Fatherland*; Lukas Dhont’s *Coward*.

seemingly impossible reality. Alongside the Korean principals, Taylor Russell, Cameron Britton, Alicia Vikander and Michael Fassbender also appear.

**THE MAN I LOVE**

Coming off one of the most acclaimed films of 2025, *Peter Hujar’s Day*, Ira Sachs shifts from 1970s Downtown New York to the late ’80s, at the height of the AIDS crisis. Rami Malek stars as Jimmy George, a magnetic performer who refuses to surrender to his own mortality, instead throwing himself into a new role, a new relationship and the embrace of his partner and friends. The ensemble also includes

last competition entry, the maddeningly underappreciated 2022 drama *Armageddon Time*.

**PARALLEL TALES**

Two-time Oscar-winning Iranian director Asghar Farhadi assembles a deluxe cast for his second French-language film (following 2013’s *The Past*), including Isabelle Huppert, Virginie Efira, Vincent Cassel, Pierre Niney, Adam Bessa and Catherine Deneuve. Loosely based on the sixth chapter of Krzysztof Kieślowski’s *Dekalog* series — which was extended to feature length as *A Short Film About Love* — the film is set in Paris and follows a novelist seeking inspiration for her new book. She begins spying on her

has any connection to their boy.

**THE UNKNOWN**

Arthur Harari shared an original screenplay Oscar in 2024 with director and co-writer Justine Triet for *Anatomy of a Fall*. His new film casts Niels Schneider as a man nearing 40 who keeps his life and his pursuits as a photographer to himself. When he’s reluctantly dragged by friends to a wild party, he is unable to take his eyes off a woman in the crowd, eventually following her. A few hours later, he wakes up in the body of the unknown woman. That role is played by the busy Léa Seydoux, who also stars in Marie Kreutzer’s competition entry, *Gentle Monster*. **VJL**

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# THE WAR FILM THAT DARES TO BE TENDER



“There was this strange, weird contradiction for me,” says Lukas Dhont. “This space of violence, for some queer men, was also a place of liberation.”

With *Coward*, Lukas Dhont turns World War I inside out — finding in its trenches a hidden world of cross-dressing, queer romance and a tenderness that history has been too afraid to talk about **BY DAVID GANFIELD**

Lukas Dhont knows that, as far as titles go, *Coward* sounds a bit loaded. But the Belgian filmmaker, whose previous feature *Close* won the Grand Prix at Cannes and was nominated for the international feature Oscar, was drawn to the name for exactly that reason: “It’s a word that has a lot of charge, it’s a word that carries a lot of judgment,” he says on a short break from the final stages of postproduction of his new movie. “Many men in the past have been sent to their deaths out of fear of being called a ‘coward.’”

Before settling on that word, Dhont had been immersing himself in stories and images of World War I that ran counter to popular imagination (and were, certainly, exceedingly rare in film). He learned of male soldiers performing theater pieces on the front lines, cross-dressing and earnestly playing the roles of wives and mothers. He read about closeted queer people finding rare, lasting romantic connections with each other. And within his own country’s history, particularly, Dhont discovered the fates that met would-be deserters who were caught — brutal sentences often leading to death. Each of these realities brushed up sharply against typical notions of “patriarchal masculinity,” as Dhont terms it, and together offered a grand opportunity for

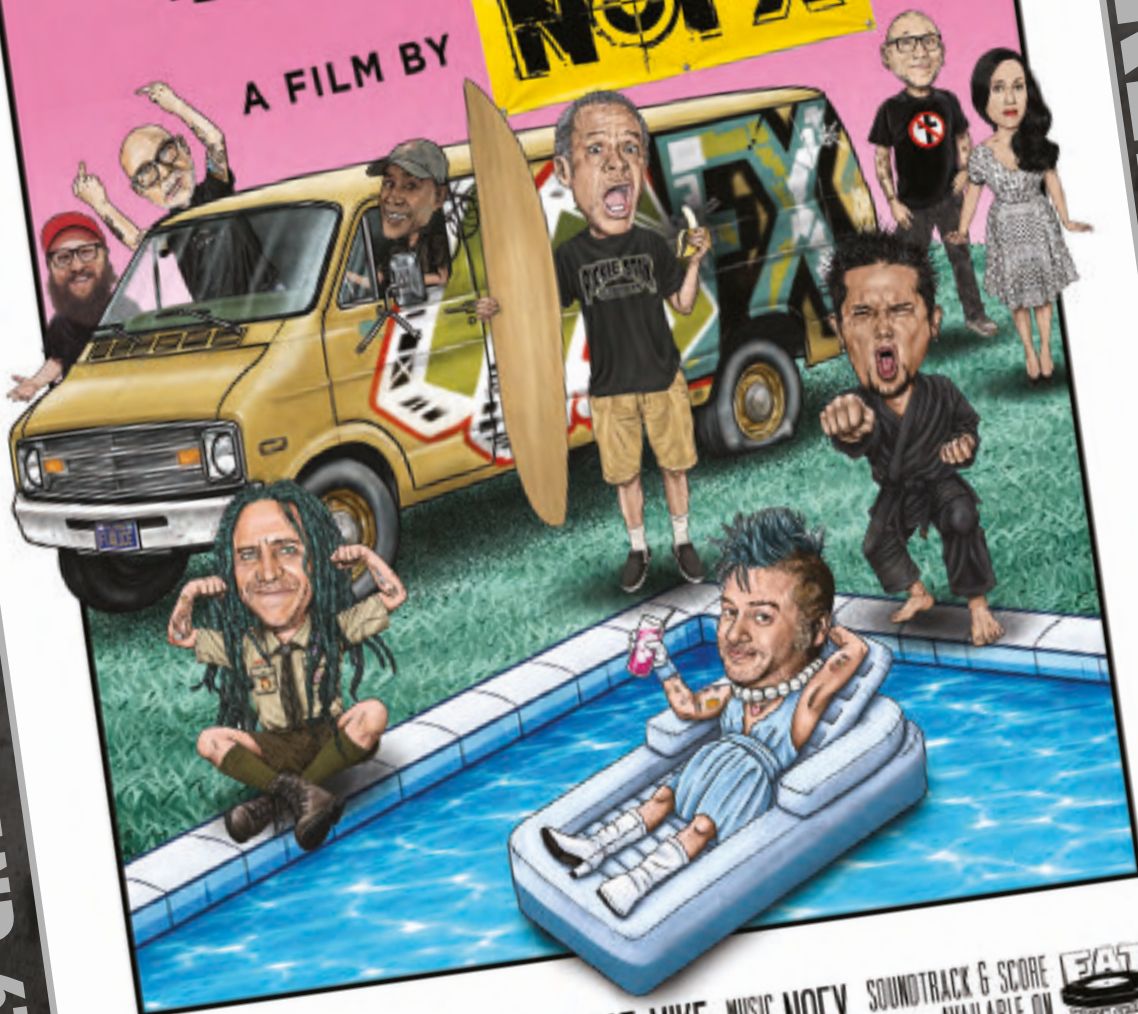
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subversion.

Enter *Coward*, which sees Dhont — who made his debut with the polarizing, award-winning trans drama *Girl* — pushing himself further in his explorations of sexuality and connection, while working on a far larger scale. The war film is also his sweetest, most tender effort to date, surprising given his penchant for emotionally pulverizing twists and turns. But Dhont likes to play with expectations. *Coward* follows Pierre (Emmanuel Macchia), a young Belgian soldier struggling to go on, and his romance with a flamboyant peer named Francis (Valentin Campagne), who stages impromptu, gender-bending dances and theatrical performances alongside others in the army.

“The camera has been so often focused on battles or the battlefield, and I saw an opportunity within the genre to point the camera to something else, which is these men who are conditioned to fight but who then, while waiting, actually create something together and are there for each other intimately,” Dhont says. “When I read these journals, for example, the testimony of a soldier who described one of his comrades performing as their mother and giving them a kiss goodnight — I was so deeply moved by this form of masculinity, which is so much about embracing emotion.”

The spark for Dhont came with encountering a simple black-and-white photo of a soldier cross-dressing just behind enemy lines. The director then traveled to galleries and historical centers like London’s Imperial War Museum to learn more about this lesser-known tradition. The walls were lined with images of tanks, descriptions of battles won and lost, odes to fallen heroes. He had to dive deeper. “We live in a society that pushes certain images of force and violence to the front and pushes away these images of softness,” he says. This went for testimonies from queer soldiers, too: “There was this strange, weird contradiction for me: This space of violence,

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In his research for *Coward*, Dhont immersed himself in stories and images of World War I. He learned of male soldiers performing theater pieces on the front lines as women, and about closeted queer people discovering lasting romantic relationships during the war.

for some queer men, was also a place of liberation.”

Dhont combines these two core ideas in the story of Pierre and Francis, which plays out in whispers, glances — as well as, occasionally, very public expressions of love that are disguised in the costumed confines of fiction, whenever they perform together. “There is this relationship at the core of the film, which can’t be made public, but that needs to happen in public,” Dhont says. “It’s something that completely develops in front of the eyes of others.” More generally, this reflects Dhont’s approach to the war genre. There are harrowing glimpses of life on the battlefield, of the pervasive stench of death that Pierre, Francis et al. contend with each day. But this remains the furthest thing from an action film. The clearest link between *Coward* and both *Girl* and *Close* is their rigorous sense of perspective. Down to the volatile sound design and pangs of romantic yearning, to say nothing of the first-person cinematography lensed by Dhont regular Frank van den Eeden, this movie follows Pierre’s every move from the inside out.

“It was really important for us to create an experience for an audience member that is immersive, that is intimate,” Dhont says. “I wanted you to be a companion to one character in this film and follow the world through his eyes.”

The period setting demands a degree of authenticity that Dhont was eager to execute. The camp where most of the film is set, for instance, was at the exact site of a real-life World War I setup. “I drive through these West Flemish fields nearly every week because my partner is from that place — the cemeteries with all these boys are, in a way, a part of our lives,” Dhont says. “We see them, we drive on the land where all these men fought and died. So to then be there with 150 young men in that costume, singing and dancing, in itself was an extraordinary experience. It felt like we were traveling through time.”

Most of the songs that Francis leads the group through were actual tunes performed during the war. Dhont and his team dug them up through their archival research; both comically and dramatically, they earnestly explored maternal love, romantic connection, collective bonding and more. The *Coward* team then composed a few original pieces that are sprinkled through the movie, inspired by the music of the era that surrounds them.

Dhont’s work is known for stirring up discourse and debate, of course, and *Coward* will prove no different in that regard. Amid the blossoming love between Pierre and Francis, one soldier grapples with a decision that illuminates the movie’s choice of title. “I

thought it was really interesting to talk about those who want to escape violence and what the world has done to them,” Dhont says. “In the past, people have been marginalized for the decision to not want to fight.”

Those who successfully escaped in the Belgian army, at least, had to vanish without a trace. “How did they lead their lives afterwards if they had to flee and couldn’t return to the place that they come from?” Dhont asks. “What does it mean to be a hero or a coward?”

Dhont recalls a recent TV program in Belgium that saw noted politicians interacting with students about escalating conflicts around the world. One young man expressed fear that their country would be soon drawn into a war — and wondered whether a draft could follow.

