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OFF THE PITCH

Soccer Superstar Erling Haaland to Play Animated Viking in Film Debut

In a bit of on-the-nose casting, the Manchester City striker will voice a warrior in *ViQueens*, the upcoming animated epic from Norwegian director Harald Zwart

BY SCOTT ROXBOROUGH

Norwegian soccer superstar Erling Haaland is making his film debut, playing (natch) a Viking in *ViQueens*, the upcoming animated film from fellow Norwegian Harald Zwart (*The Karate Kid*, *Agent Cody Banks*), *The Hollywood Reporter* has learned.

Haaland will voice an animated version of himself, a Viking called Haaland, in the film, described as an animated adventure-comedy set in a “world of fearless warrior girls, icy fjords and Silk Road mythology.”

For Haaland fans, that casting could hardly be more apt. At 6-foot-5 and statuesque, with a muscular physique, tremendous attacking speed and blond locks, the Norwegian striker has long been compared to a Viking warrior. Just 25, Haaland is already a legend of the sport. He holds the single-season goals record in England’s Premier League (36 goals in his 2022-23 season for Manchester City) and was the fastest player in history to score 100 goals, hitting the career

(Continued on page 2)

PREMIERE PREVIEW

Scarlett Johansson Goes All In

The actress returns to her roots, getting big, loud and deeply personal in *Paper Tiger*. Director James Gray couldn’t be happier about it BY DAVID CANFIELD



READ ON PAGE 32



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



Erling Haaland is one of the world's most popular athletes, boasting more than 40 million Instagram followers. And he looks like a Viking.

FINALLY

The Expendables Fires Up Again

BY CHRIS GARDNER

Eclectic Pictures and Hollywood Ventures Group are teaming on a “female-driven expansion” of *The Expendables* franchise, tentatively titled *Expendables*.

Sound familiar? It is. Ever since the first *Expendables* hit theaters in 2010 and went on to gross north of \$100 million — effectively launching a **Sylvester Stallone**-led franchise that has now produced a total of four movies — a handful of filmmakers have tried to crack a version starring women in the lead roles.

Back in 2014, *Legally Blonde* helmer **Robert Luketic** was set to direct a version penned by that film’s scribes, **Kirsten Smith** and **Karen McCullah**, for Millennium Films that was to center on female operatives who had to pose as call girls to rescue a nuclear scientist being held hostage, a plot that surely would be eviscerated online today.

That version never came to fruition, and nearly a decade later, Millennium’s **Jeffrey Greenstein** told *The Hollywood Reporter* that one of the challenges with getting that project off the ground was “trying to find a way to justify why we’d have a woman team.”

But Eclectic and HVG think they’ve found a way forward with the project, part of a new features slate of “globally commercial films” they are developing together, which was unveiled Friday at the Cannes Film Festival, where producers are in talks with distribution partners, financiers and creative talent.

Per the news, *Expendables* will serve as an origin story set in the late 1990s during the height of Y2K-era tension and geopolitical uncertainty. The newly reimagined project — originally conceived more than a decade ago alongside Millennium by **Heidi Jo Markel**, **Patrick Muldoon** and **Julie Kroll** — plans to introduce a new generation of elite female operatives in “a stylized, action-driven cinematic event designed to expand the mythology of the franchise while standing firmly on its own,” the filmmakers tell *THR*.

Expendables will be produced by Eclectic’s Markel with HVG co-founder **Glenn Gainor**. **THR**



The *Expendables* franchise has taken in more than \$200 million at the global box office.

HAALAND

Continued from page 1

landmark in just 105 matches.

“As a Norwegian storyteller making a Viking adventure for a global audience, having Erling Haaland join *ViQueens* feels incredibly exciting,” says Zwart. “Erling has already become a kind of real-life Viking icon around the world — powerful, fearless and uniquely Norwegian. Bringing him into this universe as himself gives the film an unexpected energy and authenticity that felt completely right for this story.”

Brit pop singer **Rita Ora** and actress **Ella Purnell** star in *ViQueens*, voicing the leads, Hedvig and Ingrid, two rebellious Viking girls who defy tradition to embark on an epic cross-cultural journey from Norway to China. Ora has lent her voice to the character of Wondering Blade in the *Kung Fu Panda: The Dragon Knight* animated series and was in the voice cast of *Pokémon: Detective Pikachu*. Purnell is best known for her roles in TV series *Yellowjackets* and *Fallout*, but also voiced Jinx in the hit animated series *Arcane*.

Other castmembers include **Steve Speirs** (*Star Wars — Episode One: The Phantom Menace*) as King Erik, **Anton Lesser** (*Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*) as his scheming brother Lars, and British comedian and TV personality **Alan Carr** as the Bard, a lyrically challenged royal scribe. Acclaimed composer **Christophe Beck** (*Frozen*, *Frozen II*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* TV series) is writing

the original score for the film.

Zwart is directing *ViQueens*, with **Veslemoy Ruud Zwart** of Norway’s Zwart Arbeid (*The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones*) producing for Karve Animation.

ViQueens is Zwart’s first animated feature. The Dutch-Norwegian director has moved between U.S. and European features for most of his career, mixing local-language films including World War II drama *The 12th Man* (2017) and soccer comedy franchise *Long Flat Balls* with Hollywood fare like fantasy adventure *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones* (2013) and 2010 *The Karate Kid* reboot starring **Jackie Chan** and **Jaden Smith**.

ViQueens is currently in production. Sola Media is handling worldwide sales. The company first pitched the project to buyers with an exclusive teaser at the American Film Market last year, and will be looking to secure major territory presales at the Cannes Film Market this week.

Getting Haaland on the *ViQueens* team is certain to boost the project’s international appeal. He is one of the world’s most recognizable athletes with a global fan base, including more than 40 million followers on Instagram.

“Erling Haaland transcends sports — he’s a global cultural figure,” notes **Solveig Langeland**, managing director of Sola Media. “His involvement brings another exciting dimension to a film that already combines international adventure, humor and emotional storytelling in a way we believe will resonate with audiences everywhere.” **THR**

Meanwhile, in the Real World ...

→ *The Batman: Part II* director **Matt Reeves** made it official, adding famous faces to the stacked cast for his return to Gotham. **Scarlett Johansson** and **Sebastian Stan** are among the stars joining **Robert Pattinson**, who plays the Caped Crusader.

→ Hip-hop superstar **Drake** dropped three (yes, three!) albums on May 15 in his first solo releases since the fallout of his infamous rap beef with **Kendrick Lamar** two years ago. They are called *Ice Man*, *Maid of Honour* and *Habibti*.

→ The U.S. Supreme Court rejected a challenge to federal regulations that allow the sending of abortion pills through the mail after a patient has consulted a doctor online. The justices granted an emergency appeal from the makers of mifepristone.



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DESERT DEAL

Saudi Arabia Jacks Up Film Incentives to 60 Percent

BY PATRICK BRZESKI

Saudi Arabia has sharply increased the cash rebate offered to international film productions shooting in the Kingdom, raising the topline figure to as much as 60 percent of eligible local spending, the Saudi Film Commission announced Friday at the Cannes Film Festival. The new scheme makes Saudi Arabia's incentives among the most generous in the world.

The revised incentive program, unveiled by commission CEO **Abdullah bin Nasser Al-Qahtani** during the Marché du Film, also introduces faster disbursement processes and a new package of financing solutions developed in partnership with the Cultural Development Fund, the state-backed agency that channels capital into Saudi cultural projects. The commission framed the changes as part of an effort to streamline the operating environment for production companies and improve cash-flow predictability across the shooting cycle — moves that address early gripes some global producers had voiced about the Kingdom's nascent film support programs.

The renewed film push comes amid a difficult time for the Saudi tourism and hospitality sector. The 2026 war between the U.S./Israel and Iran, which broke out in late February, has battered air travel and inbound tourism across the Gulf. Saudi Arabia, which had been growing inbound tourism faster than any of its neighbors since opening to tourist visitors in 2019, has been among the most exposed to the slowdown.

The Kingdom has sank tens of millions in building out production facilities across the country, including at the megasite Neom and in the historic Arabian oasis of AlUla.

By concentrating fresh state financing on the film sector — a key creative pillar of Crown Prince **Mohammed bin Salman's** Vision 2030 economic diversification drive — Riyadh is signaling that it intends to keep building out its content-production infrastructure despite the broader regional headwinds. The decision nonetheless comes at a moment when international producers are scrutinizing Middle East shoots more carefully than ever. **THR**



Neom production facilities in Saudi Arabia.



"I think I learned the most [on this film] than any other film," said Sandra Hüller of her Cannes entry *Fatherland*.

ON A ROLL

Sandra Hüller Is Having the Best Year in Hollywood (Again)

From *Project Hail Mary* to Cannes to Tom Cruise's most anticipated film, the German actress reflects on how one extraordinary year changed everything by LILY FORD

It's hard to imagine anyone could have a better year than **Sandra Hüller** did in 2023. The German actress starred in **Justine Triet's** Palme d'Or-winning *Anatomy of a Fall* and **Jonathan Glazer's** *Zone of Interest* — two best picture Oscar nominees that would catapult her to international fame.

But Hüller's 2026 might just be giving that year a run for its money. In February, she was awarded the Berlinale's best actress prize for her performance in *Rose*. March brought the release of *Project Hail Mary*, opposite **Ryan Gosling**, which has become one of the most critically and commercially acclaimed films of the year so far. She's here in Cannes with **Pawel Pawlikowski's** *Fatherland*, in which she pulls off a stunning performance as the daughter of **Thomas Mann**, and in October will share the screen with **Tom Cruise** in **Alejandro González Iñárritu's** *Digger*.

Indeed, Hüller is reaping the rewards of 2023 — a year that caught her the attention of Hollywood — and dove into it all in an exclusive conversation Friday morning with *The Hollywood Reporter's* executive awards editor **Scott Feinberg** for his award-winning podcast, *Awards Chatter*, at the Palais' Campari Lounge in Cannes. The scene was set with floor-to-ceiling Campari bottles and glimmering red mirrors.

Feinberg and Hüller began with *The Zone of Interest*. Famously, the actress played **Hedwig Höss**, wife of **Rudolf Höss**, commandant of the German Auschwitz concentration camp. When asked about her own personal relationship to the story and the research that went into her family history, Hüller responded: "You have to look at where you come from and what things resonate in your body without your knowledge. I really wanted to know, so I asked all my grandparents about their connections to the Nazi system, and I didn't find anything. Maybe they lied, I don't know. I'll find out when they're gone," she added, prompting laughter from listeners.

Soon, they came to *Project Hail Mary*, where Hüller plays **Eva Stratt**, head of the international task force attempting to save humanity from extinction. When asked about embracing commercial projects on a larger scale after years spent in the art house genre, she replied: "Well, there is something like scale, and then there's something [of] quality on that scale. I didn't necessarily want to do something really big, because it can be so bad. I'm not good at a lot of things, so I have to find something that I can actually do without feeling terrible all the time, so this was an opportunity, because I love the films of **Chris Miller** and **Phil Lord** and, of course, I adore **Ryan Gosling**. What can you say? I just had to do it."

She continued: "When you play with someone like **Ryan Gosling**, you don't try to compete. I can never be as fast as him, as inventive. I can just be there and try to find an end to the scene, and then everything else will happen on its own, probably."

THR's awards editor then moved onto *Fatherland*, which premiered Wednesday night to a reverent ovation here in Cannes. "I think I learned the most [on this film] than any other film." When Feinberg asked about her character's repression and, at times, explosive nature — **Erika [Mann]** slaps her ex-husband, Nazi-aligned actor **Gustaf Gründgens** — "I'm familiar with that ...

There are always restrictions. We go through the world and there are rules and there are personal choices we make, and then they sometimes force us to just endure stuff until we can't take it anymore. I, personally, like to walk away, if I can't stand something."

Finally, Feinberg teased out of her what he could about the hotly anticipated *Digger* with Cruise: "I am nearly bursting in wanting to talk about this movie," she said. "I can't. I legally can't. I can say that I saw a version [of it] that's maybe not the final version, and that it impresses me beyond anything I've ever seen. And that's all I can say. I think it's going to be a remarkable film." **THR**



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FILMFESTIVAL

James Franco Says Making His New Film *Foster* Felt Like ‘Old-Fashioned L.A.’

BY CHRIS GARDNER

Even without a movie in the official selection, **James Franco** is making a mark at this year's Cannes Film Festival.

The 48-year-old actor turned up Tuesday night at the opening ceremony, posing on the grand Palais red carpet arm-in-arm with longtime girlfriend **Izabel Pakzad**, with whom he has made a handful of Cannes appearances in recent years. He sat in the audience as **Peter Jackson** accepted an honorary Palme d'Or from his *Lord of the Rings* star **Elijah Wood** and looked on as jury members like **Demi Moore**, **Ruth Negga** and **Stellan Skarsgard** were introduced, followed by a stage appearance from **Jane Fonda** and **Gong Li** to officially declare the fest open for business.

Franco faced controversy and a sexual misconduct scandal amid allegations of abuse of power and inappropriate behavior toward aspiring actresses at his now-defunct acting school. The affair

ended in 2021 with a \$2.2 million settlement, with the star denying the allegations but acknowledging that the plaintiffs raised important issues.

Franco turned up at the Palais on Wednesday in support of a Cannes Market screening presented by Top Film Distribution of his newest film, the action thriller *Foster*. *The Hollywood Reporter* has learned that Franco will personally be meeting with international buyers as the **Timothy Woodward Jr.**-directed film seeks distribution.

He also offered remarks at the market showing. “It was great and turned into a family effort, but on a high level,” he said of the production. “It’s just a fun action movie that we got to shoot in L.A., and it felt old-fashioned L.A. in the best possible way. Thanks for showing up, and I think you’re gonna enjoy it.”

Franco stars as the title character in *Foster*, playing Donald



James Franco walked the Cannes opening ceremony red carpet with girlfriend Izabel Pakzad.

“Don” Foster, a man who is haunted by his past and clawing his way through sobriety in search of peace. When a troubled addict (**Natalie Burn**) leaves her young son on his doorstep, Don is dragged back into the violent underworld he thought he left behind as he’s hunted by a ruthless crime boss (**Ron Perlman**) that he previously worked for. But with a young boy to protect, Don now has a reason to seek redemption. **James Frain** and

Wesley River round out the cast.

“Making *Foster* was a hell of a ride. James challenged us to go deeper, so we went back to page one and rebuilt the script from the ground up. I wanted *Foster* to feel like a film from another era — gritty, emotional, violent and completely human,” says Woodward, who directed from a script by **Cory Todd Hughes** and **Adrian Speckert**.

Franco’s other upcoming projects include the comedy *Toad* and *The Razor’s Edge*. He recently starred in the Italian film *Hey Joe*, which came out in March. **THR**

The New Paris Playbook

Art, wellness, cocktails and a belle époque dining room inside the Grand Palais — the only guide you need for the city this summer

BY MELINDA SHECKELLS



WHAT TO SEE Fondation Cartier

2 Place du Palais-Royal, 75001 Paris

Summer 2026 at Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain turns the newly opened, **Jean Nouvel**-designed cultural destination into one of Paris' most dynamic creative hubs. Visitors experience the sprawling “Exposition Générale,” featuring nearly 600 works from more than 100 artists, alongside live fashion performances by **Olivier Saillard** and public art installations.

The Fondation's immersive new spaces blur the line between museum, performance venue and social salon.



WHAT TO EXPERIENCE Sant Roch

26 Rue Saint-Roch, 75001 Paris

Sant Roch delivers one of Paris' most talked-about wellness experiences. Designed around the ancient ritual of contrast therapy, the space pairs France's largest sauna — heated to 80 to 90 degrees Celsius — with icy-cold plunges kept at 5 to 10 degrees Celsius. Explore guided rituals, candlelit recovery spaces and immersive thermal experiences designed to reset the nervous system, sharpen focus and offer a rare moment of calm in the otherwise mad, mad world.



WHERE TO DRINK Ritz Bar d'Été at Ritz Paris

15 Place Vendôme, 75001 Paris

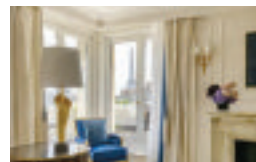
No Paris stopover feels complete without visiting the Ritz Bar d'Été, the seasonal open-air cocktail garden hidden behind Place Vendôme. From April 24 through Sept. 12, the Ritz transforms its Grand Jardin into one of the city's chicest summer escapes. Beneath fragrant greenery and soft light, insiders settle in for champagne, bûche-toasted skewers and golden-hour martinis.



WHERE TO EAT Le Grand Café

Grand Palais, 75008 Paris

Step into a glamorous new chapter of Parisian society dining at Le Grand Café. Designed by **Joseph Dirand** inside the Grand Palais, the restaurant offers the perfect touches of belle époque romance through oxidized green metals, antiqued mirrors and wine-red lacquered finishes. Outside, Thierry Boutemy's lush terrace overlooks the Petit Palais beneath magnolias and camellias, creating one of the city's most elegant summer dining scenes.



WHERE TO STAY Four Seasons Hotel George V, Paris

31 Avenue George V, 75008 Paris

The newly renovated suites at Four Seasons Hotel George V feels like inheriting a polished Parisian apartment for the weekend. Following a discreet three-year transformation by designer **Pierre-Yves Rochon**, all 243 rooms and suites were reimagined as private residences layered with Versailles parquet floors and softly gilded details. Expansive French windows frame Eiffel Tower views, while landscaped terraces and bright salons create one of the city's most luxurious residential-style stays.

