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A full-page photograph of actor Javier Bardem. He is standing on a wide, white stone staircase with ornate balustrades. He is wearing a black tuxedo jacket, a white dress shirt, and a black bow tie. He has a grey beard and is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. His right hand is resting on the balustrade, and his left hand is in his pocket. The background shows a large, light-colored building with arched windows and a doorway. The overall lighting is soft and natural, suggesting daytime.

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Javier Bardem Steps Into Cannes

By DANIEL D'ADDARIO



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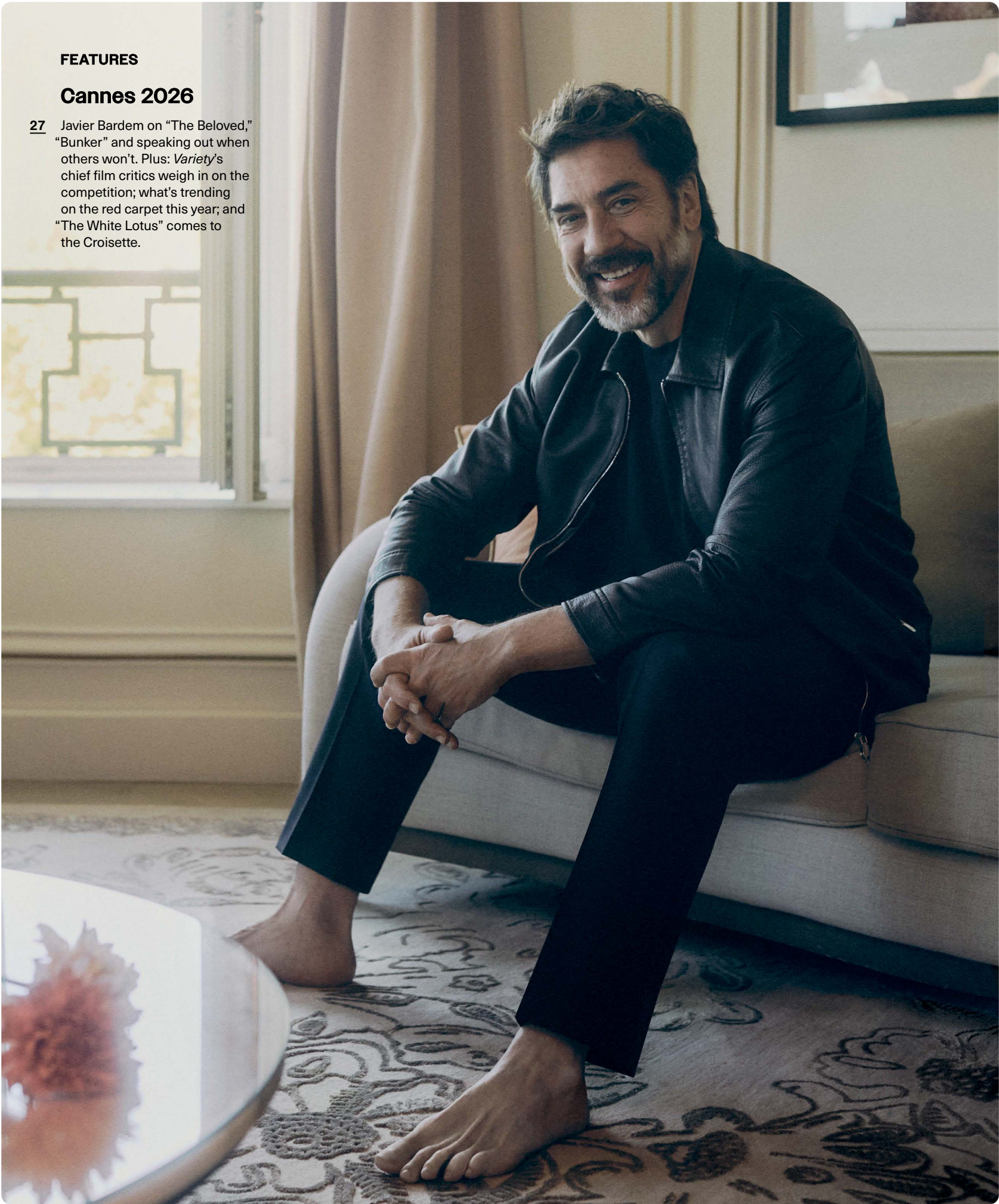
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FEATURES

Cannes 2026

27 Javier Bardem on “The Beloved,” “Bunker” and speaking out when others won’t. Plus: *Variety*’s chief film critics weigh in on the competition; what’s trending on the red carpet this year; and “The White Lotus” comes to the Croisette.