“This politician returned the question and said, ‘Well, who wouldn’t fight if Belgium was under attack?’ All the boys in that space, they raised their hands [to indicate they would],” Dhont recalls. “This boy who we could clearly feel had a fear of war, even he felt obliged to say ‘yes’ as well. There was this pressure. It has been accepted through time that men give their lives for a bigger purpose, and I wanted to talk about those men who did that — but also to give space to those who try to escape from that circle.”

If nothing else, it makes for pretty brave filmmaking. **VIR**

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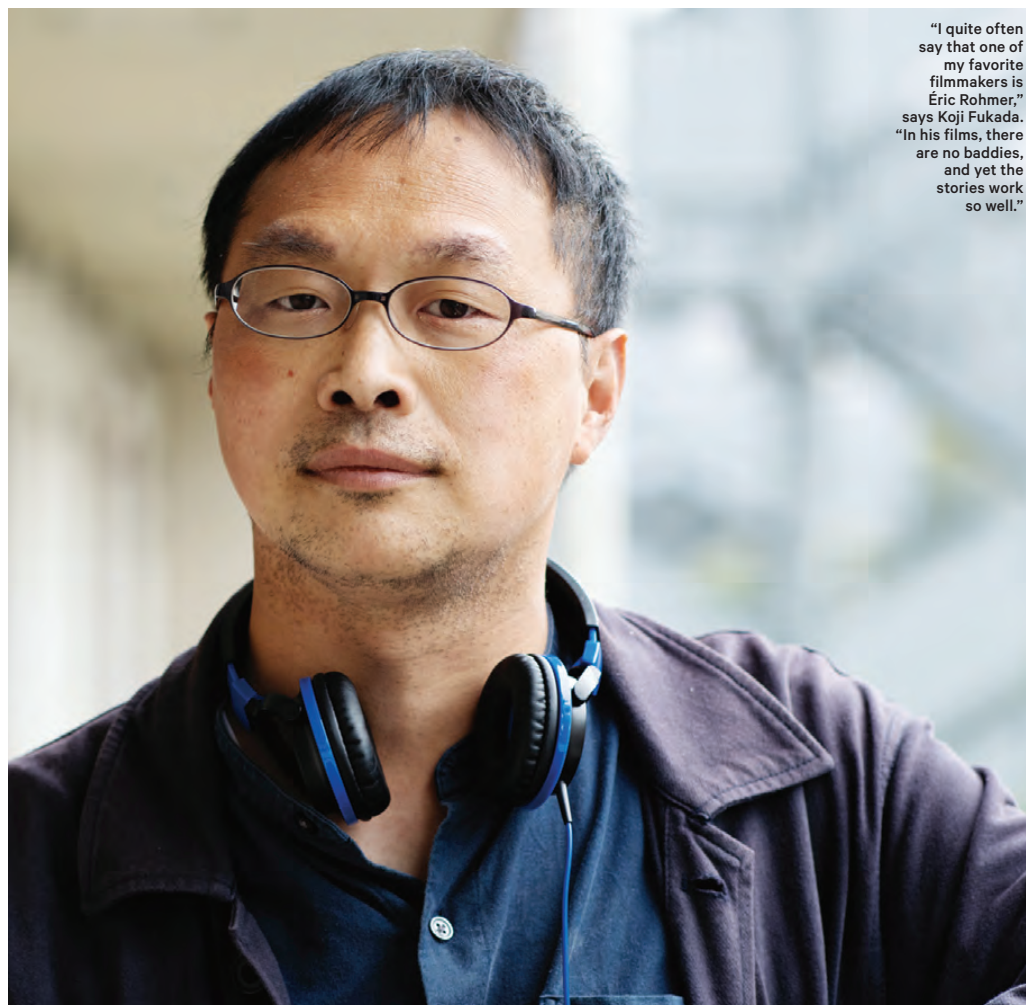
# THE DIRECTOR WHO DOESN'T BELIEVE IN BAD GUYS

Japanese helmer Koji Fukada makes his Cannes competition debut with *Nagi Notes* — a film about solitude, artistic compromise and the radical idea (inspired by his hero Miyazaki) that there are no villains **BY PATRICK BRZESKI**

**W**hen Japanese director Koji Fukada received the Tokyo International Film Festival's Akira Kurosawa Award at the age of 42 in 2022, he bashfully suggested that the career achievement prize might be coming a little too soon. Past recipients had included Steven Spielberg, Yoji Yamada and Taiwan's Hou Hsiao-hsien; and the other honoree that night, with whom he shared a stage, was five-time Oscar winner Alejandro González Iñárritu. Fukada said he would be donating the cash prize that came with the honor to a local organization he had co-founded that provides mental health and legal support to freelance film workers in Japan — and he vowed to keep striving to make good on the faith placed in his talent.

Fukada had already consistently distinguished himself at major film festivals — his breakthrough family comedy *Hospitalité* won Tokyo's top prize in 2010, and his harrowing dramatic thriller *Harmonium* took home the jury prize from Cannes' Un Certain Regard section in 2016 — but for his latest feature, *Nagi Notes*, Cannes has elevated him into its main competition for the first time, giving him a shot at the kind of glory befitting an Akira Kurosawa Award winner. He joins compatriots Hirokazu Kore-eda (*Shoplifters*) and Ryūsuke Hamaguchi (*All of a Sudden*) in the Palme d'Or race — the first time in 25 years that three Japanese filmmakers have competed for Cannes' top prize in a single edition.

*Nagi Notes* follows two



"I quite often say that one of my favorite filmmakers is Éric Rohmer," says Koji Fukada. "In his films, there are no baddies, and yet the stories work so well."

middle-aged women — Yuri (played by Shizuka Ishibashi) and Yoriko (Takako Matsu) — who reunite in the rural Japanese town of the film's title over a few days in spring. Yuri is the ex-wife of Yoriko's brother, but the two women have remained close. Yoriko toils in anonymity in Nagi as a sculptor of human figures hewn from raw blocks of wood. Yuri is an architect at a large Tokyo firm, but she's come

to visit Yoriko after finding herself at an impasse both professionally and personally. Fukada films rural Japanese life in Nagi with evident affection, and as the women reconnect and interact with a handful of other locals, memories and tensions build to the point of an unexpected reckoning.

Ahead of *Nagi Notes*' Cannes premiere — and Fukada's first walk up the Palais steps as a competition director — *THR*

connected with him in Tokyo to discuss the creative origins of his new feature, what 10 months in rural Nagi taught him about a town's hidden lives, and why he's grown convinced — like his hero Hayao Miyazaki — that "bad guys" don't belong in movies.

**This is your second time adapting a work by playwright Oriza Hirata for the screen, following *Sayonara* (2015). How did this follow-up collaboration come about?**

Japanese Himalayan Master

# YOGMATA KEIKO AIKAWA

Limited capacity  
Invitation priority

5/14

Cannes

Thu

2:30PM – 5:30PM

Venue Mondrian Cannes

Address 45 Bd de la Croisette, Cannes



5/15

Cannes

Fri

9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Venue American Pavillion

Address Village Internationale Palais

des Festivals, Esplanade du

President Pompidou, Cannes



5/17

Paris

Sun

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Venue Soho House Paris

Address 45 Rue la Bruyère, Paris



6/17

New York

wed

TBD

Venue Soho House New York

Address 29-35 9th Ave, New York, NY



## A SUCCESS STORY : From Coal to Diamond !!



\*Yogmata blessed PM Modi at the UN in 2023.

### Profile – YOGMATA KEIKO AIKAWA

The first woman in history—and at present the only Himalayan great saint accessible in ordinary society, she is the rightful heir to an esoteric tradition spanning over 5,000 years. She underwent intense spiritual training in a remote region of the Himalayas above 5,000 meters, abiding for days in a state of unity between the individual self and the divine, attained the "ultimate samadhi", and thereby realized the ultimate truth. Between 1991 and 2007, she gave public demonstrations of samadhi on eighteen occasions across India in the service of world peace and the affirmation of truth.

A globally recognized meditation master from Japan, Yogmata Keiko Aikawa will present a series of exclusive meditation experiences across Cannes, Paris, and New York.

Blending ancient Himalayan meditation traditions with a refined Japanese approach to simplicity, inner balance, and deep awareness, her method offers a grounded and accessible path to personal clarity and transformation.

These sessions are designed for both beginners and experienced participants, providing a rare opportunity to experience a powerful yet practical form of meditation in an intimate setting.

### Benefits of Himalayan Siddha Meditation

1. Awakens one's innate abilities and supports success in life
2. Fills the body with vital energy and promotes rejuvenation
3. Purifies negative karma and generates a path to good fortune
4. Sharpens intuition and enriches the imagination
5. Frees the mind of anxiety and stress
6. Encourages the sharing of positive energy with others, benefiting society
7. Helps one discover the purpose of life



#### Application form



#### Questions/Inquiries



chida@science.ne.jp

#### Yogmata Official site



<https://science.ne.jp/english/en>

#### Instagram



@YOGMATA\_KEIKO\_AIKAWA

Science of Enlightenment

In this case, he just got in touch with me. His play *Tokyo Notes* takes place entirely within an art museum, and he told me that there's actually a really nice art museum in this town called Nagi, and he wondered whether I might be able to adapt his play, but set it in this museum in rural Japan instead of Tokyo. That sounded like an interesting idea, so I went to Nagi — about a six-hour ride from Tokyo by bullet train — and that's where it all started, in 2017. I visited the museum there, and it really was a wonderful building and an impressive arts institution — a great setting. But I also found Nagi to be a unique and fascinating town, and I started to think it would be a bit of a waste to tell this story without leaving the museum. So I moved away from the original play and started coming up with this idea for a story set in Nagi itself, which became *Nagi Notes*.

**I understand you later did a longer artist-in-residency stay in Nagi. What were your impressions of the place, and how did they feed your story?**

I ended up spending about 10 months there, speaking with local residents and building my story more or less from scratch. First off, it's a very interesting place. The art museum has this very modern and unique design and it's just plopped there in the middle of this rural landscape, which makes for quite an unusual image. The museum has been there for nearly 30 years now, and it's had an effect on the population of Nagi. They're very proud of it, and the people there have become very culturally and artistically aware. Then, of course, as in the film, there is also a large military facility — a Japanese Self-Defense Forces base. This is a contrasting aspect of the town's character. It made me wonder why the base was there, of all



*Nagi Notes* follows a sculptor (Takako Matsu, left) and an architect (Shizuka Ishibashi) who struggle with memory and identity.

places, and the relationship between Tokyo and this rural part of Japan.

**The film presents two versions of the artist and the artist's life. We get the solitary sculptor who is devoted to her craft in a very pure sort of way. Yuri, by contrast, is a successful big-city architect. But she admits to feeling somewhat compromised, and she often complies when they ask her to simply imitate the style of better-known architects. Tell me about your interest in this dichotomy and how you arrived at it.**

Funnily enough, the idea of having an architect and a sculptor came to me quite early on. Initially, it was just instinct, but as I got to know Nagi, these two people and their pursuits turned out to be well-suited to the setting. I don't know how common wood sculpture is in other countries, but in Tokyo, it's a craft that's kind of impossible to pursue. Very few people have enough space in their small homes or apartments to do that kind of work, and there's the issue of noise and complaints from neighbors. High-quality wood is also very expensive. But in Nagi, space is abundant, and you can get beautiful wood cheaply or even for free just by foraging in the surrounding forests.