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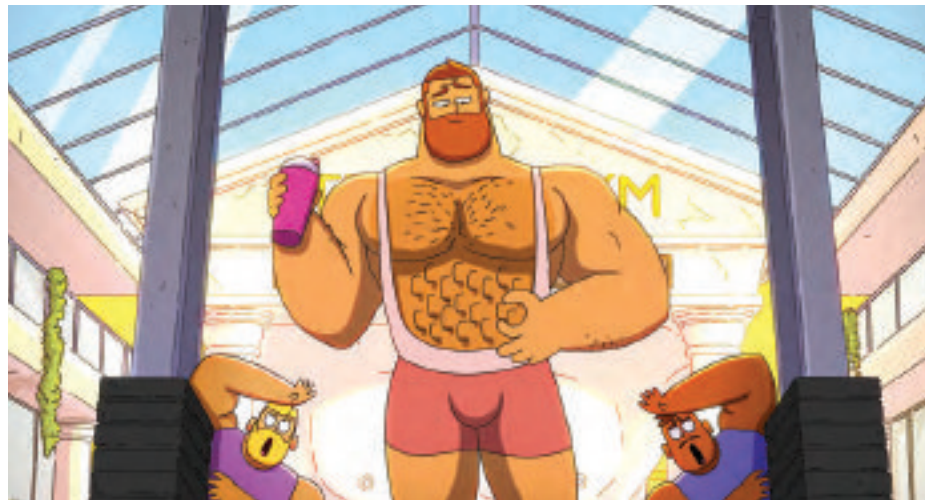
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HIDDEN GEM

Mon Dieu! A Virus Is Turning Gay Men Straight

Seven years in the making, *Jim Queen* arrives at Midnight Screenings as both a wild satire and a tender celebration of Paris's queer community **BY GEORG SZALAI**



Jim Parfait is a ripped queer influencer and "king of the Gym Queens" community whose world crumbles when he contracts a virus.

A mysterious virus is sweeping through Paris, turning gay men straight — and the race to find a cure is on. That's the premise of *Jim Queen*, an irreverent French adult animated comedy that world premieres in Cannes' Midnight Screenings program on Sunday, May 17.

The titular Jim is Jim Parfait — "parfait" being French for "perfect" — a ripped queer influencer and self-proclaimed king of the Gym Queens community on social media. When he contracts the virus, dubbed Heterosis, his world collapses. He loses his followers, his identity and his sense of self — all except for Lucien, a closeted virgin who remains devoted. The odd couple set off

on a wild ride through Paris and its Marais district, the beating heart of the city's queer scene, in search of a rumored cure that could save not just Jim but the entire LGBTQIA+ community from extinction.

The film is the feature directorial debut of **Nicolas Athané** and **Marco Nguyen**, who co-wrote the script with **Simon Balteaux** and **Brice Chevillard**. It's produced by **David Alric** and **Arthur Delabays** of French animation studio Bobbypills (*Creature Commandos*), with Global Constellation handling sales. The voice cast is led by **Alex Ramirès** and **Jérémy Gillet**, with gay porn icon **François Sagat**, singer **Philippe Katerine** and drag performer **La Briochée** rounding out the ensemble.

The inspiration, say the creators, is deeply personal. "I am gay, and when I arrived in Paris, I was 17, and I discovered a whole new world," says Nguyen. "The gay culture was so rich and had so many communities, including the fetish scene, which were all great inspirations for the movie."

Balteaux found his own way into the story. "I'm the second gay guy in the team. We met during one of these amazing parties you see [in the film], and that's how we started on the project. We both wanted to talk about the LGBTQ communities in Paris, so *Jim Queen* is a love letter to them and all the amazing people."

He adds that many of the film's colorful characters are drawn from the creators' own lives — their friends, their exes, the people they've met along the way. "I came to Paris from the countryside when I was 20, and I can definitely recognize myself in Lucien."

Some creative decisions required more debate than others. The use of the word "Gaystapo" for one of the film's factions — a nod to its historic connotation — sparked lengthy internal discussion before the team decided it worked. And with queer rights under pressure in various parts of the world, the question of political tone was never far away. "It's still a comedy," says Nguyen. "We just looked to find the right tone and the right sense of humor to [address even some] heavy themes, but in a light way."

Balteaux reflects on how much the world changed during the film's seven-year journey to the screen. "The French parliament had just accepted gay weddings. I was definitely feeling very comfortable with my sexuality. We had the feeling we were living a golden age," he says. "But over the years of struggling to make the movie, everything changed. And now [parts of the film will] sound very political. But we never wanted to be too political or lecture people." **WJG**

Cannes, According to ... The Marketer



Sebastien Aussal
Head of marketing and communications for Highland Film Group

Best bargain in Cannes?

Call **Dario** at the Old Port: He'll give you the best yacht ride for a fraction of the price.

Favorite meal in Cannes?

Le Jade! It's a very charming family-owned spot that may look modest from the outside, but it's always delicious and the service is incredibly warm and welcoming.

Most overrated restaurant?

We want to maintain a good relationship, Darling.

Biggest faux pas?

Forgetting you don't have a bow tie 15 minutes before you're about to walk the red carpet (true story)!

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

I have a 2 1/2-year-old son, can I enjoy a full night's sleep for once?!

Your "only in Cannes" moment?

The *Top Gun: Maverick* premiere a few years ago, with the French Air Patrol flying overhead.

Biggest pet peeve?

More than two different fonts used in the same key art, really impossible.

Cannes guilty pleasure?

Our interns have an unlimited budget to buy chocolate for the entire office!

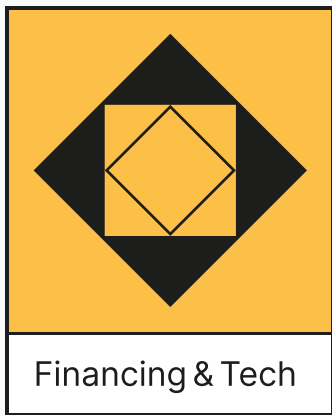
Strangest request you've ever received in Cannes?

After a few years in Cannes, nothing feels strange anymore. During the festival, people somehow manage to attend a breakfast in Antibes, a yacht lunch at

Cap d'Antibes, a flurry of meetings in Cannes, two screenings and a midnight party ... all in the same day. Teleportation genuinely seems to exist for one week a year.

Most interesting celeb encounter?

Honestly, our clients and distributors are the real stars for us. One of the best parts of Cannes is reconnecting with partners from all over the world and continuing conversations we started months earlier at the previous market.



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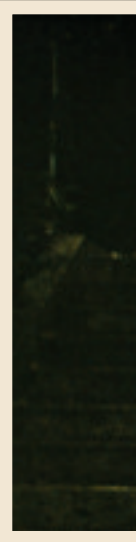


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CANNES RISING STAR

Moulin's Félix Lefebvre

The young star has risen the ranks in his native France and at just 26 comes to Cannes with a third film, László Nemes' competition title — which required some method character work
BY LILY FORD

In unwavering commitment to his role in László Nemes' harrowing competition title *Moulin*, up-and-comer Félix Lefebvre slept in the grizzly, mattress-less cell he and co-star Gilles Lellouche were shooting in — for a good few nights.

"There was bats. I didn't have any idea what time it was. And I felt like those guys during the Second World War, [who] actually went through it and were having such a hard time," the young French star tells *The Hollywood Reporter*. "I just

wanted to be the best version of me, as an actor."

To provide some much-needed context, the Hungarian filmmaker returns to the Croisette — where he picked up the Grand Prix in 2015 for *Son of Saul*, the film that would go on to claim him an Oscar — with the real-life story of French resistance hero Jean Moulin (played by Lellouche). It follows Moulin's arrest in June 1943 as he attempted to reunify the forces of the Secret Army, and wound up tortured by the sinister Klaus

Barbie, head of the Gestapo (Lars Eidinger).

To those unfamiliar with French World War II history, the figure might not even ring any bells. This was not the case for Lefebvre, who grew up studying Moulin. "It's in our history class program. We hear everything about him — he's this heroic figure, a leader of the resistance in France during the Second World War. It's one of the things that you learn at school that you actually remember," the 26-year-old continues, "because you hear that

this guy went through the worst torture and didn't say a word. So as a kid, you hear that, and you start thinking, 'Well, if I went through a lot of pain, would I be brave?' I have a very vivid memory of [learning about] this man."

When Lefebvre — whose biggest credit to date, *Summer of 85*, landed him a César Award nomination for most promising actor — caught wind of Nemes' project, he went all in. "He was watching the audition through a screen," Lefebvre remembers. "It was this distance between him and I, and it was kind of intimidating. But then I did the first take and went really emotional ... He just stood up and went closer to me and said, 'OK, that was good. But that was too much. I think it can be great if you go



Left: Félix Lefebvre plays the cellmate of French resistance fighter Jean Moulin. Above: Gilles Lellouche (left) stars as the titular hero.

more interior.”

The more they riffed, the more impressed Nemes was. Lefebvre secured the part of Martin, Moulin’s cellmate once captured by the Nazis. “[What is] very interesting about my character is that Jean Moulin, through all the movie, is paranoid with everybody that he meets. He feels like he cannot trust anybody,” the actor explains. “Everybody around him could betray him and put the French’s future in danger. So when he meets me, we are doing these scenes in the prison that kind of feels like a game of poker — where one is trying to understand if the other one is bluffing, working for the enemy, or if he’s on your side.”

As aforementioned, Lefebvre took this game of mental poker between Martin and Jean extremely seriously. He camped out on the Budapest set — re-created to exactly match the cell the pair would have faced off in — to lose himself in Martin’s headspace, and relished being treated by acclaimed star Lellouche as a peer, not a pupil. “I always love when the great and big actors just start seeing you as a colleague,” he says. “We were really, really trying to create something together, and trying to find some truth in it together.”

It’s actually the star’s third Cannes-bound movie, though one of them, *Summer of 85*, was released during the pandemic, so he never made it to the Palais.

In 2021, Lefebvre came with the out-of-competition *Supreme*, and just three years ago, premiered **Delphine Deloget’s** *Nothing to Lose* in *Un Certain Regard*. But *Moulin*, his first competition title, is particularly special: “It’s my first time [doing] the whole red carpet experience for the movie, a few thousand people watching the movie, and I’m going to discover the movie there, too.” (He has not yet seen the finished film.) “It’s going to be, I think, a very emotional moment.”

It is just one highlight from an extremely busy 2026 for Lefebvre, who has **Léopold Kraus’** *Microstar* premiering in June and, later in the year, another movie called *The Last Patient*. He considers some of his dream collaborators and **Paul Thomas Anderson’s** name swiftly comes up, but so does *Aftersun’s* **Charlotte Wells** and *How to Have Sex* director **Molly Manning Walker**. “Those two,” he says with a laugh about Wells and Walker, “would be the dream directors [that] I feel like I could say, ‘Hey, nice to meet you,’ at Cannes — and they would answer me!”

Before he gets to mingling with European cinema’s hottest auteurs, he must first receive his roses for *Moulin*. It’s no less than he deserves after that particularly method cell stay: “After a few nights, I slept so bad that I was like, ‘OK, I also now need to sleep to be able to do my job correctly.’” **THR**

RESURRECTED

3 Questions With ... Andrey Zvyagintsev

Andrey Zvyagintsev’s previous two films — 2014’s *Leviathan* and 2017’s *Loveless* — both won major prizes at Cannes, before he fell dangerously ill with COVID. The Russian auteur calls his recovery a “miracle,” and now returns to the Croisette with *Minotaur*, a **Chabrol** adaptation set at the start of his country’s brutal and ongoing war with Ukraine.

You were quite ill in the nine years between this film and your previous feature, *Loveless*. How do you reflect on that experience?

It was a horrific illness, which took 18 months of my life. For 12 months, I could not get up, and it was all to do with COVID. So the pandemic really hit me hard. I was bedridden. I couldn’t move my hands. I couldn’t move my legs. I couldn’t use them at all. With what actually happened, you can consider this to be a complete and utter miracle. It took a lot out of me. Forty days of induced coma is almost the same as being dead. And after that, I resurrected. It was absolutely incredible.



Zvyagintsev

***Minotaur* is a loose adaptation of Claude Chabrol’s 1969 film *The Unfaithful Wife*. The setting is shifted to 2022, after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine began. Why?**

We failed in 2018 to come to an agreement on obtaining the rights for adapting the script. I am very happy that we did not succeed back then in 2018, because it really is fate. ... What is happening in the country, what is happening between Russia and Ukraine, having or living in a world free from censorship — of course one can resort to making fairy tales about superheroes, one can refer to the language of [war] but not say what is happening [outside] your window. [For me,] it would have been simply, absolutely impossible.

You shot in Latvia for the first time. What was that like?

Latvia is a country which used to be part of the Soviet Union, and there are still pockets of it which are highly recognizable. Some of them you couldn’t really distinguish between some ... really run-down district of Moscow, or the suburbs. And this is why we chose to film in Latvia. We all realized that we couldn’t have done it in Russia. Filming in Russia now would be impossible. **THR**

Minotaur tells the story of a successful businessman facing increasing pressure from the corporate world.



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‘WTF?! This Is So Crazy Bold, We Want to See This Onscreen!’

Panama Film’s Lixi Frank and David Bohun on their two Cannes titles, the Austrian funding crisis and why the highest compliment a film can receive is making an audience ask: ‘What the hell am I watching?’ BY GEORG SZALAI

Panama is not only a country in Central America. It also represents a state of mind and an approach to cinema, according to Austrian producers **Lixi Frank** and **David Bohun**. After all, for many of us, Panama is a faraway place that we know of but have never been to. And that represents exactly the mindset the duo wanted to bring to the table when they founded Vienna-based Panama Film in 2018.

“Panama Film stands for films that give expression and space to challenging questions, lingering observations and lost longings,” its website highlights. And the founders tell *THR* that they focus on collaborating with filmmakers who approach cinema in unconventional ways and unique styles.

Panama has been on a particularly successful run of late. In 2025, *White Snail*, directed by **Elsa Kremser** and **Levin Peter**, was honored with the special jury prize and a best performance award at the Locarno Film Festival. Earlier this year, **Sebastian Brameshuber**’s *London* premiered in Berlin’s Panorama program and went on to win the Grand Prix at Cinéma du Réel.

Now, Panama is hitting the Croisette with two titles in the Cannes lineup. It’s the producer on **Sandra Wollner**’s new project, *Everytime*, which world premieres in the Un Certain Regard section, and a co-producer on **Valeska Grisebach**’s competition title *The Dreamed Adventure*. In addition, Frank is one of the 20 producers featured by European Film Promotion in its annual Producers on the Move showcase of rising talent.

Ahead of a busy Cannes, Frank and Bohun talked to *THR* about why they focus more on auteurs and their vision than anything else, and why Panama loves to back experimental voices that may make audiences go, “WTF?!”

“When you are going to the theater to watch a film, you go on a journey,” says David Bohun. “You come back out of the same door, but you’re somehow enriched, you’re somehow different. The journey can change something within you.”



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13:30 (1:30p) | Palais H



SCREENING: Sat, May 16
15:45 (3:45p) | Palais H



SCREENING: Sun, May 17
15:45 (3:45p) | Palais H



AT THE END OF THE SANTA FE TRAIL
Dir. Tomas Sanchez



SCREENING: Sun, May 17
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ANNIE
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EVP of Distribution
Monique R. White
+1.323.891.4269
Office # +1.323.424.4066
Monique@CaliforniaPicturesInc.com

President
Steven Istock
+1.323.219.9248
Direct # +1.323.219.9248
Steven@CaliforniaPicturesInc.com

SVP of Acquisitions & Marketing
Jennifer Margo Giron
@Californiapicsinc
Office # +1.323.424.4066
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How did you two meet, and did you work together before founding Panama Film?

LIXI FRANK We both studied at the Filmakademie Wien [Film Academy Vienna], but were in different years. So we knew of each other, but never worked together. I then produced a documentary with **Kurdwin Ayub** called *Paradise! Paradise!*, of which David was a fan. And David did a documentary with his brothers called *Are You Sleeping, Brother Jakob?*, and I was a big fan of that film. So, we knew that we appreciated each other's work. When David was planning to found a company and was looking for a second producer, he asked me.

DAVID BOHUN It was a little bit like a blind date. We knew of each other, and also our work, and I had also heard very good things about Lixi as a producer and as a human being. Her name kept popping up. And when we met, it was really business love at first sight.

FRANK It felt right. After our first talks about what kind of films we want to produce and how we want to work, I just had a really good gut feeling. And we said, "OK, let's try it. What can go wrong?" You can always split again if things don't work out.

Why did you choose the name Panama for your company, and what does the name signal about the films you look for?

BOHUN It was a long journey; we really wanted to have some simplicity. The idea of a faraway place came up, which everybody has heard about but not been to yet.

FRANK Exactly, we wanted something that works in English and in German. And then we remembered *The Trip to Panama*, a [famous German] children's book by **Janosch**. It's about finding Panama, this place of longing. But the story is much more about the journey and the people they meet on the way than about actually finding the place. The characters end up at their own place, now overgrown with plants, thinking it is Panama. We like the story so much because it represents what cinema is for us. It is a place of longing.

Tell me more about cinema as a place of longing.

BOHUN When you are going to the theater to watch a film, you go on a journey, and you come back out of the same door, but you're somehow enriched, you're somehow different. The journey can change something within you. And this is what we are looking for in films, something that is really thought-provoking and gives us input for our beliefs, our thoughts, our emotions.

Sandra Wollner's new film, *Everytime*, in the Un Certain Regard program, feels like a perfect fit for Panama Film. It's about a tragedy and how a family copes, or doesn't cope, with it. And it made me go: "What the hell am I seeing?! I can't stop watching!"

BOHUN Sandra's thoughts and approach are so unique. She



Panama Film is bringing Sandra Wollner's *Everytime* (left) and Valesca Grisebach's *The Dreamed Adventure* to Cannes.

calls it spinning around the core of what she actually wants to express and say through film. By asking questions and discussing her thoughts, she gets closer to what she really wants to show and tell us, and this raises questions that we never thought about before.

FRANK Sandra is such an exceptional director. We truly admire her way of approaching film and stories. Right after the shooting of *The Trouble With Being Born*, it was clear that we wanted to develop something new together. She came up with *Everytime*, and when we read the first treatment, including the ending with the sun [doing something unexpected that won't be spoiled here], we were like: "What the fuck?! This is so crazily bold, we want to see this onscreen!"

