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CRICKETS

The Indies Are Dying. Long Live the Indies

The pay-one window is gone, the presale market has dried up and dealmaking at Cannes is at a standstill. But the audience for independent film hasn't gone anywhere — it's just waiting to be reached in new ways BY SCOTT ROXBOROUGH

Let's be honest: Business is slow. At this point in a typical Cannes Film Market, there would usually be at least a handful of big deals, a bidding war or two. Instead, crickets.

The hallways of the Palais des Festivals are busy enough — there are plenty of packages on offer and buyers and sellers are making the rounds. But the deals aren't coming, at least not at the pace or the scale the market once reliably delivered.

The independent film industry, to put it plainly, is in transition — and nobody has quite figured out what it's transitioning into.

The old model, the one that sustained the indie ecosystem, is visibly fraying. At its center was the pay-one television window: a predictable, lucrative revenue stream that allowed distributors to take risks on projects at the presale stage, backing films before a frame was shot based on talent attachments and a promising pitch. That window has largely collapsed, squeezed out by streaming platforms that negotiate their own deals directly

(Continued on page 2)

LEGEND OF THE CROISETTE

Kiyoshi Kurosawa Finally Makes His Samurai Film

The Japanese auteur arrives at Cannes with the period epic he could never afford — as two of his most celebrated students compete for the Palme d'Or

BY PATRICK BRZESKI

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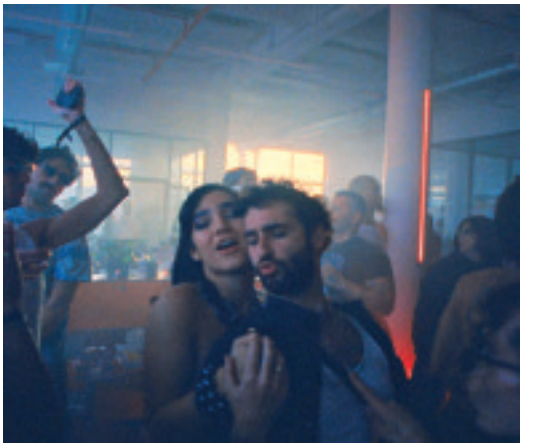

From left: Dallas Jenkins' *The Chosen* benefits from a built-in audience; Jordan Firstman's *Club Kid* is benefiting from Firstman's social media savvy.

INDIES

Continued from page 1

and on their own terms. What's left for independent distributors is a landscape stripped of the financial cushions that once made risk-taking viable.

Without the pay-one window, distributors simply aren't willing to pre-buy the way they used to, especially at the high end, for $50 million plus projects, unless they are obvious, mainstream theatrical plays with big, bankable stars. The kind that are few and far between at the Cannes Marché this year.

For producers, says **David Garrett** of Mister Smith Entertainment, who has been navigating these markets for decades, "that means relying more on equity financing and soft money to get movies financed."

The result, at the Cannes Marché, is a buyer's market without enough buyers — or at least without buyers willing to commit large sums up front. Films that would once have sparked competitive bidding are screening to polite attention and noncommittal follow-up meetings. Producers are waiting. Sellers are waiting. Everyone is waiting.

But here's the thing about a vacuum: Something always fills it. And this year in Cannes, you can start to see the outlines of what that something might be — not one model, but several, each built around a different answer to the same question: How do you finance a film and find its audience when the traditional infrastructure has cracked beneath you?

One answer, increasingly convincing, is community. Watermelon Pictures, the Chicago-based production and distribution company co-founded by brothers **Badie** and **Hamza Ali**, has built its entire operation around the idea that a deeply engaged, underserved audience is a more reliable foundation than any presale agreement. Named for the fruit that has become a symbol of Palestinian resistance, Watermelon has co-produced and/or distributed a remarkable run of Palestinian-focused films — including **Annemarie Jacir**'s *Palestine 36*, **Kaouther Ben Hania**'s *The Voice of Hind Rajab* and **Cherien Dabis**' *All That's Left of You* — all three of which made the Oscar shortlist for best international feature.

Rather than relying on traditional advertising or mainstream media coverage — often lacking for the films and subjects the distributor wants to highlight, Watermelon deploys WhatsApp groups, local community leaders and social media influencers to drive audiences to cinemas. The film industry calls this "grassroots marketing." For Watermelon, it's simply how you talk to the people your film is made for.

A faith-based variant of the same logic has produced even more dramatic results. Angel Studios, the Utah-based company behind *Sound of Freedom* and *King of Kings*, has been scaling rapidly, adding international output deals across Europe, Latin America and Asia. Another striking example of community-driven film and television is *The Chosen*, the multi-season drama about the life of Jesus of Nazareth that has become an underground phenomenon of staggering proportions.

The Chosen creator **Dallas Jenkins** is in constant contact with the show's fans and maintains a direct text chain with 3.5 million followers, a form of direct engagement that **Mark Sourian**, president of production at 5&2, who make *The Chosen*, argues is key.

"In the 21st century, if you are not in direct connection with your audience, if you are just letting your film 'speak for itself,' " Sourian says, "you are going to lose control of the conversation."

That lesson has been absorbed — instinctively, if not always consciously — by a generation of online creators now moving into feature filmmaking with their audiences already in tow.

The most striking proof of concept is *Iron Lung*, the sci-fi horror film written, directed and self-distributed by YouTuber and gaming personality **Markiplier**, which has now grossed more than $50 million worldwide.

This year at Cannes, the model is advancing. *Club Kid*, arguably the festival's hottest title in terms of commercial potential, comes from **Jordan Firstman**, a comedian who built his following through viral Instagram skits during the pandemic before crossing over into features. The film has generated the kind of heat that has been missing elsewhere in the Marché this week, and a deal for domestic rights is all but certain (there are rumors A24 has already snatched it up).

None of these models is a clean replacement for what the independent film industry has lost. Community-driven distribution is hard to scale. But taken together, they suggest something important: The audience for independent film hasn't gone anywhere. It's just waiting to be reached in new ways, on new terms, by filmmakers willing to meet it where it lives — whether that's a church network, a WhatsApp group or a comment section on YouTube. THR

Meanwhile, in the Real World ...

Sam Raimi will direct *Magic*, Lionsgate's modern take on a **William Goldman** novel that was turned into a 1978 cult horror classic starring **Anthony Hopkins** as a mentally unstable ventriloquist. **Mark Swift** and **Damian Shannon** wrote the script.

Tony Seiniger, the poster designer who oversaw marketing campaigns for such classics as *Jaws*, *Poltergeist*, *Total Recall* and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, died in Atlanta, his family said. Known as the "Godfather of Movie Advertising," he was 87.

A judge declared a mistrial in the **Harvey Weinstein** rape case after a deadlocked New York jury was unable to reach a verdict. It was the third time a jury considered the case against the disgraced film mogul, 74, who has denied wrongdoing.

THE CANADIAN SELECTION AT CANNES

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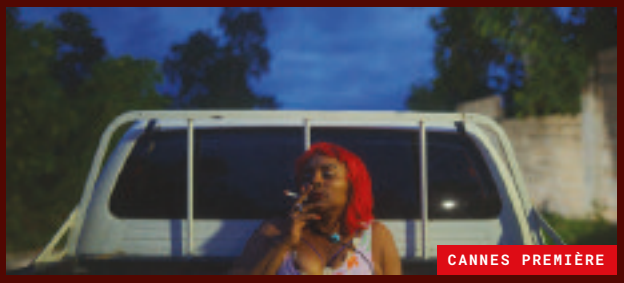

DRAMA

MARIE MADELEINE

Gessica Généus

SaNoSi Productions (France), **Ayizan Productions** (Haiti), **Stenola Productions** (Belgium), **Bidibul** (Luxembourg), **Metafilms** (Canada)

Sales/Ventes: **Pyramide International**

DRAMA

DEATH HAS NO MASTER (LA MUERTE NO TIENE DUEÑO)

Jorge Thielen Armand

La Faena Films (Canada), **Faits Divers Média** (Canada), **Volos Films Italia** (Italy), **Tres Cinematografia** (Venezuela), **Deal Productions** (Luxembourg)

Sales/Ventes: **Lucky Number**

COMEDY

SKINNY BOOTS (SKINNY BOTTINES)

Romain F. Dubois

Couronne Nord (Canada)

Sales/Ventes: **Travelling Distribution**

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DOG DAYS

German Directors Launch Local Version of Dogma 25

BY SCOTT ROXBOROUGH

Germany is doing Dogma.

A year after a group of young Danish directors, in Cannes, rebooted the groundbreaking '90s indie film movement Dogme 95, movement, with Dogma 25, five German directors are doing their own, local-language spinoff.

Directors **Tom Tykwer** (*Run Lola Run*, *Babylon Berlin*), **Ilker Çatak** (*The Teacher's Lounge*, *Yellow Letters*), **Nora Fingscheidt** (*System Crasher*, *The Outrun*), **Helene Hegemann** (*Axolotl Overkill*) and **Kurdwin Ayub** (*Mond*) have signed on to the Dogma 25 "manifesto," pledging to make movies that follow a strict "vow of chastity" that includes 10 "dogmas" intended to revitalize independent cinema in the age of algorithms and streaming conventions.

The 10 dogmas include restrictions that all scripts "must be original and handwritten"; that at least half of each film must be free of dialogue "to emphasize visual storytelling"; that the internet "is banned from the creative process to ensure connection to the physical world"; and that "no more than 10 crew members are allowed behind the camera."

Other requirements include that all Dogma 25 films must be shot in their real-world locations, with no cosmetic alterations to faces or bodies unless required by the story; that all materials — sets, props, costumes — must be reused or found; and that productions must be completed within a year to preserve urgency and creative flow.

The German Dogma 25 films will be produced by Berlin's X Filme Creative Pool and Zentropa Germany, with if ... Productions as a co-producers on Çatak's film. X Verleih will release the resulting films in Germany. Public broadcasters ZDF and Arte have signed with the intention to come onboard as backers. TrustNordisk will handle international sales on all German Dogma 25 movies.

"We are heading toward a world in which stories are already conceived as products before they have been experienced, filmed or even felt," said Tykwer, speaking at the launch of German Dogma 25, at the German Pavilion in Cannes on May 16. "We want to take the opposite act." THR

The Dogma 25 Germany directors (from left): Tom Tykwer, Kurdwin Ayub, Helene Hegemann, Nora Fingscheidt and Ilker Çatak.

MAKING WAVES

3 Questions With Lucy Liu

BY LILY FORD

Lucy Liu is in Cannes in support of *The Pirate Queen: No Safe Waters*, a "cinematic immersive experience" that Liu produced along with **Eloise Singer**. Liu also narrates the film, which premieres as part of the fest's Immersive Competition.

Do you remember your first time in Cannes?

My first experience at Cannes was for *Kung Fu Panda*, and I remember feeling completely swept up by it. Until then, I had never been in a space so intensely devoted to artistic expression on that level. What struck me most was how intimate it could still feel despite the scale of the festival — walking through it, hearing different languages, encountering people from entirely different backgrounds, and feeling this incredible connection through a shared love of storytelling.

What brings you, or your voice, to the Croisette this year?

This year feels very different from my first time at Cannes for *Kung Fu Panda*. The iPhone had only just been introduced, and the way we experienced film, media and connection felt completely different from today. Now, with the introduction of the immersive competition, this return feels especially meaningful.

Our project, *The Pirate Queen: No Safe Waters*, is a story I feel very passionate about bringing to audiences. At its heart is the story of a woman who existed outside traditional structures of power, yet changed the course of history through her ingenuity, resilience and intelligence, at a time when it was nearly impossible for a woman to be seen or even allowed an education. Connecting audiences to that legacy through an immersive format feels like exactly the right way to tell it.

What gets you excited about immersive?

What exciting to me about Immersive is that *The Pirate Queen* is a story that is deeply historical and not yet widely known to audiences. The immersive format creates an environment where people can receive her story in a far more compelling and immediate way. It's also an opportunity to introduce the Chinese culture at a pivotal moment in their history through a very modern lens. This feels especially significant right now, because there is so much content competing for attention. Immersive storytelling creates space for audiences to both observe a story and inhabit it. It's a way to honor something profoundly historic and cultural, while presenting it in a form that meets people where they are today. THR

The Most Important Competition at Cannes

A serious investigation into the most underrated item on the Croisette — the hotel club sandwich BY PATRICK BRZESKI

The Carlton Hotel: 4.5/5

Cost: 36 euros

For Cannes' most classic palace hotel, the Carlton's club is a bit of a surprise. Long strips of thin, chewy focaccia replace the conventional triangle toast, giving the sandwich a slight Italian inflection that suits a city whose cuisine has always been as much Ligurian as Provençal. Inside: chicken, hard-boiled egg, lettuce, mayonnaise — nothing more. Every ingredient is perceptible and flavorful, bound by the lightly oily bread and a restrained hand with the rich, housemade mayo. It is a sandwich of purity and simplicity, without flaws — precisely what an A-list club should be.

Hôtel Barrière Le Majestic: 4/5

Cost: 34 euros

Where the Carlton takes and lands some slight creative leaps, the Majestic aspires to simple classicism — and nails it. Four speared, triple-decker triangles arrive looking like the club sandwich's platonic ideal. The fine-crumbed bread is lightly toasted but still palpably moist, splitting the difference between structure and chewability that many hotel kitchens get wrong in one direction or the other. No reinvention. Just textbook execution from a Fouquet's brasserie kitchen that treats the form with the dignity it deserves. Hard-boiled egg can often feel like filler in a club; here it's flavorful and comes through beautifully.

Môka: 3.5/5

Cost: 27 euros

For the festivalgoers without official accreditation, which the Croisette's five-star lobbies and restaurants often require for entry, we sampled several sandwiches from Cannes' backstreet cafes. Moka, a daytime brasserie not far from the Palais, is a standout. The club here is a classic café rendition — a two-triangle, extra-thick triple-decker, generously stuffed and wholly satisfying in the way a no-frills lunch should be. It arrives laden with a somewhat baffling embellishment, a ribbon of bacon draped atop each half. Filling, inoffensive and reasonably priced (for a change).

Hôtel Martinez: 2.5/5

Cost: 36 euros

The Martinez has made the tragic decision to reimagine its club as an oversized maki roll, sliced into three cylindrical pieces. It photographs well and picks up easily enough, but getting a clean bite proves embarrassingly difficult. Worse, the bread overlaps at the seam, leaving you with an extraneous flap of white that serves no structural or gustatory purpose. This is precisely the kind of architectural reinvention that has no place when playing the standards. If you find yourself locked into a Martinez lunch meeting, order the roasted chicken breast with zucchini or the sea bass instead.