On the cover: Styling: Alex Badia; Styling assistant: Martina Tacchini; Grooming: Pablo Iglesias/NS Management; Production: Raquel Sueiro/RSM Productions; Tuxedo, shirt and bow tie: Zegna; Shoes: Martinelli; This page: Jacket: Brunello Cucinelli; Pants: Fursac; Shirt: Zegna

Cover photograph by Xavi Gordo. Photographed at Mandarin Oriental Ritz, Madrid

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Javier Bardem, unafraid to weigh in on divisive politics, talks about seismic changes in the film industry and beyond.

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Javier Bardem is best known for the nihilism of his "No Country for Old Men" villain. But in 2010, when he won the best actor prize at Cannes, he was seen as almost transcendently human.

Clockwise from top: "Lord of the Flies"; Cannes' Hotel Villa Botanica; Quinta Brunson; the Eiffel Tower; Thierry Frémaux

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This year's poster
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International
Film Festival

On the Road to Cannes

→ Javier Bardem is, as his “Dune” co-star Timothée Chalamet might describe him, one of “the greats” — particularly in regard to Cannes. From “No Country for Old Men” to “Vicky Cristina Barcelona” to “Biutiful,” several of his most indelible performances have screened at the fest. And this year, Bardem — our Cannes Issue cover star — returns to the south of France with “The Beloved,” a Spanish drama that might draw comparisons to last year’s festival favorite “Sentimental Value.”

In a revealing interview, Bardem sat down with Daniel D’Addario in his hometown of Madrid to

discuss his politics, his career and his marriage to Penélope Cruz. It’s a candid profile that represents an artist grappling with seismic change in the industry — and the world beyond.

On the ground in Cannes, tens of thousands of festivalgoers will experience cinema as it’s meant to be seen — on the big screen. This year’s official poster pays homage to 1991’s “Thelma & Louise,” directed by Ridley Scott — a film whose sharp feminist politics are as striking today as they were upon its release. Cannes, in its 79th year, never takes place in a vacuum, and the latest edition will certainly touch on all the political unrest around the world.

Elsewhere in our issue, don’t miss Elsa Keslassy’s three blockbuster stories: a look at the next season of “The White Lotus,” which is filming in Cannes; a deep dive into how Pierre-Antoine Capton steered his company Mediawan to massive success; and an interview with festival topper Thierry Frémaux reflecting on his 25 years on the Croisette.

Finally, here in the United States, as the early days of Emmy campaigning are underway, we are proud to unveil *Variety*’s first-ever TV Week. This invite-only celebration of the season’s most memorable actors, writers, directors and more — hosted by our journalists and conceived by our associate publisher Donna Pennestri — is not to be missed.



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The Gilded Age

Media moguls are swimming in moolah, even as the conglomerates they lead face choppy waters

By Brent Lang and Todd Spangler

➔ Warner Bros. Discovery shareholders sent a clear message to David Zaslav last month: Greed isn't good.

On April 23, they approved a plan to sell the company to Paramount for \$110.9 billion, while overwhelmingly rejecting the windfall Zaslav is set to receive when the deal closes — as much as \$886 million, according to Warners, though his actual payout will likely be less than that. In the nonbinding vote, owners holding 82% of shares opposed Zaslav's golden parachute, which gives the Warner Bros. Discovery chief \$552 million in stock, cash and benefits, as well as up to \$335.4 million in reimbursement to take care of the tax bill on his lavish payday (an amount the company says will decline to zero by the end of 2026). The

move may have been largely symbolic, but analysts believe that it signals growing distaste for the outsize rewards chief executives in the media and technology space receive for their work.

“It makes a difference,” says Rosanna Landis Weaver, a consultant at the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility. “When a vote gets this high, boards of directors reasonably fear their reputations and start to take their responsibility to be impartial watchdogs more seriously.”