How are things looking these days for Austrian film from

your perspective?

BOHUN Well, from an outside perspective, this latest success at Berlinale with 11 Austrian films, and now being present in Cannes with three films, looks amazing. But these are the fruits of the past years, where we had this uncapped cash rebate scheme, ÖFI+, that became an essential pillar for Austrian film production. Due to the Austrian state's budget gap, this funding pot was shut down for theatrical productions, which means a significant reduction [in the number of films that can be] produced. On the distribution [side], we are having the most successful year since our foundation — but so far without funding for an upcoming feature film.

FRANK And it is impacting the

whole industry at the moment. So, that big success of Austrian films this year is overshadowed by that. Our hopes lie in the Investment Obligation that our government is trying to set up this year; the Austrian film industry really needs this to continue participating in [co-] productions like *Everytime* or *The Dreamed Adventure*.

What films is Panama Film working on right now?

FRANK We are mainly working on a new film by **Patric Chiha**, an Austrian director based in Paris. *Ice Cream* is a story about two teenagers in Vienna who are madly falling in love before Ava discovers that Florian is having sex with older men. It is about desire, intimacy and how difficult it is to find yourself. We are in the financing process, and it is set up as a co-production with France.

BOHUN We are also working on the third feature of **Alexandra Makarová**, which is called *Fanny Is Alive*. We saw her sophomore feature, *Perla*, last year and were very impressed by Alexandra's way of thinking [about] film as an overall cinematographic composition, by how she manages to capture emotions nonverbally instead of putting them into dialogue. You can feel her inspiration by film history. Her next film is set in 1947, post-war Vienna. It's about Fanny, who has survived three concentration camps and is now in a so-called Displaced Persons Camp. Those were transit centers for Holocaust survivors. She wants to migrate to Palestine to leave the past behind, but is finally found by her husband and hence forced to go back to her former home in Vienna. It is a film about this period of Europe

that is treated little in films so far, and Alexandra's approach hooked us immediately.

So, how cool is it to have two films at Cannes?

BOHUN It is a very beautiful reward for us and all the work we have put into Panama Film. We have been really lucky to have had films at Berlin, where Sandra Wollner's *The Trouble With Being Born* won an award in the Encounters competition, which put us on the map of the Austrian film industry. And together with our long-term production partner **Viktoria Stolpe** from *The Barricades*, we were at Venice in the competition. Last year at Locarno, *White Snail* won two awards. So we have had the chance to consistently present our projects at those renowned festivals. And now, being part of this Cannes circle is really the next step for us. **VIII**



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Dress du Jour Isabelle Huppert

In Gucci

Red can be risky on the Palais carpet, but the *Parallel Tales* star and festival icon rose to the challenge in a design by Demna (following him from his former home at Balenciaga) for her world premiere. The look is both dramatic and cinematic, featuring a fan-pleated neckline with a train and matching gloves, accessorized with Chopard jewelry.



STYLE EVOLUTION

Diego Luna on How to Dress Like a Director, Not a Movie Star

BY CHRIS GARDNER

Though he starred in two films that debuted in Cannes in the early aughts — 2003's *Soldiers of Salamina* and 2007's *Mister Lonely* by Harmony Korine — the first time Diego Luna walked the film festival's red carpet came when he presented his narrative directorial debut, 2010's *Abel*.

It was a family affair as Luna attended with his longtime close friend, Gael Garcia Bernal, who executive produced the film, and his own father. This many years later, Luna still remembers every detail of the screening and how he dedicated the showing to his dad. Luna is back on the Croisette again this year and the family bonds remain as strong as ever. He's here to present his latest directorial effort, *Ashes*, attending with his son, and he'll be making the promotional rounds wearing looks by Zegna.

Luna has a history with the Italian luxury house that dates back nearly 20 years to when he starred in a Zegna campaign. But rather than outgrow an early fashion partnership, Luna has leaned more fully into wearing finely tailored suits and tuxedos for major red carpet appearances, such as the recent Golden Globes.

Ahead of walking the steps of the Palais for film festival's opening night ceremony, Luna spent a few quality minutes with *The Hollywood Reporter* in a suite at Hôtel Martinez to discuss how he adjusts his style strategy when debuting a film as a director rather than an actor, what he loves about Zegna and his favorite Cannes memory.

You've been to Cannes many times before. It must feel wildly different to be here now with a film you directed and with your son?

Yeah. I came in 2010 with the first fiction film I directed [*Abel*], and my dad came with me. I still remember the whole screening and how important it was for me to share it with him, so much that I dedicated the screening to him. It's kind of nice to think about how much time has passed and now I'm here with my son. A lot of things have happened for me at this festival.

I noticed you were also here for the 70th and 75th festival anniversary celebrations. What do you remember about those milestones?

It was great. The festival that I enjoyed the most was when I was on the jury for Un Certain Regard. It was fabulous — like a



Above: Diego Luna on the set of his latest directorial effort, *Ashes*. Right: On a Hôtel Martinez balcony ahead of Cannes opening night in a black tuxedo by Zegna.

dream. You cannot get used to something like that, because they treat you amazingly well. You get to watch so many films and sit with other artists, who are fantastic to listen to and share ideas and reflections with. It's 10 days of movie watching with great food and the best possible company. You come out of an experience like that as a different person, enriched in every possible way.

You have a deep history with Zegna. I found a campaign from 2007 that you starred in.

Yes, I did a campaign for two years, or something close. It was a lot of photo shoots all around. I loved it because at the time, it was so new for me. I got to wear clothes and suits that were custom-made and tailored for me, so everything fit like a glove. It was so cool. I even got to go to Italy a lot and meet with Zegna. My photo was everywhere, and my friends used to make fun of me when they saw my face at the bus stop or in subways. My friends sent me so many pictures of them posing in front of me. It was amazing. I wore those suits for a decade of my life.

You started wearing Zegna in your 20s and you're still with the brand today, which is rare for fashion partnerships. What is it about Zegna that works for you?

It feels very simple. But at the same time, I know how much work goes into the clothes they make. When you put on Zegna, it feels very easy, as if it's made for your body, because it fits so nicely. It doesn't feel

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imposing or that it's taking over you. I don't have to think too much about it because it's so comfortable and well-made.

That must be very important when you're getting ready for a red carpet or a big event, like presenting your film in Cannes?

Yes, true. For example, this tuxedo that I'm wearing right now [for the opening ceremony], the design features wide-leg pants that are high waisted. It's more out there than what I would normally wear. For my premiere on Wednesday, I will wear something more classic since it's my film and I'm not acting in it. I have to behave and be properly dressed for group pictures with the team. I don't want to be wearing something too crazy. The beauty of that is that Zegna has both, and everything looks amazing.

That's a style rule I don't think many people realize. Why is it important to you as a filmmaker not to outshine your actors?

It's about sharing the moment with the whole team and making sure we all blend and look like a team. There's a time and a place for everything, but this one is a very special moment because it's very much about the four years of hard work done in collaboration. It should be about the whole team, not any one individual.

When it comes to the more casual Zegna looks, what do you gravitate toward?

I love having Zegna help me because they make something for every part of the journey. They have clothes that work for morning events, easygoing interviews, press junkets and then very dressy events. It can be simple. It can be very monochromatic. I can be a bit boring myself and they have room for people like me. **VIR**

Below, from left: Luna, nominated for *Andor*, turned up in 2026 wearing Zegna at both the Golden Globes (in a brown monochromatic tuxedo) and the Critics Choice Awards (in green mandarin-collar blazer and matching pants).





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- Nathan Pengel – The Best Candidate
- Jenny Kavit – All The Ugly Parts
- Paul Corricelli – Head Wound

FEATURE

- Oliver Mack Calhoun – Exonerated
- Laurent Vayriat – Exeat
- David Jara – Darkling
- Walid Chaya – Crazy Rich Arabs
- Farrah Abraham – My Teenage Dream Ended
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VOLKER SCHLÖNDORFF HAS NO REGRETS

At 87, the German director returns to Cannes with a new film and six decades of history behind him — the scandals, the Palme and the politics

BY SCOTT ROXBOROUGH

This Cannes, Volker Schlöndorff is just here to enjoy himself. “Go there for the fun,” he recalls former Cannes chief Gilles Jacob telling him recently. “You got the Palme already.”

It's the kind of advice only a filmmaker with Schlöndorff's history on the Croisette could receive. He arrived in Cannes for the first time with *Young Törless* in 1966, his debut feature and one of the opening salvos of the New German Cinema movement. The adaptation of Robert Musil's novel about cruelty and authoritarianism in an Austrian military boarding school caused an immediate scandal. Mid-screening, Schlöndorff remembers, a German cultural attaché stormed out of the Palais shouting: “This is not a German film!”

“For publicity, I couldn't have asked for anything better,” Schlöndorff says now.

At 87, Schlöndorff speaks with the calm precision of someone who has spent decades arguing about cinema, politics and history — often all at once. His films have done the same. In dozens of features over six decades, from *The Lost Honor*

of *Katharina Blum* (1975) to *Coup de Grâce* (1976) to *The Ninth Day* (2004), *Calm at Sea* (2011) or *Diplomacy* (2014), his work has traced the fault lines of European history: fascism, terrorism, war, ideological collapse, and the uneasy compromises between morality and survival. Few filmmakers of his generation moved as fluidly between art house prestige, literary adaptation and political confrontation.

And few remained so closely tied to Cannes.

After *Young Törless*, Schlöndorff returned repeatedly to the festival through the late 1960s and '70s, sometimes triumphantly, sometimes less so. He jokes now that several of those films “have fortunately been forgotten.” But Cannes remained the recurring stage on which Schlöndorff's career unfolded — and where, in 1979, it reached its defining peak.

That was the year *The Tin Drum*, his adaptation of Günter Grass' sprawling anti-fascist masterpiece, shared the Palme d'Or with Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*. The pairing felt symbolic: New German Cinema meeting New



Hollywood at the height of both movements' artistic ambition. Coppola's Vietnam epic alongside Schlöndorff's surreal story about a child who refuses to grow up as Europe descends into madness.

After Cannes, *The Tin Drum* went on to win the Oscar for best foreign-language film, the first German movie to do so since the end of the Second World War.

"Sometimes, you're kissed by the Muses, as I was with *The Tin Drum*. That will remain, forever, my peak," he acknowledges. "As time goes by, I feel grateful to have had such a peak."

If *The Tin Drum* became the film that permanently defined Schlöndorff internationally, it also clarified the themes that had always driven him. History, in Schlöndorff's cinema, is never background. Politics enters bedrooms, kitchens and private lives whether people invite it in or not.

That worldview was shaped as much by biography as ideology. Born in Germany during the war, Schlöndorff spent his formative years in France, attending school there and beginning his cinema apprenticeship under such directors as Louis Malle and Jean-Pierre Melville. He absorbed the intellectual rigor of the French New Wave. Later, after international success brought him to Hollywood, Schlöndorff would find a counterweight in his friendship with Billy Wilder, who taught him "how to not let your profession entirely take over your life."

But Schlöndorff is, was and will always be, in his words, "a political animal." He was formed amid the ideological tumult of postwar West Germany in the 1960s and '70s. Several of his films — *The*



From left: Susanne Wolff and Lars Eidinger in Volker Schlöndorff's *Visitation*. The film follows successive inhabitants of a lakeside property from the Nazi era to reunification.

Lost Honor of Katharina Blum, the omnibus film *Germany in Autumn* (1978), *The Legend of Rita* (2000) — confront the lingering presence of Nazi and authoritarian ideology in German institutions and the radicalization that emerged in response. Schlöndorff sympathized with the anger driving the student movements of the time and pushed back against those condemning the radicals, including German left-wing terrorist group the Red Army Faction, who were using violence to achieve political ends.

There were detours. Hollywood came calling after *The Tin Drum*. Schlöndorff turned down an offer from Steven Spielberg to do an episode of *The Twilight Zone* — but did make *Swann in Love* (1984) with Jeremy Irons, *Death of a Salesman* (1985) with John Malkovich and Dustin Hoffman, *Voyager* (1991) with Sam Shepard and Julie Delpy, even the now-forgotten, first adaptation of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1990) starring Natasha Richardson, Faye Dunaway and Robert Duvall.

New York briefly became

home. Then history intervened again. The fall of the Berlin Wall pulled Schlöndorff back to Germany, where he spent years helping revive the legendary Studio Babelsberg following reunification — the backlot, based in East Germany, was threatened with collapse — work he now describes as necessary if frustrating and far removed from filmmaking itself.

This year, Cannes brings him back once more, out of competition, with *Visitation*, adapted from Jenny Erpenbeck's novel *Heimsuchung*. Set across decades at a lakeside property in Brandenburg, the film follows successive inhabitants through the Nazi era, East Germany and reunification, tracing how political systems reshape ordinary lives whether their occupants acknowledge it or not. The film's ensemble cast includes Lars Eidinger, Martina Gedeck, Susanne Wolff and Angela Winkler. StudioCanal is handling international sales.

The role of the artist under authoritarianism, the fragility of private happiness and the illusion that anyone can

remain untouched by history put *Visitation* firmly in the land of Schlöndorff, in the territory he has explored his entire career.

Looking back across six decades of Cannes triumphs, scandals, detours and reinventions, Schlöndorff sounds surprisingly unburdened by it all. He speaks about the unpredictability of a filmmaking life with the same unsentimental clarity his films bring to history itself.

"Je ne regrette rien," he says.

You have a long relationship with Cannes, but an even longer relationship with France, where you studied and first started your career in film. What influence did that early period in France have on you?

The influence is enormous. In these formative years, between 15 and 25, that's where you make friends, where you are happy the first time ... But especially that's where I discovered filmmaking. Everything I am in life, as well as in my profession, in my art, it all comes from these 10 years in France.

The other person I connect you to is Billy Wilder, whom you were good friends with and did an incredible documentary on (2006's *Billy Wilder Speaks*). What did you learn from Wilder?

Which kind of shoes to buy, which kind of clothes to wear, what to order in the restaurant. Most of all, how to not let your profession entirely take over your life. He was as passionate and as devoted a filmmaker as you can imagine, but his art collecting, his meeting with friends, especially his discussing movies with friends [were just as important to him]. For him, watching a film was one thing, but discussing the movie afterwards, that was the real joy. We would sit down, with our own films or others' films, and try to analyze how come it works and how come it doesn't work? He always identified with the person in the movie theater and what influence the film would have on them. That was the important point.

"GILLES JACOB TOLD ME LAST WEEK: 'WHAT DO YOU CARE ABOUT COMPETITION? YOU GOT THE PALME ALREADY. GO THERE FOR THE FUN.' AND THAT'S WHAT I'M DOING."

Do you remember your first Cannes with *Young Törless*?

It was exactly 60 years ago, almost to the day, on May 15, 1966. It seems unreal that I should be the same person as the one who was there 60 years ago. It's a great joy for me [to be back]. And also it's very relaxed. It's out of competition, as Gilles Jacob told me last week: "What do you care about competition? You got the Palme already. Go there for the fun." And that's what I'm doing.

What was the reception to the film back then?

There was a little scandal. In the middle of the screening, the German representative, the cultural attaché of the embassy, got up screaming, "This is not a German film!" and left the Grand Palais slamming the door behind him. Well, I couldn't have asked for better publicity. But the real screening for me was the press screening in the morning. I remember going into the press conference with maybe 40 or 50 critics together, and that applause was probably the most enjoyable one I ever had in my life.

You were back a few times in between *Young Törless* and *The Tin Drum* (1979) ...

Seven times in total, three times between *Young Törless* and *The Tin Drum* with films, I'd say, have fortunately been forgotten. My second movie, *Degree of Murder*, with Anita Pallenberg and the music by The Rolling Stones' Brian Jones. Then my Michael Kohlhaas adaptation, *Man on Horseback*, my first English-speaking production for Columbia, which was too much, too soon for me. But Cannes is very, very familiar. It's really strange that one is still around, still going, still making films.

When you won the Palme d'Or for *The Tin Drum*, you shared it with Francis Ford Coppola and *Apocalypse Now*.

I was friends with Francis, and had been visiting him on his yacht the day before. I knew he was carrying the weight of, you

know, \$50 million of his own fortune he had in the movie, and there was the rumor that he'd been promised the Palme as a condition for bringing the film to Cannes. We joked about it, but it felt very much like David versus Goliath.

I felt very honored to share the Palme with him. He was bothered by it at the time, but not for vanity reasons. He was really fighting for the money, and he thought that sharing the prize might diminish the commercial impact of the Palme. But both films did well, and after that we had a bond.

Did you feel with *The Tin Drum* you had found your voice as a director?

Well, if I found it, then I lost it very fast again. You can never say in filmmaking you've found it. You invest the same enthusiasm, the same labor, the same creativity in every project, and sometimes all of a sudden, you're kissed by the Muses, as I was with *The Tin Drum*. That will remain, forever, my peak. As time goes by, I feel grateful to have had such a peak. And life was easier afterwards. I was able to work in a more relaxed manner. I didn't have anything more to prove.

Winning the Academy Award gave me a tranquility.

***Visitation* returns again to the Nazi era and East Germany, periods you've explored many times before.**

I was totally unaware how political this film was going to turn out. I saw it as a pastoral, the bucolic countryside, on the lake, through summer, winter, spring, the four seasons. It was only as we were making it that I saw how the characters think they are enjoying a happy summer, they feel in full control of their private lives, but there are politics looming in the background that will change their lives. The Nazi period is just about a third of the film, it's not about that per se, but more about how we are all shaped by historical events, more than our own will and our own desires. We might want this or that, but then the bombing starts, the government is overthrown, history happens and we get thrown off course. Meanwhile, nature remains beautiful and indifferent to our joys and our suffering.

Do you see yourself as a political artist?