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HIDDEN GEM

A Rwandan Mother Preaches Forgiveness for Genocide

Marie Clémentine Dusabejambo's *Ben'Imana* follows a survivor who leads her community toward reconciliation — but doesn't extend that grace to her daughter **BY DAVID CANFIELD**

Clémentine U. Nyirinkindi stars as a genocide survivor pushing for forgiveness in public while berating her pregnant daughter at home.

Marie Clémentine Dusabejambo undertook extensive research, over about a decade, for her first feature film, *Ben'Imana* — a nuanced look at the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, told from the perspective of women involved in community reconciliation projects and conversations. Dusabejambo listened to harrowing stories from survivors and heard brutal confessions from regretful perpetrators. Initially, she kept crying — this was her community, too, after all, with real wounds unhealed. Then she realized: "They're not crying when they're telling me this. Why am I crying?"

Dusabejambo

That kind of hard-earned wisdom is all over *Ben'Imana*. In her 20s, Dusabejambo was planning on attending university for electronics and telecommunications before taking a callout for new filmmakers. She fell hard for the language of cinema and quickly knew that she wanted to make her own movie about the legacy of the genocide, which she grew up in. Her first short followed two students, one of whose parents was killed during that period. "At that time I didn't have knowledge of the weight of what happened during and after the genocide," she says. "But that led to this film."

The crux of *Ben'Imana* explores the relationship between Vénéranda (**Clémentine U. Nyirinkindi**), a survivor who leads community recovery efforts, and her teenage daughter, who's newly, unexpectedly pregnant. This causes a rift between the two women — clashes of tradition versus modernity, evolving gender roles, and most centrally for the topic of this movie, forgiveness. We watch Vénéranda cruelly scold her daughter in the same breath that she empathically urges women reeling from very dark choices to forgive themselves.

These themes emerged out of conversations Dusabejambo had with these actual women, traumatized and/or guilty, before casting them in the film despite no acting experience. "They bring in something that is real," the filmmaker says. Because of the depth of her knowledge of their stories and psyches, she could guide their scenes accordingly: "I was also trying to find their language: How do they talk about themselves? How do they talk about this history without being too reductive?"

That reflects the larger achievement of *Ben'Imana*: The film carries across a very specific, melancholy, but warm point-of-view. Dusabejambo knows that having a Rwandan film centered almost entirely on women felt novel on its own, but she was never satisfied with that as a differentiator. "The place women have in Rwanda is one of influence and power that is indirect, but it's a matriarchal society — and there are women who participated in the killings," she says. "In this mothering space where we all met, I wanted to go through the women's hearts and find the heartbeat."

That collective spirit extended behind the camera, too.

Says Dusabejambo: "It's a small community. We have been working together for a long time in the film industry in Rwanda. We coexist in collectivity." THR

My Cannes Moment
Scott Feinberg

Robert Redford (left) with *THR*'s executive editor (awards) Scott Feinberg.

As I arrived in Cannes this year to cover the festival for The Hollywood Reporter, *I couldn't help but think back to my first trip to this beautiful, crazy place, 13 years ago. At the time, I had virtually no idea where anything was or how anything worked — even just tracking down my credential was an overwhelming ordeal. My stress was compounded by the fact that I had invited along my girlfriend, figuring we would have time to do things together — suffice it to say, we did not, and she wasn't my girlfriend for much longer. Also, for much of the fest, it was pouring rain.* C'est la vie.

But, as ever in Cannes, between the grind and exhaustion, there were magical moments. The opening night party was a celebration as lavish as one in the film it was celebrating, The Great Gatsby. *Traversing the Croisette, I ran into* ***Michel Hazanavicius*** *and* ***Bérénice Bejo****, whom I'd gotten to know when* The Artist *was on the awards circuit, and filmed a long walk-and-talk interview with* ***Noah Emmerich****. I interviewed a pair of veterans,* Behind the Candelabra's ***Michael Douglas*** *and* ***Jerry Weintraub****, at the Hotel du Cap, and a pair of up-and-comers promoting their first film together:* Fruitvale Station's ***Ryan Coogler*** *and* ***Michael B. Jordan****.*

But, without a doubt, the highlight, for me, was being in the presence of one of the last true legends of Hollywood's golden age, ***Robert Redford****. Redford, then 77, hadn't been to Cannes in 25 years, but he came that year with my friend* ***J.C. Chandor****'s film* All Is Lost, *which featured one of Redford's last truly great performances — perhaps even his best. I was fortunate enough to attend the film's afterparty on — appropriately enough — a boat, or, more specifically, a yacht, moored in the Old Port of Cannes. There, I had the privilege of being introduced to, and briefly interviewing, the man himself. I don't get starstruck easily, but I will admit that that night, I was. When Redford died last September, I mourned the loss of a great talent and humanitarian — and reflected on that night in 2013, when I got the full Cannes experience in the pleasure of his company.*


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Dress du Jour
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The *Gentle Monster* star stepped out in an elegant off-the-shoulder black satin long gown designed by the house's artistic director **Nicolas Ghesquière**, which took more than 450 hours to complete. The iconic French actress, whose film debuted to a six-minute standing ovation, paired the look with a statement necklace, ring and earrings, all from Louis Vuitton's high jewelry collections.

TASTEMAKER

Law Roach Leaps From Image Architect to Taste Architect

The celebrity stylist touches down in the South of France for a collaboration with ice cream brand Magnum before jetting off to style Ariana Grande's new tour **BY CHRIS GARDNER**

Law Roach has long identified as an "image architect," but Magnum amended the title for Cannes by appointing the veteran power stylist as the ice cream brand's "taste architect."

As part of his duties, Roach touched down on the Croisette on Thursday to curate Magnum's first fashion show as creative director by overseeing the design and curation of the presentation "in celebration of the House of Magnum." The trendsetter even closed the show by walking hand in hand with *Project Runway* pal **Heidi Klum**, who made a surprise showing. Aside from Magnum ice cream bars that were handed out all afternoon, there was another sweet moment: Klum's son, **Henry Samuel**, strutted down the runway.

Following the show, *The Hollywood Reporter* caught up with Roach to talk that new title, his history styling **Naomi Campbell** for Cannes outings and the high-profile work obligation that put him on a plane first thing Friday back to the States: styling **Ariana Grande**'s anticipated Eternal Sunshine Tour.

You're the first "taste architect" for Magnum. Why did you say yes?
Because they came up with that really beautiful title that kind of mimics "image architect," which I thought was so interesting. Also, when I got to dig into the history of Magnum, although this might feel like their first dabble into fashion, it's not. In 1994, **Kate Moss** did the **Vivienne Westwood** show holding a Magnum ice cream bar. And their commitment to quality and craftsmanship mimics and echoes what I do as a stylist.

From left: Law Roach and Heidi Klum step out on the runway for Magnum's fashion show in Cannes; Barbara Palvin and Dylan Sprouse at the afterparty.

When I first heard that you were taking this opportunity, I wondered if Law Roach eats ice cream?
Law Roach does eat ice cream. Law Roach also eats adult ice cream because Magnum is a leader in this field crafting ice cream that really is for adults because it's all about pleasure and sensuality. The throughline between what they do and what we do is so apparent, that's what is really exciting about this partnership.

You're no stranger to Cannes. I loved the moment in 2024 when you stepped out on the Palais red carpet with Naomi, your good friend. She wore an archival Chanel look. What do you remember about that night?
Being really shocked because when you hire me as a stylist, that's what I come prepared to do, right? When I'm with a client, it's not about me. I'm not trying to be in the limelight unless I'm invited to. And Naomi and Chanel invited me to. They asked me to walk alongside her on that carpet with Chanel, and I thought it was incredible. Naomi's fans really enjoyed that moment. My fans really enjoyed that moment. It was like the battle of the hair. She's the queen.

You were also wearing Chanel. When you're styling yourself for such a moment, what's the mission?
I still have this thing that if I'm not completely alone, it's not about me. I am in the service industry. My job is to make my clients feel as confident as beautiful as possible. So that's what's on my mind. I have no problem being four steps behind my talent. But I thought it became this really iconic cultural moment for us to be there together and I was just grateful that that happened.

What's the strategy for styling for such a grand occasion like Cannes?
Every occasion is a grand occasion for me. I live in a world of dreams of grandeur. You know what I mean? I live in a fantasy that sometimes my clients have to pull me back from. The red carpet for Cannes has been iconic for so many years. As a stylist, that's what you dream to do. You dream to have a look on that carpet. It's Cannes, Venice, the Oscars, the Met Gala. I've been so grateful to be able to live out those dreams and for Magnum to let me come and to be their inaugural taste architect.

What can people expect from Zendaya's upcoming press tours for *Dune: Part Three* and *The Odyssey*? Archival or method dressing?
You can expect both of those things, but you can also expect me. I am the costume designer for Ariana Grande's new tour. I actually leave here very early in the morning to go back to L.A. to start fittings. I'm so excited because Ari hasn't toured in seven years and the last tour she did, I was the costume designer for that, as well. It's a reunion of us and our creativity and love for each other. This new album is so good. It is quintessential Ariana, and her fans are going to be really excited to hear the music and to see the show.

She has evolved as an artist since the last tour, so I'm curious how it's going to look?
We're grown now. Seven years is a long time to not have a tour or not to perform for huge audiences. And I just think that her maturation as an artist and as a woman is so incredible. I'm just so grateful that she chose me to come back and to collaborate with her for it. THR

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Dir. Rain Rannu

A HOME FOR CHRISTMAS
Dir. Jarett Bellucci

THE BABY PACT
Dir. Matt Berman

CRYPTO SHADOWS
Dir. James Fox

SAINT NICK
Dir. Justin Knodel

ANDY WARHO: AMERICAN DREAM
Dir. L'ubomir Slivka

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

THE ROAD TO GALENA
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THE DARKNESS RETURNS
Dir. William Butler

ANNIE
Dir. Nicolas Bosc

THE LEGEND OF CATCLAWS MOUNTAIN - Dir. Richie Greer

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KIYOSHI KUROSAWA FINALLY MAKES HIS SAMURAI FILM

The Japanese auteur arrives at Cannes with the period epic he could never afford — and two of his most celebrated students competing for the Palme d'Or beside him

BY PATRICK BRZESKI

If there's a great crime of recent world cinema, it's that Kiyoshi Kurosawa hasn't been granted bigger budgets. The 70-year-old Japanese auteur has consistently spun masterful moviemaking from a relative shoestring over the four and a half decades of his prolific and deeply influential career.

Kurosawa has explored genres with a restlessness and inventiveness few directors of his generation can match: from the now-classic serial killer procedural *Cure* (1997) to the dread-soaked J-horror landmark *Pulse* (2001), the lacerating family drama *Tokyo Sonata* (Cannes' Un Certain Regard Jury Prize winner of 2008), the haunting wartime mystery *Wife of a Spy* (best director at Venice in 2020), and most recently *Cloud*, the psychological action film that landed on numerous critics' 2025 best-of lists. In nearly every case, he has worked on production budgets that would barely cover the catering costs on a Hollywood feature of comparable ambition.

Kurosawa came of age during an era of sharp contraction for the Japanese film business, after the rise of television had eroded the dominance of the country's once-fabled movie studios. The film business responded to the period's challenges with the rise of "pink eiga," a soft-core erotic genre that trafficked in the nudity and violence that couldn't be shown on TV, becoming one of Japan's most bankable production engines through the 1970s and into the 1980s. The genre also proved an unexpectedly fertile training ground for a generation of Japanese directors — among them future Oscar winner Yojiro Takita (*Departures*), Masayuki Suo (*Shall We Dance?*), Koji Wakamatsu — and Kurosawa, whose 1983 feature debut *Kandagawa Pervert Wars* was characteristically trashy but also a highly film-literate riff on *Rear Window* by Hitchcock, the filmmaker who would later come to be seen as his greatest influence.

"I've always had this desire to make a [samurai] film one day," says Kiyoshi Kurosawa of *The Samurai and the Prisoner*. "I just never really had the opportunity."

It was *Cure*, though, that eventually announced Kurosawa as a singular voice in world cinema. A beguiling, hypnotic study of a Tokyo detective (the great Koji Yakusho) investigating a series of murders committed by ordinary people who can't seem to explain what made them do it, the film was made for less than $1 million and performed poorly upon its release in Japan, but steadily grew in global reputation

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From left: Kurosawa's breakthrough film, 1997's *Cure*; and 2001's *Pulse*, which premiered in Un Certain Regard.

over the nearly three decades since its release. As fans of the Criterion Closet will well know, it has been regularly hailed as a landmark: Bong Joon Ho has ranked it among the 10 greatest films of all time, and Ari Aster once said, "There is an argument to be made that *Cure*, by Kiyoshi Kurosawa, is the greatest movie ever made."

In the intervening years, Kurosawa has also extended his imprint on Japanese cinema as a teacher. During his time as a professor of film studies at Tokyo University of the Arts, he taught two aspiring filmmakers who grew into some of Japan's most accomplished new voices: Ryûsuke Hamaguchi, whose *Drive My Car* won the best international feature Oscar in 2022, and Koji Fukada, whose 2016 drama *Harmonium* won the Un Certain Regard Jury Prize at Cannes. Both are in competition for the Palme d'Or this year, with films that have drawn some of the festival's strongest early reviews: Hamaguchi's *Parallel Lives* and Fukada's *Nagi Notes*.

"Kiyoshi Kurosawa has this ability to tell incredibly powerful stories solely through the way he works with moving images — without even trying to peer into a character's mind by the use of dialogue. He's a pure filmmaker," Fukada tells *The Hollywood Reporter*. "Every student wants to compete with their teacher one day, but I realized early on that there was no way I would ever surpass him if I tried to make movies the way he does. So I had to go away and develop my own style — which is something he allowed and encouraged me to do. I've loved his films since I was a teenager, but I also really credit him with helping me find my own voice."

"And I don't think I'll ever surpass him, by the way," Fukada adds.

The master will be side by side with his star pupils in Cannes this year — and although his own film is showing in the festival's Special Screenings section rather than the main competition, it will arrive as a long-hoped-for event among international film buffs.

Kurosawa's new film fills a conspicuous absence in his diverse filmography: For roughly his 30th feature, he has finally made a classic samurai movie.

The new feature, *The Samurai and the Prisoner*, is set in 16th century Japan during the late Sengoku, or Warring States, period, and adapted from Honobu Yonezawa's Naoki Prize-winning 2021 novel of the same name. The story follows Lord Araki Murashige (played by *Departures* star Masahiro Motoki), a real-life vassal of the tyrannical warlord Oda Nobunaga who rose in rebellion against his master in 1578 and barricaded himself inside his stronghold, Arioka Castle. As Oda's army closes in from outside, a young samurai is murdered within the castle walls, triggering a cascade of bizarre incidents that throw the fortress into paranoia and suspicion. With traitors potentially among his most trusted retainers, Murashige is forced into an uneasy alliance with Kanbei Kuroda — a brilliant but dangerous strategist whom he himself has thrown into the castle dungeon, played by Masaki Suda, the memorable lead of last year's *Cloud*. The ensemble also features Yuriko Yoshitaka, Munetaka Aoki, Ryota Miyadate, Tasuku Emoto and Joe Odagiri. Kurosawa wrote the adaptation himself, and the film is produced by 130-year-old Japanese studio Shochiku in association with Tokyo Broadcasting System Television.