But Zaslav, who has one foot out the door, didn’t seem to get the message. A week later, Warner Bros. Discovery revealed that his pay package for 2025 had tripled to a staggering \$165 million, making him one of the highest-paid CEOs in the world. In contrast, Tim Cook, the chief of Apple, which has a market cap of nearly \$4 trillion compared with Warner Bros. Discovery’s \$67.8 billion, had to settle for a compensation package worth \$74.3 million.



“Most of these CEOs didn’t start the companies they lead, but you’re giving them an entrepreneurial return for managerial risk. If a media CEO doesn’t do a good job, they walk away with a great salary and a lot of stock options.”

Charles Elson, John L. Weinberg Center for Corporate Governance

Zaslav wasn’t the only chief executive enjoying a big raise. Overall, payouts to the heads of America’s biggest corporations accelerated in 2025, mostly in the form of stock and options awards. For 318 companies in the S&P 500 last year, the median CEO compensation package was \$17.7 million — an increase of 10.6% year over year, versus a 7.5% bump in 2025, according to an analysis by ISS-Corporate, a corporate-governance analytics provider. Those 2025 pay hikes didn’t always align with the companies’ performance, outpacing the median 7.5% one-year increase in total shareholder returns for the companies analyzed.

And Zaslav and his fellow entertainment moguls are earning bank as Hollywood is fac-

ing threats on all sides. The box office was flat last year, and attendance and ticket sales haven’t come close to pre-pandemic levels. At the same time, customers are cutting the cable cord, prompting media companies to invest more heavily in streaming. The problem is, the money they make running a Peacock or Disney+, or the revenue they generate from licensing content to Netflix or Prime Video, pales in comparison with what they once pulled in from cable. The people running these media conglomerates often turn to the same playbook — layoffs. Over the past few months, Disney, Amazon, Paramount, Warner Bros. Discovery and Universal have slashed thousands of jobs as they look to cut costs. So why hasn’t that spirit of belt-tightening extended to the C-suite?

The answer may lie in the way that many media companies are structured. Comcast, Fox and Paramount all have what’s known as dual-class stock, which gives the families that control them nearly unchecked authority to determine how their top executives get financially rewarded. It establishes a dangerous precedent, because other companies in the sector that aren’t family owned, such as Disney, put their dual-class competitors in their peer group when they sit down to figure out their leaders’ paydays.

“These compensation packages will continue to accelerate as long as these dual-class companies are establishing the rules of the road,” says Charles Elson of the University of Delaware’s John L. Weinberg Center for Corporate Governance. “It creates upward pressure on the whole system, and every media company CEO is going to feel like they can’t fall behind the rest of the pack.”

But that competitive pressure doesn’t translate to a spirit of shared sacrifice. Instead, the compensation committees of major media companies use both qualitative and quantitative metrics for determining whether or not to reward these corporate leaders their multimillion-dollar bonuses. So even if a CEO doesn’t reach certain financial goals, they are rewarded for their television division’s Emmy wins, the box office performance of a blockbuster film or the opening of a theme park attraction, regardless of how directly involved they were in those successes. That typically means that even if the companies they run have a rough year, a CEO’s pay stubs won’t suffer.

“The logic is wrong,” Elson says. “Most of these CEOs didn’t start the companies they lead, but you’re giving them an entrepreneurial return for managerial risk. If an entrepreneur screws up, they go broke. If a media CEO doesn’t do a good job, they walk away with a great salary and a lot of stock options.”

• **Disney**



Bob Iger
CEO

2025 compensation
\$45.8M/+11.5%

Median employee compensation **\$56,932**

Iger pay ratio to median employee **805**

It’s so hard to say goodbye (again). After two decades atop the Magic Kingdom, Iger is finally exiting Disney. His return in 2022 after Bob Chapek’s tumultuous tenure was a mixed bag. Disney+ is profitable, and its animation division has delivered hits like “Zootopia 2.” But other parts of the empire, such as Lucasfilm and Marvel, have struggled. Disney is sending Iger out in style. His base salary is \$1 million, but he augmented that with \$35 million in stock and options and received a \$7.2 million cash bonus. Most important — but left unsaid in Disney’s summary of Iger’s “performance highlights” — was that he ended the succession drama around Disney by handing the keys to Josh D’Amaro, who will earn \$38 million as CEO. That makes D’Amaro a slightly cheaper alternative to Iger, but give him time. Soon the padawan will be raking it in like the master.