Architecture is kind of the opposite. It's an art form that

can't be realized alone. No matter how much you love architecture, you can never really just do it by yourself, for the love of the craft. Filmmaking is much the same as architecture. I think I came to these two because I found myself empathizing with Yuri, while at the same time longing for the way Yoriko is able to work — how attractive it would be to live that very pure version of the solitary art life.

**Knowing your filmography, I had some apprehension near the start of *Nagi Notes*. Thinking back to films like *Harmonium* or *Love Life*, I worried that something truly terrible might be about to befall one of the sweet kids or lead characters. But it quickly becomes clear that this is a gentler, subtler, softer sort of film. Was that your intention from the outset?**

This time, from the outset, I knew I didn't want to make something tragic. There are various reasons for that. One of them is that when people in Japan look at rural life from a city perspective, we tend to take quite a negative view — there's a tendency to see them as backward, insular, or even a little spooky. But I didn't want to go down that road. That was the first reason.

The second reason is that things like children going missing or terrible acts of violence are not the only tragedies that we encounter in life. For me, there is a bigger tragedy that exists for all of us, and that is the tragedy of loneliness, and it's something that we all suffer. In the film, Yuri has gotten

divorced and she's found herself stuck in her work and her career — and now, she suddenly finds herself having to face up to this loneliness, and it's the biggest tragedy of her life so far. Yoriko, on the other hand, works totally alone, in a place full of empty land — and maybe because of that, she has accepted loneliness. I think that's what Yuri finds so attractive about Yoriko's way of life. I wanted to show this contrast.

**I was also struck by how there are really no bad people in the movie. What was it like working in that register?**

I didn't find that particularly challenging. I think that everything is relative when it comes to human beings. I don't think there are any good or bad characters. In certain situations, people can appear good or bad — and in this case, it's just that there were no moments in the film where anybody appeared bad. I quite often say that one of my favorite filmmakers is Éric Rohmer. In his films, there are no baddies, and yet the stories work so well. Hayao Miyazaki here in Japan is another hero of mine. He's shaped the way I see the world since I was a child. In the 1980s, he stopped having villains in his films. In every film after *Castle in the Sky* [1986], there are no bad guys.

**The film ends on a most ambiguous note, so I was curious whether you had a resolved answer as to what Yuri is going to reveal about who she really is in the moments or days after the film's end point.**

Yuri's future is not decided. For me, the most important thing about a film is to give space, or to create blanks that the audience can fill in for themselves — not to force my ideas or a message onto the audience. I've left space for the audience to wonder what happens to Yuri and to Yoriko. That's the best way I know to prevent a film from falling into propaganda. Yuri's future is a blank space, like all of ours. I do wish I could see how that sculpture turns out, though. **THR**

**“THIS TIME, FROM THE OUTSET, I KNEW I DIDN'T WANT TO MAKE SOMETHING TRAGIC.”**

# TAIPEI

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TAIPEI  
FILM  
COMMISSION

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# ACTION!



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FILMING TAIPEI  
SCREENPLAY  
COMPETITION



TAIPEI  
FILM ACADEMY  
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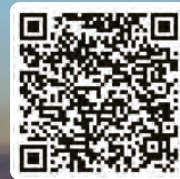


TAIPEI FILM FUND



TIGSFA

TAIPEI INTERNATIONAL  
GOLDEN SHORT FILM AWARDS



# YES SHE CANNES

## MEET THE WOMEN SHAPING CANNES



At the heart of Yes She Cannes is the She Squad — a global network of women across the film industry. Built on authentic connection, genuine support and opportunities. This Member Spotlight invites you to discover a selection of those members shaping Cannes this year, bringing projects, ideas and collaborations into the industry.

### PRODUCERS

#### Patricia Chica

Producer, director and PR strategist behind Flirt Films and ChicArt PR, Patricia Chica supports international creatives while producing author-driven feature films.



#### Aida Schlaepfer

A producer working across screenplay development and film distribution, Aida Schlaepfer curates high-quality projects while building international partnerships.



#### Tasja Cathrin Rosè

Writer and producer developing award-winning sci-fi series *Darkness & Fire*, Tasja Cathrin Rosè builds international partnerships across film and music.



#### Wanda Bryant Hope

A producer and former Corporate executive, Wanda Bryant Hope brings award winning leadership across global strategy, marketing, and film investment.



#### Sophia Louisa Lee

A writer-director-producer, Sophia Louisa Lee develops psychologically driven films and novels exploring identity, memory and the unseen.



#### Belindalee Hope

Award-winning producer of *Joika*, *Madam and Shadow in the Cloud*. Founder of Be Hope Films and Co-founder of The Wing, NZ's international co-production entity, leveraging the 40% NZSPR rebate for global partners.



#### Maria Soccò

An award-winning producer, director and founder of Maria Soccò Productions, Maria Soccò is developing a slate of film and documentary projects.



#### Luna Zhang

Luna Zhang is an independent producer specializing in film finance, deal making, and global partnerships. Her work champions meaningful storytelling and diverse voices.



#### Isabella Blake-Thomas

A Producers Guild member, Isabella Blake-Thomas has worked across Disney+, Amazon and Netflix and is preparing to direct her debut feature.



#### Simone McIntyre

Writer, producer and actress, Simone McIntyre works across film, theatre and voice, with credits including Amazon's *Ride or Die*, Audible Bestsellers and BAFTA-qualifying festivals.



#### Mirjeta Baraliu

A producer and filmmaker, Mirjeta Baraliu is presenting her documentary *Children of Kosovo* while seeking international partners for development and distribution.



#### Karmen Audino

A film publicist and emerging producer, leading publicity across MENA. She is developing her original series *BONDS* and moving into global content packaging.



### DIRECTORS

#### Sylvie Zaidman

A producer developing a feature based on her award-winning short *tRUTH*, Sylvie Zaidman focuses on character-driven stories exploring the future of society.



#### Aella Jordan-Edge

An award-winning director and NFTS graduate, Aella Jordan-Edge is developing her debut feature following her Tribeca and Cannes SFC-selected short *Truckload*.



#### Elizabeth Blake-Thomas

Director and founder of *Mother Daughter Entertainment*, Elizabeth Blake-Thomas is developing new projects while expanding her work across film, storytelling and creative coaching.



#### Sophia Seymour

An NFTS alumna and director of *Is It Heaven Up There?*, Sophia Seymour is presenting her Cannes SFC-selected short while developing two feature films and building international co-production partnerships.



# BUILDING COLLECTIVE POWER

Cannes is often seen as a place of access — but access alone is not enough. Real change happens when presence becomes collective, when connections become collaboration, and when visibility is shared, not competed for.

## Kaz (Karen) Anstee

Writer-director developing a slate of feature films. Kaz Anstee's distinctive voice is influenced by her career as a Royal Ballet and opera violinist, bringing musicality and wit to character-driven storytelling.



## Victoria U. Bell

Director-producer Victoria U. Bell is building an international slate spanning romance and psychological thriller, focused on commercially driven stories with strong emotional stakes.



## Aurora Ovan

Italian writer-director Aurora Ovan is developing climate sci-fi feature *Chronicles of Nature and City*, selected for the *Fantastic Pavilion Round Robin*, focused on blending genre storytelling with a focus on sustainability and impact.



## Aida Golghazi

Aida Golghazi is a writer-director in the UK, creating films on identity and belonging, shaped by her multicultural heritage and upbringing. She is currently finishing her MA graduation film at Metfilm School.



### ACTORS

## Tegan Grace Muggeridge

Rising Star Tegan Grace Muggeridge is a British actress-turned-director, who is the lead in *A Girl Called Alice* and directed her debut short "A Swiped Illusion".



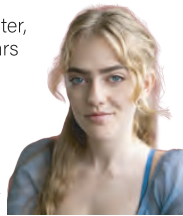
## Clara Cantos

A trilingual Spanish actress working across European Film and Theatre, Clara Cantos brings characters of quiet power with dangerous edges and multi-award winning writing to Cannes.



## Nina Hafner

An actor and trained film fighter, Nina Hafner stars in upcoming feature *The Commitment* while working across film and stage in the UK and Europe.



## Lee Lawson

Candaian screen nominated actor and award winning filmmaker, including jury award at SWSX for *Man Eating Pus\*y* Lee Lawson is developing following new genre projects.



## Stéphanie Ponsin

Award-winning actress Stéphanie Ponsin brings bold, emotionally driven performances to international film while developing her work as a writer and director.



## Jenna Rae Montgomery

An actor specialising in period drama, Jenna Rae Montgomery combines performance with a background in history, bringing authenticity to character-led storytelling.



## Cathy Conneff

Actor and writer known for work with Film4 and BBC, currently developing her *NEXT PROJECT Closure* and expanding collaborations around neurodivergent storytelling.



## Inessa Kraft

An actor and producer drawn to philosophical, uplifting storytelling, Inessa Kraft creates globally resonant work rooted in adventure, identity and transformation.



## Sophia Koman

A Neapolitan actress trained across Italy, the UK and France, Sophia Koman is developing her first screenplay alongside a growing slate of international projects.



## Martine Richards

An actor and award-winning voice artist, Martine Richards has appeared in *Return to Silent Hill* and works across film, games and audio storytelling.



## Lisa Miranda

An actress and executive producer on upcoming feature *Red Card*, Lisa Miranda works internationally across film, fashion and socially driven storytelling.



## Mara Natuzzi

An Italian actress and emerging filmmaker based in London, Mara Natuzzi is developing new multilingual and socially driven work following her directional debut 'Padre'.



## Sabrina Culver

Producer on Neb Chopin's *Storm Rider*, directed by Zoran Lisinac. A seasoned actress she has appeared in numerous projects including the upcoming *The Canvas*.



## Isabella Bonfante

Director and actress Isabella Bonfante creates psychologically driven, female-led stories, bringing international market experience and a sharp visual voice to her work.



## Rebecca Turner

A London-based, award-winning actor, Rebecca Turner brings truth and grit to on screen performances, while also developing a social impact feature film as a writer and producer.



## Leigh Ariana Trifari

A cultural writer and consultant producer, Leigh Trifari works across film strategy and editorial, supporting award-winning projects while exploring global creative power through Sovereign Scripting.



### OTHERS

## Denée Busby-Howard

Producer, showrunner and capital strategist redefining how power, ownership and storytelling interact in Hollywood. Showrunner for BET's *Legacy*. Credits include: *Angel*, *Lot Patrol* and *Stray House*.



## Alida Pantone

Founder of the London Rolling Film Festival, Alida Pantone is a curator supporting emerging filmmakers, with screenings at *Vue Cinema Piccadilly* and partnerships across the festival circuit.



## Faith Elizabeth

Filmmaker and founder of *Yes She Cannes*, championing women in film. Creator of the award-winning *My Baby Cries*. Horror-comedy *Granny DJ* is now on the festival circuit. Developing debut feature *The Trabocchi Tails: Asrai*, a dark mermaid fantasy set in Italy.