"FOR MY FIRST ATTEMPT AT A [SAMURAI FILM], I WANTED TO TRY A CLASSICAL STYLE, IN THE SIMILAR STYLE OF THE GREAT OLDER FILMS THAT CAME BEFORE ME."

Chatting with *THR* prior to Cannes in Tokyo, Kurosawa joked that the reason he hadn't made a samurai film until now wasn't because of any trepidation over the fact that the genre is so closely associated with the classic Japanese director with whom he happens to share a family name. On the contrary, he says — the looming international reputation of Akira Kurosawa has been a benefit rather than a burden to him. "From the start of my career, whenever I went overseas, people wondered if I was related to Akira Kurosawa," he says. "I'm not related to him at all — but once they heard my name, they always remembered me."

The real reason, Kurosawa says, is more prosaic and predictable: money. He had long wanted to make a *jidaigeki* (Japan's traditional genre of pre-modern period drama), but only if he could do so in the classical mode he had grown up loving — and the kind of sets, locations, wigs, makeup and costumes that mode requires had never been within reach of his usual budgets.

"I've always had this desire to make a *jidaigeki* film one day, but to do so nowadays takes a lot of money — expensive sets and locations; wigs, makeup and costumes — and I just never really had the opportunity given to me until now," he says.

He adds: "There are still many *jidaigeki* being made today,

especially on Japanese TV, but most of them have been modernized in one way or another — through the costumes, the dialogue, the cinematography. Those modernized versions can be fun in their own way, but for me, for my first attempt at a *jidaigeki*, I wanted to try a classical style, in the similar style of the great older films that came before me."

Before production, Kurosawa spent some time revisiting many of the great Japanese *jidaigeki* of the 1950s and '60s. He began, naturally, with the elder Kurosawa. He says that *Throne of Blood*, Akira Kurosawa's samurai riff on *Macbeth*, was especially instructive. "It was a really great film for thinking about the Warring States period — the Sengoku Jidai — but also because it involves lots of conversations between warlords, and between the lead character and his wife. There's a lot of interior talking in my film, so those were good references for me." He also returned to the work of Masaki Kobayashi, the director of *Seppuku*, whose camera lingers so often within fortified interiors; and to Kenji Mizoguchi's *The 47 Ronin* — set in a later era, but instructive for its handling of confined domestic space and ritual in pre-modern Japan.

Kurosawa seriously considered shooting *Samurai and the Prisoner* in black and white, the format of so many of the classics he was drawing from, but settled instead on a richly shadowed, high-contrast use of color — and on European Vista, an aspect ratio narrower than CinemaScope but wider than the standard Academy format of the post-war period dramas he loves. He worked closely with cinematographer Yasuyuki Sasaki, whose work can also be seen in Cannes this year in Yukiko Sode's accomplished Un Certain Regard entry *All the Lovers in the Night*. "What is interesting about the great black-and-white films I was watching is the way that they showed a lot of the drama through the play of light and shadow," Kurosawa says. "I wanted to show the same thing, but with color."

The most surprising difficulty of the production, he says, was a question more subtle than issues of technical craft: how 16th century Japanese characters would actually move, speak and behave outside the formal cadences of the script's old-style dialogue. The dialogue itself drove most scenes, but the space between them was hard for the director — who, until now, had always worked in modern times — to picture. "How did they talk in their daily lives? How did they move? What was their way of being? That was something I had a very hard time imagining," he says.

He came to see the historical gap as one of the genre's defining challenges — and, eventually, as one of its most exciting mysteries. "There was just no way of knowing, but we still had to do it. For me as a director, and also for the actors, it was in some sense a very thrilling experience. The sense of normalcy we work with in modern times doesn't apply. Reality is simply very different in a *jidaigeki* than in a modern piece."

Many of the great Japanese samurai films of the post-war era are, in a sense, anti-samurai films — sustained interrogations of the cruelty, hypocrisy or human cost of the *bushido* code. This tradition runs at least from Kobayashi's *Seppuku* through Yoji Yamada's *The Twilight Samurai*. Asked about that alternate lineage, Kurosawa says he hadn't framed the film that way consciously, but now sees it as part of this tradition. "It is definitely an anti-samurai film," he says. "It's very anti- the values represented by *bushido*. I was depicting a protagonist who resists those values, escapes them and ultimately becomes free of these rules."

The Murashige of Yonezawa's novel — and of Kurosawa's film — is unusual for the genre: a lord and tactician who is also a lover of poetry and the tea ceremony, and who has come to despise the killing that the samurai life demands. The timeliness of the film's pacifist message — amid a moment of widening global conflict — was part of the project's appeal, he says.

"There is this very simple thought that exists fundamentally in this character — that he didn't want to do any more killing — and I felt that was a very fresh take, and something that does speak to today," he says.

But it was the second arc and message of the story that intrigued him most. "It's also about a person who was originally moved by a lot of desire for power and authority, but then decides to abandon all of it, and through that wins a new kind of freedom," he says. "This isn't only about people in power. People living today — myself included — tend to be moved by different kinds of desires: making money, building a reputation, attaining influence. But what happens when you look away from all of these at once and find a new way to live? That's the action Murashige takes in the end, and to me, that was very interesting."

Kurosawa (right) presented the best director award to his countryman — and one time pupil — Hirokazu Kore-eda at the 17th Asian Film Awards in 2024.

At 70 and nearly three dozen features deep, with another now in Cannes, Kurosawa says he remains unsatisfied — both with his body of work and his country's movie output as a whole.

"Japanese filmmakers — and I include myself — have gotten very good at making films that identify universal themes in aspects of everyday life. But I question how much we are really engaging with the spirit of our times, tackling the fundamental issues that Japanese society is going through," he says. "Are we actually able to use our current situation as a kind of fuel, and turn it into cinema?"

The auteur says he's belatedly been catching up on last year's U.S. awards contenders — Paul Thomas Anderson's *One Battle After Another*, Ryan Coogler's *Sinners* and Maggie Gyllenhaal's *The Bride!* — and that he's found himself newly galvanized by the social urgency he's found there.

"In my opinion, none of these are quite perfect movies," he says. "Each is a little imbalanced in its own way. I feel a certain distance between what they attempted to do and what they ended up expressing. But there is a vitality to their attempt to engage with the fundamental problems they see in American society and to make really entertaining cinema out of that. Japanese cinema in the 1950s and '60s once did this, too. If we can find that impetus again, we'll be able to say our film culture has entered a wonderful new era."

He adds: "I want to urge Japanese directors to pursue this kind of filmmaking — and I include myself, alongside the younger filmmakers who are going to Cannes with me this year. That's a desire I still have, even at my age, with the energy I have left." THR

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THE SOLDIER AND THE FAMILY HE DESTROYED

Star Boyd Holbrook and director Reed Van Dyk on *Atonement*, their Iraq War drama about a soldier who seeks out the family he devastated — and what it takes to make a war film that tells the truth **BY MIA GALUPPO**

Wartime has always had a prominent place onscreen. Less prominent are films that tackle the aftermath of war. Movies like *The Deer Hunter* and *The Best Years of Our Lives* show the difficult transition back home after the battlefield. Even rarer is a film like *Atonement*, the feature debut for director Reed Van Dyk, which sees the returning soldier battling his own demons while coming face-to-face with people whose lives were devastated by his actions.

Based on a *New Yorker* article from Dexter Filkins, *Atonement* follows Second lieutenant Lou D'Alessandro (Lu Lobello, in real life) who, during a firefight at the beginning of the invasion of Iraq, shoots on cars crossing at an intersection, killing three men in the multigenerational Khachaturian family (Kachadoorian, in real life), Iraqi civilians trying to find shelter after an explosion destroyed parts of their home. Back in the United States, the Marine, who is suffering from PTSD and panic attacks, finds out that some of the surviving Khachaturians immigrated to the United States and reaches out to meet them, with the hope of finding forgiveness.

Van Dyk read Filkins' original story while in his Los Angeles apartment. "I couldn't stop crying," he says, but adds, "I was in no position at that time to make a movie." He later went to UCLA for film school and made several short films, one of which,

Left: Boyd Holbrook stars in *Atonement*. Above: Palestinian actress Hiam Abbass plays the matriarch of the Khachaturian family, with whom Holbrook's character has a climactic meeting.

DeKalb Elementary, received an Oscar nomination in 2018. He often thought about the soldier and the Kachadoorians, and "when I had anybody to support and help me figure out how to make a feature, I asked."

Determined to make it his feature directorial debut, it was important for Van Dyk to reach out to the real people at the center of the story. "I didn't want to open up these old wounds for them without being certain that I was wanting to breathe life into this as a film." He flew out to New York to have dinner with Filkins and drove to Las Vegas to sit with Lobello. He came to know the Kachadoorians best, as they lived only 20 minutes from each other in Los Angeles. Says the filmmaker: "It was a beautiful process of, over years, talking to them, getting their blessing."

Van Dyk placed a particular importance on realizing early invasion Baghdad. The city onscreen so often acts as, he says, "backdrop for American stories." He and his cinematographer traveled to Baghdad for a scouting trip, with a reading list from Iraqi authors. The six-hour documentary from Abbas Fahdel, *Homeland: Iraq Year Zero*, was an principal source.

The director also spoke with Marines to bring authenticity to the film's central firefight, avoiding Hollywood's well-worn battlefield stereotypes. These, says the director, can look more akin to a sporting events where "it is their side, our side. Who's up and who's down." He focused instead on just the Americans pulling the trigger, intending for the sequence to hue closer to a documentary. Or, at the very least, "closer to the truth than I'm accustomed to seeing in movies, where Iraqis are often looked at through the sniper scope."

As for casting, Van Dyk was not familiar with Boyd Holbrook's best-known work, like Marvel movie *Logan*, and the long-running Netflix series *Narcos*. Instead, he first clocked Holbrook in a small role in Jeff Nichols' motorcycle period piece *The Bikeriders*. "I left the theater talking about him. I said, 'I saw that guy in an Indiana Jones movie [*Dial of Destiny*] and he was nothing like he was in that.' " Shortly after, the director saw Holbrook playing Johnny Cash in the Bob Dylan biopic *A Complete Unknown*, and was astounded by the actor's range. Says Van Dyk: "I was just like, 'This guy can do anything.' He's a character and really puts his shoulder into finding the body and movement and voice of that person."

He was confident that Holbrook, who is prolific but often cast as a supporting character, could carry this film.

For his part, Holbrook was drawn to Van Dyk's more nuanced perspective on a wartime film. "We see so many monetized versions of war. This is something that you never get to see," says the actor. Ultimately, he was drawn to Lou's search for absolution: "I'm going to, face to face, meet these people and put myself aside."

The role was physically daunting. First there was the firefight, which was shot on location in Jordan, which doubled for Iraq. Holbrook wore 40 pounds of gear in over 100-degree heat. But, he says, the awkwardness and discomfort lent itself to the practicalities of war that the filmmakers were hoping to capture. "It was not, 'I'm going to look like a cool solider.' That's the whole antithesis of the vibe that Reed wanted."

Van Dyk pushed to have the Jordan sequences film first, allowing Holbrook to draw on those scenes for the second half of the film that sees Lou back in the United States, struggling with the memories he has from Iraq, plagued by panic attacks.

Holbrook, who signed on to the film only two months before shooting began, thought, "I'm not going to be able to fake a panic attack." He prepped breath work that would "kick in this diaphragm thing," working himself up to the point where it felt like he was having a panic attack, and would sustain. He remembers sustaining what felt like an attack for over two hours, saying, "I got into such a place that I couldn't control what I was physically going through."

Says Van Dyk, "When you have an actor committed in this way, where the body more than the mind is believing the circumstances of the story, my job in that case is to try to move through the scene as quickly as we can and stay out of his way."

Opposite Holbrook is Palestinian actress Hiam Abbass, playing the matriarch of the Khachaturian family, with whom Lou has the climactic meeting. "I wanted to do the actor-y thing and not meet her until Lou met her [in the script]," says Holbrook of trying to avoid Abbass. But they were filming in Jordan at the same time and decided it was best they got to know each other. "I was so happy that I did, because I've got to understand her and her story, so when it came time to do our big scene, we didn't need any rehearsal."

Like in the original *New Yorker* story, *Atonement* builds to the meeting between Lou and the surviving Khachaturians, a potent mix of unrealized emotion and catharsis. *The Hollywood Reporter* review of the film, which premiered in Directors' Fortnight, singled out the scene: "Abbass gives a master class in less-is-more restraint in these scenes, her character's fortitude severely challenged but unbroken by her years of suffering." Meanwhile, Holbrook is "a bundle of exposed nerves as he reckons with his own guilt and with the tremendous weight of grief and anger on the Iraqi family."

Atonement's aim to show an atypical onscreen depiction of war and its aftermath is realized in this moment.

Says Van Dyk: "There's something that was really profound about two people on opposite sides of a war coming together in a living room and, almost in spite of themselves, reaching for each other." THR

"WE SEE SO MANY MONETIZED VERSIONS OF WAR. THIS IS SOMETHING THAT YOU NEVER GET TO SEE."

Boyd Holbrook

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THE GUMSHOE WHO WOULDN'T LEAVE TOWN

Andy Garcia on *Diamond*, his 20-year passion project: a Los Angeles noir starring Dustin Hoffman, Bill Murray and Brendan Fraser that he refused to shoot anywhere but the City of Angels **BY MIA GALUPPO**

Diamond, Andy Garcia's detective story that will bow at the Cannes Film Festival on May 19, is a modern day marvel — a Los Angeles-set film that actually shot in the city. At a time when headlines decry productions fleeing the city, *Diamond*, which filmed everywhere from the Bradbury Building to the Paramour Estate, is a reminder of why the city is sorely missed onscreen.

Set-in modern-day L.A., the film stars Garcia as the titular gumshoe, Joe Diamond, who is a relic from another time, favoring suits to athleisure and is happily at home on a barstool. When he is hired by a wealthy woman (played by Vicky Krieps) whose husband ends up dead in their hilltop mansion, Diamond investigates the case that also leads him to truths about his own mysterious past. Surrounding Diamond is a group supporting characters, like a Chinese food-loving coroner (Dustin Hoffman), a glad-handing DA (Brendan Fraser) and sympathetic bartender (Bill Murray).

Ahead of Cannes, Garcia talked to *THR* about making his modern L.A.-set noir, Bogey's best films and how *Ocean's 11* helped him land his co-star.