• **Apple**



Tim Cook
CEO

2025 compensation
\$74.3M/-0.4%

Median employee compensation **\$139,483**

Cook pay ratio to median employee **533**

In September, Cook will step down as CEO after a 15-year run — and he’s taking a chunk of change with him. Cook’s pay for fiscal year 2025 was roughly the same as the year prior, with the biggest portion represented by Apple stock valued at \$57.5 million, plus a \$12 million cash bonus. In discussing his compensation package, Apple’s proxy filing said “the size of the equity awards Mr. Cook has been granted aligns with Apple’s growth, success and the tremendous value delivered to our shareholders under his leadership” — noting that since Cook took over as CEO in 2011 through 2025, Apple’s cumulative total shareholder return increased 2,162%. The filing also cited 650-plus award wins for Apple TV productions. Apple’s next CEO, former senior VP of hardware engineering John Ternus, has big shoes to fill.

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• Netflix



Ted Sarandos
Co-CEO

2025 compensation
\$53.9M/-12.9%

Median employee
compensation **\$211,201**

Greg Peters
Co-CEO

2025 compensation
\$53.2M/-11.8%

Sarandos/Peters pay ratio to
median employee **255/252**

The streamer’s two top execs saw double-digit drops in their total reported pay in 2025. They launched an \$83 billion play for Warner Bros. (before walking away), but the aborted deal didn’t directly affect their earnings. Both were abundantly rewarded, as Netflix ended the year with more than 325 million paid customers and revenue boosted by 16% to \$45.2 billion. But the execs’ cash bonuses for 2025 were paid out at 117.6% of their target, rather than at 200% as in 2024. Overall, per the company’s proxy filing, in determining the pay packages for Sarandos and Peters, the board’s compensation committee “considered the competitive market compensation paid for comparable roles” and “determined to keep their total target compensation flat” compared with 2025. The co-CEOs will pilot Netflix forward not only sans WB but also without co-founder Reed Hastings, who is leaving as chairman in June.

• Paramount Skydance



David Ellison
CEO

2025 compensation
\$63.2M/NA

Median employee
compensation **\$57,004**

Ellison pay ratio to median
employee **1,109**

Welcome to the club, David. As head of Skydance, Ellison had a limited public profile, and was better known as the son of Oracle founder Larry Ellison. That’s changed dramatically: Ellison purchased Paramount for \$8 billion in August, then secured a deal to buy Warner Bros. for \$110.9 billion. In return, he received a \$63.2 million pay package that includes a \$1.4 million salary and \$58.7 million in stock (which vests over five years). Ellison was supposed to oversee his media empire with Jeff Shell, the former NBCU CEO. Things didn’t work out. Last month, Shell left the company amid a legal battle involving a gambler named R.J. Cipriani. Shell was set to earn \$60.7 million in 2025. He’ll have to settle for less. But don’t weep for him. Under his separation agreement, he can receive accelerated vesting of his stock awards, as well as his \$3.5 million salary and \$1.5 million bonus.

• Warner Bros. Discovery



David Zaslav
CEO and president

2025 compensation
\$165M/+217.9%

Median employee
compensation **\$119,748**

Zaslav pay ratio to median
employee: **1,378**

Cast your mind back to the 7th century. The Byzantine Empire is at its zenith; the Tang Dynasty controls much of Asia. There’s no such thing as paper money, and germ theory, electricity and Bugs Bunny are centuries away. But if you’re the average Warner Bros. Discovery employee, you would need to start work in 648 CE and go right up until today to earn what David Zaslav pulled in last year. Zaslav, whose pay package tripled in 2025, was entitled to his \$3 million salary, \$22.6 million in stock and a \$25.7 million cash bonus because the company’s board said he showed a “deep understanding of [Warner’s] strategy and operations” -- and he was granted \$109.6 million in one-time options for leading a plan to spin off its cable business. That split was nixed in favor of selling the whole thing to David Ellison for \$111 billion, a deal that stands to add half a billion to Zaslav’s fortune.

• Fox Corp.