I can't help it. I'm the political

animal. I'm completely involved and interested in what's going on in history. The difference between the '60s and now is you don't really have the belief anymore that you can change a lot, but you have to partake because politics is what decides our lives.

You were very engaged politically in the '60s and '70s, at a time when groups like the German Red Army Faction were using violence to achieve political change. How do you look back on that time now?

First, let me quote Édith Piaf: *Je ne regrette rien*. Secondly, I never justified political violence. But in my movies, I tried to show how post-war German society was still completely infiltrated by old Nazis, in the educational system, in the justice system, in everyday politics. And that needed to be shaken up. The street protests of '68 didn't achieve much initially, so inevitably, it escalated into violence. I think the people who used violence, at the beginning, had good intentions. They thought it would be a wake-up call. But the more isolated they became, the more fanatical things got.

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Schlöndorff (left) with Eidinger on the set of *Visitation*.

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SCARLETT GOES ALL IN

Johansson returns to her roots, getting big, loud and deeply personal in *Paper Tiger*. Director James Gray couldn't be happier about it **BY DAVID CANFIELD**

James Gray was sure Scarlett Johansson would say no. "I didn't think Scarlett Johansson had any interest in working with me on any level," the acclaimed filmmaker says. "I don't even know if she's aware of this, but multiple times, I wanted to work with her. I've been kind of obsessed with working with Scarlett for a long time, so I had total pessimism about it." Listening in on an adjacent Zoom box, Johansson nods while holding her poker face like only great actors can. Then, when it's her turn to respond, she smirks: "I won't comment on the pessimism part ... but James and I have met before to discuss different things, so he's actually not being totally forthcoming. He did know that I was interested."

Gray clarifies: "I was extremely nervous. I was terrified that she was going to think it's preposterous and silly."

Then Johansson read the script for *Paper Tiger*, which debuts this weekend in Cannes. "I was like, 'Oh, I know I can do this. I don't necessarily know how I'm going to do it, but I know that there's something here that I can do and that I can be additive,'" she says. "It had so many elements that I loved. It's a big story inside of a small story."

Johansson has made a habit of effortlessly mixing fizzy tentpole fare such as *Jurassic World: Rebirth* and Mike Flanagan's upcoming take on *The Exorcist* — currently



Gray

filming, and thereby preventing Johansson from attending the *Paper Tiger* premiere on the Croisette, she says — with challenging, chewy auteur-driven projects from the likes of Noah Baumbach and Wes Anderson. *Paper Tiger* falls firmly in the latter category.

The drama stars Johansson and Miles Teller as Hester and Irwin Pearl, parents to two boys in late '80s New York holding tight to the flicker of dreams new and old for bigger lives, as well as the crushing weight of the sense that they might be fading away. Irwin gets drawn into a sketchy new moneymaking scheme with his suave brother, Gary (Adam Driver), leading to an unsettling encounter that places the family in serious danger.

Hester is the heart of this story: a stay-at-home mom determined to fight for more — and left to contend with a narrower set of options once tragic news sets in. "I liked the idea of Hester being feminine and soft and graceful because she has a lot of chutzpah inside her," Johansson says. The star speaks with a movingly affectionate understanding of the character: "She loves fashion magazines and going to the movies — she loves romantic comedies and all things romantic — and window shopping. All of those things are such an important part of who she is and how she presents herself.

She should be in the middle of her life and striving for more — vivacious and full of life. That's how I envisioned her."

Her approach hits its most poignant register, then, as bad news piles up: "Women give up their dream for their husband and take a step back, and the dream becomes more of a dream for their family. It's so common. I've seen it in my friends, I've seen it in my family. I just know in my bones what that is — there's a sadness about it and a beauty about it. It's such a bittersweet thing."

Paper Tiger is rich with the texture of life, and even as its suspenseful crime-drama architecture harkens back to Gray's earlier work, the vivid, period-specific family portraiture is the main attraction here, showcasing his evolution behind the camera. "To be very pretentious about it, the intention was to try to make a very classical drama. The bonds of the film are both marital and familial, father and mother and son, two brothers, mother and daughter — it's about very elemental bonds of human relationships," Gray says. "People sometimes shit on that idea, 'classical' — they equate it with 'old-fashioned,' but the two are not the same thing. Internal conflict, struggle, love, emotion — that is never old-fashioned. That's beautiful, that's what it means to be a human being, and the minute that gets old-fashioned, you may as well just raise the white flag."

Gray has long advocated for supporting this scope of cinema for theaters — Neon acquired U.S. rights just as its Cannes selection was announced — and has only leaned in more as his career has progressed. He went into *Paper Tiger* with a crucial question for himself: "How do you make a movie where the whole point of it is the expression of love?" Johansson proved crucial in answering that through her performance. Long heralded for her naturalistic work in dramas like *Marriage Story* and *Lost in Translation*, the two-time Oscar nominee goes big and loud in *Paper Tiger*. The accent is thick, the curls are curling, the emotion runs hot in all directions. Yet every choice is fully rooted in the material — the "layers of history" within the script, as she puts it, and the memories and sounds and images of Johansson's own family.

"The voice is so familiar to me — I grew up in New York and my mom was from the Bronx and my grandmother was from Brownsville and my grandfather was from Coney Island," she says. "The neighborhoods, humor, irony, all of that is fun to express because it's part of the fabric of who I am culturally and where I come from. Even my grandmother, Dorothy, her mother spoke only Yiddish to her, and there's a real musicality to the dialect that's so specific."

From day one, she embraced

"The voice is so familiar to me — I grew up in New York and my mom was from the Bronx," says Scarlett Johansson of her role in *Paper Tiger*. "The neighborhoods, humor, irony ... it's part of the fabric of who I am culturally."



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that quality — a handful of times, she admits, in excess: “James would actually sometimes say to me, ‘It’s too much: You’re not a yenta from Brownsville!’”

Gray has worked with a ton of decorated actors over the years, including Oscar winners Joaquin Phoenix, Anthony Hopkins, Brad Pitt, Gwyneth Paltrow, Charlize Theron, Marion Cotillard and Anne Hathaway (who was originally supposed to star in *Paper Tiger* opposite Jeremy Strong, in a reunion from Gray’s previous feature *Armageddon Time*; scheduling problems led to the recastings). In these stacked ensembles, he has seen it all.

“I made a picture once with — well, I won’t say, but two actors who were competing over one another, in this phase of their careers, and it became completely ugly and ridiculous,” Gray teases. “I’ve had all kinds of weird circumstances, but *Paper Tiger* was very much a dream.”

Johansson shares only a handful of scenes with her *Marriage Story* co-star Driver — “I would’ve loved to have had even more scenework with him, I love working with him,” she says — but grew close to Teller: “He’s so unexpectedly tender. I went away for a couple of weeks to do the press for *Jurassic* — I felt crazy to leave, but I had to go — and when I was gone, I’d get photographs of my makeup station from Miles and he’d be like, ‘Where’s Hester?’”

Teller was not alone. Johansson made her mark on that set, in large part through her indelible characterization. “Scarlett’s last day on set was just about one of the hardest days I’ve had — I was so sad,” Gray says. “When you make an emotional investment in something — and the major thread is to communicate love and sympathy, which is what we hoped that the film would convey — you feel yourself feeling the same thing as when you watch those actors on a daily basis.

... It took me a long time to get over it. Maybe that’s too corny, I don’t know. But it is true. It took me a long time.” **THR**

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Booking a hotel because *The White Lotus* made it look good was just the beginning. The expanded version of set-jetting (travel inspired by film and TV) involves volcanic wine country, an invitation-only whisky room in Edinburgh and a Slovenian cellar where the bear salami is aged by the moon. These are the European destinations worth building a trip around — and the films to reference before and after the experience.

SICILY: FOR WINE LOVERS

In 1971, Francis Ford Coppola couldn't shoot in Corleone — it looked too modern. He moved east, to the hillside villages of Savoca and Forza d'Agrò near Taormina, and accidentally gave Sicily a cinematic identity that has never worn off. Bar Vitelli, where Al Pacino's Michael Corleone first sees Apollonia, still serves granita under the same vine-covered terrace. The Church of San Nicolo, where they married, still stands at the end of the



A FILM LOVER'S TOUR OF EUROPE

From the Sicilian hillside where Coppola shot *The Godfather* to an Edinburgh whisky room you can only enter by invitation, six destinations where the film connection is just the beginning **BY MELINDA SHECKELLS**



From left: The Hendrick's Gin Palace in Girvan, Scotland. The Bristol Belgrade. Rosewood Amsterdam is filled with major works of art like this one by Frank Stella. The AS Boutique Hotel in Slovenia.

same cliffside street. *The White Lotus* season two doubled down on Taormina and introduced the Etna wine country to a generation of viewers who hadn't found it yet.

On Etna's slopes, the Benanti and Tornatore wineries produce nerello mascalese and carricante from vines rooted in volcanic soil unlike anything else growing in Europe right now. Planeta handles the broader education, with wines that have become reference points for the whole island. The place to stay is Monaci delle Terre Nere, a former 17th century Augustinian monastery that Guido Coffa spent years converting into a Relais & Chateaux wine estate — 62 acres of vineyards, citrus orchards and lava-stone terraces, with a kitchen that lives and dies by what the farm produces that morning. Before leaving the area, lunch or dinner at Anciovi, the poolside seafood restaurant at San Domenico Palace — the Four Seasons where *White Lotus* was actually filmed — is mandatory.

VENICE: FOR ART LOVERS

Steven Spielberg used Venice well in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989) — the Grand Canal boat chase and Campo San Barnaba doubling as a library. The city hasn't changed its approach since. In 2026, the Venice Biennale brings the global art world back to the one city that has been staging this kind of thing since before the concept existed. The Giardini pavilions and Arsenale are the serious work — formally ambitious and often politically uncomfortable. The collateral exhibitions in palazzos and deconsecrated churches across all six sestieri are where the best discoveries happen.

The St. Regis Venice on the Grand Canal near the Accademia Bridge handles the city's logistical complexity without making a fuss about it — the butler service is ideal to simplify every need in a city where nothing is simple. Dinner at Airelles Venezia at the new ABC Kitchen is an absolute must.

PUGLIA: FOR AGRITOURISM LOVERS

No Time to Die (2021) used the ravine city of Gravina in Puglia for one of its action sequences. The region has absorbed a decade of being discovered and come out intact. The right base in 2026 is Tenuta Negroamaro, a 10-suite estate near Gallipoli on the Ionian coast — seven hectares of pine woods and red-soil gardens, interiors by designer Olga Ashby, private plunge pools and a kitchen sourcing from the estate. It sits in Salento, the quieter southern end of the region, where the pace is slower.

AMSTERDAM: FOR ARCHITECTURE LOVERS

Rosewood Amsterdam, which opened in the former Palace of Justice on the Prinsengracht, is where the industry crowd should stay. George Clooney, Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, Julia Roberts and Catherine Zeta-Jones were all in Amsterdam in 2003 filming *Ocean's Twelve* with Steven Soderbergh using the Nine Streets canal houses as his backdrop.

Rosewood Amsterdam, which opened in the former Palace of Justice on the Prinsengracht, is where the industry crowd should stay.

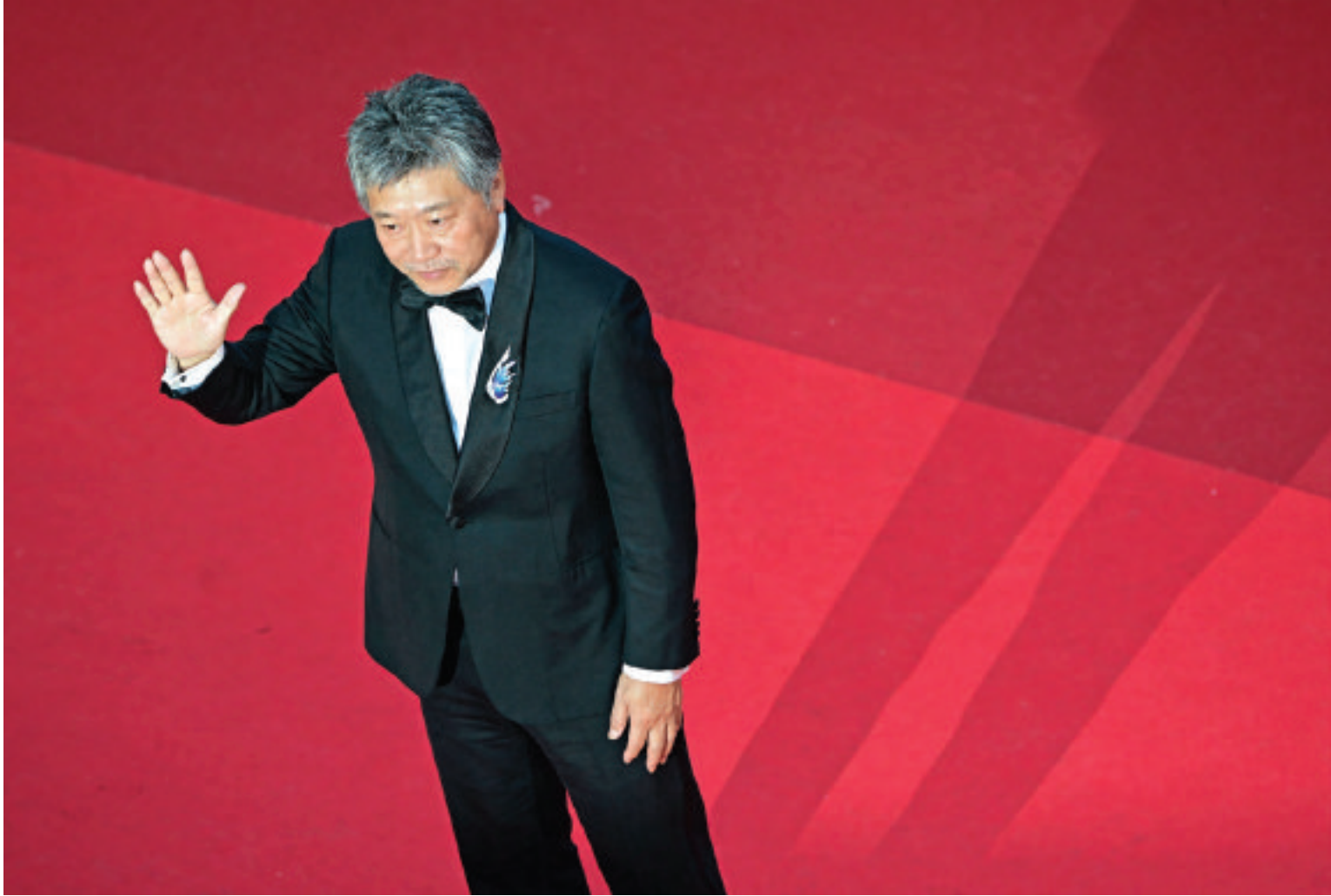
Studio Piet Boon handled the design. Innovative Media puts digital works on a large lobby screen in collaboration with Amsterdam's Nxt Museum. Urban Art covers the street culture. Frank Stella's Polish Village reliefs and Maarten Baas' Grandfather Clocks are among the signature pieces, and guided art walks run alongside rotating exhibitions in The Gallery.

SLOVENIA: FOR FOOD LOVERS

Ljubljana is small, walkable and layered — a castle on the hill, a covered market by the river, an architectural confidence that punches well above the city's size. Jaz by Ana Ros, which opened in 2023 inside the AS Boutique Hotel on Copova ulica, is the meal worth planning around. "JAZ" is Slovenian for "I" — this is Ros unencumbered by the pressure of Hisa Franko, her three-Michelin-star destination restaurant in the Soca Valley. No tasting menus. Shared plates. A menu that changes daily based on

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THE HUMANIST AND THE ANDROID

Palme d'Or winner Hirokazu Kore-eda ventures into science fiction — and finds the same territory he has always explored: grief, family and what it means to love someone you are losing **BY PATRICK BRZESKI**

Japanese art house favorite Hirokazu Kore-eda is a somewhat unlikely figure to probe the sci-fi implications of generative artificial intelligence. The 63-year-old auteur, winner of the Cannes Palme d'Or in 2018 for *Shoplifters*, has made his indelible imprint on world cinema with delicate family drama, suffused with wry humor and wrenching humanism, far more so than

futurism. But for his 17th feature, *Sheep in a Box*, Kore-eda has set his story in a speculative world just over the horizon — where packages are delivered by drone, all cars are electric, and generative AI has reached into the most intimate domains of human experience.

The film stars Haruka Ayase and Daigo Yamamoto as a young couple mourning the recent death of their son. They live in

a leafy exurb of Tokyo in a sleek, sunlit home designed by the wife, an architect, and built by the husband, a carpenter with a soulful reverence for high-quality wood. But the weight of their grief is just as palpable as the utopian patina of their surroundings. A dubious promise of relief arrives by way of a new AI-powered robotics company — one that specializes in vividly realistic android re-creations of

lost loved ones. Tentatively, the bereaved parents soon welcome a little humanoid (played by newcomer Kuwaki Rimu) into their home who is indistinguishable from their beloved late son, Kakeru — except for a power button on the back of his neck and a nightly need to sit on his charging station.

In other hands, the stage would be set for a *Black Mirror*-like dystopian chiller, but Kore-eda, unsurprisingly, takes his premise into less obvious, more nuanced emotional terrain. You could say one of world cinema's great humanists extends the grace of his embrace into the realm of the post-human.

The Hollywood Reporter connected with Kore-eda in Tokyo ahead of Cannes to discuss how *Sheep in a Box* came about.

Tell me about the creative origins of this project. Where did this premise come from?