Noirs have such a long history in Hollywood but are less prominent now. How did the story come about?

My daughter, who's in the movie, she asked me to help her with her English homework when she was a senior in high school. She said, "Dad, I gotta turn in a paper tomorrow. Will you help me?" And I said, "Well, what's the assignment?" She said it's a little short story and you have to pick a location in Los Angeles. She picked Bob's Big Boy. I said, "Ready?"'And then I started. I improvised this thing while she was typing, I don't know why it came out [as a noir]. It just came out in that format. I started this inner monologue, which is still in the movie. "I woke up to the morning light that had the courage to peek through the thick gray skies. I didn't wake up in my well worn Murphy [bed], but on a bed of ice plants that will forever have my imprint. And I looked up and I saw Bob, a big boy, smiling at me." I improvised this thing while she was typing and I wrote a couple more scenes. She turned in the paper. I think we got a B.

When did you decide it could be something more than a homework assignment?

It just sat on my computer and probably around 2014 is when I started to home in and say, "I want to explore this character." Then I had 60 pages, so I pitched it as a pilot for a television show. Nobody was interested. That's the nature of our business.

***Diamond* filmed at downtown L.A. landmarks, like Angels Flight, Clifton's Cafeteria, the Bradbury Building and The Pantry. You also shot at Cole's, famous for its French dip, after it closed.**

It was announced in the paper that it was closing when we were prepping the movie. It's a major location in the film. I was able to speak with the gentleman who was the owner, Cedd Moses. We had lunch and he read the script. He was accommodating, and we restored the sign. Then they opened for longer, but now they're officially closed, which is a shame. It's iconic to Los Angeles.

Why was it important for you to shoot in Los Angeles?

It's the world he lives in. The period gumshoe detectives, a lot of them were based in Los Angeles. I've been in Los Angeles since 1978 and I have a love of architecture. I've had it all my life. I was always fascinated with Los Angeles in that time period of the '30s and '40s and all these iconic buildings — the California Club and City Hall. I started writing to these places. I had written in the story that he lived above a garage in the eastern part of downtown. A curious thing happened — during the COVID shutdown, Guy Ritchie was doing a movie with Jason Statham [*Wrath of Man*] and they called because they wrote an additional character to the film to do two or three scenes that would tie the story together. I went to work one day on the film with Jason and we just happened to shoot in the place where Diamond lives in the movie. I saw it, and I went, "This is the place." The movie is love letter to the city of Los Angeles. Without those things, it is not the same movie. People would say, "I like the movie. We will finance it. Can you shoot in Atlanta?" I would go, "No, I'm sorry. I can't do it."

How long did you have for filming?

We had 25 days and 52 locations.

Wow.

That's independent filmmaking. It was years in the making, and then weeks to get it done, on a $20 salary.

What was the casting process like on this?

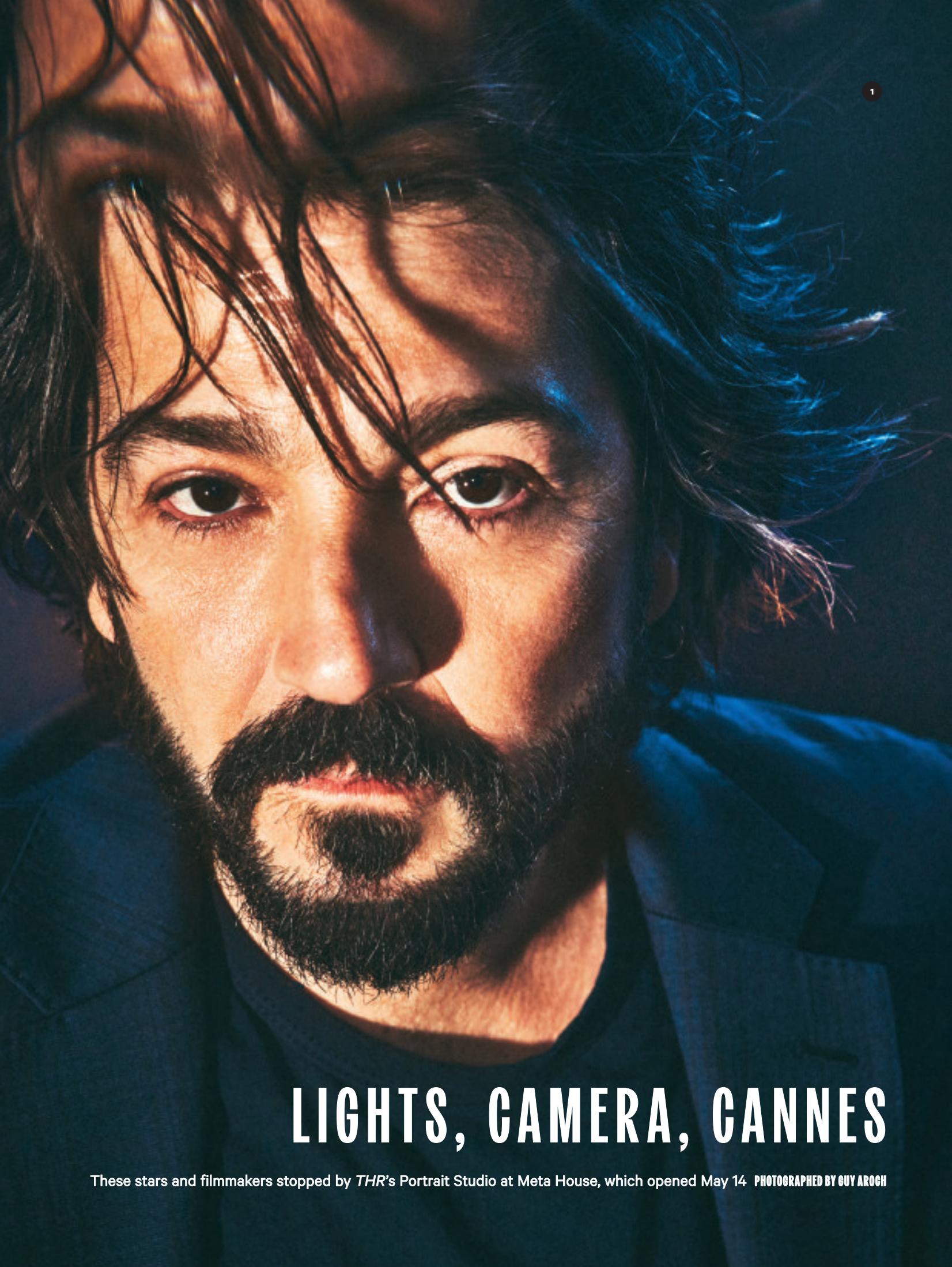
It came together fairly quickly. Relationships are great, but [actors] have to be motivated by the material. Bill Murray is a friend. He said, "Whatever

Below: Andy Garcia as detective Joe Diamond, who prefers to wear a suit and fedora in modern-day L.A.

character, I'll do it." He's a prince in my life. Dustin was the same thing. But the first linchpin that happened was Vicki. I sent the script to Vicki through our mutual agent. A couple of months passed and I didn't hear anything. I kept checking with our agent, and he said, "She's a slow reader. She's distracted. She's got kids." Then out of the blue, she called me. Apparently what happened was she was watching *Ocean's 11* with a girlfriend of hers. The girlfriend said, "Oh, I love this actor. I really like him. You should work with him." She told her, "He sent me a script." She read it that night and then called the next day. With her blessing, everything snowballed. It could have been a difficult part to cast because it could be played in a very cliché way. When I saw Vicki in *Phantom Thread* years ago I said, "That's the character."

After spending 20 years trying to make this movie, how does it feel now getting to take it to Cannes? It's like you've raised a child to the point where it's grown now and you walk it to the intersection. You say, "I love you and I'm proud of you," and you watch it go across the street by itself. You can't make people like it. It's on its own.

Twenty-five years ago, I was developing one of William Saroyan's plays as a screenplay, *The Cave Dwellers*. The play had a 20-page forward where he was interviewed about his creative process. The interviewer asked, "Do you care if your plays are successful?" And he said, "The fact that my place exists is success enough." Francis Coppola always said to me that the mark of a movie that has resonance is how it holds up 25 years later. I saw Francis' movie *Megalopolis*. He had been trying to make that movie for 30 years. What I took away from it was there's no great obstacle that can't be overcome by a dream. To achieve that dream, you have to have discipline and commitment and thick skin. But all the great movies and great art starts with a dream that a person won't let go of. THR



LIGHTS, CAMERA, CANNES

These stars and filmmakers stopped by *THR*'s Portrait Studio at Meta House, which opened May 14 PHOTOGRAPHED BY GUY AROCH

1 Diego Luna directed the migration-themed film *Ashes* (*Ceniza en la Boca*), premiering in the Special Screening section. **2** Jordana Brewster visited Cannes for the 25th anniversary *Fast and the Furious* screening. **3** Will Sharpe co-stars with Stephanie Hsu in the animated coming-of-age movie *In Waves*. **4** Seth Rogen voice stars in *Tangles*, an animated film about dementia that *THR*'s review suggests "will prove cathartic" to many. **5** *Butterfly Jam*'s Riley Keough, whom co-star Barry Keoghan called "incredible" for her "rawness." **6** *Tangles*' Julia Louis-Dreyfus recalled on *THR*'s *Awards Chatter* podcast, recorded live in Cannes, that she met *Seinfeld* creator Larry David while working on *SNL*. "We spent a lot of time happily being miserable together," she said.

THE NIGHT *PAN'S LABYRINTH* CHANGED CANNES FOREVER

Guillermo del Toro returns to the fest with a restored version of his masterpiece — and a message about imagination, fascism and human creativity that has never felt more urgent **BY SCOTT ROXBOROUGH**

When Guillermo del Toro arrived in Cannes with *Pan's Labyrinth* 20 years ago, he was not expecting a triumph. He was expecting to be ignored.

Del Toro's dark, ravishing fantasy set in Francoist Spain — which had taken years to finance and produce, endured a brutal production and emerged from post barely in time — was the last film to screen in competition at that year's festival. "A lot of the press was leaving," del Toro recalls, speaking to *The Hollywood Reporter* in Cannes, where he returned to present a newly restored 4K version of the movie, as the opening film in the festival's Cannes Classics selection. "I was thinking: 'How many people are going to show up for this, on the final day?' Then the screening was packed, packed!"

What followed is now festival legend. The film ended with what del Toro describes as "an explosion of applause that is the largest and most emotional I've ever had in my life" — a standing ovation that ran to 23 minutes, a Cannes record that still stands. "Twenty-three minutes is a commute," del Toro told the audience at the Classics screening on May 12, in the Debussy Theatre. "You know, like the time to go from

From left: Ariadna Gil, Sergi López, an unidentified guest, Guillermo del Toro, Maribel Verdú and 11-year-old Ivana Baquero. Above: Ofelia meets a faun after wandering into the woods.

your office to your house."

He was not prepared for it. "Normally Cannes is very circumspect," he said. "You either get no sound or you get aggressive sound. But rarely do people react to the screen loudly, and then they start reacting. And then it gets more and more emotional." Standing there, receiving the ovation, del Toro found himself unable to take it in. "In spite of my great body, I'm not used to adulation, it's very hard for me to take in love," he told the Cannes audience. "But Alfonso Cuarón was there with me, and he said, 'Let it in. Let the love get in.' "

The journey to that moment had been, by del Toro's account, extraordinarily difficult. "This was the second-worst filmmaking experience of my life," he said at the screening, "the first one being making *Mimic* with the Weinsteins." Preproduction had been a struggle — "nobody wanted to finance it" — and the production itself piled on additional problems. "It was very difficult in preproduction, difficult production, difficult postproduction. Everything." They arrived at Cannes, he said, "basically just in time with the print."

The film they brought was something unlike almost anything else in competition that year. Set in 1944 in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, *Pan's Labyrinth* follows Ofelia, a young girl living with her pregnant mother and her new husband, a brutal Francoist captain played by Sergi López. In the labyrinthine woods near their military outpost, Ofelia encounters a faun who tells her she is a princess from an enchanted world and gives her three dangerous tasks to complete before she can return to it. Del Toro intertwines her magical quests with the real-world underground struggle of the Spanish Republicans, suggesting — as in much of his work — that imagination is a form of resistance.

Ivana Baquero, who played Ofelia, was at the Debussy Theatre for the Cannes Classics screening.

"Ivana was about 10 or 12 when she made the movie," Del Toro notes. "She's now 30. And I was 100 pounds lighter."

Looking back, he sees the 2006 competition — in which Park Chan-wook's *Old Boy* also screened in competition — as a turning point for the festival itself. "*Old Boy* and *Pan's Labyrinth* marked a big shift," he said. "This is early days at Cannes of changing the mentality of the programming from the 10 or 20 directors that normally came to Cannes." He noted that he had been to Cannes before, with *Cronos* in 1992, as had fellow Mexican director Alejandro González Iñárritu with *Amores Perros*, "but always in the sidebar sections, not in competition." *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Old Boy* were the start of Cannes embracing genre-inflected cinema from beyond Europe and the U.S.

The Cannes premiere of *Pan's Labyrinth*, and the momentum it generated, set the film on a path that few could have predicted. It screened next at the New York Film Festival, "another very circumspect festival," and received another standing ovation. Then Toronto. "It was really the beginning of people realizing there was something there," del Toro said.

The film went on to receive six Academy Award nominations, winning three — for best cinematography, best art direction and best makeup. Made for under $20 million, it went on to gross $83 million worldwide.

Returning to the film for its 20th anniversary, del Toro found it still held up.

"I was quite taken about how beautifully physical the movie is," he said. "Back then, just as we did with *Frankenstein*, I was determined that every set was going to be built. We were going to handmake this movie. We did not shoot on location except for the forest. We built every set, every prop, built every piece of furniture. I wanted it to be, as much as possible, something fabricated. Because there was a sense of design to create a juxtaposition between the imaginary world and the round, warm colors and the cool, straight lines of the captain's world." Seeing it again, he said, "I was very impacted, just feeling how the craftsmanship is beautiful."

That includes the film's at-the-time groundbreaking blend of animatronics, with in-camera and digital visual effects. Del Toro has left them all untouched.

"The only film where I feel I did an effect that failed was on *Blade II*. There's a digital shot in there that's bad, and it will always be bad, because it was not well conceived and it was too ambitious. But there's nothing I would change in *Pan's Labyrinth*."

The new restoration will release theatrically in the United States via Cineverse and Fathom Entertainment. StudioCanal acquired international rights to the film and will release the restored version theatrically in key territories — Germany, the U.K., France, Benelux, Australia — this autumn, followed by premium Collector's Editions in those markets. Mexican exhibitor Cinépolis will lead theatrical distribution in Mexico and across Latin America. StudioCanal is handling international sales rights for the restored version.