**YES SHE CANNES**  
CONNECT WITH US AND DISCOVER  
MORE ABOUT THE SHE SQUAD



# YES SHE CANNES

# WOMEN BUILDING COLLECTIVE POWER



MARCHÉ DU FILM



**Yes She Cannes** is a global platform supporting women in film through community, visibility and access at the Cannes Film Festival. Founded in 2018 by filmmaker Faith Elizabeth, it connects an international network of creatives, industry leaders and emerging voices navigating the film market.

At its core, Yes She Cannes supports women attending Cannes — from first-timers to established professionals — through curated programming, community spaces and meaningful industry connections. Through its membership network, the She Squad, it fosters collaboration, knowledge-sharing and visibility across all sectors, including performance, directing, production, finance and distribution.

## COMMUNITY

At the heart of Yes She Cannes is the She Squad — a global community of women across the film industry. Built on shared experience and collaboration, the network continues to grow, strengthening collective presence at Cannes.



## THE TERRACE - MEMBER SPACE

Launching this year at Cannes, The Terrace is an exclusive new space for She Squad members to connect, collaborate and grow — designed to foster meaningful relationships and offer on the ground support.

**Featuring Terrace Talks including:** From Funding to Visibility with Luna Zhang and Patricia Chica, and a Welcome Workshop with Dr Clare Anyiam-Osigwe in partnership with the Wellness Film Festival. AIX Rosé served throughout.



Presenting Two Panels at the Marché du Film:

## MAIN STAGE PANEL

### BUILDING COLLECTIVE POWER: HOW WOMEN ACROSS THE INDUSTRY SHAPE INFLUENCE IN FILM

Join us for a conversation exploring how women across the industry are building influence, visibility and lasting change in film.

Palais des Festivals

14 May 2026

16:00-17:00



**Faith Elizabeth**  
Filmmaker, Director Faithful films,  
CEO Yes She Cannes



**Sara Hamilton**  
Head of Global Partnerships &  
Impact Strategy, E2AC x Greenlit



**Guneet Monga Kapoor**  
CEO & Producer, Sikhya  
Entertainment, Founder, WIF India



**Maria Hundsnes-Shvetsova**  
Co-Founder & VP, DISAUTHORITY



**Amanda Toney**  
Managing Director, Stage 32



**Maria Soccor**  
Actor, Filmmaker & Founder, Maria  
Soccor Productions



MARCHÉ DU FILM



E2AC

change starts with a story

DISAUTHORITY

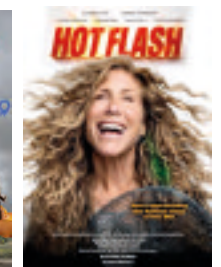
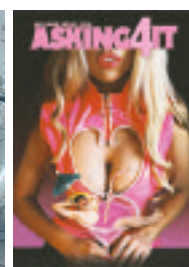
STAGE  
32

MARIA SOCCOR  
PRODUCTIONS INC.



## PROJECT SHOWCASE

Presented at the panel, a curated showcase of women-led projects connecting bold voices with industry opportunity.



# PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

**MAIN STAGE PANEL**  
Shaping Industry Influence  
Through Collective Power

**WOMEN IN GENRE PANEL**  
Opening Doors Across  
Horror, Sci-Fi and Thriller

**PROJECT SHOWCASE**  
Connecting Bold Voices  
with Industry Opportunity

**THE TERRACE**  
A New Members' Space  
for Connection and  
Conversation

**SHE SQUAD  
COMMUNITY**  
A Global Network  
Supporting Women in Film

**INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS**  
Collaborating Across the  
Marché and Global  
Pavilions

## DISCOVER MORE

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## WOMEN IN GENRE PANEL

### WOMEN IN GENRE: SHAPING CAREERS, OPENING DOORS & BUILDING POWER

Presented with the Fantastic Pavilion, in partnership with Etheria Film Festival, Wench Film Festival and Bloodstream.

Palais des Festivals  
(palais stage -1)

16 May 2026

15:30-16:30

Followed by a private cocktail at the Fantastic Pavilion, by invitation only.



**Faith Elizabeth**  
Filmmaker, Director Faithful films,  
CEO Yes She Cannes



**Heidi Honeycutt**  
Etheria FF, Studio Dome,  
Bloodstream & Author



**Sapna Moti Bhavnani**  
Filmmaker & Festival Director,  
Wench Film Festival



**Joanne Mitchell**  
Director, Writer, Producer of  
Broken Bird



**Natasha Halevi**  
Director & Actress, Fatale Collective



**Lee Lawson**  
Filmmaker & Actress of  
Man Eating Pus\*y



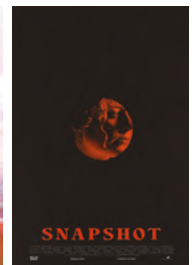
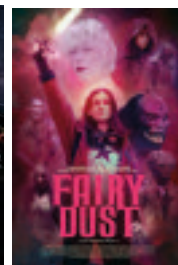
## LED BY FAITH ELIZABETH



Filmmaker, director and founder of Yes She Cannes, Faith Elizabeth champions women in film while developing bold, female-driven stories of her own. Alongside festival-screening short Granny DJ, she is currently developing debut feature The Trabocchi Tails, a dark mermaid fantasy exploring identity, transformation and the female experience through a richly female-led world.

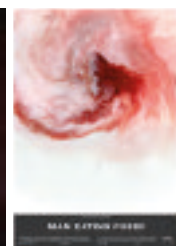
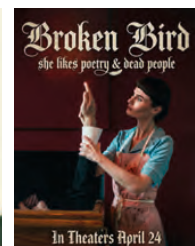
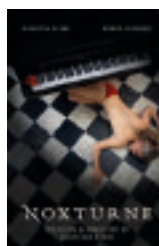
## PROJECT SHOWCASE

A curated selection of projects showcased at the Women in Genre panel, spotlighting bold voices and creating space for industry connection. Featuring: The Catch — Jo Southwell (Mermaid Pictures); tRUTH — Sylvie Zaidman (Our Way Movies); Snapshot — Silicon Gothic; Bone Keeper — Howard J. Ford (Latitude Films); Fairy Dust — Andy Edwards (Paranoid Android Films) and Charlie Shaw's Revenge — John Langridge (Drop Dead Films).



## GENERATING BUZZ

From SXSW winner Lee Lawson, Man Eating Pus\*y, to Joanne Mitchell's FrightFest-opening Broken Bird, alongside Kristina Klebe's directorial debut Noxturne and rising talent Aurora Ovan presenting Chronicles of Nature at the Fantastic Pavilion Round Robin - a snapshot of female voices shaping the future of film.



## SPECIAL THANKS TO

Here's to the women who made this year possible — from Elena Davidson (OOF Mortgages), who stepped in to secure our venue, to PR support from Patricia Chica (ChicArt PR), and those working tirelessly behind the scenes, including Alida Pantone (London Rolling Film Festival). None of this would be possible without you. Our deepest thanks.



# Karla Sofía Gascón Rides Back Into the Fray

As ISII Group makes its Cannes debut with *Trinidad*, the star opens up about playing a villainess and what she really thinks about the *Emilia Pérez* Oscar season storm: 'I am one of the least harmful people in this world'

BY GEORG SZALAI

Spanish film company ISII Group is inviting audiences on a star-studded cinematic trip to the American Wild West with its most ambitious feature film so far, the action-adventure Western *Trinidad*, starring Karla Sofía Gascón, Paz Vega, Gabriela Andrada and Sofia Allepuz.

Written and directed by Laura Alvea and José Ortuño and set to premiere in Spain on Nov. 13, *Trinidad*, which was shot in the Canary Islands, tells the story of a young Spanish woman, played by Andrada, who moves to the American Wild West with her mother (Vega) and sister (Allepuz) to escape legal issues. She finds a new life as a gunslinger, which allows her to support her family, but also creates enemies, including the widow Bronson, portrayed by Gascón in her first major role since her Oscar-nominated work in Jacques Audiard's *Emilia Pérez*.

Led by CEO Silvia Carvalho, the Madrid-headquartered ISII Group, founded in 2024, has been gearing up for its inaugural Cannes after making its market debut at Berlin via its international sales and distribution firm Deep Com Roots. The company says it has been in pre-market negotiations for *Trinidad* for several territories.

ISII Group encompasses four production companies: Inefable Productions, which focuses on fiction and is behind *Trinidad*; Isora Films, which specializes



From left: Gabriela Andrada, Paz Vega and Karla Sofía Gascón in ISII Group's *Trinidad*.

in documentaries; Sinapsis Studios for animation projects; and SIA Servicios Audiovisuales, its production services arm. ISII also has a presence, and skin in the game, across other parts of the film business. Also part of the company are KBCF Consulting, focused on financial and regulatory structuring, and Divergente, a streaming platform for content that is less than an hour long.

Overall, ISII looks to combine artistic and financial ambition

with a focus on films that can travel. *Trinidad* is "designed as an event" with "a long-view commercial plan," Carvalho tells *THR*. "*Trinidad* is clearly our flagship title, but we are not arriving with just one project," she explains. "We are bringing a broad in-house slate of diverse original projects, including upcoming theatrical releases, and two high-profile [titles] in production, one of them English-language. We offer a diverse catalogue

that caters to commercial high-concept and prestige distributors worldwide."

Among the wider slate: *Love on a Tightrope*, Arima León's debut feature about the real-life romance between tightrope walker Pinito del Oro and poet Natalia Sosa; *Summer Days*, directed by Chema de la Peña, about a son whose father brings his much younger girlfriend home for the summer; the thriller-horror film *Restricted Area*, which is almost completed; and

For all the latest coverage of the Cannes Film Festival, go to [THR.COM/CANNES](https://www.THR.COM/CANNES)



CALIFORNIA PICTURES

Cannes 2026 | Marche Du Film | Riviera E12



SCREENING: Sun, May 17  
Palais H - 13:30 (1:30p)



SCREENING: Thur, May 14  
Palais H - 15:45 (3:45p)



SCREENING: Sat, May 16  
Palais H - 13:30 (1:30p)



SCREENING: Fri, May 15  
Palais H - 13:30 (1:30p)



SCREENING: Thur, May 14  
Palais H - 13:30 (1:30p)



SCREENING: Fri, May 15  
Palais H - 15:45 (3:45p)



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Jennifer@CaliforniaPicturesInc.com

ISII's first English-language thriller, *La Cathédrale*, which begins shooting soon.

For Carvalho, *Trinidad* represents something larger than a single title. "It is the first clear statement of the kind of cinema we want to build at ISII Group," she says. "We believe in a theatrical-first approach, in films made to connect with audiences through the singular experience of going to the movies."

She adds: "ISII Group is still less than 2 years old, yet we already have four feature films scheduled for release in 2026, four more already greenlit for production this year, and a wider pipeline of projects in development. *Trinidad* is the first visible sign of a broader creative and industrial vision — one designed for sustainable growth and long-term partnerships."

*THR* spoke with Gascón about her role, the controversy she's leaving behind and what a 19th century Western has to say about the world today.