In general, I've gotten interested in generative AI. But the

more specific spark for this story came to me in March of 2024, when I happened upon an article about a Chinese startup [called Super Brain] that uses AI to resurrect people who have passed away. That got me even more interested, and I wrote up a little treatment. Later that fall, I was on a trip to Beijing for other purposes and I arranged an opportunity to speak to the company's founder, Zhang Zewei. He gave me a demo of how their service works. Basically, they use a bunch of data about the deceased person, including audiovisual data — photos and videos — they create an AI likeness of the deceased person that their loved ones can interact with. What I found fascinating is that the technology makes it possible to have new conversations with them — not just covering topics you've discussed with them before. I found it all precarious, but I could also see how this is something that will inevitably spread. So I decided to expand my treatment and explore these issues more deeply.

I was struck by how *Sheep in a Box* is a pretty optimistic take on AI overall. It's not particularly dystopian. How did you come to that point of view?

I can't say I'm especially well-read in the sci-fi space, but when you consider Isaac Asimov's famous *Three Laws of Robotics* [which can be paraphrased as: A robot may not harm a human being; a robot must obey human orders, unless those orders conflict with the first law; and a robot must protect its own existence, unless doing so conflicts with the first or second law] they are very anthropocentric. It's all based on the idea that humans will always be the center of this world. And I've always felt a little discomfort with that approach. I believe that as AI and androids evolve, they are going to transcend humanity, and at that point, humanity is not going to be something they even really care about. They will want to connect with something bigger. That's what I see as the

“I ASKED A MEMBER OF MY CREW TO HAVE CHATGPT READ MY SCRIPT AND EVALUATE IT ... IT DIDN'T GIVE ME ANY UNEXPECTED ANSWERS.”

most realistic outcome, anyway.

So, one of the first thoughts was that I wanted my story to land in this notion of androids choosing to no longer exist among the humans. Then I began thinking of how children always outgrow and transcend their parents — you know, the idea of them leaving the nest, and eventually living lives that the parents sometimes struggle to keep up with. I decided to layer these two stories, and that's essentially how it came about.

How did you approach the world-building aspect of the project — deciding just how futuristic the film's pseudo sci-fi setting would be?

One of the big themes of the film is the idea of the box, so a key breakthrough for the production was finding the modernist house that we shot as the couple's home. It's composed of overlapping boxes, and if you take a bird's-eye view of the whole structure, it's essentially a box with a square garden courtyard in the middle. Finding that house and drawing various ideas from it was huge for the production. Not just in terms of scene details or art direction, but because the sets themselves were built to align with the layout of the actual house, and I revised some things in the script after taking inspiration from the architecture.

The house itself is in Kamakura, which is a bit away from Tokyo and very different from the lived-in, downtown feel that I portrayed in *Shoplifters*. Kamakura is a bit high-end, and it has a feeling of being more open and connected to nature. In that sense, both the town and the house are quite sophisticated.

The real home was built by a couple who live there with their kids. The wife is an architect and the husband works for a construction company — just like the characters in our story. We rented the house as it is. It was foundational to the whole film.

We also witness the mother's creative process as an architect throughout the story. She makes meticulous paper models of her buildings, and there's a moment when she snaps at the android little boy when he interferes in her process and tries to just tell her the answer to her creative experimentation. She tells him, “Don't take that part away.” I sensed some potential notes of instruction on your part here — about how our relationship with AI might evolve, or should evolve, if we're lucky and thoughtful.

Something that I often think about these days is process. In Japanese, the word we might use to describe this kind of activity is *muda*, which translates to waste, futility or effort that doesn't really yield any direct value. But I feel that the time we spend in that state is what makes us human. So, with that scene you mentioned, I wanted to give some hints of that. But

if you look at the whole story from a broader perspective, the couple go through an evolution of processing their grief, their relationship, and how they relate to and feel about this android version of their son, and it's precisely that process — the search, and the trial and error of it — that makes the film a humanistic portrayal. AI offers the promise of basically just being able to present you with the answer. In many contexts, that will certainly save time — it eliminates the *muda* — but it just doesn't feel as good, ultimately. There's no merit in it. It's like being given the answer without playing the game.

Lastly, I have to ask ... Does Hirokazu Kore-eda use AI and what's your relationship with it like — in your work or daily life?

Personally, no, I don't use it at all. Not at all. But while I was making this film, I thought, “Why not give it a go?” So I asked a member of my crew to have ChatGPT read my script and evaluate it. We explained our goals and asked it, “What are some ideas you may have to make this script better?” I was hoping to have a productive back and forth. And it was OK. It was interesting. I could see how it has become something that feels fun to talk to — but it didn't give me any unexpected answers. Maybe someday it will evolve to the point where it has the capability to give you something really surprising and compelling, but that wasn't my experience. **THR**



Hirokazu Kore-eda on the set of *Sheep in a Box*.

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THE GRANDE DAMES

Joan Collins and Isabella Rossellini have spent decades navigating fame, image and an industry that treats women as disposable. At Cannes, they've finally found the roles that say everything they've been waiting to say **BY SCOTT ROXBOROUGH**

Joan Collins and Isabella Rossellini look amazing. Collins is fresh from the Cannes red carpet, where the night before she had outshone starlets a third — a quarter — her age. At 92, the actress brought a blast of old Hollywood glamour to a festival that, this year especially, has often felt strangely drained of it.

Her sculpted white orchid gown, a custom Stéphane Rolland Haute Couture number with a sweeping train, paired with dramatic black opera gloves, diamond jewelry and similarly encrusted needle-toe pumps, gave off unmistakable Alexis Carrington energy — a reminder of the 1980s, when Collins, as the scheming queen of *Dynasty*, practically dictated the decade's fashion vocabulary.

"It was very exciting. I had my glam squad do me up, the hair, the makeup," she says. "I looked — well, I won't say how I looked, but you can read what they wrote."

Sitting opposite me now on the Carlton Beach, Dame Joan is



Collins in Stéphane Rolland Haute Couture for the *My Duchess* red carpet.

only slightly more casual, wearing a thigh-length patterned summer dress and oversized hexagonal sunglasses the size of tea saucers. Her famous mane is perfectly buffed into place.

Next to her, Isabella Rossellini is the bohemian counterpoint: Draped in a loose black-and-white patterned outfit with flashes of bright orange lining, her trademark pixie cut untouched by Cannes excess. Rossellini has flown in for this interview, joining Collins to discuss *My Duchess*, the first collaboration between the two screen icons.

But Rossellini skipped the red carpet entirely.

"I actually find it very intimidating," she says. "It's a whole production now. It's not like when my mother [Ingrid Bergman] went to the Oscars. She wore her own jewelry, maybe something special that my father had bought for her."

"Well, I wore my own jewelry last night," Collins jumps in. "Because I didn't want a security guard following me around. Which is what happens when they give you something to wear."

The two women bounce off each other like old friends rather than first-time co-stars, veering effortlessly between fashion, film and stories from another era of cinema.

"Your father and I almost worked together," Collins says suddenly, turning to Rossellini.

She launches into a sprawling anecdote about *Sea Wife*, the 1957 drama in which she starred opposite Richard Burton. Roberto Rossellini had originally been hired to direct.

"Roberto fought with Darryl Zanuck over my character, who

was a nun, and Roberto wanted her to have sex, a relationship with Richard Burton's character. He said that would be real, natural. They fought about it for a week while we played Scrabble in the sand. The studio wouldn't budge and Roberto said, 'Well, it's not true to life,' and left."

Rossellini laughs. "My father really liked you."

Collins recently posted a photo of her with Roberto Rossellini on Instagram on May 8, which would have been his 120th birthday.

"She's very big on Instagram," Rossellini says.

"Oh, you have more followers than me," Collins retorts.

But Collins is not in Cannes simply to reminisce about the golden age of cinema. She's here to launch *My Duchess*. Directed by Mike Newell (*Four Weddings and a Funeral*) from a script by Louise Fennell, the film tells the story of Wallis Simpson, the Duchess of Windsor, the previously divorced woman King Edward VIII, later known as the Duke of Windsor, abdicated his throne to marry. It focuses on the final years of her life, when she lived in France under the control of her exploitative lawyer, Suzanne Blum, played by Rossellini. The film picks up after the death of the Duke of Windsor in 1972 and traces the Duchess' physical and mental collapse under Blum's control.

"People thought she had died, but she hadn't. This lawyer [Rossellini] came in and destroyed her. She spent the last eight or nine years of her life blind, deaf and dying. And no one knows that."

But getting the project made took decades. *My Duchess* is the first feature from John



Above: Isabella Rossellini (left) and Joan Collins in Cannes for the premiere of their historical drama *My Duchess* (far right).

Gore Studios, the new outfit fit launched by the Broadway impresario behind *Hamilton* and *The Book of Mormon*, who agreed to finance the project after Collins pitched it to him at a King's Trust dinner in late 2023. Embankment Films is handling sales in Cannes.

Collins has been trying to make her Wallis Simpson film for 30 years. In the early 1990s, Collins met Mohamed Al-Fayed — the father of Dodi Fayed, who died with Princess Diana in the Paris car crash, and, at the time, the owner of London luxury department store Harrods.

"I told him how fascinated I was with Wallis Simpson," Collins recalls. "He said, 'I own her house in France.' So I went there."

She was shown around the house by Bahamas-born Sydney



Johnson, the Windsors' former valet. "The place was immaculate, it looked just as it did, just as it does in the film. There were two mannequins, one of the Duchess and one of the Duke. He was wearing a kilt. She was wearing Chanel, of course."

Collins admits to feeling a kinship with Simpson, who was the target of the tabloids of her day.

"This film is a bit of me getting back [at the press], because I had a lot of problems in my time," she says. "They always saw me as the bad girl because of the roles I played. When I was in *Dynasty*, the press would say: 'She's just like that,' and I wasn't!"

For Collins' fans, *My Duchess* is something of a revelation. As Simpson declines, the actress appears frail, diminished, stripped of poise and makeup. Frighteningly exposed.

"Joan has this combination that I have never seen before," says Rossellini. "She

is beautiful, has great beauty, great glamor, but absolutely no vanity whatsoever."

"No, I am not vain. I have never been vain," Collins agrees. "I'll answer the door in shorts with no makeup. I don't care."

That lack of vanity becomes the greatest weapon of *My Duchess*. The sight of Collins — one of the defining glamour figures of post-war cinema and television — as she physically withers onscreen is something we have never seen before.

But there is, as Rossellini puts it, one "Joan Collins moment" in the film: when the Duchess finally snaps and lashes out at Blum.

"I say the F-word one time in the film, in that scene," says Collins with obvious delight. "As I was doing it, I thought: 'I just told Ingrid Bergman's daughter to F-off!'"

Despite the darkness of the material, there is an unmistakable lightness between the two actresses, perhaps because both have spent decades navigating the strange collision of celebrity image and artistic ambition. And both have also successfully adjusted to periods out of the spotlight. In an industry that often treats women as disposable, they are true survivors.

"I started working in this business when I was 17, and my

father told me, 'If you are lucky, you can work until you're 27,'" says Collins. Seventy-five years later, she notes that she's had probably "had the longest-ever career in show business. I'm certainly the oldest working."

She says the secret to career longevity, both for her and Rossellini, was surprisingly simple.

"We had good families. We never had problems with alcohol or drugs. And we always wanted to work."

The woman who spent decades playing glamorous monsters is now playing a victim slowly erased from the world. By the end of *My Duchess*, stripped of makeup, jewelry and image, there is almost nothing left of the Joan Collins audiences think they know. At 92, after more than seven decades onscreen, Dame Collins may finally have found the one role that destroys the myth she spent a lifetime creating. **THR**

"SHE IS BEAUTIFUL, HAS GREAT BEAUTY, GREAT GLAMOR, BUT ABSOLUTELY NO VANITY WHATSOEVER."

Isabella Rossellini

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Hidden Gem No More: How San Sebastián Found Its Sweet Spot

After 73 editions, SSIFF has quietly become one of the most respected names on the global film fest circuit, and as its longtime director prepares to step down, it has never looked stronger **BY JENNIFER GREEN**

If you've spent time on the film festival circuit, you're probably aware of the "hidden gem" reputation of the San Sebastián International Film Festival. The "gem" part is easy to explain: global cinema, glittery stars, enthusiastic locals, a size that allows for real connections, world-renowned cuisine and the inimitable charm of this bay-set Basque city.

It's the "hidden" part of the equation that raises some eyebrows.

After 73 editions, San Sebastián still remains slightly off the radar for some in the industry, shadowed by its bigger European counterparts. Despite its melding of international auteurs and A-list celebrities, SSIFF is sometimes pigeonholed as mostly focused on Spain and Latin America. Timing is also not in its favor: The September fest comes on the heels of Venice and sometimes overlaps with Toronto, meaning it battles titans for world premieres.

"I think one of the San Sebastián Film Festival's strengths is its awareness of its core characteristics and its refusal to try to be anything else," says SSIFF director José Luis Rebordinos, who will retire after 15 years following this

fall's 74th edition (Sept. 18-26), to be replaced at the helm by current deputy director Maialen Beloki.

"We can't be a major market, but we can have interesting industry activities like the Europe-Latin America Co-Production Forum or the Investors' Conference," Rebordinos continues. "We can't have the year's biggest American releases as premieres, but we can showcase some of them with members of their teams in parallel sections."

In other words, the event has found its sweet spot. "We are a festival with a large enough audience to interest both the industry and critics, but small enough to feel human and welcoming," Rebordinos says. "We work with humility, and our

slogan is 'We are the smallest of the greats.'"

San Sebastián regulars agree: "Everybody thinks of Cannes and Venice and Berlin, but it's the smaller festivals like San Sebastián that people will gravitate toward," says Christine Vachon, co-founder of New York-based Killer Films. "Those are the festivals where you actually get to spend time with filmmakers, local artists and financiers."

The festival was recognized with "A" status in 1957, just four years after it launched. Early visitors included luminaries like Federico Fellini, Alfred Hitchcock, Jean-Luc Godard, Kirk Douglas, Audrey Hepburn and Elizabeth Taylor. The lifetime achievement Donostia Award, created in 1986, has



Jennifer Lawrence received SSIFF's Donostia Award for her contribution to cinema in 2025.

drawn big names like Gregory Peck, Bette Davis, Lauren Bacall, Al Pacino and Anthony Hopkins.

Last year saw two firsts: the youngest-ever awardee — Jennifer Lawrence — and the first producer honoree (Esther García, Pedro Almodóvar's in-house executive). Accepting her Donostia, Lawrence called it "really special" to be "at a festival where people genuinely love cinema — the storytelling art and the soul of the movies."

The festival's industry events have expanded over the years. They include the Creative Investors' Conference (heading into its fifth year, in collaboration with CAA Media Finance), the Europe-Latin America Co-Production Forum and a host of other initiatives focused on new directors, works in progress, startups and more. Last year's edition welcomed just over 2,400 professionals accredited from more than 1,500 companies across 65 countries.

"The Europe-Latin America





Fest director José Luis Rebordinos will retire after 15 years following the 74th edition of SSIFF, and will be replaced at the helm by current deputy director Maialen Beloki.

“Participating in San Sebastián greatly helps position a film and give it exposure, especially in Europe and Latin America, and particularly in Spain,” says Manu Calvo, co-producer of *Sundays* through Encanta Films.

Marisa Fernández Armenteros of Buenapinta Media, also a co-producer on the film, adds: “Winning the Golden Shell was a turning point for the film. An award like that opens many doors, because you go from having just another film on the festival circuit to gaining significant visibility in Spain and abroad. It helps with international sales, expands its reach to other festivals, and allows the film to find audiences it probably wouldn’t have reached otherwise, and who, in the case of *Los Domingos*, connected with it and filled the theaters.”

As anyone who has attended SSIFF knows, theaters at the festival itself are always full. Last year’s edition saw 181,183 spectators attending 666 screenings of 254 titles from 56 different countries, an audience increase of 5.15 percent compared with the previous year. “Ticket prices are kept low and stable to ensure that local audiences can attend screenings,” notes Stone.

Rebordinos didn’t have to look far for his replacement. “I am immensely pleased that the person appointed ... is someone from my team, as well as a fundamental part of the work carried out over these 15 years,” Rebordinos says.

The transition is already underway. Says Rebordinos: “Now that the appointment has been made, my responsibility in the coming months is to work closely with Maialen so that she arrives in January 2027 with the greatest possible understanding of the festival.” **VIII**

Co-Production Forum has been a great success for years now,” Rebordinos highlights. “Selecting only around 16 projects is difficult due to the high quality of the submissions. More and more members of the industry are participating in this event. The Investors’ Conference has also become a key event, bringing together some of the most important names in global film production and investment.”

SSIFF is also the crown jewel of the fast-growing regional Basque industry. “Its sights are firmly set on filmmaking as an evolving global force,” says longtime observer Rob Stone, emeritus professor of film studies at the University of Birmingham and co-author of *Basque Cinema: A Cultural and Political History*. Yet it’s still “Basque at heart,” he says.

Since Jose Mari Goenaga and Jon Goraño’s *Flowers (Loreak)* became the first Basque-language film to premiere in the main competition in 2014, there

has been at least one local film in the festival’s official selection every year. Last year, a whopping 37 Basque productions screened at the festival, evidence of the industry’s growth as a production hub thanks to major new incentives. The festival, in turn, had an estimated economic impact of 47.9 million euros (\$56.2 million) on the region in 2024.

“There was a lot of very good material to choose from, and last year, many [Basque films] were left out,” says Mar Izquierdo, coordinator of Zineuskadi, a nonprofit co-founded by the regional government to support and promote the Basque industry. But, she adds, “José Luis has always said he wouldn’t want Basque productions to be here for free — he doesn’t want it to seem like just because you’re from here, you automatically get in.”

Still, “SSIFF is excellent at identifying, attracting and nurturing original talent in Spain and Latin America,” notes

Belén Vidal, a reader in film studies at King’s College London and Spanish cinema specialist, underscoring how those talents often end up becoming the year’s biggest films from the regions. “I attend SSIFF to catch the ‘big’ Spanish titles for the year ahead.”

To wit, after Basque filmmaker Alauda Ruiz de Azúa took home the festival’s top Golden Shell prize for her film *Sundays (Los Domingos)* last year, she went on to sweep the country’s Oscar-equivalent Goya Awards.