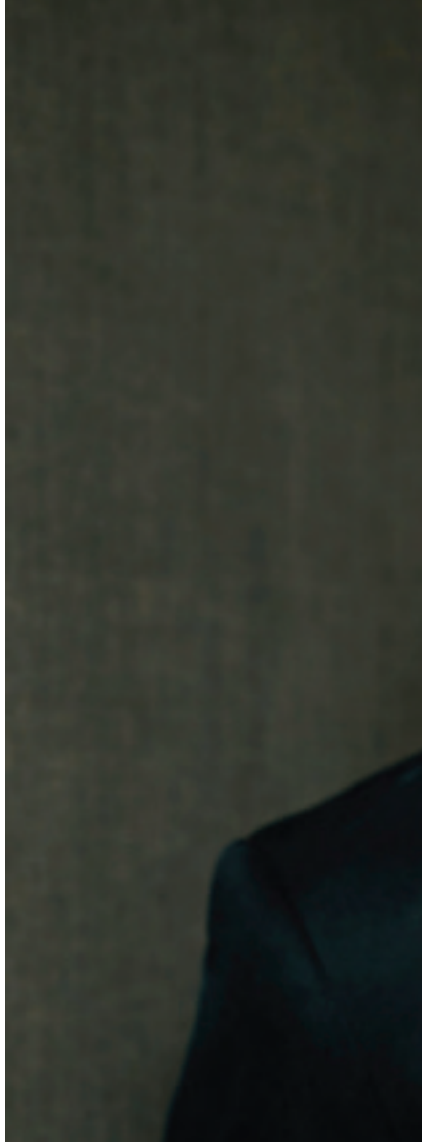
Continued on page 39

Del Toro on the set of *Pan's Labyrinth*.

THE MAN WHO PLAYS MONSTERS

Lars Eidinger on why he keeps saying yes to Nazis, what Klaus Barbie taught him about empathy and how he ended up as the villain in James Gunn's *Superman* sequel

BY SCOTT ROXBOROUGH



The world is about to see a lot more of Lars Eidinger. The German actor is a towering leading man in his own country, whether onstage, were he is a member of the ensemble of Berlin's Schaubühne theatre, or screen, from playing an introverted husband in a toxic relationship in Maren Ade's *Everyone Else* (2009) to, in Matthias Glasner's *Dying* (2024), the most turbulent conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic since Cate Blanchett's Lydia Tár. And he has skirted around the outskirts of international scene. He was the boyfriend of Kristen Stewart's celebrity employer in Olivier Assayas' *Personal Shopper* (2016), played the main Nazi baddie in Netflix limited series *All The Light We Cannot See* (2023) and, last year, was the crazed purse thief chased down by George Clooney in Noah Baumbach's *Jay Kelly*.

But soon the 50-year-old character actor will be joining the DCU and plotting to conquer and collect the world as Brainiac, the villain of James Gunn's *Superman* sequel *Man of Tomorrow*.

Before that, Cannes is getting a double dose of Lars. He has two films in the festival this year. He plays Klaus Barbie — the infamous "Butcher of Lyon" — in László Nemes' World War II drama *Moulin*, screening in competition, and is an architect who collaborates with both the Nazi and East German communist regimes in Volker Schlöndorff's sweeping historic drama *Visitation*, playing as an out-of-competition Cannes Premiere.

Eidinger likely won't make it to the Croisette this year — his DCU duties mean he'll be shooting in the U.S. during the festival — but speaking to *The Hollywood Reporter*, he reflected on playing everyone from Nazi war criminals to comic-book supervillains, and why he's drawn to characters who force audiences to confront the uncomfortable parts of themselves.

Why did you say yes to the role of Klaus Barbie in *Moulin*?

Lars Eidinger (right) as Klaus Barbie in László Nemes' *Moulin*.

It's almost like being asked to play Hitler.

Well, honestly, it was the person Klaus Barbie himself who drew me in. I probably wouldn't have said yes if it had been yet another fictional Nazi character. I never used to understand why actors would categorically refuse to play Nazis, because I always assumed those were attractive, complex roles. But then my most recent one — which I told myself that would be my last Nazi role, the last wartime role — was *Persian Lessons*. That experience was extreme — I came face to face with my own demons. My father was born during the war; my grandfather fought in it. I was raised by those people. I grew up with them, and that has a very direct influence on my personality, my character — it's always present in my life.

After that film, I realized I'd rather free myself from that, and stop returning to that trauma again and again. Because it is a trauma that Germans carry around with them — the Second World War, the Shoah, the Holocaust. Then came a film with Shawn Levy, *All the Lights We Cannot See*. And I was drawn back in, because colleagues like Mark Ruffalo were involved, the fact that it was American, and Shawn Levy made it interesting. But I told myself: absolutely the last time.

Then came the call from László Nemes. I thought back to *Son of Saul* — a very good film and a very skillful use of the device of telling the story of a concentration camp through the perspective of one person, essentially through the protagonist's face.

I thought, "László Nemes is surely an interesting interlocutor for engaging with this subject one more time." And as for Klaus Barbie specifically — you're absolutely right, he occupies an extreme place; there's almost no one who doesn't know that name. That's what drew me: to engage with this character. And especially with the history surrounding him — not in the film, but what I find so fascinating: how he was dealt with after the war, how long he remained active, that he even worked for the Americans and ended up involved in the drug trade. As a biography, that's quite staggering and very revealing about an era. That's really what wakes my interest: when something documents a period, captures what defined a time.

Do you find empathy for all characters you play — even someone who seems like a monster?
Of course, my goal as an actor is to feel empathy for the character — empathy in the sense that I understand, that I try to inhabit the character's logic and perspective. My method is to start by gathering as much material as possible. With Klaus Barbie, that's possible — you can watch how he spoke, how others described him. There's Max Ophüls' magnificent documentary *Hotel Terminus* (1988), where survivors recount their experiences with him.

I took all of that in, and then at a certain point I set it aside and just worked from the text, the script. Experience has taught me that too much imitation can paralyze you. I try to be freer, to treat it as fiction again. The interpretation of Klaus Barbie in *Moulin* differs from the original. The historical Barbie is described as very sadistic, physically aggressive — someone who enters a room and strikes people on the head, leaving them unconscious during interrogations. They often couldn't even recall afterward what they'd said, because the torture had rendered them senseless. That violence, that physical violence, essentially doesn't appear in our film. That's a deliberate choice — I discussed it with László, and I was uncertain at first whether it was right. But what it underscores is that we are dealing with fiction.

And there's a tension there: The film always flirts with the temptation for the viewer to walk out and think, "That's how it was." That's what the film plays with. That's the great responsibility you carry, and the great danger — that you partly falsify history, because the viewer always thinks they now know how it was. You watch *Downfall* (2004), and leave the cinema believing you know what happened in [Hitler's] bunker. Which is, in a certain sense, fatal. You have to keep that responsibility in mind as an actor.

Your other Cannes role is *Visitation,* which also features someone who functions within an authoritarian system: an architect, an artist, whose choices make him complicit, first with the Nazi regime, then with the dictatorship in East Germany. Was that the draw?
Yes, exactly — the theme is actually very comparable. In that film, and in the source novel, the architect's wife [played by Susanne Wolff] is more critical, while my character initially functions very well within the system. That was very important to me, because in hindsight it's always easy to say you would have resisted, you would have distanced yourself. But from within the system, from within the time itself, it's often not that simple.

I can equally imagine that generations following ours will distance themselves from certain behaviors — capitalism, for instance, has its dark sides that we often ignore, we function within the system knowing full well how much injustice it entails.

When I say I play a character with empathy, I mean I want to bring the audience into the same conflict the character is in, and also feel which parts of themselves they share with these figures. The greatest danger in art and filmmaking is holding it at arm's length, observing from a safe distance. My great ambition is always to engage with these figures — to sound the notes I share with them, to put myself in relation to them rather than distancing myself. To be genuinely empathetic.

You don't seem interested in being liked. You consistently choose roles that aren't designed to win over an audience. Is provocation part of the aim?
I believe the figure of the classic hero is actually a far less realistic figure — it's a pure fiction. And you engage with it differently, because the hero creates distance: You feel you can't identify, you look up to this figure.

There's a quote from Charles Manson — the serial killer — who said: "Look down at me and you see a fool, look up at me and you see a god, look straight at me and you see yourself." Obviously, it's always a little piquant to quote a serial killer — but the thought itself is interesting: You recognize yourself in the figure. And that's the highest ambition of art: to confront people with themselves. Being liked isn't really a criterion. I pursue figures — or they pursue me — that I feel bring out certain parts of myself, and of the viewer, that perhaps they weren't consciously aware

Continued on page 39

Aston Martin Goes All in on Hollywood-izing F1

As race car drivers hit the Cannes red carpet and Brad Pitt's blockbuster crosses $600 million, Aston Martin insiders explain how Formula One became the glitziest sport in the world

BY LILY FORD

Within 48 hours of this year's Cannes Film Festival launch, two Formula One drivers were revving up the Palais carpet.

Carlos Sainz and Charles Leclerc — once teammates at Ferrari, now just gridmates following the Spaniard's move to Williams — had photographers in a frenzy as they appeared with their respective partners at festival galas. They had scored an invite to the fest through being global ambassadors at L'Oréal, but the truth is that Cannes, as its position as the world's leading hub for international cinema slips, is desperate for a slice of the F1 pie.

Since *Drive to Survive* resurrected the sport in 2018, the fan base has grown by over 68 percent globally. "The F1 river has truly burst its banks," says Rob Bloom, chief marketing officer at Aston Martin, the fastest-growing team on the grid. "It's everywhere."

The rapidity of F1's growth cannot be overstated. Bloom's declaration is backed up by the stats: In 2025, 1.83 billion people watched F1, per Nielsen, up 6.8 percent from 2024. Over 43 percent of fans are now under the age of 35, with female representation rising to 42 percent, and at Aston Martin Aramco Formula One Team, fronted by drivers Lance Stroll and Fernando Alonso, they're tallying a 30 to 40 percent year-on-year growth.

But it's no longer on-track performance that determines the success of an F1 team. What sets Aston Martin apart is its discovery of the power of fan engagement, commercial partnerships and — as Brad Pitt and the producers on the $630 billion box office hit *F1: The Movie* recognized — the Hollywood-ization of F1.


Bloom


Peddie


Slack

"For years, Hollywood has honed its recipe, a recipe built on key ingredients," begins Aston Martin's executive creative director Stu Peddie. There's the star power — in this case, the 22 best drivers in the world — he says, and the gripping story. The sport has cinema's immersive world-building: It takes us to 24 races around the globe every year, from Mexico City to Singapore, Monaco to Melbourne. It also, continues Peddie, has the platform potential and the ability to create an entire ecosystem of creative assets and experiences around a race or team. "If you think about Hollywood," says Peddie, "it thrives because there are multiple storylines. Formula One is the same."

It's no secret that F1 is now as Hollywood as it's ever been. At May 3's Miami Grand Prix alone, among some of the high-profile names to have appeared trackside are Jimmy Fallon, Chase Infiniti, Patrick Dempsey, Chance the Rapper, Jamie Foxx, Colin Farrell, DJ Khaled and Lupita Nyong'o. "Every Grand Prix now feels like a major cultural event — almost like a Super Bowl weekend," notes Jefferson Slack, managing director for commercial at Aston Martin.

"It attracts actors, musicians, athletes and global brands who want to be part of that atmosphere. Some are genuine fans of the sport, while others recognize that F1 has become one of the biggest global platforms for audiences, hospitality and brand exposure. We've also seen it work the other way, too," he continues, "with drivers increasingly appearing in culturally relevant spaces such as film premieres, fashion events and things like the Met Gala."

Despite what some might think, Sainz and Leclerc's Cannes call-ins made perfect sense. It reflects, Slack says, how F1 has solidified its place at the intersection of sport, entertainment and popular culture.

With such a wealth of star power at their fingertips, the commercial and marketing branch of Aston Martin understood immediately what could be gained by investment in brand partnerships, fan activations and targeted audience


Fernando Alonso fans at the stage ahead of the F1 Grand Prix of Australia at Albert Park Grand Prix Circuit on March 7 in Melbourne, Australia.

Left: Alexandra and Charles Leclerc attend the *La Vie D'Une Femme* screening in Cannes on May 13. Above: Rebecca Donaldson and Carlos Sainz Jr. at Hôtel Martinez on May 12.

outreach. Now, Hollywood is no longer just an influence on F1 — it's part of the framework. "We have deliberately positioned ourselves as less like a traditional racing team and more like a modern entertainment and luxury lifestyle franchise," Slack tells *THR*.

Some great examples of this include merchandise collaborations with The Rolling Stones and Disney's *Toy Story* ahead of the franchise's fifth installment releasing this summer. Aston Martin was the first team on the grid to boast an official skin care partner, Elemis, and its extension beyond motorsport into the broader cultural and luxury ecosystem has landed team-ups with Swiss watch empire Breitling, sports juggernaut Puma and energy drink company Celsius. "Take our South Beach pop-up at the Miami Grand Prix," says Bloom. "It was about creating opportunities for people to engage with our team and sport in different ways, creating experiences that leaned into fans' other interests, from Pilates to HIIT classes with the team. Or the Celsius run club in Miami," he adds. "That activation wasn't about people setting personal bests in a 5K. It was about community: bringing 2,000 people together for a shared experience, united by a shared interest around Formula One."

It's a method Hollywood has had no choice but to latch onto. Take *The Devil Wears Prada 2*, which has accrued a cool $440 million global box office tally so far, no doubt bolstered by the film's collabs with the likes of Diet Coke, Starbucks, Samsung Galaxy, Lancôme, TreSemmé, Havaianas, Grey Goose, Google, Mercedes-Benz, Tiffany & Co. and Dior. *Barbie* and *Wicked* followed a similar blueprint, which helped unearth the lucrative effects of dialing into your female audience.

"With [F1's] growth has come an entirely new demographic of fan — particularly in the U.S. — with a younger, female audience. Formula One is so much richer for that," says Bloom. At Aston Martin, they've made role models out of driver ambassador and head of F1 Academy Jessica Hawkins, as well as F1 Academy driver Mathilda Paatz.

Says Peddie: "If we look ahead five years, what we really want is for younger female fans entering the sport to see Aston Martin Aramco as the team they naturally gravitate toward. At the same time, we'll absolutely continue serving long-standing traditional fans, too. Ultimately, we want everyone to feel like there's a place for them in this sport."

And so exists yet another commonality between Hollywood and F1: The urgency of inclusion. F1, once considered an exclusive boys' club, is undergoing something of a transformation regarding its access and outreach, with teams increasingly aware of the need for gender parity off-track. At Aramco's livery takeover at the 2025 US Grand Prix, Aston Martin called the campaign The Science Inside and covered the car in aerodynamic equations and engineering formulas. "Rather than solely focusing on the car's visual identity, we wanted to build a meaningful program designed to help inspire the next generation into careers in STEM and motorsport," says Bloom.