**What attracted you to *Trinidad*, a 19th century Spanish Western, after your success with *Emilia Pérez*?**

What attracted me most was the opportunity to play another great character. When I was offered the chance to take part in a Western, the first thing that came to mind was playing with horses and guns, but what I was offered was far better: a crippled, bitter villainess with a deep resentment toward progress.

**What was it like working with an ensemble cast, including Paz Vega and Gabriela Andrada, under the direction of Laura Alvea and José Ortuño?**

They are all top-level artists, fully committed to a project into which they've poured their soul and their love for our profession and for filmmaking. It's always a pleasure to work with such talented people who elevate everything we do.



Says ISII Group CEO Silvia Carvalho: "ISII Group is still less than 2 years old, yet we already have four feature films scheduled for release in 2026, four more already greenlit for production this year, and a wider pipeline of projects in development."

**What was it like shooting a story set in the old United States in the Canary Islands?**

Spain has hosted numerous productions set in the Old West. Practically all of Clint Eastwood's films were shot in Spain, given the landscape similarities and the facilities available. Having visited several places in the U.S., I wouldn't be able to tell where it was filmed. It's fascinating to see how an imagined reality is re-created and brought to life through streets, wagons, horses and guns.

**How relevant are the issues explored in the film today?**

It's actually a very timely film. It speaks about resentment and racism in a society that sees difference as a threat to its interests, instead of embracing it as a starting point for growth and understanding. It also addresses misogyny, oppression, tradition and a kind of conservatism that stands against progress and the advancement of rights and development. It touches on the challenges faced by immigrants, who must navigate a society of immigrants that does not want to lose control. It's a story about human hypocrisy — failing to recognize that their ancestors once followed the same path as those they now criticize.

**In this film, you play the villain. Was that a conscious decision after the controversy surrounding past tweets that made some people see you as a villain during the *Emilia Pérez* Oscar campaign? And what lessons did you take from that experience?**

I choose my roles based on my interpretive abilities, the acting challenge they present, and above all, the life contrast they offer — allowing me to explore different versions of the human being. This villain is a clear example of how far the character is from my reality, far removed from the image some tried to attach to me in their attempt to defame me. I am one of the least harmful people in this world.

The whole tweet story now feels almost like a childish tale. Given the current climate, it's not hard to understand where it came from and who was behind it. Someone decided who I should be in people's minds and built a narrative to fit that image. With time and perspective, I've fully understood this fabrication, used simply to prevent an actress from winning an award because of what she represents.

When the time comes, I will speak more in depth about it. The lesson I take is always a positive one: No matter how much it feels like everything is

turning against you, smile — because, as the saying goes, he who laughs last, laughs best, especially when you're falsely accused of [being] something you are not. In the end, I was lucky — it could have been much worse.

**What can you tell us about your character, the widow Bronson, and the role?**

It's my first fully English-language film, with a Southern accent. She's essentially a female Darth Vader, with the power of the dark side and strong manipulative abilities. If it weren't for the setting, she could easily be a great comic book supervillain.

**What was the most difficult part of your role or the shoot?**

Being confined to a wooden chair, wearing that impressive multilayered costume, in the intense heat of Gran Canaria. But it was worth it.

**What is your hope for *Trinidad*, which seems like it could have broad audience appeal?**

Many surprises. I believe it's a remarkable piece within its own unclassifiable genre. Hopefully, we'll be able to premiere it at a festival and compete for awards that my fellow cast and crew undoubtedly deserve. Audiences are going to have a lot of fun with the adventures and misadventures of these unusual characters.

**Do you have other projects with ISII in the works?**

Yes. I love the creativity of the entire team led by Silvia. Hopefully, we'll be able to bring audiences as many stories as our imagination allows.

I'd love to be able to share details about the upcoming projects, as there are many cinematic adventures ahead with ISII Group, but for now it's time for the American West and *Trinidad*. **THR**

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# Japan Is Everywhere at Cannes This Year

With Kore-eda, Hamaguchi and Fukada in competition and a new generation pitching at the market, the country of honor is making the most of its moment **BY MATHEW SCOTT**

It has been a very good year for Japanese cinema — and Cannes is where the country has come to prove it.

In the main competition, buzz has been building around three of Japan's previous Cannes heroes. Palme d'Or winner Hirokazu Kore-eda (*Shoplifters*, 2018) returns with *Sheep in the Box*; Ryūsuke Hamaguchi — best screenplay winner in 2021 for *Drive My Car* — presents his French co-production *All of a Sudden*;

and Koji Fukada, who took the Un Certain Regard Jury Prize in 2016 for *Harmonium*, competes with *Nagi Notes*. All three films explore questions of family and friendship.

Japan is also looking ahead. On May 15, the Japan Goes to Cannes night at the Marché du Film will present five in-production projects that speak to the strength and diversity of contemporary Japanese cinema.

Among them is Kore-eda's



Above, from left: Koji Fukada, Ryūsuke Hamaguchi and Hirokazu Kore-eda. Left: Hamaguchi's *All of a Sudden* tells the story of a woman who runs a care home for the elderly who is profoundly affected by meeting a theater director who is battling cancer.

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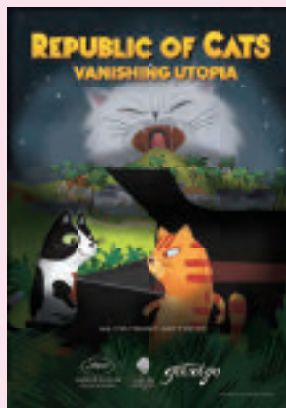
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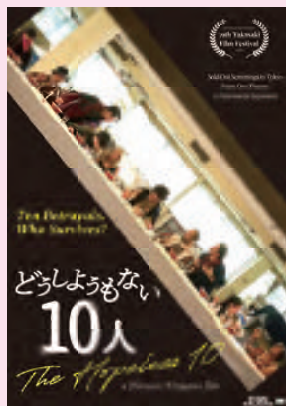
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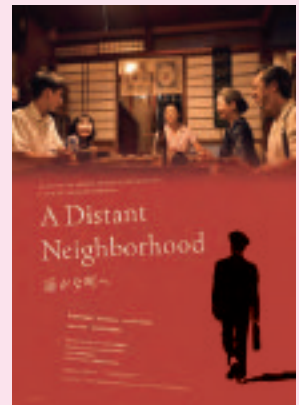
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next film, *Look Back* — currently in postproduction — which traces the 13-year friendship between two girls who bond over a love of manga. It will be the director's first manga adaptation, and the story of how he came to it says everything about the project's pull.

"He picked it up on impulse and read the entire manga in one sitting that night," producer Daiju Koide tells *THR*. "Although manga and film are different mediums, he felt a raw, urgent sense of determination from the work as a creator. He told me he could feel, almost painfully, that the author, Tatsuki Fujimoto, must have felt he couldn't move forward without creating this piece."

Given the source material's popularity — and the fact that the anime version scooped an estimated \$13 million at the Japanese box office — expectations are high, especially when it comes to the casting of the two much-loved central characters. The hope among fans is that the actors will be announced in Cannes.

"One of the most daunting tasks was finding the right children to portray the two leads, Fujino and Kyomoto," says Koide. "Before the auditions began, I was genuinely anxious, wondering if children who could embody such captivating characters even existed in the real world. Yet, sitting right next to me, director Kore-eda was all smiles. As it turned out, the two we found through the auditions were truly extraordinary."

Also being presented is *The Gate of Murder*, a thriller from Ko Kanai — known for popular TV dramas including *Naomi & Kanako* (2016). Produced by Yoshikazu Tsubaki and Kadokawa Corporation, the film follows a man haunted by a childhood acquaintance he blames for all his misfortunes, who begins plotting the man's death.



From top: In Kore-eda's neo-sci-fi *Sheep in a Box*, a married couple who have lost their son are offered a humanoid robot who is identical to the boy. Fukuda's *Nagi Notes* tells the story of a sculptor and an architect who develop a unique bond in rural Japan.

The bullishness is well-founded. Back home, the world's third-largest film market saw annual revenues soar 32 percent to \$1.79 billion in 2025, surpassing the pre-pandemic record of \$1.70 billion set in 2019. Production numbers are also at an all-time high, with 694 Japanese films released in 2025, beating the previous record of 689 (2019), while 685 were released in 2024.

Local titles did the heavy lifting: The anime monster hit *Demon Slayer: Infinity Castle — Part I* led the way with \$255 million, followed by Kabuki epic

*Kokuho* (\$127 million) — the highest-grossing domestic live-action film of all time — with *Detective Conan: One-Eyed Flashback* (\$95.8 million) and *Chainsaw Man — The Movie: Reze Arc* (\$67.8 million) also performing strongly.

The Goes to Cannes lineup reflects that momentum. *You, Fireworks, and Our Promise* (working title), an animated film from Shin-Ei Animation and SynergySP, directed by Akira Suzuki and produced by Michihiko Umezawa, follows a high school boy who discovers a drawing of fireworks bearing his name and a future date

— only for the girl carrying it to vanish, replaced by her identical-looking great-grandmother from the past.

"What has always been important to us is the idea that even the smallest moments can carry a sense of warmth, humor, and sometimes a quiet sense of wonder," says Umezawa. "*You, Fireworks, and Our Promise* is part of that ongoing journey. While the storyline begins with something very local, the Nagaoka Fireworks Festival, the film speaks about universal ideas of memory, time, and the way emotions can be shared across generations. At its heart, this is also a coming-of-age love story. I think one of the strengths of anime is that it allows the ordinary and the imaginative to exist naturally side by side."

Veteran director Takahisa Zeze (*64: Part I*, *64: Part II*) brings mystery-drama *All That Exists* (working title) to the market, produced by Takahashi Naoya with sales through Toei Company. A journalist haunted by a twin kidnapping case is drawn back into the mystery 30 years later, following the death of the detective who worked on it, and into the orbit of a strange realist painter.

Rounding out the lineup is *Lives at Right Angles*, from Syoutarou Kobayashi (*Kaasan Mom's Life*), produced by Sato Gen through Toei Video Company with Hakuhodo DY Music & Pictures handling sales. The film follows Daiki, a janitor who has managed his life with autism spectrum disorder with the help of his sister — until she decides to get married, leaving him to face an uncertain future alone.