Lachlan Murdoch
CEO

2025 compensation
\$33M/+38.7%

Median employee
compensation **\$100,889**

Murdoch pay ratio to median
employee **327**

In September, the Murdoch family’s brutal fight over the future of its media empire was determined with a \$3.3 billion settlement that granted Lachlan Murdoch full control when his father, Rupert, dies. That ensured that Fox properties like the New York Post and Fox News would keep their far-right bent, a political disposition in question if Lachlan’s siblings James, Prue and Elizabeth had governed the company as part of a trust, as had long been the plan. It was a battle worthy of HBO’s “Succession,” filled with palace intrigue and clashing egos. His relationship with his siblings may be in tatters, but Lachlan was well compensated for coming out on top. In addition to his \$3 million salary, he received \$13.3 million in options and stock awards and another \$10.7 million in a non-equity incentive plan. He also racked up \$2 million in other compensation, which includes security costs.

• Comcast



Brian Roberts
CEO and chairman

2025 compensation
\$35.1M/+3.8%

Median employee
compensation **\$92,390**

Michael Cavanagh
Co-CEO

2025 compensation
\$71.2M/+154%

Roberts pay ratio to median
employee **381/777**

Roberts got a raise last year — but not nearly as much as recently promoted co-CEO Cavanagh did. For 2025, they received the same salary (\$2.6 million) and cash bonus (\$8.6 million). Cavanagh was granted \$60.34 million in stock awards; that included a stock grant with a target value of \$35 million, vesting over a three-year period, tied to his promotion. The board’s compensation committee “determined that Mr. Cavanagh should receive an award designed to recognize his ... strong leadership” and give him incentives to “drive long-term shareholder value creation,” per Comcast’s proxy statement. A big win for both execs, per Comcast, was shedding cable-centric Versant Media. Under the leadership of Roberts and Cavanagh, “we completed the successful spin-off of Versant, which we believe will better position our company to compete in the evolving media landscape,” the filing said.

• Amazon



Andy Jassy
CEO

2025 compensation
\$2.1M/+29.6%

Median employee
compensation **\$40,206**

Jassy pay ratio to median
employee **51**

Jassy’s \$2.1 million compensation looks fairly modest in the context of Amazon’s \$2.8 trillion market cap as of late April. But “Earth’s most customer-centric company” isn’t short-changing its top exec. The CEO’s pay package largely consists of long-term stock awards. In 2025, Jassy’s realized compensation (including the value of stock vested during the year) was \$43.5 million, up 9% from 2024, per Amazon — or more than 1,000 times what the average Amazon employee earns. On top of that, Jassy had stock awards that had not vested as of the end of 2025 that were worth \$242.3 million. The company made a point in its proxy statement of explaining that it had boosted compensation for warehouse and delivery employees: Driven by a \$1 billion investment, Amazon’s average pay for those roles last year in the U.S. rose to more than \$23 per hour, “more than triple the federal minimum wage.”

"Charles is excellent as Best."
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"A charming fish-out-of-water comedy."
- NEW YORK TIMES

Best Medicine



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

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Netflix's Robbie Praw and Tracey Pakosta curated this year's Netflix Is a Joke Fest.

Kill Shots

Netflix Is a Joke is back. The streamer's comedy chiefs break down the star-studded lineup

By Ethan Shanfeld

→ The biennial event sprawls across Los Angeles from May 4 to 10, taking over venues like the Greek Theatre, Intuit Dome and The Comedy Store. Think of a currently performing comic, and they're probably on the lineup: Shane Gillis hosts a roast of Kevin Hart; John Mulaney headlines the Hollywood Bowl; Flight of the Conchords reunites. Plus, Nikki Glaser, Jerry Seinfeld, Katt Williams and so many more.

Netflix Is a Joke Fest is a victory lap for the streamer, which has become the most prominent name in stand-up, as well as a reflection of the talent it has partnered with on the scripted side. Here, Netflix stand-up chief Robbie Praw and scripted comedy boss Tracey Pakosta talk about curating the festival and what's next on Netflix.

What do you think is the wackiest or most ambitious idea you will pull off this year?

ROBBIE PRAW I'm excited to see the celebration of Pee-wee Herman. As a "Seinfeld" dork, I'm excited to see Larry and Jerry onstage together talking about the show. The roast speaks for itself. As for the wackiest things, I am personally running a 5K for the first time, in front of peers and comedians. That feels like my most questionable choice.

Netflix has invested quite a bit in the podcast space. How has that experiment been going so far?