If F1 is the all-encompassing world of film and TV, its drivers are the A-list stars, its technical squads the talented production crews, and, instead of a billion-dollar tentpole release once a year, it's a momentous, narratively rich, and shockingly dramatic event every other weekend. There are the franchise spinoffs, the merch drops, the celebrity cameos, the brand deals and — most importantly — an ever-expanding crowd at the box office. And the teams? They're all for it. Adds Bloom: "The Hollywood-ization of the sport has huge power to continue to inspire this generation." THR

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SCREENING GUIDE


A Girl's Story

SUNDAY
May 17

8:15 ***La Gradiva*** (145 mins.), Miramar, mk2 Films

8:30 ***Forever Your Maternal Animal*** (105 mins.), Debussy, Heretic

8:30 ***Paper Tiger*** (115 mins.), Lumière, Goodfellas

8:45 ***Dora*** Theatre Croisette, Finecut Co. Ltd.

9:00 ***1242: Gateway to the West*** (110 mins.), Arcades 3 Online, Galloping Entertainment

9:00 ***Just an Illusion*** (114 mins.), Arcades 1, Gaumont

9:00 ***Maverick: The Epic Adventures of David Lean*** (106 mins.), Olympia 4, Embankment Films Ltd

9:00 ***Orange-Flavoured Wedding*** (115 mins.), Olympia 9, Pyramide International

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

9:00 ***Titanic Ocean*** Palais J, Paradise City Sales (Ex Memento International)

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

9:30 ***Atonement*** Arcades 2, Goodfellas

9:30 ***Nuisance Bear*** (90 mins.), Olympia 3, The Match Factory

9:30 ***Hot Water*** (97 mins.), Riviera 1, Films Boutique

10:00 ***Docs-in-Progress — Palestine Showcase 2026*** (75 mins.), Lérins 1, Cannes Docs — Marché du Film

10:00 ***The Best Summer*** (84 mins.), Olympia 6, Visit Films

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

10:00 ***Annecy Animation Showcase 2026*** (43 mins.), Palais K, Festival International du Film d'Animation d'Annecy (Citia)

10:30 ***A Girl's Story*** Agnès Varda, Paradise City Sales (Ex Memento International)

11:00 ***All the Lovers in the Night*** (139 mins.), Debussy, Bitters End, Inc.

11:00 ***Everybody to Kenmure Street*** (98 mins.), Online #1, The Party Film Sales

11:30 ***Shana*** (84 mins.), Arcades 1, Les Films du Losange

11:30 ***Wild Is the Wind*** (105 mins.), Arcades 3, Media Art

11:30 ***Micro Star*** (86 mins.), Lérins 2 Online, Cinéfrance

11:30 ***Brazilian Lineup*** (32 mins.), Lérins 2, Ministry of Culture of

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Don‘t always read from left to right. From Sept 16 til Sept 20.

oldenburg FILMFESTIVAL

Brasil

11:30 ***The Beloved*** (135 mins.), Lumière, Goodfellas

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

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

11:30 ***Redemptions*** (110 mins.), Olympia 4, Cinéfrance

11:30 ***Their Town*** (80 mins.), Olympia 7, Visit Films

11:30 ***Ben'Imana*** (100 mins.), Olympia 9, mk2 Films

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

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

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

11:30 ***Another Man*** (90 mins.), Palais B, Filmax (Castelao Pictures)

11:30 ***Such a Long Letter*** Palais D, Agence Culturelle Africaine

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

11:30 ***A Girl's Story*** Palais J, Paradise City Sales (Ex Memento International)

11:30 ***Soumsoum, the Night of the Stars*** (101 mins.), Riviera 2, Films Boutique

11:45 ***Docs-in-Progress — Spain Showcase 2026,*** (75 mins.), Lérins 1, Cannes Docs — Marché du Film

12:00 ***Butterfly Jam*** Arcades 2, Goodfellas

12:00 ***Pitches Without Borders*** (120 mins.), Lérins 3, Maison des Scenaristes

12:00 ***Tin Castle*** (105 mins.), Olympia 3 Online, Films Boutique

12:00 ***Molière, Cyrano and the Young King*** (120 mins.), Olympia 2, Ginger & Fed

12:00 ***All About Corinne*** (113 mins.), Olympia 3, Indie Sales


Sheep in a Box

12:00 ***Shana*** (84 mins.), Olympia 6, Les Films du Losange

12:00 ***We Are Aliens*** (111 mins.), Olympia 8, Charades

12:00 ***Emergency Exit*** (96 mins.), Palais E Online, Media Art

12:00 ***Against All Counsel And The Warrioress*** (51 mins.), Palais G Online, Imppa-Indian Motion Picture Producers Association

12:00 ***Africa International Film Festival Goes to Cannes*** (48 mins.), Palais K Online, Africa International Film Festival (AFRIFF)

12:00 ***The Last Concert*** (90 mins.), Palais C, Other Angle Pictures

12:00 ***Living Twice, Dying Thrice*** (103 mins.), Palais E, Arthood Entertainment GmbH

12:00 ***Joseph's Son*** (90 mins.), Palais G, National Film Development Corporation / NFDC India (Ltd)

12:00 ***Fantastic 7 — 2026*** (48 mins.), Palais K, Fundacio Sitges Festival Internacional de Cinema de Catalunya

12:00 ***Love Fits Everything*** (102 mins.), Riviera 1 Online, Piperplay

12:00 ***Tatti, Land of Dreams*** (91 mins.), Riviera 1, Innovative Eye

12:15 ***Too Many Beasts*** (95 mins.), Theatre Croisette, Playtime

12:45 ***Sheep in the Box*** (126 mins.), Agnès Varda, Goodfellas

13:00 ***Dudley & the Invasion of the Space Slugs*** (85 mins.), Lérins Cinema Club, All Rights Entertainment (France)

13:30 ***Savage Mountain*** (100 mins.), Arcades 3, Submarine Entertainment

13:30 ***Monkey Quest*** (92 mins.), Olympia 1, Charades

13:30 ***Perfect*** (94 mins.), Olympia 4, Visit Films

13:30 ***Stand Up*** (92 mins.), Olympia 9, Loco Films

13:30 ***A Million Yard Stare*** (89 mins.), Palais #B Online, Webfilmland Productions

13:30 ***5 Edges of Safety*** (75 mins.), Palais D Online, OCG Plus (Uzbekistan)

13:30 ***She Dances*** (93 mins.), Palais F Online, Pinnacle Peak Pictures

13:30 ***Melpomene*** (126 mins.), Palais B, Marignan Films

13:30 ***Connected*** (108 mins.), Palais D, Palm Tree Universal

13:30 ***The Complete Howard French Course*** (110 mins.), Palais H, California Pictures

13:30 ***Daniel*** (120 mins.), Riviera 2, Pinnacle Peak Pictures

14:00 ***Rehearsals for a Revolution*** (95 mins.), Arcades 2, The Party Film Sales

14:00 ***I'll Be Gone in June,*** (122 mins.), Debussy, Luxbox

14:00 ***The Train*** (91 mins.), Lérins 1 Online, Westside Studios

14:00 ***Aqui*** (200 mins.), Lérins 1, Films Boutique

14:00 ***Melody for a Bear*** Olympia 2, Pathé Films

14:00 ***The Blood of Naples. San Gennaro's Miracle*** (93 mins.), Olympia 3, Nexo Studios

14:00 ***She Keeps Me Young*** (91 mins.), Olympia 6, Visit Films

14:00 ***Forever Your Maternal Animal*** (105 mins.), Olympia 8, Heretic

14:00 ***Khoonta*** (123 mins.), Palais E Online, Indywood Distribution Network

14:00 ***Detention*** (132 mins.), Palais C, Acid

14:00 ***Don't Give Up*** (105 mins.), Palais I, Kinokult

14:15 ***Co-Pro Social Club — Public Presentation*** Palais K, Cannes Docs — Marché du Film

14:30 ***Rendez-Vous With Cate Blanchett*** Bunuel, Festival de Cannes

15:00 ***Moulin*** (120 mins.), Lumière, 193

15:15 ***Sierra de Teruel*** Agnès Varda, Cannes Classics

15:15 ***Double Freedom*** (100 mins.), Theatre Croisette, Luxbox

15:45 ***Everytime*** (119 mins.), Arcades 3, Charades

15:45 ***Pacific*** Lérins 2 Online, Filmsharks / The Remake Co.

15:45 ***Orange-Flavoured Wedding*** (115 mins.), Olympia 4 Online, Pyramide International

15:45 ***Congo Boy*** (110 mins.), Olympia 5 Online, The Party Film Sales

15:45 ***All of a Sudden,*** (195 mins.), Olympia 1, Cinéfrance

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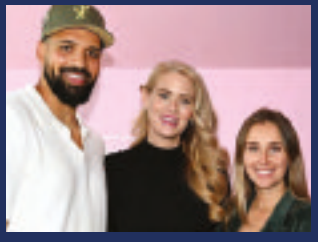

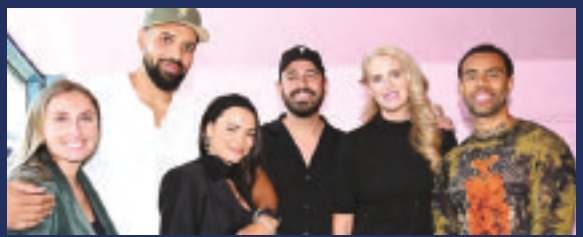

15:45 ***Second Chances*** (109 mins.), Olympia 4, Le Pacte
15:45 ***Micro Star*** (86 mins.), Olympia 7, Cinéfrance
15:45 ***Mu Yi*** Olympia 9, mk2 Films
15:45 ***A Son*** (100 mins.), Palais B, Filmax (Castelao Pictures)
15:45 ***Amazomania*** (93 mins.), Palais F, Autlook Filmsales
15:45 ***The Spin*** (90 mins.), Palais H, California Pictures
15:45 ***Zombucha!*** (110 mins.), Palais J, Cross Border Films
15:45 ***Asherah: A Love Odyssey*** (70 mins.), Riviera 2, Q2 Films
16:00 ***Seance Speciale Courts*** (84 mins.), Miramar, Semaine de la Critique
16:15 ***Rays and Shadows*** (195 mins.), Arcades 2, Gaumont
16:15 ***Viva*** (112 mins.), Olympia 2 Online, Loco Films
16:15 ***Ashes*** (98 mins.), Olympia 3, Luxbox
16:15 ***The Sausage Dog*** (97 mins.), Olympia 6, France TV Distribution
16:15 ***Chrysalis*** (130 mins.), Palais E Online, Agence Culturelle Africaine
16:15 ***Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Forum Goes To Cannes*** (36 mins.), Palais K Online, Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Forum
16:15 ***Become Awesome*** (90 mins.), Palais E, Other Angle Pictures
16:15 ***Frontieres Buyers Showcase 2026*** (57 mins.), Palais K, Frontières Market / Fantasia International Film Festival
16:30 ***The Dull-Ice Flower*** (100 mins.), Bunuel, Cannes Classics
16:30 ***Promised Spaces*** (75 mins.), Palais C, Luminalia
17:45 ***The Lock In*** (116 mins.), Arcades 3 Online, Galloping Entertainment


Jim Queen

17:45 ***Post Truth*** (102 mins.), Olympia 4 Online, Odin's Eye Entertainment
17:45 ***Marie-Madeleine*** (104 mins.), Olympia 7 Online, Pyramide International
17:45 ***September 21*** (122 mins.), Palais D Online, Imppa-Indian Motion Picture Producers Association
17:45 ***Fugitive From Asteron*** (133 mins.), Palais F Online, House of Film
17:45 ***Alterity*** (93 mins.), Palais J Online, TriCoast Worldwide
17:45 ***The Victors*** (97 mins.), Palais B, Buenos Aires Film Commission
17:45 ***The Broken Cross*** (120 mins.), Palais D, Chrysea
17:45 ***RJ Bastar*** (139 mins.), Palais F, Imppa-Indian Motion Picture Producers Association
17:45 ***Cheaters Welcome*** (80 mins.), Palais H, Megafilm Ltd.
18:00 ***The Blow*** (104 mins.), Arcades 3, Charades
18:00 ***Dora*** Theatre Croisette, Finecut Co. Ltd.
18:15 ***Under a Bad Star*** (125 mins.), Olympia 3 Online, Urban Sales
18:15 ***The Best Summer*** (84 mins.), Olympia 8 Online, Visit Films
18:15 ***Fate*** (85 mins.), Olympia 6, Kyrgyz Cinema
18:15 ***Douyin Future Directors Program*** (110 mins.), Palais I, China Film Foundation-Wutianming Film Fund for Young Talents
18:15 ***Madame*** Palais K, mk2 Films
18:30 ***Another Day*** (120 mins.), Lumière, StudioCanal (Fr)
18:45 ***Avedon*** Agnès Varda, Festival de Cannes
19:00 ***Maverick — The Epic Adventures of David Lean*** (105 mins.), Bunuel, Cannes Classics
19:00 ***The Station*** (112 mins.), Miramar, Paradise City Sales (Ex Memento International)
19:15 ***When the Night Falls*** (90 mins.), Debussy, SND — Groupe M6
20:00 ***Vysotsky. Unknown ... A True Story.*** (180 mins.), Arcades 3 Online, Apollo Film Production
20:00 ***Rewind Barcelona*** (86 mins.), Arcades 1, Celluloid Dreams
20:00 ***Paper Tiger*** Olympia 1, Goodfellas
20:00 ***Last Chance Motel*** Olympia 4, Studio Dome
20:00 ***Where Talent Ignites — Audiovisual From Spain*** (30 mins.), Olympia 5, The Connector
20:00 ***Sheep in the Box*** (126 mins.), Palais K, Goodfellas
20:30 ***Rewind Barcelona*** (86 mins.), Arcades 2, Celluloid Dreams
21:00 ***Heimsuchung*** (118 mins.), Agnès Varda, StudioCanal (Fr)
21:15 ***Too Many Beasts*** (95 mins.), Theatre Croisette, Playtime
21:30 ***Hope*** (160 mins.), Lumière, Plus M Entertainment
22:30 ***Double Freedom*** (100 mins.), Arcades 1, Luxbox
22:30 ***The Beloved*** (135 mins.), Olympia 1, Goodfellas
22:30 ***Paper Tiger*** (115 mins.), Palais K, Goodfellas
12:30 ***Jim Queen*** (84 mins.), Lumière, Global Constellation

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REVIEWS

Paper Tiger

Adam Driver, Scarlett Johansson and Miles Teller headline James Gray's haunting, at times operatically intense drama about a Queens family's brush with the Russian mob **By David Rooney**

"Let there be wealth without tears; enough for the wise man who will ask no further." It's fitting that the Aeschylus quote on the opening of James Gray's riveting *Paper Tiger* evokes Greek tragedy. In this piercing account of the American dream in tatters, the magnitude of that dimension feels appropriate, echoing the currents of betrayal, fear and death that course through the film like rivulets of blood. Calling it a sequel would be reductive, but the haunting drama is a companion piece to Gray's 2022 film, *Armageddon Time*, again rooted in the director's childhood. But it's closer both thematically and tonally to his brooding 1994 debut feature, *Little Odessa*.