For all involved, the opportunity carries real weight. "Not only in terms of exposure, but also in how we connect with the international film community," says Umezawa — speaking, it's fair to say, for everyone on the lineup. **THR**

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## SCREENING GUIDE


**WEDNESDAY**  
**May 13**

<p><b>8:45</b> <i>In Waves</i> (91 mins.), Miramar, Charades</p> <p><b>9:00</b> <i>Oh, This Unspeakable Void</i> (137 mins.), Lerins 2, Beta Cinema</p> <p><b>9:00</b> <i>My Duchess</i> (95 mins.), Lerins Cinema Club, Embankment Films Ltd</p> <p><b>9:00</b> <i>The Electric Kiss</i> (122 mins.), Lumiere, Playtime</p> <p><b>9:00</b> <i>Act One</i> (104 mins.), Olympia 9, Visit Films</p> <p><b>9:00</b> <i>Young Washington</i> (120 mins.), Palais #F Online, Angel Studios</p>	<p><b>9:00</b> <i>Piperplay Promo Reel</i> (120 mins.), Palais #J Online, Piperplay</p> <p><b>9:00</b> <i>Mata</i> (99 mins.), Palais H, Indie Sales</p> <p><b>9:00</b> <i>The Helpers</i> (75 mins.), Riviera #2 Online, Inspire Film Company</p> <p><b>9:30</b> <i>Monkey Quest</i> (92 mins.), Arcades 1, Charades</p> <p><b>9:30</b> <i>A Girl Unknown</i> (125 mins.), Lerins #3 Online, Pyramide International</p> <p><b>9:30</b> <i>Marie-Madeleine</i> (104 mins.), Lerins 3, Pyramide International</p> <p><b>9:30</b> <i>The Last Day</i> Olympia 6, WestEnd Films</p> <p><b>9:30</b> <i>Princess Stella</i> (118 mins.), Palais #C Online, Princ Films</p> <p><b>9:30</b> <i>The Bearded Girl</i></p>	<p>(101 mins.), Palais E, Princ Films</p> <p><b>9:30</b> <i>Ashes</i> (98 mins.), Palais K, Luxbox</p> <p><b>9:30</b> <i>Vita Mia</i> (125 mins.), Riviera #1 Online, Beta Cinema</p> <p><b>9:30</b> <i>Love Divine</i> (120 mins.), Riviera 1, Vision Distribution</p> <p><b>10:00</b> <i>Butterfly Jam</i> Theatre Croisette, Goodfellas</p> <p><b>10:30</b> <i>Lucio Fontana. The Final Cut</i> (90 mins.), Online #4, Nexo Studios</p> <p><b>11:00</b> <i>The Electric Kiss</i> (122 mins.), Agnès Varda, Playtime</p> <p><b>11:00</b> <i>Porte Bagage</i> (100 mins.), Online #1, MMM Film Sales</p> <p><b>13:30</b> <i>Women on Trial</i> (105 mins.), Arcades 1, Gaumont</p>	<p><b>11:30</b> <i>The Harvester</i> (100 mins.), Arcades 3, Latido Films</p> <p><b>11:30</b> <i>Tita</i> Bunuel, Cannes Classics</p> <p><b>11:30</b> <i>Still Afloat</i> (88 mins.), Lerins #2 Online, Latido Films</p> <p><b>13:30</b> <i>The Man in My Head</i> (92 mins.), Lerins 2, Film Factory Entertainment</p> <p><b>11:30</b> <i>Dua</i> (101 mins.), Miramar, The Party Film Sales</p> <p><b>11:30</b> <i>Che Guevara: The Last Companions</i> Olympia 4, Lucky Number</p> <p><b>11:30</b> <i>Forest High</i> (102 mins.), Olympia 5, Rai Cinema</p> <p><b>11:30</b> <i>The Meltdown</i> (100 mins.), Olympia 7, Les Films du Losange</p> <p><b>11:30</b> <i>The Keeper of the Camphor Tree</i> (114 mins.), Olympia 9,</p>
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Charades

**11:30** *Gamer Girls* (102 mins.), Online #2, Reel Suspects

**11:30** *The Retreat* (90 mins.), Palais #B Online, Princ Films

**11:30** *I Understand Your Displeasure* (93 mins.), Palais B, Films Boutique

**11:30** *Someone's Daughter* (102 mins.), Palais D, FilmOption International

**11:30** *Five Years, Four Months* (83 mins.), Palais F, Patra Spanou Film

**11:30** *Abandoned* (81 mins.), Palais H, WTFilms

**11:30** *Matter of Time* (103 mins.), Palais J, Pinnacle Peak Pictures

**11:30** *On Our Own* (95 mins.), Riviera 2, True Colours Glorious Films SRL

**12:00** *God Forgives Everyone* (114 mins.), Lerins #3 Online, Piperplay

**12:00** *A Mighty Adventure* (77 mins.), Lerins 1, Golden Network Asia Ltd

**12:00** *Sola Media Promo Reel* (110 mins.), Olympia #3 Online, Sola Media Gmbh

**12:00** *On Edge* (96 mins.), Olympia 6, Intramovies

**12:00** *5 More Minutes* Palais C, Filmmax (Castelao Pictures)

**12:00** *The Night Driver* Palais E, VMI Worldwide

**12:00** *Miss You, Love You* (120 mins.), Palais G, Architect

**12:00** *Just After Dawn* (100 mins.), Palais I, Futurikon

**13:00** *The Playmaker Munich Promo Reel* (110 mins.), Lerins #4 Online, The Playmaker Munich (A Brand Of B.A. Produktion GmbH)

**13:00** *Tulipop Magical Seasons* (75 mins.), Lerins Cinema Club, Toonz Media Group

**13:30** *Yesterday the Eye Didn't Sleep* (100 mins.), Arcades 3, Salaud Morisset

**13:30** *Adult Supervision* (108 mins.), Lerins 2, Heretic



Yesterday the Eye Didn't Sleep

**13:30** *The Last Resort* (107 mins.), Olympia 5, Voltage Pictures

**13:30** *By Any Means* (115 mins.), Olympia 7, North.Five.Six.

**13:30** *Six Months in a Pink and Blue Building* (104 mins.), Olympia 9, Luxbox

**13:30** *Interior Apartment Day* (91 mins.), Online #6, Reel Suspects

**13:30** *The Last Supper* (120 mins.), Palais #B Online, Pinnacle Peak Pictures

**13:30** *Zoners* (120 mins.), Palais B, Pinnacle Peak Pictures

**13:30** *Love on a Tightrope,* (115 mins.), Palais D, Deep Communication Roots SL

**13:30** *El Sett* (155 mins.), Palais F, Arab Cinema Center

**13:30** *Answer* (90 mins.), Palais H, Radiant Films International

**13:30** *Scruggs* (115 mins.), Palais J, Kassab Pictures LLC

**13:30** *Empty Nesters* (90 mins.), Riviera #2 Online, Picture Tree International GmbH

**13:30** *Between Dreams and Hope* (106 mins.), Riviera 2, True Colours Glorious Films SRL

**14:00** *The Journey to Gyeong-Ju* (110 mins.), Lerins 1, Lotte Entertainment

**14:00** *Ip Man: Kung Fu Legend* (98 mins.), Lerins 3, All Rights Entertainment (France)

**14:00** *Inside Girl* (90 mins.), Olympia 3, Other Angle Pictures

**14:00** *Grace Period* (115 mins.), Olympia 6, Voltage Pictures

**14:00** *Death Has No Master* (105 mins.), Olympia 8, Lucky Number

**14:00** *Into the Jaws of the Ogre* (86 mins.), Palais C, Rediance

**14:00** *Knight on Wheels,* (75 mins.), Palais E, Cinema Do Brasil

**14:00** *Bachelorette Nightmare* (110 mins.), Palais G, OCG Plus (Uzbekistan)

**14:00** *Congo Boy* (110 mins.), Palais I, The Party Film Sales

**14:00** *Girl in the Clouds* (90 mins.), Palais K, SC Films International

**14:00** *La Luz* (120 mins.), Riviera 1, Latido Films

**14:00** *I Can't Sleep* (110 mins.), Theatre Croisette, Quinzaine Des Cinéastes / Directors' Fortnight

**14:45** *In Waves* (91 mins.), Miramar, Charades

**15:00** *Nagi Notes* (108 mins.), Lumiere, mk2 Films

**15:00** *Gunman* (80 mins.), Online #1, MMM Film Sales

**3:15** *The Match* Debussy, Goodfellas

**3:30** *Moonlighting* Agnès Varda, Cannes Classics

**15:45** *Just an Illusion* (114 mins.), Arcades 3, Gaumont

**15:45** *Ashes* (98 mins.), Bunuel, Luxbox

**15:45** *The Greater Good* (102 mins.), Lerins #2 Online, Piperplay

**15:45** *Vesna* (93 mins.), Lerins 2, The Bureau Sales

**15:45** *TrustNordisk Promo Reel* (110 mins.), Olympia #1 Online, TrustNordisk

**15:45** *Their Town* (80 mins.), Olympia #4 Online, Visit Films

**15:45** *The History of Concrete* (101 mins.), Olympia 4, Visit Films

**15:45** *The Golden Age* (112 mins.), Olympia 7, Films Boutique

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| <p><b>15:45</b> <i>In Waves</i> (91 mins.), Olympia 9, Charades</p> <p><b>15:45</b> <i>Dante</i> (89 mins.), Palais #D Online, Film Factory Entertainment</p> <p><b>15:45</b> <i>22 Lengths</i> (102 mins.), Palais #H Online, Beta Cinema</p> <p><b>15:45</b> <i>Shanghai Wonton</i> (108 mins.), Palais B, China Film Co-Production Corporation</p> <p><b>15:45</b> <i>2 Degrees South of the Equator</i> (100 mins.), Palais D, VDF Connection</p> <p><b>15:45</b> <i>Pretty Ugly</i> (87 mins.), Palais H, The Film Sales Company</p> <p><b>15:45</b> <i>Foster</i> (100 mins.), Palais J, Top Film Distribution</p> <p><b>15:45</b> <i>Late Bloomers</i> (92 mins.), Riviera 2, Piperplay</p> <p><b>16:15</b> <i>Runner</i> (96 mins.), Lerins #1 Online, Latido Films</p> <p><b>16:15</b> <i>Pirate Mo Exclusive New Scenes</i> (110 mins.), Lerins 1, The Playmaker Munich (A Brand Of B.A. Produktion GmbH)</p> <p><b>16:15</b> <i>Tristes Tropiques</i> (108 mins.), Lerins 3,</p> | <p>Finecut Co. Ltd.</p> <p><b>16:15</b> <i>Merry Christmas Aubrey Flint</i> Olympia 3, WestEnd Films</p> <p><b>16:15</b> <i>Flesh &amp; Fuel</i> (90 mins.), Olympia 6, Pyramide International</p> <p><b>16:15</b> <i>Marvelous Mornings</i> (86 mins.), Olympia 8, Loco Films</p> <p><b>16:15</b> <i>Arcadia Sky: Touching the Sky</i> (80 mins.), Palais C, Electrolift Creative</p> <p><b>16:15</b> <i>Last Call</i> (91 mins.), Palais E, Picture Tree International GmbH</p> <p><b>16:15</b> <i>Yugly</i> (40 mins.), Palais G, Octopolis</p> <p><b>16:15</b> <i>500 Miles</i> (102 mins.), Palais I, Beta Cinema</p> <p><b>16:15</b> <i>Melati</i> (107 mins.), Palais K, SC Films International</p> <p><b>119:00</b> <i>Bloody Tennis</i> (94 mins.), Lerins Cinema Club, The Playmaker Munich (A Brand Of B.A. Produktion GmbH)</p> <p><b>17:30</b> <i>Dua</i> (101 mins.), Miramar, The Party Film Sales</p> <p><b>17:45</b> <i>Carlo Acutis. The Millennial Saint</i> (90 mins.), Arcades 3,</p> | <p>Nexo Studios</p> <p><b>17:45</b> <i>Ben'Imana</i>, (100 mins.), Olympia 4, mk2 Films</p> <p><b>17:45</b> <i>I'll Be Gone in June</i> (122 mins.), Olympia 5, Luxbox</p> <p><b>17:45</b> <i>No Rest for the Wicked</i>, (103 mins.), Olympia 9, Charades</p> <p><b>17:45</b> <i>Zero Ad</i> (120 mins.), Palais #B Online, Angel Studios</p> <p><b>17:45</b> <i>Hershey</i> (120 mins.), Palais B, Angel Studios</p> <p><b>17:45</b> <i>Mimics</i> (93 mins.), Riviera 2, Pinnacle Peak Pictures</p> <p><b>18:15</b> <i>Gabin</i> (105 mins.), Lerins 1, Lightdox</p> <p><b>18:15</b> <i>Perfect</i> (94 mins.), Olympia 6, Visit Films</p> <p><b>18:15</b> <i>A Story About Fire</i> (85 mins.), Palais C, China Film Co-Production Corporation</p> <p><b>18:30</b> <i>A Woman's Life</i> (98 mins.), Lumiere, Be for Films</p> <p><b>18:30</b> <i>Butterfly Jam</i> Theatre Croisette, Goodfellas</p> <p><b>18:45</b> <i>Groundswell</i> Agnès Varda, Festival de Cannes</p> <p><b>19:00</b> <i>Farewell My Concubine</i></p> | <p>(171 mins.), Bunuel, Cannes Classics</p> <p><b>19:15</b> <i>Teenage Sex and Death at Camp Miasma</i> (106 mins.), Debussy, The Match Factory</p> <p><b>20:00</b> <i>Under a Bad Star</i> (125 mins.), Arcades 1, Urban Sales</p> <p><b>20:00</b> <i>Hintor</i> (103 mins.), Olympia 4, Sostis Productions</p> <p><b>20:00</b> <i>It's OK</i> (118 mins.), Palais F, China Film Co-Production Corporation</p> <p><b>20:30</b> <i>Under a Bad Star</i>, (125 mins.), Arcades 2, Urban Sales</p> <p><b>20:30</b> <i>Opening Ceremony Critic's Week</i> Miramar, Semaine de la Critique</p> <p><b>21:00</b> <i>In Waves</i> (91 mins.), Miramar, Charades</p> <p><b>21:30</b> <i>Forsaken</i> (100 mins.), Lumiere, Studio TF1</p> <p><b>21:45</b> <i>Butterfly Jam</i> Theatre Croisette, Goodfellas</p> <p><b>23:45</b> <i>The Fast and the Furious</i>, Lumiere, Universal Pictures Content Group (USA)</p> |
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# REVIEWS