PRAW We can't speak to the whole strategy. The podcast that our group has been working on is "The Pete Davidson Show," and we're really happy with how that's doing. He's doing two shows that are going to sell out — one with Nikki Glaser, one with John Mulaney.

Is Mulaney going to do another season of "Everybody's Live"?

PRAW We don't think so, no. John is on a big tour. There's no talk of him doing that right now.

Now that Stephen Colbert is a free agent, have you had any discussions about trying to get him on Netflix in some capacity?

TRACEY PAKOSTA We haven't. We talk about how much we love him. We're big fans of Stephen Colbert and his show, but nothing specific.

What can you tease about the roast?

PRAW It's going to be a real night of surprises. You have Shane Gillis hosting and Kevin Hart as the roastee — two of the biggest comedy superstars of all time. Our phones are ringing off the hook with stand-ups wanting to be on that show to roast these guys.

For a while, it seemed like another roast after Tom Brady might not come together. Is it difficult to find an A-list star who's willing to put themselves in the hot seat?

PAKOSTA There are people who have no problem being roasted. It did seem like it took a while, but for this festival, after Tom Brady, getting the right person was the goal.

PRAW There has never been a comedian at Kevin's level that has been in that hot seat. He's going to be ruthless at the end of this roast, and I'm excited to see it.

Tell me about the process of getting Louis C.K. back on Netflix.

PRAW When it comes to Louis, part of the job of my team is we listen to the type of stand-ups people want to see, but we also spend a lot of time looking at who's selling tickets all around the world. Louis has had a really impressive run for the last two years, and he has a great special right now, so we're excited to see it on Netflix this summer.

You must have anticipated backlash [given his 2017 sexual misconduct scandal]. How much does that factor into the decision to partner with him?

PRAW When our members sit and open up Netflix, they have a decision to make of what they want to watch. This is just about giving them an option to see a really popular comedian that they may want to watch who's still putting out great stuff.

What is one under-the-radar show at Netflix Is a Joke that is a must-see?

PAKOSTA Stamptown.

PRAW I knew you were gonna say that. I was literally about to say Stamptown. It was my biggest belly laugh of the year.

"When it comes to Louis C.K., part of the job is we listen to the type of stand-ups people want to see, but we also look at who's selling tickets." Robbie Praw, Netflix

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Upfronts Uncensored

Networks and streamers have plenty to tout — and just as many needs

→ The networks may now take a back seat to larger conglomerate sales at the upfronts, but what they're showing between ads — the actual programs — still matters. Of course, these days that mostly means live sports. Entertainment fare is facing reduced shelf space in primetime, and even the streamers are placing more focus on live events, which perhaps means less attention on good ol' fashioned scripted programming.

Maybe that's why it feels like at the broadcast networks, fewer shows are on the bubble and more are being canceled — there aren't as many time slots, and most of them are accounted for by hit franchises. Still, broadcast did cultivate some new hits this season, with freshman entries like CBS' "Marshals," ABC's "Scrubs" redux and Fox's "Best Medicine."

CBS announced its fall slate in April. As for the rest, here's what to expect as the networks and streamers get ready to make their pitches to Madison Avenue the week of May 11.

● ABC/Hulu

HITS ABC's "High Potential," "The Rookie," "Will Trent," "Scrubs"; Hulu's "Chad Powers," "All's Fair," "Paradise," "The Secret Lives of Mormon Wives"

MISSES "The Bachelorette"

NEEDS More shows. Seriously, ABC has so little shelf space that its new output has been limited. Meanwhile, Hulu could use a few more originals as well.

● Amazon

HITS "The Summer I Turned Pretty," "The Boys"

MISSES "Gen V," "The Wheel of Time," "The Run-arounds," "Outer Range"

NEEDS The streamer can't seem to crack comedy. And are Amazon's pricey fantasy series and video game adaptations worth the ROI? Under new TV chief Peter Friedlander (formerly of Netflix), Prime Video is adapting hit romantasy novel "Fourth Wing" and video games "Tomb Raider" and "God of War," but it needs to do better than lukewarm hit "The Rings of Power" — or it could be time to rethink that strategy.



Clockwise from left: Peacock's "The 'Burbs"; CBS' "Marshals" and Fox's "Best Medicine" have been hits.