Alauda Ruiz de Azúa, director of *Sundays (Los Domingos)*, took home the Golden Shell for best film in 2025.

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LIGHTS, CAMERA, CANNES

The stars and filmmakers behind *Teenage Sex and Death at Camp Miasma*, *A Woman's Life* and *In Waves* are photographed by Guy Aroch on May 14 and 15 at THR's Portrait Studio at Meta House

BEHIND-THE-SCENES PHOTOGRAPHY BY JORDAN WATSON



Clockwise from top: *Teenage Sex and Death at Camp Miasma*'s Hannah Einbinder was photographed May 14. *In Waves*' Will Sharpe, AJ Dungo and Phuong Mai Nguyen were photographed May 14. *A Woman's Life*'s Charline Bourgeois-Tacquet and Léa Drucker were photographed May 15 using Ray-Ban Meta glasses.

SCREENING GUIDE

SATURDAY
May 16

0:30 *Full Phil* Lumiere, Studiocanal (Fr)

8:00 *All of a Sudden* (195 mins.), Lumiere, Cinefrance

8:00 *A Girl Unknown* Miramar, Pyramide International

8:30 *Club Kid* (125 mins.), Debussy, Charades

8:45 *Shana* (119 mins.), Theatre Croisette, Les Films du Losange

9:00 *De Gaulle — Bourguiba: The Battle of Bizerte* (84 mins.), Arcades 3 Online, Media Art

9:00 *Women on Trial* (105 mins.), Arcades 1, Gaumont

9:00 *I242: Gateway to the West* (110 mins.), Arcades 3, Galloping Entertainment

9:00 *Torrente for President,* (103 mins.), Lerins 2, Film Factory Entertainment

9:00 *Maverick: The Epic Adventures of David Lean* (106 mins.), Lerins Cinema Club, Embankment Films Ltd

9:00 *Species* Olympia 7, WTFilms

9:00 *The Last Day* Olympia 9, WestEnd Films

9:00 *Forever Your Maternal Animal* (105 mins.), Palais H, Heretic

9:30 *Elephants in the Fog* Olympia 8, Best Friend Forever



9:30 *Gohan* (141 mins.), Arcades 2, GDH 559 Co., Ltd.

9:30 *Black Rain* (123 mins.), Lerins 3, Toei Company, Ltd.

9:30 *Walking With Animators* (105 mins.), Olympia 3, Le Pacte

9:30 *Parallel Tales* (138 mins.), Olympia 6, Charades

9:30 *Bros* Palais C, Filmax (Castelao Pictures)

9:30 *Melpomene* (126 mins.), Palais E, Marignan Films

9:30 *Anomalie* (112 mins.), Palais G, North Macedonia Film Agency

10:00 *Docs-in-Progress — The Five Nordics Showcase 2026* (75 mins.), Lerins 1, Cannes Docs — Marché du Film

10:00 *Festival Do Rio Goes to Cannes* (48 mins.), Palais K Online, Festival Do Rio — Rio De Janeiro International Film Festival

10:00 *Frontieres Proof of Concept 2026* (57 mins.), Palais K, Frontières Market / Fantasia International Film Festival

11:00 *La Gradiva* (145 mins.), Miramar, mk2 Films

11:00 *Downtown* (98 mins.), Online #1, M-Appeal

11:15 *A Girl's Story* Debussy, Paradise City Sales (Ex Memento International)

11:30 *The Diary of a Chambermaid* (94 mins.), Arcades 1, Quinzaine des Cinéastes / Directors' Fortnight

11:30 *Micro Star* (86 mins.), Lerins 2, Cinefrance

11:30 *Che Guevara: The Last Companions* Olympia 4 Online, Lucky Number

11:30 *Club Kid* (119 mins.), Olympia 1, Charades

11:30 *Brave Cat* (94 mins.), Olympia 4, Indie Sales

11:30 *The Station* (112 mins.), Olympia 5, Paradise City Sales (Ex Memento

International)

11:30 *The History of Concrete* (101 mins.), Olympia 7, Visit Films

11:30 *Straight Shot* (96 mins.), Palais B Online, Pinnacle Peak Pictures

11:30 *Make Me Feel* (90 mins.), Palais D Online, Arthood Entertainment GmbH

11:30 *Splish Splash Forever!* (87 mins.), Palais B, The Yellow Affair

11:30 *The Boatman* (110 mins.), Palais D, Alfama Films

11:30 *Just After Dawn* (100 mins.), Palais F, Futurikon

11:30 *A Soldier and a Sailor,* (108 mins.), Palais H, Palm Tree Universal

11:30 *Fantastic Cuts* (100 mins.), Palais J, VDF Connection

11:30 *Orfeo* (74 mins.), Riviera 2, True Colours Glorious Films SRL

11:30 *Clarissa* Theatre Croisette, Neon

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- 11:45** *Docs-in-Progress — Docs by the Sea Showcase 2026* (75 mins.), Lerins 1, Cannes Docs — Marché du Film
- 12:00** *Beast of Prey* (95 mins.), Lerins 3 Online, Piperplay
- 12:00** *Her Brother* (98 mins.), Lerins 3, Kadokawa Corporation
- 12:00** *Gentle Monster* Lumiere, mk2 Films
- 12:00** *Children of Liberty* (82 mins.), Olympia 2 Online, Urban Sales
- 12:00** *The Way Home* (96 mins.), Olympia 6 Online, Nexo Studios
- 12:00** *A Woman's Life* (98 mins.), Olympia 2, Be for Films
- 12:00** *Tin Castle* (105 mins.), Olympia 3, Films Boutique
- 12:00** *Unraveled* (104 mins.), Olympia 8, TrustNordisk
- 12:00** *Under Your Feet* (94 mins.), Palais C Online, Filmsharks / The Remake Co.
- 12:00** *Dreamer* (108 mins.), Palais G Online, Palm Tree Universal
- 12:00** *Rolling Loud* (90 mins.), Palais I Online, Evolution Pictures Ltd
- 12:00** *Tokyo International Film Festival Goes to Cannes*, (69 mins.), Palais K Online, Tokyo International Film Festival
- 12:00** *The Nest* Palais C, Filmax (Castelao Pictures)
- 12:00** *Emergency Exit* (96 mins.), Palais E, Media Art
- 12:00** *Against All Counsel and the Warriress* (51 mins.), Palais G, Mppa-Indian Motion Picture Producers Association
- 12:00** *Mu Yi* Palais I, mk2 Films
- 12:00** *Africa International Film Festival Goes to Cannes* (48 mins.), Palais K, Africa International Film Festival (Afriff)
- 12:00** *Love Fits Everything* (102 mins.), Riviera 1, Piperplay
- 13:00** *Think Good* (95 mins.), Agnès Varda, Playtime
- 13:00** *One Fight Away* (120 mins.), Lerins Cinema Club, Ginger & Fed
- 13:30** *Vesna* (93 mins.), Arcades 3, The Bureau Sales
- 13:30** *Dudley & the Invasion of the Space Slugs* (85 mins.), Lerins 2, All Rights Entertainment (France)
- 13:30** *The Last Supper. The Passion by Leonardo Da Vinci* (80 mins.), Olympia 9 Online, Nexo Studios
- 13:30** *La Perra* (106 mins.), Olympia 5, Lucky Number
- 13:30** *Stand Up* (92 mins.), Olympia 7, Loco Films
- 13:30** *Heysel 85* (91 mins.), Olympia 9, Salaud Morisset
- 13:30** *Daniel* (120 mins.), Palais D Online, Pinnacle Peak Pictures
- 13:30** *Jim Queen* Olympia 1, Global Constellation
- 13:30** *Hershey* (120 mins.), Palais F Online, Angel Studios
- 13:30** *A Million Yard Stare* (89 mins.), Palais B, Webfilmland Productions
- 13:30** *5 Edges of Safety* (75 mins.), Palais D, OCG Plus (Uzbekistan)
- 13:30** *She Dances* (93 mins.), Palais F, Pinnacle Peak Pictures
- 13:30** *The Legend of Catclaws Mountain*, (104 mins.), Palais H, California Pictures
- 13:30** *The Experiment* (121 mins.), Riviera 2 Online, Picture Tree International GmbH
- 13:30** *Cold War 1994* (117 mins.), Riviera 2, Edko Films Ltd
- 14:00** *La Casa Del Ángel* (76 mins.), Bunuel, Cannes Classics
- 14:00** *Forever Your Maternal Animal* (105 mins.), Debussy, Heretic
- 14:00** *The Train* (91 mins.), Lerins 1, Westside Studios
- 14:00** *The Eel* (117 mins.), Lerins 3, Shochiku Co., Ltd
- 14:00** *Frank & Louis (Working Title)* (95 mins.), Olympia 3, TrustNordisk
- 14:00** *Tangles* (102 mins.), Olympia 6, Charades
- 14:00** *Six Months in a Pink and Blue Building* (104 mins.), Olympia 8, Luxbox
- 14:00** *Closure* (108 mins.), Palais E Online, Outlook Filmsales
- 14:00** *Adelaide Film Festival Goes to Cannes 2026* (72 mins.), Palais K Online, Adelaide Film Festival
- 14:00** *Under a Bad Star* (125 mins.), Palais C, Urban Sales
- 14:00** *Khoonta* (123 mins.), Palais E, Indywood Distribution Network
- 14:00** *The Story of Documentary Film* Palais G, Dogwoof
- 14:00** *Phreaker* Palais I, Elle Driver
- 14:00** *Green Family* (96 mins.), Riviera 1, Vision Distribution
- 14:15** *Spotlighted Projects — Speedy Pitches* Palais K, Cannes Docs — Marché du Film
- 14:30** *Flesh & Fuel* (90 mins.), Miramar, Pyramide International
- 15:00** *Sheep in the Box* (126 mins.), Lumiere, Goodfellas
- 15:00** *Double Freedom* (100 mins.), Theatre Croisette, Luxbox
- 15:15** *Rehearsals for a Revolution* (95 mins.), Agnès Varda, The Party Film Sales
- 15:45** *Viva* (112 mins.), Arcades 1 Online, Loco Films
- 15:45** *The Lion Queen* (87 mins.), Arcades 3, Submarine Entertainment
- 15:45** *Amma Ariyan* (115 mins.), Bunuel, Cannes Classics
- 15:45** *Tatti, Land of Dreams* (91 mins.), Lerins #2 Online, Innovative Eye
- 15:45** *Pacific* Lerins 2, Filmsharks / The Remake Co.
- 15:45** *The Golden Age* (112 mins.), Olympia #4 Online, Films Boutique
- 15:45** *Death Has No Master* (105 mins.), Olympia 7 Online, Lucky Number
- 15:45** *Orange-Flavoured Wedding* (115 mins.), Olympia 4, Pyramide International
- 15:45** *Congo Boy* (110 mins.), Olympia 5, The Party Film Sales
- 15:45** *Before We Leave Tuscany* (96 mins.), Palais B, House of Film
- 15:45** *5 More Minutes* Palais D, Filmax (Castelao Pictures)
- 15:45** *Nezha's Destiny* (30 mins.), Palais F, Blast Films International Ltd.
- 15:45** *Sugar Candy* (110 mins.), Palais H, California Pictures
- 15:45** *Gravy* (84 mins.), Palais J, Kinokult
- 15:45** *The Harvester* (100 mins.), Riviera 2 Online, Latido Films
- 15:45** *Backstage Madness* (80 mins.), Riviera 2, Kyrgyz Cinema
- 16:00** *Propeller One-Way Night Coach* Bazin, Apple TV+
- 16:00** *The Samurai and the Prisoner* (148 mins.), Olympia 6, Charades
- 16:15** *Gabin* (105 mins.), Lerins 1, Lightdox
- 16:15** *Storm Rider* (104 mins.), Olympia 8 Online, Garden of Titans, LLC
- 16:15** *Viva* (112 mins.), Olympia 2, Loco Films
- 16:15** *As Green as It Gets* (120 mins.), Olympia 3, Ginger & Fed
- 16:15** *American Doctor* (92 mins.), Palais C Online, Outlook Filmsales
- 16:15** *Dance of the Living* (92 mins.), Palais E Online, Bendita Film Sales
- 16:15** *Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival Goes to Cannes* (44 mins.), Palais K Online, Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival
- 16:15** *Rewind Barcelona* (86 mins.), Palais C, Celluloid Dreams

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The Meltdown

16:15 *Chrysalis* (130 mins.), Palais E, Agence Culturelle Africaine
16:15 *Black Is Beautiful* (98 mins.), Palais G, Mediawan Rights
16:15 *The Meltdown* (100 mins.), Palais I, Les Films du Losange
16:15 *Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Forum Goes to Cannes* (36 mins.), Palais K, Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Forum
16:15 *She Dances* (93 mins.), Riviera 1 Online, Pinnacle Peak Pictures
16:15 *Zejtune* (108 mins.), Riviera 1, Films Boutique
16:30 *Kwaidan* (183 mins.), Lerins 3, Toho Global Inc.
17:15 *Congo Boy* (110 mins.), Agnès Varda, The Party Film Sales
17:15 *La Gradiva* (145 mins.), Miramar, mk2 Films
17:45 *Flesh & Fuel* (90 mins.), Arcades 3 Online, Pyramide International
17:45 *The Lock In* (116 mins.), Arcades 3, Galloping Entertainment
17:45 *Maya Satya Bhrm* (120 mins.), Lerins

2 Online, Indywood Distribution Network
17:45 *Post Truth* (102 mins.), Olympia 4, Odin's Eye Entertainment
17:45 *Dua* (101 mins.), Olympia 5, The Party Film Sales
17:45 *Marie-Madeleine* (104 mins.), Olympia 7, Pyramide International
17:45 *Scarred* (118 mins.), Palais D Online, Impa-Indian Motion Picture Producers Association
17:45 *Viva Carmen* Olympia 1, Global Constellation
17:45 *Zero Ad* (120 mins.), Palais F Online, Angel Studios
17:45 *The Weight of Longing* (93 mins.), Palais H Online, Jai Viratra Entertainment Limited
17:45 *Mergen* (105 mins.), Palais B, Cross Border Films
17:45 *September 21* (122 mins.), Palais D, Impa-Indian Motion Picture Producers Association
17:45 *Fugitive From Asteron* (133 mins.), Palais F, House Of Film
17:45 *One More Wish* (107 mins.), Palais H,

Megafilm Ltd.
17:45 *Alterity* (93 mins.), Palais J, Tricoast Worldwide
18:00 *1949* (82 mins.), Arcades 1, The Match Factory
18:00 *Clarissa* Theatre Croisette, Neon
18:15 *The Beloved* (135 mins.), Lumiere, Goodfellas
18:15 *Redemptions* (110 mins.), Olympia 3 Online, Cinefrance
18:15 *Titanic Ocean* Olympia 2, Paradise City Sales (Ex Memento International)
18:15 *Under a Bad Star* (125 mins.), Olympia 3, Urban Sales
18:15 *The Best Summer* (84 mins.), Olympia 8, Visit Films
18:15 *Indian Saga (Anthology)* (105 mins.), Palais C Online, Impa-Indian Motion Picture Producers Association
18:15 *Tera Mera Nata* (116 mins.), Palais E Online, Impa-Indian Motion Picture Producers Association
18:15 *Cyrano in My Head* (76 mins.), Palais C, Buenos Aires Film

Commission
18:15 *As the Water Flows* (119 mins.), Palais G, China Film Foundation-Wutianming Film Fund for Young Talents
18:15 *The Butler* Palais I, K5 International GmbH
18:15 *Nagi Notes* (108 mins.), Palais K, mk2 Films
18:30 *Vittorio de Sica la Vita in Scena* (100 mins.), Bunuel, Fandango
18:45 *The Blow* (104 mins.), Olympia 6, Charades
19:15 *Heimsuchung* (118 mins.), Debussy, StudioCanal (Fr)
19:30 *Marvelous Mornings* (86 mins.), Agnès Varda, Loco Films
20:00 *Summer Drift* (86 mins.), Arcades 1, Acid
20:00 *Vysotsky. Unknown ... A True Story.* (180 mins.), Arcades 3, Apollo Film Production
20:00 *Key of Bones: Curse of the Ghost Pirate* (90 mins.), Olympia 4, Fairway Film Alliance, LLC
20:00 *The Creature* (104 mins.), Palais B, Maharashtra Film, Stage & Cultural Development Corporation Ltd
20:30 *Summer Drift* (86 mins.), Arcades 2, Acid
20:30 *Trente* (75 mins.), Olympia 1, mk2 Films
20:30 *Gentle Monster* Palais K, mk2 Films
20:45 *La Ciociara* (101 mins.), Bunuel, Cannes Classics
20:45 *All of a Sudden,* (195 mins.), Olympia 2, Cinefrance
21:00 *Flesh & Fuel* (90 mins.), Miramar, Pyramide International
21:15 *Shana* (84 mins.), Theatre Croisette, Les Films du Losange
21:30 *Gentle Monster* Agnès Varda, mk2 Films
21:45 *Paper Tiger* Lumiere, Goodfellas
22:30 *Atonement* Arcades 1, Goodfellas
22:30 *Trente* (75 mins.), Olympia 1, mk2 Films

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REVIEWS



REVIEWS

Parallel Tales

Not even an all-star French cast led by Isabelle Huppert and Virginie Efira can save Asghar Farhadi's contorted competition entry about voyeurism and imagination **By David Rooney**

Countless exceptional films have been made in which voyeurism — whether practiced by the protagonist or the audience — is a significant component. Think Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, Polanski's *The Tenant*, Haneke's *Caché*, Coppola's *The Conversation* and Powell's *Peeping Tom* for starters, or at the more delectably lurid end of the spectrum, De Palma's *Body Double* and *Dressed to Kill*. Asghar Farhadi's elegant but frustrating *Parallel Tales* (*Histoires parallèles*) treats voyeurism as a jumping-off point to reflect on the uneasy relationship between truth and imagination. But the film keeps circling itself, with diminishing traction.