That lends Gray's ninth, arguably best film a gratifying full-circle symmetry. The director has often mined personal history for inspiration — the Vanessa Redgrave character dying of a brain tumor in *Little Odessa*, just as Gray's mother did; the passage of his émigré grandparents through Ellis Island, which informed parts of *The Immigrant*; his own bittersweet coming of age, when his eyes were opened to prejudice and inequality in *Armageddon Time*.

The director mines his family's own history in this sequel of sorts to his 2022 film *Armageddon Time*.

Paper Tiger is fundamentally a crime thriller, clearly adopting a free hand with fictionalization. But it's just as much a domestic drama that plucks elements from Gray's childhood, casting Scarlett Johansson and Miles Teller as his parents Hester and Irwin, variations on Esther and Irving, the roles played by Anne Hathaway and Jeremy Strong in *Armageddon Time*.

Initial plans were for Hathaway and Strong to reprise those parts, but when scheduling conflicts caused both actors to drop out, Gray decided to take the project in a more heightened direction. It became a melodrama — the good kind, fueled by raw emotional power, not the artificial kind that traffics in overwrought audience manipulation — with a dark, burdened heart.

Gray and his older brother are again represented, this time as Scott (Gavin Goudey), about to turn 18 and go to college, and Ben (Roman Engel), the younger brother he picks on. They worship their Uncle Gary (Adam Driver), a former cop who is everything their engineering nerd dad is not. Gary drives a fancy car, wears sharp suits and, coolest of all, packs a gun in an ankle holster.

It's not a big leap to imagine Gary getting into some shady business dealings, even if his record on the force was clean and he has remained in good standing with bureau chief Bob (Patrick Murney), who can occasionally be tapped for useful information.

A century earlier, Brooklyn's Gowanus Canal was among the world's most polluted waterways, befouling the entire Eastern Seaboard with tons of toxic waste. Even in 1986, the eye-watering stench of the murky waters remained. Irwin at first scoffs at the idea that the decaying industrial area could be gentrified. But Gary — who is considered in the family to have the Midas touch with business deals — persuades Irwin to hear him out on a proposed partnership.

Downplaying the fact that he's in talks with the Russian mob to nail a lucrative contract, Gary whisks Irwin to Gowanus to see their supposed cleanup operation and meet the thuggish type in charge, Alexei (Yavor Vesselinov). The Russians are looking for a way to get around city regulations,

so Gary attempts to convince them they need his connections and his brother's engineering know-how, proposing a consulting agreement. Despite being told by Gary to let him do the talking, Irwin starts asking questions, making Alexei prickly.

This is Driver's best role in some time. Gary is a calculated charmer adored by his brother's family; anytime he visits their modest suburban home in Queens feels like an occasion. But he's also selective about sharing the truth, counting on Irwin's lack of street smarts by reassuring him that the Russians are paper tigers, far less threatening than they appear.

Like an expert salesman, he convinces Irwin that a financial windfall is right at their fingertips. He shrugs off his brother's concern about where all that industrial sludge will go by saying their involvement will be purely in an advisory capacity; it's up to the Russians what they do with the information he and Irwin provide.

In a harrowing sequence that dials the churning dread up, Irwin drives the boys over to Brooklyn one night, against their frazzled mother's wishes, to show them Uncle Gary's get-rich-quick scheme. He leaves his sons in the car as he steps out to inform the workers of a safety hazard, which turns Alexei and his goons violent. While Irwin is getting smacked around, two mobsters terrorize the boys in the car before kicking them out and driving off. The most chilling moment is when Alexei after looking at Irwin's papers says, "So now we know where you live."

We are in prime James Gray territory as Irwin wrestles with the instinct to call the cops, he and the completely freaked-out boys opt to keep the incident from Hester, and tensions escalate between him and Gary. It's gripping stuff, directed with unerring tonal control and blanketed in ominous storm clouds by Christopher Spelman's magnificently unsettling, full-bodied score, mixed in with the occasional bit of lugubrious Russian choral music.

While Gary is pissed at his brother for sticking his nose in and ruffling the Russians' feathers, he's cocky enough to believe he can saunter in and fix things with a few calming words. But that's not how mob boss Semion Bogoyavich (Victor Ptak), who controls a vast criminal network, operates. The Russians regard Irwin's unannounced visit as a grave breach of trust, setting a hefty price to make the problem go away.

The spiral of menace is breathtaking as Gary continues to dig them in deeper with his misplaced confidence and reckless moves, and a bone-chilling warning left in the dead of night forces Irwin to bring Hester up to date. Johansson has never been better, as Hester is simultaneously gripped by rage and blood-curdling fear when she learns of the danger to which Irwin exposed their sons.

Teller also expands his range in an affecting performance that sees Irwin struggling with regret, self-castigation, disillusionment with the brother he has always admired and stone-cold terror for the fate of his family.

Meanwhile, Hester has been privately dealing with mental lapses and throbbing headaches, refraining from telling her family about the medical tests her doctor ordered. Nor does she tell her good-natured meddler of a mother (Cindy Katz), who's forever nudging them to get out of the city and move to Great Neck. Johansson plays her with a tough edge to match her Queens accent, but Hester is clearly petrified by this perfect storm of ugly events.

In a movie that's almost operatic in its cymbal clashes of violence, its agonizing tensions and vicious threats, the heart-stopping scene in which Hester receives her diagnosis at the doctor's office is perhaps the single most devastating moment. It's a shock even though it's been amply foreshadowed.

There's no shortage of other dramatic crests, among them a climactic shoot-out in a cornfield that's a model of steadily mounting suspense.

Paper Tiger is a great-looking movie — cinematographer Joaquin Baca-Asay slathers on the dark, gritty textures while never stepping too far into noir-ish stylization. And editor Scott Morris delivers a cut of just under two hours that nonetheless breathes like an epic. While the obvious antecedents outside of Gray's own body of work might be Coppola or Lumet or Scorsese or Mann, I kept thinking while watching of the early crime films of Akira Kurosawa.

Gray and his cast are in blazing form here in a bruising movie that reveals the price of pursuing the American dream too recklessly, instead of heeding Aeschylus' words. The Reagan era now seems a precise point on the country's timeline when wealth became an obsession, no longer just a goal.

Competition
CAST Adam Driver, Scarlett Johansson, Miles Teller, Roman Engel, Gavin Goudey, Cindy Katz
DIRECTOR James Gray
1 hour 55 minutes

The Beloved

Javier Bardem carries the latest feature from Spanish director Rodrigo Sorogoyen, a tense but overly familiar chronicle of a movie shoot that flies off the rails

By Jordan Mintzer

Films about filmmaking often seem destined for film lovers only, to the detriment of everyone else. There are of course some great exceptions to that rule, such as Truffaut's *Day for Night*, Fellini's *8 ½* and Godard's *Contempt* — or, this past year, Joachim Trier's *Sentimental Value*, which was a hit in Cannes that wound up winning an Oscar.

Still, the genre is an undeniably tough nut to crack and tends to yield the same old tales of tyrannical directors, insecure actors, overtaxed crewmembers and corrupt producers. Some, but not all, of those tropes are present in Spanish filmmaker Rodrigo Sorogoyen's behind-the-scenes drama *The Beloved (El Ser Querido)*, which manages to add a few welcome twists to the formula. It also dishes out a heavy dose of on-set malaise that can be so unbearable to watch that at times you want to yell out, "Cut!'

Sorogoyen is something of a master of malaise, as evidenced by his taut 2023 thriller, *The Beasts*, about a French couple relocating to a Spanish town, where they're so unwelcome they become pariahs and, eventually, prey. He also created and directed the well-praised TV series *The New Years*, which followed a couple through times both good and bad in episodes shifting from carnal passion to extreme discomfort.

The Beloved often consists of the latter, courtesy of its two-time Oscar-winning fictional filmmaker, Esteban Martínez (Bardem), who returns home after years of exile in New York to direct a period piece set in the Spanish Sahara — a contested territory in North Africa, now known as Western Sahara, that Spain occupied until the 1970s.

The catch, in what already seems like a risky project, is that Martínez has decided to cast his own estranged daughter, Emilia (Victoria Luengo), in the lead role, even if she's only acted in a few forgettable TV shows. If the Trier movie immediately comes to mind here, well, it's because both films mine similar material, focusing on an esteemed but volatile director trying to make amends with a child/actress he neglected for too long.

But Sorogoyen's movie is a different beast in many ways, beginning with how

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Javier Bardem is a director trying to reconcile with a daughter (Victoria Luengo) who resents him.

he teases out the tension and withholds key pieces of information, stretching our unease to a breaking point. The first 15 minutes of *The Beloved* are a prime example of that, following Martínez as he shows up at a restaurant for an encounter with Emilia. We have no idea what their relationship is at first — are they former lovers? frenemies? partners in crime? — until we learn not only that Martínez abandoned Emila after birth, but that he's returned to his homeland to ask her to star in his ambitious new movie.

The drama then shifts to the film shoot itself, which takes place on the deserts and shores of the Canary Islands, standing in for the Sahara circa 1932. At that point, Sorogoyen and DP Álex de Pablo start switching up techniques and film formats — from the intimate handheld close-ups of the opening sequence to epic vistas mixing color with black-and-white footage — capturing the wind-strewn landscapes where Martínez and his crew will be shooting for the coming weeks.

The on-set conflict quickly ratchets up under the director's domineering presence, which feels harmless at first, like he's just another celebrated auteur with a big ego trying to make it through a tough production. But as the shoot progresses, he winds up turning into a total dictator, culminating in a standout scene during which his treatment of cast and crew becomes excruciatingly — and somewhat hilariously — abusive.

Bardem is terrific in the role of a hardened filmmaker with a shady past and shitty reputation who still has talent to burn, hoping to redeem his relationship with Emilia as they collaborate for the first time. Martínez initially turns on the charm with his daughter, encouraging her as an actress despite her lack of experience. But when that fails to win her over, he starts to lose his cool, chastising everyone — including his longtime French producer, Marina (Marina Foïs, who co-starred in *The Beasts*) — and turning Emilia completely against him.

Why this happens is where *The Beloved* feels a little too familiar. In a nutshell, Emilia resents her dad for decades of poor behavior, including a drinking problem that Martínez, who's been sober for several years now, seems incapable of acknowledging. We've certainly seen this all before — the director with the dark past; the daughter who may never forgive him — and Sorogoyen doesn't quite manage to make it emotional, even if Luengo (*The Room Next Door*) is quite powerful as a girl who can't let go of a lifelong grudge.

Another issue involves the fictional movie being shot, which is called *Desert* and seems to be about the perils of Spanish colonialism, yet remains disconnected to all the shenanigans going on behind the scenes. The parallel stories are never convincingly tied together, to the point that we lose interest in the project Martínez seems to be risking his whole career on — not to mention his already tenuous relationship with Emilia.

Even if its elements don't always gel, *The Beloved* offers another prime showcase for Sorogoyen's art of unease, as well as for Bardem's considerable talent for playing men who can fly off the handle at any moment (Martínez is like *No Country for Old Men*'s Anton Chigurh strapped to a director's chair). Godard, whose own on-set antics were on display here last year in Richard Linklater's *Nouvelle Vague*, famously wrote that "the cinema is truth 24 times a second." This tense outing proves that the truth sometimes comes out once you stop rolling.

Competition
CAST Javier Bardem, Victoria Luengo, Melina Matthews, Marina Foïs, Malena Villa
DIRECTOR Rodrigo Sorogoyen
2 hours 15 minutes

Cantona

Directors David Tryhorn and Ben Nicholas coax frank talk from legendary striker Eric Cantona in this deft, nostalgia-inducing, perhaps generous-to-a-fault portrait of the tempestuous but gifted player **By Leslie Felperin**

Football superstar Eric Cantona, the poetic yet pugilistic French striker who played best for English club Manchester United in the 1990s, gets the whole the-man-the-myth-the-legend treatment in the starkly if aptly titled documentary *Cantona*.

The latest from sports-movie stylists David Tryhorn and Ben Nicholas, who co-directed the comparable single-soccer-subject profile *Pele* as well as *The Figo Affair: The Transfer That Changed Football*, this zippy package combines plenty of recently shot interview snippets with Cantona himself, cantankerous but charismatic as ever, with encomiums from three of his most significant colleagues: Man U manager Alex Ferguson, French mentor Guy Roux and teammate David Beckham. Plus his parents. It's all interspersed with lashings of archive material, including the footage of Cantona's infamous karate kick to the chest of a heckler, which temporarily derailed his career. For sports fans, especially those worshipful of King Eric, this is cinematic cocaine, neatly chopped out, electrifying at first although too much of it could leave you feeling jaded and jangly.

Indeed, *Cantona* services fans generously with plenty of great clips of our hero making extraordinary goals and passes, remonstrating with authorities and, best of all, taking his shirt off in his younger years. But there are sizable nits that could be picked. For starters, the early years and his family background are covered with but a cursory montage, as are his post-Man-U years apart from a few fun clips from some of the films he made as an actor, including that time he played himself in Ken Loach's *Looking for Eric*.

In the film's press notes, the directors say they interviewed many more people than the six mentioned above, but decided to cut out the others because "Eric's personality didn't suit an ensemble cast," and they chose to prioritize his voice. Of course, that's their prerogative, and with a character as strong as Cantona it makes sense in a way.

But it also skews the final product in a more hagiographic direction and arguably excessively minimizes the importance of teamwork in Cantona's and Man U's success. Contemporaries such as Ryan Giggs, Roy Keane, Lee Sharpe and Andy Cole, for example, were as integral to the well-oiled machinery of the team, tightly synced with Cantona, as Beckham ever was — but perhaps they don't have the same cachet as Becks, especially abroad. In fact, in many ways Beckham's star ascended as Cantona's waned, and it would only take a few judicious edits and exaggerations to make their story look like *All About Eve*, but with jockstraps and unibrows.

But what *Cantona* elects to do, it does well. The star of the show, turning 60 on May 24 this year, has mellowed with age only marginally and for the most part, like Édith Piaf, *il ne regrette rien*. The film opens with a quotation from the poem "L'Héautontimorouménos" ("The Self-Tormentor") from Charles Baudelaire's collection *Les fleurs du mal*, about how the speaker is both "the wound and the knife … the blow and the cheek"; that dualism is stressed throughout, with Cantona referring to himself as both an angel and a devil, opinions he expresses while sitting in a church, no less.