REVIEWS

## *The Electric Kiss*

Pierre Salvadori's film opens the fest with a fizzle, stranding Pio Marmai, Anaïs Demoustier and Gilles Lellouche in a 1920s-set con artist caper that's more twee than captivating **By David Rooney**

When you see the names of two such accomplished writer-directors as Rebecca Zlotowski and Robin Campillo credited with the original idea for a film as moribund as Pierre Salvadori's *The Electric Kiss* (*La Vénus électrique*), it's inevitable to wonder if the material might have worked in other hands. Based on what's onscreen, that seems unlikely. A French period comedy drama about a widowed painter and the charlatan psychic pretending to channel his late wife, this is bland, middlebrow entertainment for domestic consumption, an underwhelming choice to open Cannes.

Salvadori was most recently on the Croisette in 2018 with the far jauntier screwball crime romance *The Trouble With You*. That Directors' Fortnight entry slightly overloaded on farcical complications but breezed along on the script's daffy humor, underlying sweetness and the director's pleasingly light touch.

Working with the same co-writers, Benjamin Charbit and Benoît Graffin, Salvadori struggles to breathe life into *The Electric Kiss*, a film whose air of

Vimala Pons and Gilles Lellouche star in a Cannes opener that's unlikely to travel far beyond French borders.

strained whimsy falls flat. That aspect is fed by the principal setting of a carnival in Saint-Ouen-sur-Seine on the outskirts of Paris in 1928, full of sideshow acts selling bogus spectacle. And while it's no fault of lead Anaïs Demoustier, her pixie-ish Audrey Tautou quality contributes to an *Amélie* adjacency that does the new film no favors.

Demoustier plays Suzanne, who risks electrocution several times a day to make sparks fly when volunteer smoochers from the audience pucker up. She's underpaid and exploited by Titus (Gustave Kervern), the surly slob running "The Electrified Venus," who made a deal to take Suzanne off her father's hands when she was 15.

Preferring her own company to that of the other carnies, including her dopey friend Camille (Madeleine Baudot), she listens in on the fraudulent seances of the neighboring medium while smoking under the caravan. She's poking around one

night, eyeing a bottle of laudanum like it's Chekhov's gun, when after-hours customer Antoine (Pio Marmai) bursts in desperate to contact his late wife, Irene. He refuses to take no for an answer, and Suzanne can't say no to the money, so she passes herself off as "Madame Claudia," improvising convincingly enough for Antoine to book a private session the next day.

Since Irene's death, Antoine, miserable and pickled in booze, has rattled around in their Paris villa nestled in a leafy garden, with an art studio gathering dust. With sleight of hand and a pair of milky opaque contacts, Suzanne again successfully channels the man's dead wife, so much so that he's inspired to resume painting for the first time since her passing.

When Antoine's art dealer, Armand (Gilles Lellouche), catches on to Suzanne's

*Continued on page 54*

Out of Competition

**CAST** Pio Marmai, Anaïs Demoustier, Gilles Lellouche, Vimala Pons, Gustave Kervern, Madeleine Baudot

**DIRECTOR** Pierre Salvadori

2 hours 2 minutes

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# Once Upon a Time in Harlem

An indelible doc is compiled from footage of Black luminaries in Duke Ellington's home in 1972 **By Jourdain Searles**

In 1972, at Duke Ellington's spacious Harlem townhouse, director William Greaves captured living history on 16mm film. For four hours, figures from the Harlem Renaissance gathered in a spirited recollection of the first time Black American culture had the space to truly flourish as a free people.

The guest list included composer and pianist Eubie Blake and bandleader and lyricist Noble Sissle, both most known for one of the earliest all-Black Broadway shows, *Shuffle Along*. There's photographer James Van Der Zee, who captured portraits of two important figures who both passed away in the 1940s, political activist Marcus Garvey and poet Countee Cullen — as well as the latter's widow, Ida Mae Cullen, making sure her husband's literary legacy was represented. There's Aaron Douglas, whose paintings were his own form of activism, reflecting the racial struggles of the time.

The Great Migration gave Black Americans a chance to start over without being brutalized for the pursuit of knowledge and self-expression, and the amount of talent and history in the room is staggering. This film serves as a comprehensive introduction to the Harlem Renaissance, and as you watch, there's an overwhelming urge to write down every name you hear and spend hours looking them up later.

*Once Upon a Time in Harlem*, which debuted at Sundance and is now screening in Directors' Fortnight in Cannes, is a triumph of DIY filmmaking. Greaves had assembled a small team of four cameramen — including his son, David Greaves — and two sound engineers. Now, David Greaves completes his late father's work, lovingly assembling the footage into a warm narrative that flows naturally from moment to moment. The conversation is lively, with people often chatting over each other and going on tangents. Split screen is used to show facial reactions while people are talking. The partygoers constantly encourage each other to speak, never wanting to hold the spotlight for too long.

At 100 minutes, *Once Upon a Time in Harlem* gives us only a taste of those magical four hours. But Greaves puts us right in the room with his naturalistic, *vérité* approach, making us quiet spectators among some of the most influential Black writers, thinkers, artists and entertainers to ever live. Elegantly dressed in long, flowing dresses and dignified blazers and looking right at home surrounded by shelves of books, these



*Once Upon a Time in Harlem* uses footage taken by director David Greaves and his late father, William Greaves, showing a gathering of some of the key figures of the Harlem Renaissance.

luminaries reminisce about a time when everything felt possible. With nowhere to go but up, writers and artists were engaged in collective, spontaneous creation.

The movie pays special attention to the figures who could not be present: Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston and the aforementioned Cullen and Garvey. Garvey is both revered and mocked in the room, with each partygoer saying their piece; many remark on how he never actually made it to Africa, despite encouraging his fellow Black Americans to leave this oppressive country and return home. Hurston actually did make it to Africa and was one of the few Black women of her time to do so. Her fieldwork footage is among the earliest known filmmaking done by a Black American woman.

In one spirited exchange, the partygoers debate the use of the word "negro" as opposed to "Black" or "African American." It's fascinating to see how conversations that are now relegated to online discourse were happening in person among Black artists and intellectuals during the Renaissance, its aftermath and the birth of Black Power in the '70s.

At a point when our culture is more fractured than ever by technology and social media, it's inspiring to be reminded of the power of community as a mechanism for Black creativity. One element of the film that stands out is the focus on libraries as a

safe home for writing, gathering, researching and record-keeping for Black writers and artists. Two librarians speak of their time at the 135th Street Library in Harlem, with an inspiring reverence for the space and their position within it.

Attempting to describe *Once Upon a Time in Harlem* with words feels inadequate. The moment it ended, I wanted to watch it again at home, pausing every few minutes to take more detailed notes of names and faces or add sketches of the various artwork presented. I approached writing this review with a great deal of anxiety, as the documentary reminded me of all the books I haven't read and names I didn't know.

But the beauty of the film is that it doesn't judge viewers for what they do and don't know, but rather encourages us to open our minds to history and see the connections between then and now. William Greaves was born in Harlem during the Renaissance, too young to be a part of it, but just old enough to understand the role of younger generations in keeping Black history alive. In a time when Black Americans have to deal with a government that wants to erase our history and minimize our accomplishments, *Once Upon a Time in Harlem* stands as a piece of cinematic resistance.

Directors' Fortnight  
**DIRECTOR** William Greaves, David Greaves  
1 hour 40 minutes

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## BARRY KEOGHAN

Continued from page 21

### You're no stranger to Cannes, that's for sure. Does it ever feel any less surreal?

You just feel it soon as you land. All the people that have been there before you, the historic moments it's had, and it's just classy. I went with Yorgos [Lanthimos] for the first time, and I loved it. I brought my film camera, my Canon, and I took pictures. And it's just beautiful. It's a celebration. I want to be there for Talha and everyone else and to celebrate with them.

### And Riley — had you two worked together before?

Technically, yes, *Hurry Up Tomorrow*, because she was the voice of the phone call. I was like, "Oh, we worked together!" And she was like, "Did we?" and I was like, "Yeah!" and she [said,] "Oh yeah, we did!" So this is our second movie together. (Laughs.) And we're cousins, it's crazy! But we're not. Nah, I'd watch Riley all day, honest to God. She is just incredible. I've been a fan of hers and to be doing scenes with her ... You don't know what's coming. You really don't know what's coming. And it's the physicality in that unknown that's unpredictable. There are actresses out there who I've always wanted to work with — Patricia Arquette would be one — but Riley is one and she has that rawness. She's absolutely incredible. And I said to her, "I've had great fun on this." There's a scene in it, we're in the kitchen, and on paper, it goes a certain way. But it was such a breath of fresh air to not know where it's going and just try and match that.