The director and his sibling co-writer Saeed Farhadi loosely based their script on the sixth chapter of the great Krzysztof Kieślowski's 10-part project for Polish

Isabelle Huppert plays a novelist who draws inspiration for her next book from spying on a woman across the street.

television, *Dekalog*, an episode that was expanded to feature length and released theatrically in 1988 as *A Short Film About Love*. Running a fleet 86 minutes, that masterful feat of storytelling observes the love of a withdrawn young Warsaw post office worker for a beautiful, promiscuous woman living in an apartment directly across the street, where he watches her every night through a telescope.

In a film running a lethargic two hours 20 minutes, the Farhadis have kept only the setup and composer Zbigniew Preisner's delicate but hauntingly emotional score. However, not even that exquisite music can wring much feeling from this terminally underpowered movie, which plays less like

a lived-in, full-bodied story than a bloated metafiction writing class assignment.

The director of Oscar winners *A Separation* and *The Salesman*, Asghar Farhadi is a world-class artist who put his own distinctive stamp on the grown-up moral melodrama of marital and family conflict.

His new film reaches for psychological complexity, but after an intriguing start, it bogs down in fussily over-complicated plotting as it traces the escalating entanglements of crotchety novelist Sylvie (Isabelle Huppert), drawing inspiration for her next book by training a telescope on the self-possessed beauty working in a Paris apartment across the street. In her fictional construct, Sylvie names the woman Anna (Virginie Efira), after her late mother.

The problem is that all the various

All of a Sudden

Drive My Car director Ryūsuke Hamaguchi's first French-language film, set at a Paris nursing home and starring a luminous Virginie Efira, rewards patient viewers

Ryūsuke Hamaguchi has shown a fascination for the exchange of ideas as a form of negotiation and exploration, whether it's the theater workshops in *Drive My Car* or the town meetings with developers in *Evil Does Not Exist*. Staff meetings and training sessions are a big part of the Japanese auteur's *All of a Sudden* (*Soudain*), set primarily in a Paris elder-care facility run by a woman whose progressive approach clashes with the realities of understaffing and bottom-line-driven management.

The underlying question is whether care and compassion can survive late-stage capitalism. As the concentration of wealth accelerates, for-profit sectors are paying less, leading to lower birth rates and labor shortages in the health care services required to handle an aging population.

If that sounds dry, it is, especially when presented as a conversation between friends, complete with bullet points on a whiteboard. But Hamaguchi has his own methodology, and for audiences with the patience to get through a talky first hour, *All of a Sudden* evolves into a moving affirmation of the basic human rights of respect and dignity. Whether it justifies the three-and-a-quarter-hour running time will be up for debate. But the payoff is worth it.

Dementia movies have been multiplying in recent years, but this feels different in its gentle observation of cognitively impaired patients and the dogged efforts of two women determined to bring comfort and even joy to those seniors' twilight years.

Marie-Lou Fontaine (Virginie Efira) is director of a care-home franchise branch on the outskirts of Paris. She has been given an unusual amount of latitude to run the facility following the tenets of a compassion-based system called "Humanitude." But many staff members are resentful of that freedom, particularly outspoken senior nurse Sophie (Marie Bunel).

Sophie and others maintain that the amount of time and attention required to do daily patient rounds according to Marie-Lou's guidelines is unrealistic. They also argue that the importance placed on "verticality," coaxing the patients to walk each day, merely increases the risk of falls.

strands — the parallel tales — dilute our access to the characters, limiting their dimensions. One of the many strengths of the Kieślowski film is its tight focus on just two individuals, the watcher and the watched, with a couple of secondary characters hovering around the edges. When the voyeur and his subject begin physically to interact, there is low-key suspense, a hint of danger and a fatalistic romantic current fed by their growing mutual curiosity. Before he evolved into the more dream-like poetry of his later successes, *The Double Life of Véronique* and the *Three Colours* trilogy, *Dekalog* revealed Kieślowski to be an impeccable craftsman in the fine art of narrative distillation.

Another two or three drafts of distillation is exactly what the unwieldy *Parallel Tales* could have used. Sylvie is set up as the story's fulcrum, but that role is largely usurped by Adam (Adam Bessa), a young homeless man hired by the novelist's niece Céline (India Hair) to help pack up the apartment they co-own, readying it to be sold. Sylvie is as tetchy and aloof with Adam as she is with her niece; her monomaniacal focus on her work has allowed the place to become hopelessly cluttered and filthy, and Sylvie has zero interest in doing anything about it.

The most interesting new element Farhadi introduces is an emphasis on sound, something so often missing for the long-distance voyeur. "Anna" works as an old-fashioned analog Foley artist, alongside a handsome young man the author names Christophe (Pierre Niney), adding sound effects that range from a squeaky mattress to footsteps in the sand to the gentle flapping of a bird's wings. The sound engineer at the mixing console is dubbed Pierre (Vincent Cassel).

In Sylvie's story, Christophe is madly pining for Anna, even though she keeps pushing him away. But she does occasionally give in to the implorations of married Pierre, with whom she appears to have a history. That romantic triangle is about as flavorful as a week-old baguette.

When Adam sneaks a read of Sylvie's pages, he becomes obsessed with Anna, orchestrating ways to keep running into her and starting conversations. He also starts writing his own version of the story, which inevitably falls into Anna's hands,

and he learns their real names. Efira's character is Nita, while Cassel and Niney are Nicolas and Théo, brothers not immune to sibling rivalry. When Théo/Christophe picks up on Adam's interest in Nita/Anna, he reacts with hostility in a terrific altercation scene on a Metro platform.

But mostly, the intertwining threads just sit there, never coming together in any satisfying way or holding up as their own story within the story, despite how hard the writers work at showing that reality can inspire fiction but fiction can also bounce back to influence reality.

Just to make things even messier and more overplotted, Sylvie notices a light on for five days straight in an upper-floor apartment, reporting to the cops her concern that the old man who lives there might have died.

Sure enough, that old man was once the dashing young lover of Sylvie's mother, and when seeing them together through the window across the street proved too much for her father, he took a suicidal leap off the balcony, in full view of his wife. Her screams still haunt the building, according to some, which explains the faint sounds of a distressed woman that Pierre kept picking up on his headset earlier. This would appear to be an extension of Sylvie's fiction, but by that time, I had well and truly stopped caring.

Parallel Tales has Farhadi's characteristic polish and DP Guillaume Deffontaines, who has worked frequently with Bruno Dumont, lights the interiors beautifully, lending subtle golden tones to the fiction scenes. Naturally, it's also a big plus to have such an assembly of magnetic actors, with especially solid work from Efira in dual roles. Catherine Deneuve turns up for a single scene (barely more than a cameo) to throw some haughtiness back at Huppert, playing Sylvie's publisher and not at all bothering to hide how bored she is by the outline for the new novel. Girl, I feel you!

Plans reportedly are in early development for all 10 *Dekalog* chapters (shaped around the Ten Commandments) to be remade. Let's hope the standard improves.

Competition

CAST Isabelle Huppert, Virginie Efira, Vincent Cassel, Pierre Niney, Adam Bessa, India Hair
DIRECTOR Asghar Farhadi
2 hours 20 minutes

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It's to the script's credit that the naysayers are not just opposers of change; instead, they are pragmatic professionals mindful of the limited resources available to them.

While on a tram, Marie-Lou sees a boy running along the side of the road, seemingly out of control. She gets off to make sure he's OK and follows him to a park. When the nonverbal boy's guardians track him down, she learns that his name is Tomoki (Kodai Kurosaki), and his autism makes him prone to unpredictable behavior.

The grateful strangers are Mari (Tao Okamoto), an experimental stage director, and Gorô (Kyoza Nagatsuka), Tomoki's father and an actor in Mari's solo performance piece. At their invitation, Marie-Lou goes to see the production, a hospital-set reflection on the dismantling of asylums, offering a different perspective on the treatment of mental illness.

Recognizing some of the play's themes from her own work, Marie-Lou stays behind to chat with Mari and the two women spend a long night together walking and talking, their friendship blossoming instantaneously. Marie-Lou is fluent in Japanese, having done her anthropology degree in Tokyo, while Mari, equally fluent in French, studied philosophy at the Sorbonne.

Their backgrounds reflect those of Makiko Miyano and Maho Isono, authors whose collected letters about illness and abrupt changes in health were published in the nonfiction book that loosely inspired Hamaguchi and Léa Le Dimna's screenplay.

Virginie Efira (right) is the unorthodox director of a Paris elder-care facility and Tao Okamoto her unlikely new friend.

Marie-Lou shares her frustration with tensions at work, while Mari reveals with a matter-of-fact absence of self-pity that she has terminal cancer and her condition could drastically worsen at any time. Mari starts spending time at the care home, where Marie-Lou encourages her to involve staff and patients in simple trust exercises. The bond between the two women becomes almost spiritual, and the caregivers seem to absorb their positivity by osmosis.

Only a director as elegant as Hamaguchi could fold together a testament to the solace of female friendship, a painstakingly detailed workplace study, a consideration of compassion as a form of resistance and a soulful meditation on mortality.

As always with Hamaguchi, the film is dotted with luminous moments of human connection, whether it's the simple pleasure for Marie-Lou of waking from a nap in the sun under a tree in the garden, sharing a cigarette with a feisty patient, or Marie-Lou's détente with Sophie, whose respect among other nurses and assistants means that if she left, others would follow.

Efira has gone from strength to strength in the years since the Belgian actress emerged — her work in Rebecca Zlotowski's *Other People's Children* is especially notable — and her natural tenderness shines through here, even when moments of friction cause her to show a brittle side or lean

toward burnout.

She's well-paired with model-turned-actress Okamoto (widely seen in *The Wolverine* and in arcs on *Westworld* and *Hannibal*), whose tranquil countenance belies the ticking-clock awareness of her mortality. Marie-Lou accompanies her to Kyoto, where Mari plans to check in to a hospice. (A scene in which they sit on a mountainside looking out over a sprawling view of the city below while eating pot noodles is lovely.)

But Marie-Lou convinces her to return to Paris and take up a live-in artist-in-residence position at the care home, giving a sense of purpose to whatever time she has left. Perhaps the warmest moment of satisfaction for Marie-Lou is when a colleague tells her that Mari's workshops seem to be of even greater benefit to the staff than to the patients.

All of a Sudden is an odd but audacious film in the way it favors the thematic over the dramatic. Those not attuned to Hamaguchi's wavelength may find it overstretched and desiccated. But if you can get on board with its leisurely pace, there's transcendent beauty in its view that all lives are of value, no matter how diminished. As Marie-Lou puts it: "An inert hand is not a dead hand ... there's life until there's not." — D.R.

Competition

CAST Virginie Efira, Tao Okamoto, Kyoza Nagatsuka, Kodai Kurosaki, Jean-Charles Clichet, Marie Bunel
DIRECTOR Ryūsuke Hamaguchi
 196 minutes

Gentle Monster

Léa Seydoux stars as a musician reeling from disturbing revelations about her husband in *Corsage* director Marie Kreutzer's competition entry, which handles a tricky topic with sensitivity **By Leslie Felperin**

Tackling a subject close to home for writer-director Marie Kreutzer, *Gentle Monster* examines the fallout when Philip Weiss (Laurence Rupp) — a middle-class Austrian documentary maker, father and husband — is accused of watching, distributing and maybe even making child pornography.

Kreutzer's colleague, the actor Florian Teichtmeister who appeared in her feature *Corsage*, was caught up in a similar case, resulting in his being sentenced to two years in prison. But instead of examining the psychology of accused men, Kreutzer smartly elects to tell the story largely through the eyes of his bewildered French wife, Lucy, played by Léa Seydoux in a performance that's all raw nerves — steely, vulnerable, angry and broken at once.

Kreutzer's script strives to create a complex view of the ways people react when they're involved in situations like this, and how guilt and innocence are never entirely cut and dried. That's especially clear with a subplot — not entirely necessary, but you can see why Kreutzer thought it was — about the German policewoman (Jella Haase) investigating Philip's case, who has her own problems with a difficult, possibly monstrous man at home.

The nuclear family at the heart of the story are first met living in the German countryside, in a house far bigger than this family of three — Philip, Lucy and their 6- or 7-year-old son, Johnny (Malo Blanchet) — obviously needs. Philip and Lucy are still sleeping on a mattress on the floor, having not gotten round to buying a proper bed yet. But that doesn't stop them from having energetic, tellingly choreographed sex while Johnny is at school or asleep, scenes filmed with a woozy sensuality. (DP Judith Kaufmann, who also shot *Corsage*, lights actors, especially creamy-skinned Seydoux, beautifully.)

There are subtle hints that Philip's career isn't going great. Lucy's concerts feature her playing piano and singing off-kilter interpretations of pop songs usually performed or written by men like The Cure's "Boys Don't Cry" or George Michael's "Freedom" (arranged by mononymic singer-songwriter Camille), and the shows aren't exactly making bank. Money, however, doesn't seem to be top priority in this trilingual household, where the parents sometimes talk to each other in English and in their native tongues to Johnny.

At one point, Lucy's very French, somewhat distant mother, Eloise (Catherine Deneuve, impactful in her few scenes), observes that Lucy has done the one thing that's worse for a female artist than having children: moving to the countryside. When the film pivots toward the big reveal of the story, it becomes painfully clear what she means. Lucy is very isolated in this superficially tranquil setting, separated from friends, dependent on Philip, and not even entirely fluent in German.

That seclusion becomes particularly problematic when the police show up at their door with warrants to take away all of Philip's computers and hard drives. They arrest him for distributing child pornography in a dark web online chat group, where he goes by the handle GentleMonster_87. Lucy has to contact his lawyer, Lukas (Nils Strunk), and deal with the legal ramifications, as well as all the childcare while shielding Johnny and both her own and Philip's family from the truth.

But what exactly is the truth? Lucy doesn't know, although she's keen to believe Philip's protestations of innocence, unable to accept that the guy she's been in love with for years might also be GentleMonster. Is that version of Philip capable of sharing footage of preadolescent children being violated online, as Detective Elsa Kühn (Haase) claims?

By slow degrees, Philip's story shifts to accommodate the incontrovertible evidence of IP addresses and deciphered cryptography, and Lucy struggles to keep up, let alone understand. Like a photograph developing in a bath of chemicals, Kreutzer's strategies and themes slowly become clearer, and the scene isn't pretty. Guilt is a metastatic entity here that spreads among nearly everyone connected to Philip and Lucy. Even Det. Kühn is not above blame. Her elderly father, Herrmann (Sylvester Groth), has become disinhibited by dementia and is prone to touching his female caretaker (Patrycja Ziolkowska) inappropriately, a problem Elsa doesn't want to face any more than Lucy does.

Kaufmann and her team use long, handheld takes holding close, usually on Seydoux's face, to create an in-the-moment urgency when needed. The craftsmanship Kreutzer displayed in *Corsage* is again in evidence in this contemporary story that revolves, like *Corsage*, around a woman trapped in a marriage with few options no matter how much she bleeds herself dry for love, to paraphrase Coldplay's "Yellow," sung by Camille over the closing credits.

Competition

CAST Léa Seydoux, Laurence Rupp, Jella Haase, Malo Blanchet, Anton Rubtsov, Catherine Deneuve

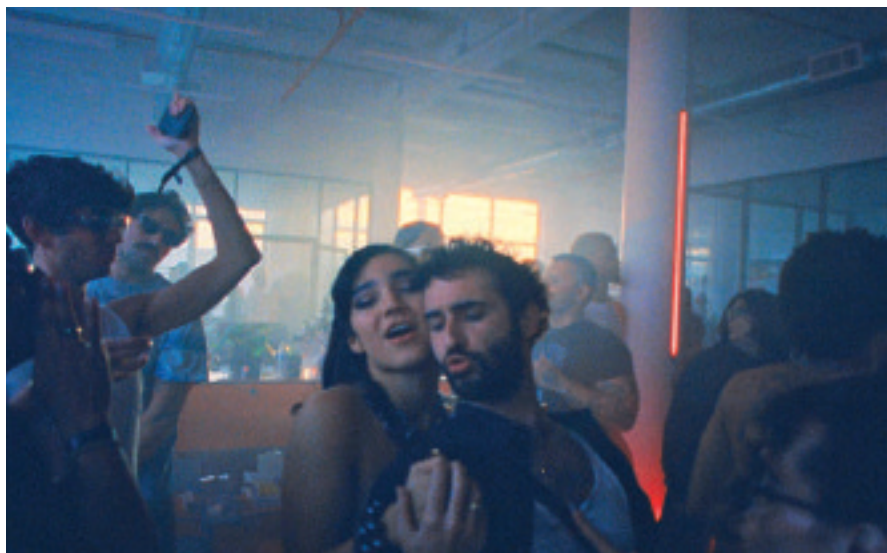
DIRECTOR Marie Kreutzer

1 hour 55 minutes

Léa Seydoux (left) plays a woman who turns to her mother (Catherine Deneuve, right) for support when her husband — and father of her children — is accused of distributing child pornography.



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Club Kid

The divisive writer-actor Jordan Firstman's directorial debut trades the queer provocation of his past work for a cozily winsome and clever fable about unexpected parenthood **By Richard Lawson**

The writer and actor Jordan Firstman — known for viral web videos, films like *Rotting in the Sun*, the TV series *I Love LA* — is an acquired taste. He often plays into a certain abrasive, ditzy stereotype about gay men who live in big cities: sex-crazed but loveless, self-conscious and self-aggrandizing at once, literate but dumb. As a nascent star, he's been pretty divisive, both embraced for being a gadfly who actually puts in the work and scorned for what is viewed as brash over-confidence.

Firstman's directorial debut, *Club Kid*, shrewdly acknowledges those garish personality tics. Firstman plays Peter, a party promoter tripping the light fantastic in New York. He and his friends, a queer melange of DJs, scenesters and enablers, have seized a corner of the city's nightlife and turned it into something like a livelihood. In Peter's case, his work provides a neat cover for what appears to be a pretty serious dependence on cocaine and other narcotics. But he's not hurting anyone besides himself, so what's the harm really?