In less lofty terms, that means his game instincts and ball control were sublime, a once-in-a-generation talent. But his temper and arrogance were equally unparalleled, constantly leading him to argue with authority figures, from referees to his own managers. He changed clubs an extraordinary seven times between 1983 and 1992 before finally settling down with Man U. Similarly, he lost the captaincy of the French national team for Euro 96 because of the kung fu incident that banned him from playing, and he was never selected again for the World Cup's French squad.

But those who love him are loyal to the bone and express that here, even if in a choked-up, inarticulate-straight-male way, as is the case with famously taciturn Scotsman Ferguson. What's even more interesting is the way Ferguson talks about the game as if it were spectacle, and how he knew in 1992 that he needed someone "with some flair, a sparkle that lights up a stage," and that's what he found in Cantona. It isn't all about strike rates and penalty kicks; sparkle is important, too. That charisma is abundantly on display here, as it is in the new interviews, where Cantona's intelligence and integrity are just as palpable as his rage.

As if to cool that fire, classical selections are used to bed large swaths of the film, with electronic grooves that hark back to the heyday of acid house from Paul Hartnoll, co-founder of British rave scenesters Orbital. Even the rhythms of the editing feel very 1990s, which no doubt help this appeal to older millennial dads nostalgic for their wilder years.

The directors of *Pele* return to "the beautiful game" for another documentary about a soccer giant — French Manchester United star turned actor Eric Cantona.

Special Screening
WITH Eric Cantona, Alex Ferguson, Guy Roux, David Beckham
DIRECTOR David Tryhorn, Ben Nicholas
1 hour 55 minutes

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Sophie Okonedo plays the titular character in *Clarissa*, an updated interpretation of *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Clarissa

Sophie Okonedo, Ayo Edebiri and David Oyelowo star in Arie and Chuko Esiri's sharp, stirring adaptation of *Mrs. Dalloway*, which transposes the action of Virginia Woolf's novel to modern-day Nigeria **By Lovia Gyarkye**

With its stream-of-consciousness style and fragmented perspectives, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is a novel with few adaptations. Marleen Gorris tried with her shaky 1997 film starring Vanessa Redgrave as the titular protagonist and Rupert Graves as the tragic Septimus. A film inspired by a book inspired by Woolf (Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*) followed, and a handful of stage adaptations came and went. Now, Arie and Chuko Esiri, the twin brothers behind critically acclaimed drama *Eyimofe*, attempt their own translation — and how lucky we are for that.

Clarissa is a compelling interpretation of *Mrs. Dalloway* that transposes the action of Woolf's novel from 1920s London to present-day Lagos. Clarissa, played with terrific restraint by Sophie Okonedo, is now a Nigerian society woman preoccupied by the infamous Lagosian traffic, interactions with her housekeepers, and memories of youthful summers spent debating the meaning of democracy in Nigeria and the intellectual and political priorities of a developing nation-state.

Septimus (Fortune Nwafor, a revelation) is an off-duty military officer who has just returned from fighting insurgent group Boko Haram in the north. He struggles to fend off thoughts of conflict (ongoing since 2009) and anchor himself to his present-day reality, one in which he's happily married to Aisha, a well-regarded Muslim seamstress (Modesinuola Ogundiwin).

The Esiri twins combine this new framework with a poetic register that has become increasingly popular since their feature debut premiered in Berlin six years ago. *Clarissa* embraces the cinematic grammar employed by filmmakers like Raven Jackson (*All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt*), Savanah Leaf (*Earth Mama*), RaMell Ross (*Nickel Boys*) and most recently Akinola Davies Jr. (*My Father's Shadow*). Similar to the films by these directors, *Clarissa* revels in the splintered language of memory. Jonathan Bloom's gorgeous cinematography (the film was shot on 35mm) and Blair McClendon's disciplined editing display an intuitive understanding of the source text, finding rhymes and echoes in close-ups of a lip touching a knee or a kingfisher bird crying from a branch. Kelsey Lu's spectral score adds to the dreamy quality of the film.

Clarissa begins on a slightly different note than Woolf's novel. The Esiris (the film was directed by both but the screenplay was written by Chuko) eventually get to the flowers, but first they offer the image of a young Clarissa (India Amarteifio) sneaking out of the room of young Peter (Toheeb Jimoh). It is 1994 and the pair, along with other friends, are in Abraka, a verdant town in southern Nigeria. Their days are spent swimming in the lake, picnicking by the beach and debating poetry and literature. At the sound of morning prayers, an older Clarissa awakens from this dream and shuffles out to her lawn, where the leafy bush has been replaced with the industrial skyline of Lagos. The flowers must be procured, the tents put up in the garden, the finishing touches added around the home before her guests arrive.

As Clarissa meanders through Lagos, a portrait of the bustling West African city emerges. The Esiris luxuriate in scenes of people at work and observations of an increasingly cosmopolitan locale, subtly revealing trenchant class differences. Nowhere is that more apparent than with Septimus. When looking at his Lagos, the camera often closes in, reflecting the kind of claustrophobia poverty tends to engender. Septimus lives in a small apartment with his wife, and struggles to acclimate to civilian life after a traumatic tour in the North. Just as *Mrs. Dalloway* sought to reveal how Britain abandoned veterans, Clarissa gestures at the power and collateral damage of Nigeria's military.

While Clarissa's life seems more expansive — wider shots accompany her thread — it is also chillier. Clarissa married Richard, a respectable man in politics played by Jude Akuwudike, but she still thinks of her former lover Peter (a fine David Oyelowo) and the intensity of her relationship with Sally (played by Ayo Edebiri as a youth and Nikki Amuka-Bird as an older woman).

In flashbacks, an attraction blooms between young Clarissa and Sally. Amarteifio and Edebiri have an understated chemistry that makes the covert passion between these two women believable. To Clarissa, Sally represents an effortless cool — a composite of countercultural standards that she secretly wishes to embody. While there's an understandable obliqueness to their relationship, one does wish that the filmmakers had afforded more space to their intellectual sparring.

There's a radical bent to the Esiris' interpretations of and deviations from *Mrs. Dalloway*. Woolf wrote the novel to reveal the madness of a post-war society and the disjointed nature of a nation undergoing significant change. And for all the ways she sharply articulated the oppressed condition of women, she also relied on a colonial framework and deployed racist tropes. A sly achievement of *Clarissa* is in how it not only acknowledges this history, but upends it too.

Directors' Fortnight
CAST Sophie Okonedo, Ayo Edebiri, David Oyelowo, India Amarteifio, Toheeb Jimoh, Fortune Nwafor
DIRECTOR Arie Esiri, Chuko Esiri
2 hours 7 minutes

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DEL TORO

Continued from page 23

The theatrical run launches Oct. 9 — del Toro's birthday.

The October release will also include, for the first time, a 3D version of the film. Del Toro has been working on the conversion for months and it is, by his account, still in progress.

"My idea is, what can have people that experienced it in theaters say, 'I want to experience it in theaters again'?" he explains. The way he shoots — heavily composed foregrounds — made him feel the material was well-suited to the format. "I always, as when I was watching it and we were placing the fairies in the digital effects, I always felt, 'Oh, this would be so great if it had depth.' " He also saw a conceptual use for it: "I said, 'Oh, I can use it as an element of depth' — when she is in the real world, it's a little more shallow, and when she is in the imaginary world, I can have a little more depth. And I thought it could be used expressively."

The conversion is being handled by SDFX Studios (formerly Stereo D), the same company del Toro worked with on *Pacific Rim*. "For me, the best version of *Pacific Rim* is the Imax 3D version," he said. "I feel you haven't seen the movie if you haven't seen it in Imax 3D." Calibrating *Pan's Labyrinth* to achieve a comparable result has been painstaking. "It is taking many months because it has to be very carefully calibrated. You don't want to overdo it. You don't want to underdo it. The separation of elements has to be really carefully done for it to pop." The 3D, he noted, "is gonna take us a lot of many more months to finish."

One reason the film continues to find new audiences, del Toro has come to understand, is structural rather than cultural. Unlike most of his other work, *Pan's Labyrinth* does not age alongside its fans, but finds purchase with each new generation.

"If I talk to somebody that likes *Hellboy* or *Blade*, they're 20 years older than when I launched it," he says. "But if you talk to someone that loves *Pan's Labyrinth*, most of the time you get a bunch of them are young people. For some reason it connects with the strength of being young, when the world is telling you that you're wrong and you know that you're right. I wanted to put it out in the world in a big way so that I can keep connecting with the spirits that remain young."

He also has broader convictions about the value of bringing restored films back to cinemas. "I think the future of theatrical is a mixture of reissues and new movies," he says. "The European model of the art house that exists very much enmeshed in the distribution and exhibition system — it's such an interesting model, and it doesn't quite get embraced outside of Europe, but I think it's very promising." He reaches back to his own filmgoing past: "I would see the Hammer horror films opening weekend, and then three years later they were back in a double program or something. And it was always great — you wanted to revisit them. You put *Road Warrior* (1981) out there on a big screen, and I'm there. You put *The Devils* (1971) by Ken Russell in theaters, I'm there."

Twenty years after the longest standing ovation in Cannes history, del Toro is still making the same arguments he articulated in *Pan's Labyrinth*: ghat imagination is not a luxury, and that we have to resist giving in to fascism, to fear, to the idea that human creativity is replaceable.

"We live in times where they tell us that what we are facing is so formidable that it is useless to resist, and that art can be made by a fucking app," he told the Cannes crowd ahead of the screening. "I feel [that] like the girl Ofelia in *Pan's Labyrinth*, we can hope to leave a mark. If we can put our faith against their faith, and our strength against their strength, there is hope. We have to give in to one of two forces. We can give in to love. We can give in to fear. Never, never, never give in to fear." THR

EIDINGER

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of but can discover there. It's always a form of reflection, of self-examination. The antihero, in my experience, is a far better vehicle for identification than the classic hero.

And yet you are playing the villain in the new Superman movie, *Man of Tomorrow*. What drew you to a franchise like that?

It's not as different as you might think. Even if it seems surprising at first, these films have a serious philosophical ambition. They carry great allegorical weight for me. Take just the word "super" — it's used as a superlative, for something excellent, wonderful. But "super" really only means "over" or "above." So Superman is the Übermensch. You have the Super Ego. There's already a deep psychological dimension built in.

Last week I was on set during rehearsals and asked if I could watch some of the filming, which had already started. And I saw an actor in the Superman costume, suspended on wires in front of a bluescreen. I looked at that image and thought: This is the essence of fiction. It's as significant an image as Hamlet holding the skull: Superman, in that Superman pose, hanging from wires in front of a bluescreen.

Being in the Superman universe wasn't a dream or burning desire for me. But now that it's happening, I can see a certain inevitability in it, something almost fated.

You're known as a stage actor — your *Hamlet* is renowned. Is there a connection between your theater work and what you do onscreen?

Yes, the theatrical quality has actually helped me enormously in the context of *Superman*, too, because it involves a different register of performance, one that isn't primarily realistic and allows for a far more expressive style of playing. When I watch a film like James Gunn's *Guardians of the Galaxy*, I find it has a great theatrical quality — in the handling of good and evil, and in a certain tendency toward allegory. Brainiac is described as the incarnation of Satan. I find that almost Shakespearean. The king, the fool — there are so many parallels for me.

German actors abroad are often pigeonholed as villains. Does that bother you?

Well, that's not really my way of thinking, honestly — I can understand it, but I believe one of the great errors of our time, or perhaps of human beings in general, is the longing to divide everything into good and evil. In psychology that's called black-and-white thinking — thinking in extremes. It's described as a cognitive distortion, a form of madness, which I find interesting: It's essentially borderline behavior, to say there's only black and white, good and evil, and to miss how the world actually presents itself — in contradictions, in gray zones, in nuances.

I think that's ultimately why I try, even with dark characters, to portray them as ambivalent beings. I would do the same playing a good person: I'd search for the darkness within the good. My general ambition in art is to play against this kind of thinking, against moral simplification. I engage a great deal with [Bertolt] Brecht — I'm doing a Brecht reading tour across German-speaking countries, and I always close with "An die Nachgeborenen," [which translates] "To Those Born After." It begins: "I live in dark times." And Brecht describes those dark times. I guarantee you: Everyone in the room hearing it for the first time thinks I'm speaking about now, about our present moment. But it was written [before] the Second World War. It describes something immanent to human beings — what makes us human. "The fate of man is man." That's what interests me: to examine what makes a human being. And that's why it matters to me to say: With Klaus Barbie, it's not about monsters. It's about human beings. THR

When Léa and Adèle Turned the Cannes Jury *Blue*

BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR MIGHT be the title of Tunisia-born French director Abdellatif Kechiche's latest sprawling drama, but the emotions — and the sex, of which there is fenomeno — definitely run red hot in this deeply moving portrait of a young girl's climb toward adulthood in the arms of another woman. Sure to raise eyebrows with its showstopping scenes of unsimulated female copulation, the film actu-

The names of French actresses Léa Seydoux and Adèle Exarchopoulos will be forever intertwined in the Cannes record book, so it is serendipitous that both are returning to this year's festival. Back in 2013, they starred in director Abdellatif Kechiche's *Blue Is the Warmest Color*, playing young women who share a sexually charged relationship. The film was an immediate sensation. Said *THR* critic Jordan Mintzer, "Sure to raise eyebrows with its show-stopping scenes of unsimulated female copulation, the film is actually much more than that: It's a passionate, poignantly handled love story."

Some handicappers thought it might prove too risqué for that year's jury, headed by Steven Spielberg, but the jury stunned at the closing night ceremony by not only awarding the film the Palme d'Or, but by also taking what it called "the exceptional step" of declaring that the honor should be shared by the director and his two leads. At the press conference that followed, Exarchopoulos said of *Blue*: "It's universal. It's a love story. If it's also a hymn to tolerance, then that's all the more gratifying." Added Seydoux, "What brought us together was the love that existed between us, and perhaps our sense of humor."

There's a good chance the two will bump into each other on this year's red carpet. Exarchopoulos stars in Jeanne Herry's French drama *Another Day*, screening in competition. Seydoux appears in two competition titles: Marie Kreutzer's *Gentle Monster*, also featuring Catherine Deneuve, and Arthur Harari's *The Unknown*, a Neon pickup about a man who after a one-night stand wakes up in the body of the woman he seduced. — GREGG KILDAY

Léa Seydoux (left) and Adèle Exarchopoulos at the *Blue Is the Warmest Color* photocall. *THR* deemed the film "a deeply moving portrait of a young girl's climb toward adulthood in the arms of another woman."


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