### How would you describe Kantemir's process?

He's a legend. He's an absolute legend. Again, such a talented man. He'll get to what he wants to get to by not making you feel [like] you've done it wrong. And that's not necessarily to say that [other] people do that. But he won't come right up and go, "Great, but do it this way." He'll go, "OK, so where do you think that we can [go now]? Do you think it's at this point we

can turn that on?" I think it's a nice approach. I really admire it because, again, I've asked to be in his movie and I want to be part of his process. So whatever he's doing, I'm intrigued. I'm wanting to learn and watch him. I'd come in on days I wasn't in and look at how he's doing it. And I also want to come in and just help Talha as well, and be there for him. It got to the stage where he was there, doing it all, but I'd still come in and he'd [say,] "I don't need you!" (Laughs.) But I wanted to be part of it and observe Kantemir. Jomo [Fray], our DOP, was incredible as well. But he's brilliant. I'd love to work with him again.

### Could you be tempted into directing yourself one day?

I could, I could. Yeah, I'd love to. I don't think people would understand what I'm saying though, "Could you do it this way? That way? This way? Yeah, whatever." You get me. Most of the time on set would be spent on that, me getting people to understand what I'm saying.

### Hey, I understand you perfectly right now.

Believe me, I'm talking *slow*. (Laughs.) But I'd love to [direct]. I've always been interested in directing. I remember directing a short film for Gucci/Dazed as part of a young filmmakers, young artists celebration. There were 15 of us that got to make these little adverts to show off the new Gucci bag and I made a short film. I picked a non-actor and called it *Animal*, funnily enough, and shot it on 16mm and had a great, great time just working with every department and appreciating it. And realizing and seeing on set that every single minute counts, and understanding why [people are like], "Come on! Let's go!" (Laughs.) Understanding why people have an attitude sometimes because you're trying to get the shot in.

### Maybe next time we talk, it'll be for a film in Cannes that you've directed.

There we go. That's going to happen. I'm going to make a movie, an animal one.

### We have to ask: What's it like carrying a little bit of Ringo Starr around with you?

Is that what you see?!

### I mean spiritually!

(Laughs.) No, that's good if you do see it. It's great. It's a joy to be playing Ringo Starr, and it's another chapter in my life I'll be incredibly proud of. We're in the middle of it now. Sam Mendes and the whole team here, Greig [Fraser] the cinematographer and [producer] Julie [Pastor], all of them, they've just been absolutely such a family to me and to the lads [Paul Mescal, Harris Dickinson, Joseph Quinn] as well. And we've all become like brothers. It's been an incredible process. I'm grateful for it. I can't wait for people to see it.

### As someone who has already done so much, how would you describe what gets Barry Keoghan excited nowadays, with acting roles but also as a producer?

That's the fun part, isn't it? With Wolfcub Productions, we have a Netflix [project] in development, something I can't announce just yet. We have *Butterfly Jam* and another thing that's really so close to being announced as well. There are a few things. We have a project called *Lemonade*, it's a story about foster care at home in Ireland. It's very personal to me. So I'm looking for projects. I'm looking for writers. I'm looking for first-time directors and people like that. [I want to be] a safe place that people can bring projects and talk about [them], and we can get into it and see if it fits the slate that I'm trying to create.

Places like [Saltburn producers] LuckyChap and [Sacred Deer producers] Element Pictures have been massive for me. Working with the lads, getting to see how they operate when they're on set, it's things like that where I'm using my experience now. But in terms of what I want to do next? It's up in the air. As un-fun as it sounds, you have to always be in love with it, want to work with the filmmaker, and [you] want it to be a new kind of challenge, you know? I don't want to step into parts that I've played already. **THR**

## ELECTRIC KISS

Continued from page 50

deception, he chases her off, threatening to call the cops if she returns. But he quickly reconsiders, striking a deal to split the proceeds if she can maintain the ruse and keep Antoine busy at the easel. Armand provides background information to help further the illusion.

Following Suzanne's discovery of Irene's diaries, the narrative takes a bifurcated turn as it retraces the early stages of Irene (Vimala Pons) and Antoine's relationship some years earlier.

Working as an artists' model while figuring out how to escape the poverty of her upbringing, Irene is a self-possessed pragmatist. She sees a possible stepping stone toward financial security when she spots Antoine's undiscovered talent and convinces Armand to represent him. But complications ensue as a romantic triangle forms, echoed in both timelines, and Suzanne begins to have genuine feelings for Antoine, an innocent wracked with misplaced guilt over his wife's death.

The problem is that the twin plotlines don't hold together structurally. While the romance, the deception, the surprise discoveries, the attempted suicides and the burlesque comedy should be gathering steam, it all becomes a tedious muddle.

The movie unfolds in a space between playful fantasy — an aspect fueled by both the 1920s carnival setting and the enchanted-looking garden around Antoine's house — and dramatic reality. But it doesn't occupy either dimension with enough imagination to create much intrigue or engender much affection for the characters. The actors are all likable enough, but they are stuck with limp material that's more twee than captivating. **THR**

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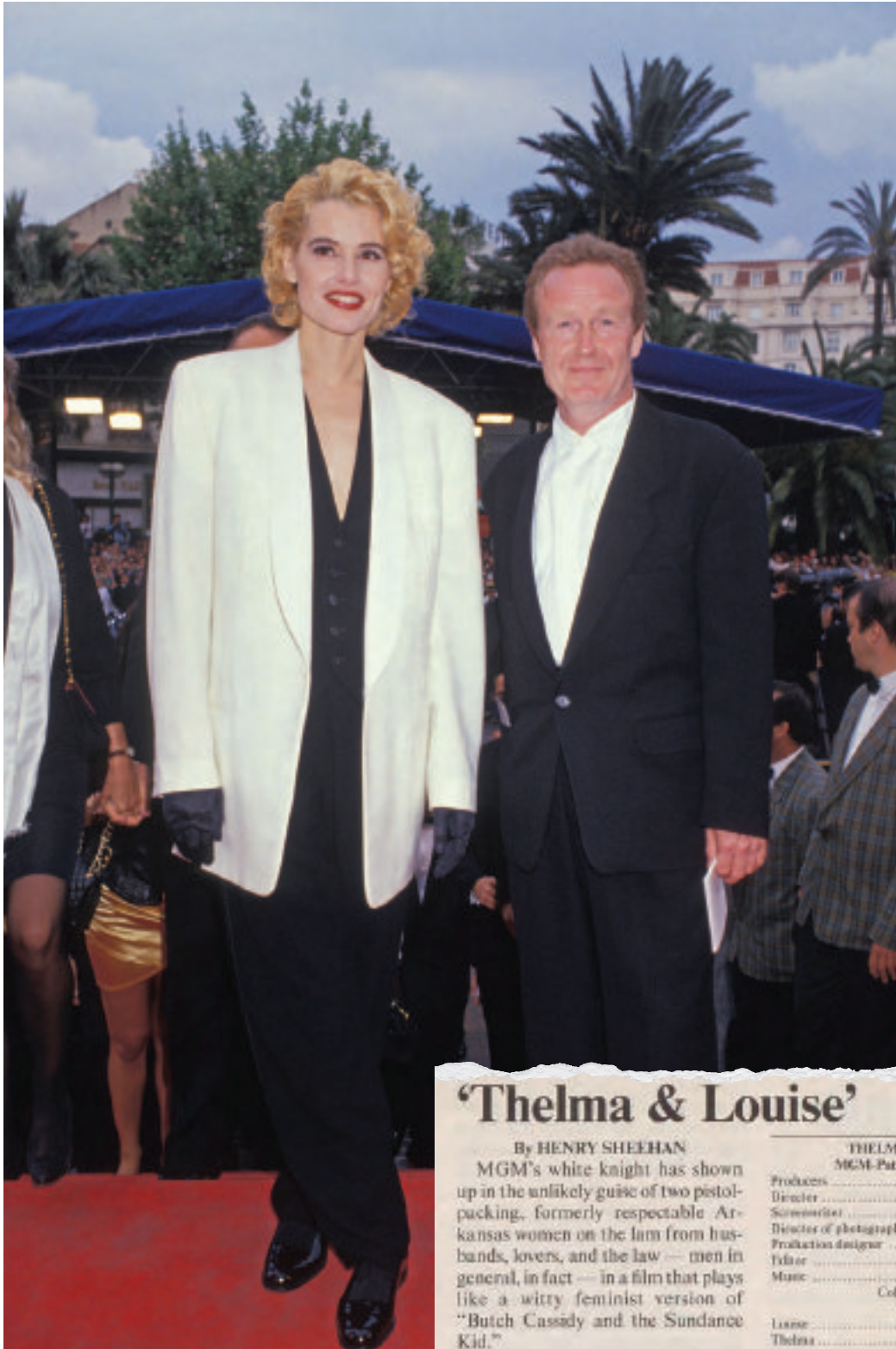
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# Thelma & Louise Closed Out Cannes, Opened a Door



Spike Lee missed the world premiere of *Thelma & Louise*, director Ridley Scott's groundbreaking female road movie starring Geena Davis and Susan Sarandon. The movie screened out of competition as the Cannes Film Festival's closing night film in 1991, directly following the presentation of that year's awards. But Lee didn't stick around after the Palme d'Or went to the Coen brothers' *Barton Fink* — a bit of an upset since his own *Jungle Fever* had been heavily touted as a favorite.

Everyone else, though, got to witness the debut of a movie that turned traditional Hollywood tropes upside down as it celebrated the resourcefulness of its two liberated female protagonists. Likening the film to “a witty feminist version of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*,” *THR* critic Henry Sheehan said, “Davis, who despite her desperate circumstances has never looked more glamorous, does not have the big dramatic scenes that Sarandon has, but her character more comically undergoes the biggest changes, and Davis embodies them with clarity and persuasion.” Speaking with the *Los Angeles Times*, Davis said, “This is a movie about adventures of women, and that’s rare. And that’s really sad that it’s rare, and we can’t think of another movie like this.”

As if a testament to the film’s genuine and long-lasting singularity, the 2026 Cannes Film Festival is using a photograph of Davis and Sarandon taken on the set of *Thelma & Louise* as the striking image for this year’s poster. —GREGG KILDAY

## ‘Thelma & Louise’

By HENRY SHEEHAN

MGM’s white knight has shown up in the unlikely guise of two pistol-packing, formerly respectable Arkansas women on the lam from husbands, lovers, and the law — men in general, in fact — in a film that plays like a witty feminist version of “*Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.”

THELMA & LOUISE	
MGM-Pathé Entertainment	
Producers .....	Ridley Scott, Mimi Polk
Director .....	Ridley Scott
Screenwriter .....	Callie Khouri
Director of photography .....	Adrian Babbia, I.S.C.
Production designer .....	Noron Spencer
Editor .....	Thom Noble
Music .....	Hans Zimmer
Color/Dolby	
Cast	
Louise .....	Susan Sarandon
Thelma .....	Geena Davis

Geena Davis and director Ridley Scott on the Palais red carpet for the festival's closing-night screening of *Thelma & Louise*, which went on to become a landmark film about female empowerment.



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