In its first scenes, *Club Kid* deliberately tries patience. It succeeds in both seducing us into the party and making us want to go home to bed. We can sense that a downfall is coming — Peter is too rude and hedonistic to not be careening toward some sort of comeuppance — but it's unclear how hard, how nihilistic Firstman is willing to get.

To our surprise, Firstman instead steers his film toward one of cinema's most

cherished, some might say hoary, conventions. The story jumps forward a decade, and the consequences of a dark-room sexual encounter are suddenly staring Peter in the face in the form of a 10-year-old boy he's told is his son. Thus, *Club Kid* manifests many a gay guy's nightmare: a rare dalliance with a woman has resulted in a child and, thus, the death of fun.

Peter greets the arrival of this boy, Arlo (Reggie Absolom), with just that kind of panic. He's been asked to take custody following the death of Arlo's mother, making this something of a *Baby Boom* situation, albeit with a tween rather than an infant. Conscious of predecessors, Firstman endeavors to figure out how the structural demands of this well-worn accidental-parent narrative might graft onto a portrait of solipsistic gay-millennial malaise.

Club Kid, a winning and clever film, does some Hollywood airbrushing. Peter acknowledges he has issues with drugs, and thus promptly quits them, a considerable smoothing out of how a significant life change like that would play out in real life. But Firstman and Absolom have such a lively, natural rapport that one doesn't really mind the ease with which they adapt to one another. And it's a relief to settle into such a cozy, familiar plot after the thump and stress of the film's beginnings.

Though the film shifts into drama, Firstman is careful not to forget the comedy. He gets especially good results from

Jordan Firstman plays a gay party boy who discovers he has a 10-year-old son in this *Un Certain Regard* selection.

actor/model Eldar Isgandarov as Firstman's houseguest Nicky, a curious, elfin creature who gives many of the film's funniest line readings. Firstman has populated his film well, making good use of Colleen Camp, Kirby Howell-Baptiste and Diego Calva as a seriously sexy social worker/love interest. It's a disarmingly friendly ensemble, orbiting around Firstman's offhandedly charming lead turn.

Might there be a hint of something self-flattering in that charm? Sure. The film exists partly as an advertisement for Firstman's softer side. He gives Peter little friction in his quest to be better; parenting skills come quickly, sprung out of an innate decency. But many actor-directors in the past have given themselves just such a spit-shine, so we probably can't begrudge Firstman for doing the same. He does do some convenient exculpatory psychological analysis, though. I maybe don't fully buy that all of Peter's bad behavior can be explained away by his repeated insistence that he just doesn't like himself very much. There's some deflection happening there.

But *Club Kid* isn't really a whitewashed vanity project. It's a confident, exciting directorial debut, stylish in an unobtrusive way and agreeably paced. It is cognizant of at least some reality, too: Firstman eventually brings the fantasy down to earth, recognizing that bureaucracy would inevitably come to bear on this found family.

Peter might be matured, and humanized, by the imposition of fatherhood, but the movie doesn't attach the same moral weight to that shift as do movies like *Raising Helen* and *Big Daddy*, or the sneakily conservative urgings of some Judd Apatow's films. *Club Kid* doesn't condemn the world that Peter is suddenly snatched out of; it just makes the argument that it was an environment to which Peter had grown particularly ill-suited.

I don't think the film is a renouncement of Firstman's milieu, a "haven't we grown out of this?" bit of smarm. But it is suggesting to those who might be lost in the party that life can be led with more — and I apologize for using this word — intentionality. It's a call to consciousness, a gentle urging that slowing down is not giving up, that cool is not the only currency, and that what happens in the dark room may not always stay there. Something to keep in mind as another Pride approaches, perhaps.

Un Certain Regard

CAST Jordan Firstman, Cara Delevingne, Kirby Howell-Baptiste, Diego Calva, Reggie Absolom

DIRECTOR Jordan Firstman

1 hour 59 minutes

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SCHLÖNDORFF

Continued from page 25

How do you look back on your years reviving Studio Babelsberg?

Somebody had to do it. I had no idea what I was getting into. I thought we were going to produce movies. Instead, it was mostly renovation of the facility. There were more politics than filmmaking involved. It was fascinating, but it was not my job. I'm a filmmaker. In a sense, I lost five or eight years of filmmaking, plus another couple of years just to recuperate from that. It was like I had changed sides, from the creative side to the financial, commercial side, and because the studio shifted from being state-owned to investor-owned, and so many people lost their jobs, it was like shifting politically from leftist to capitalist.

But today, I'm fine with it, because otherwise Studio Babelsberg wouldn't exist. And it does. We shot the interior of the house [in *Visitation*] at the studio, and I did all the sound work. It was satisfying to finally take advantage of all that investment.

So you really have no regrets?

Things could have been different. You often try to make yourself believe that you made the choices in your life, but the influence of the world on your private life is enormous. The fall of the Berlin Wall made me studio boss in East Germany. It wasn't my choice. I think the one conscious choice I made, the one that determined everything, was deciding, at age 16 or 17, to go to boarding school in France and then deciding to become a filmmaker. I labored, with intense will and energy, and 10 years later, I became a filmmaker. Everything else came from that. **TUR**



The grounds at Monaci delle Terre Nere unfold over 62 acres on the slopes of Etna, shaped by monks, farmers and one very persistent volcano.

FILM LOVER'S TOUR

Continued from page 29

what came in from the Ljubljana market that morning and what Ros felt like cooking.

The AS Boutique Hotel has 30 rooms designed by Ofis Architects with views to the castle. The essential excursion is to the Ribnica Valley, 45 minutes south, where David Lesar runs BioSing out of an underground cellar. Lesar cures bear, deer and pork into salamis aged according to lunar phases in clay-lined chambers — no additives, no industrial shortcuts, nothing that didn't exist in 1492 when the Ribnica Valley first started trading. Ros serves the products at Hisa Franko. The tasting in Lesar's cellar, paired with wines from his 10,000-bottle private collection, is one of the more theatrical food experiences available anywhere in Europe.

BELGRADE: FOR OFF-THE-BEATEN PATH LOVERS

Ralph Fiennes chose Belgrade to shoot *Coriolanus* (2011), his directorial debut — filming in the Serbian parliament building, across the city's bridges and through a streetscape that compresses medieval, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and Socialist modernist architecture into a single sightline. Fiennes said

the city's spirit drew him first and the locations confirmed it.

The Bristol Belgrade opened in 1912 as the most glamorous address in the Savamala district and spent the better part of a century living up to it — the Rockefellers had a suite named for them, Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito was a regular, Garry Kasparov played chess here. After closing in 2018 and spending two and a half years under the hands of 16 restoration artists working alongside Belgrade's cultural monuments institute, it reopened in early 2025 as a five-star independent property with 143 rooms, a Michelin Key and an art nouveau secession facade that looks exactly as Nikola Nestorovic designed it in 1912. The Library is the room to know — fireplace, books, the right atmosphere for a city that rewards the long evening.

SCOTLAND: FOR WHISKY LOVERS

Sam Mendes shot the Glencoe sequences of *Skyfall* (2012) in the Scottish Highlands. Now the Highlands have a second pop culture claim: *The Traitors*, both the U.K. BBC edition and the U.S. Peacock version, shoots at Ardross Castle, a 19th century Scottish Baronial estate on more than 100 acres along the River Alness north of Inverness.

The castle's long corridors and Highland backdrop have made it one of the most recognized locations in reality television globally.

The Balvenie distillery in Dufftown is the whisky visit that earns the trip. Floor maltings still running the traditional way, coopers making barrels on site, a 30-year vertical tasting conducted without theatrics. It is the kind of place that converts the curious into the serious. Down in Girvan, the Hendrick's Gin Palace runs at an entirely different frequency: Victorian greenhouse, cucumber cocktails, the theatrical self-awareness of a brand that has fully committed to its own unique style.

In Edinburgh, Gleneagles Townhouse in the New Town is smaller and in some ways sharper than the Perthshire flagship — members' club energy, correctly restrained. One Hundred Princes Street has the castle views and the proportions that remind you what Edinburgh was built to do. Both make the case for staying longer. The reservation worth pursuing is the private room at Johnnie Walker Princes Street: invitation only, archive bottles, the kind of conversation about provenance and rarity that doesn't happen on the standard tour. **TUR**

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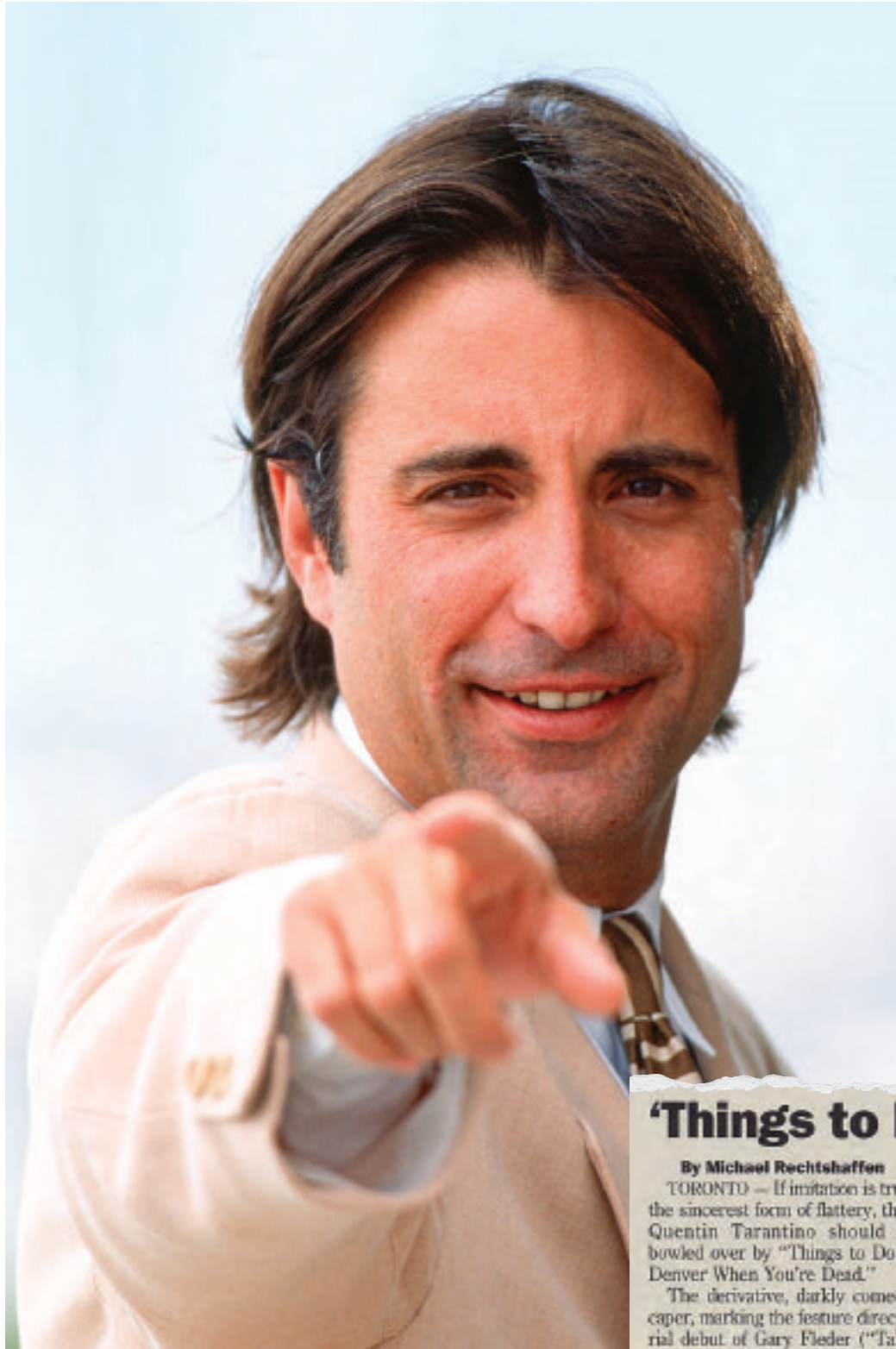
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When Andy Garcia Brought *Denver* to the Croisette



In 1995, Andy Garcia visited Cannes as star of Miramax's *Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead*, accompanied by his entire family. That seemed to trigger the *New York Daily News*, which wrote, "Among certain Hollywood types, there is a saying: Wives don't fit in in Cannes. Don't tell that to Andy Garcia. The smoldering star not only brought his wife ... he brought his three young daughters to the premiere of his new movie."

Of course, the R-rated *Denver*, directed by Gary Fleder, in which Garcia plays a former hitman who's called back into the game for one more job alongside a killer cast that included Treat Williams and Christopher Walken, was hardly a family film. *THR* critic Michael Rechtshaffen observed, like many reviewers, that "the derivative, darkly comedic caper" was something of an imitation of Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*. That was a comparison that Garcia rejected: "Hogwash. There are no similarities. That was a dark comedy where you laugh when someone gets stabbed in the heart with a hypodermic needle. Ours is a tragic poem. When people get killed, you care about them."

Garcia takes another stab at the crime drama this year with his newest feature, *Diamond*, which will screen out of competition. He directed the film and stars alongside Vicky Krieps, Brendan Fraser, Bill Murray and Dustin Hoffman. — GREGG KILDAY

'Things to Do in Denver'

By Michael Rechtshaffen
TORONTO — If imitation is truly the sincerest form of flattery, then Quentin Tarantino should be bowled over by "Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead."

The derivative, darkly comedic caper, marking the feature directorial debut of Gary Fleder ("Tales

the attempt ultimately rings hollow.

At best, this mongrel "Reservoir Dogs" has its share of outrageous sequences and some colorful performances from a high-profile ensemble, which may be enough to attract a select group of cheap thrill-seekers.

Andy Garcia at the Cannes photocall for *Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead*, which premiered in *Un Certain Regard* and in which he plays "a debonair, reformed gangster," said *THR*.



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Seth Abramovitch

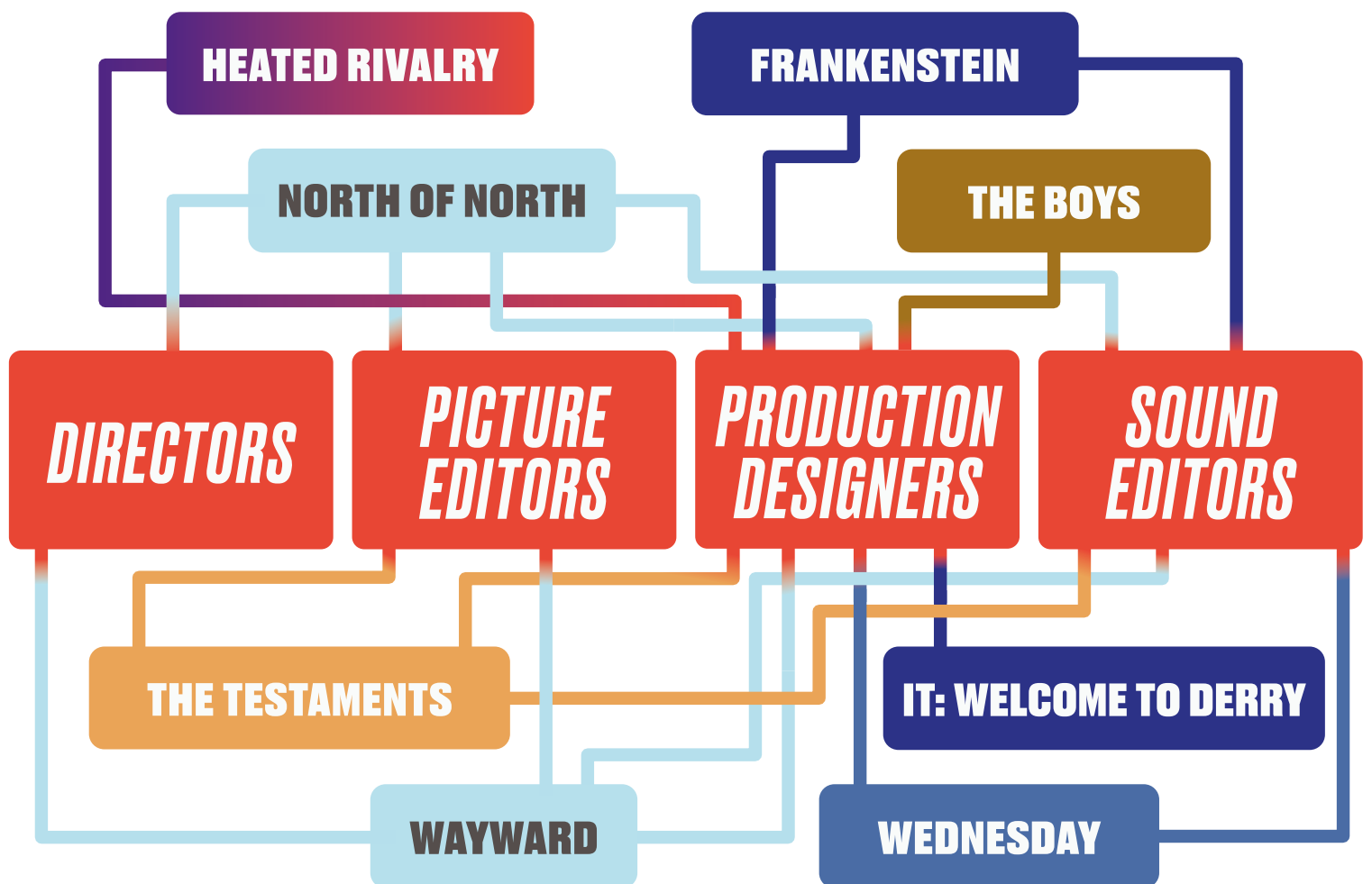


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