● CBS

HITS "Marshals," "Boston Blue," "CIA," "Sheriff Country"

MISSES "DMV," "Watson," CBS' head-scratching decision to cancel "The Late Show With Stephen Colbert"

NEEDS Leasing late night to Byron Allen after canceling "The Late Show" was a temporary solution, but CBS needs a long-term strategy for 11:35 p.m.

● Fox

HITS Unscripted lineup, "Best Medicine," "Memory of a Killer"

MISSES "The Faithful: Women of the Bible"

NEEDS Fox has just one live-action comedy on the air, and the network's only new shows on deck are the "Baywatch" reboot, "The Interrogator" with Stephen Fry and "Family Guy" spinoff "Stewie."

● NBCUniversal

HITS "The 'Burbs," "Legendary February" campaign

MISSES "Stumble," "The Hunting Party," "Brilliant Minds"

NEEDS NBCUniversal needs new blood on broadcast. While Dick Wolf's "Law & Order" and "One Chicago" universes will always keep the network afloat, "The Fall and Rise of Reggie Dinkins" was the only non-franchise title to generate much buzz. But there's hope for a successful refresh if pilots like the "Rockford Files" reboot, the Damon Wayans Jr. comedy "Puzzled" and Dan Goor and

Luke Del Tredici's private investigator comedy move forward.

● Netflix

HITS "Stranger Things," "Wednesday," "Untamed," "His & Hers"

MISSES "The Witcher," Netflix's partnership with Prince Harry and Meghan Markle

NEEDS Procedural dramas in the vein of "Law & Order" or "The Pitt" have seen a resurgence given their cost-effectiveness and ability to return annually, but Netflix has yet to come up with a breakout.

● Warner Bros. Discovery

HITS "Heated Rivalry," "The Pitt," "Euphoria," the "Game of Thrones" universe (including "A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms" and "House of the Dragon"), "Tournament of Champions"

MISSES With "Hacks" on its final season and "The Comeback" a one-season-only return, HBO has to figure out its future in comedy.

NEEDS As the pending merger of David Ellison's Paramount Skydance with David Zaslav-led WBD continues to make headlines, partners are understandably wondering about the future of programming and ad-sales strategies for a company that could soon combine Paramount+ with HBO Max, plus several linear networks still in play.

Contributors: Selome Hailu, Jennifer Maas, Joe Otterson and Michael Schneider

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My Trip to the Cottage

An exclusive stay in the remote 'Heated Rivalry' home with the rooms where it all happened

By Anna Tingley

➔ On a recent Tuesday morning, against all odds, I'm driving a rental car on Ontario's Highway 407, en route to "the cottage": the famed lake house featured in the sex-fueled season finale of "Heated Rivalry." After a two-hour journey from Toronto Pearson Airport to the charming town of Muskoka, I wind through a forest until finally reaching an unpaved path leading — up, up, up — to a remote enclave on Muskoka Lake. There, surrounded by birch and oak trees still bare from winter, sits the sprawling, glass-encased property — instantly recognizable to any of the millions of fans left spellbound by the love story of Shane Hollander (Hudson Williams) and Ilya Rozanov (Connor Storrie) in the hit HBO show.

The cottage has become so mythologized by the fandom that when it became available to book on Airbnb, for a steeply discounted \$183 per night, the site crashed from an influx of users. When I was offered a free, two-night stay for an exclusive first look, I knew I had to go.

As I pull into the driveway, I meet Jan, the director of Jayne's Luxury Rentals, which has leased the property to Airbnb for the month of May. He says



When the lakeside cottage in Muskoka became available on Airbnb, users crashed the site.

the cottage rents for \$15,000 to \$19,000 a week but will likely be listed at \$25,000 or more when he takes the property back over. "I haven't seen any crazy fans camping outside yet," he jokes. "But I'm sure it'll start soon." I don't mention the viral TikTok I saw this morning of two fans who had traveled from L.A. to sneak a video of the cottage's exterior.

It's the interior though — clad in a warm palette of natural woods, stone and neutral upholstery — that truly steals the scene. Floor-to-ceiling windows, flooding the space with light, overlook a picturesque view of the lake. Architect Trevor McIvor, who designed the cottage in 2020, assembled the three-bed, three-bath house with Douglas fir beams and columns that run through the ground floor's flowing layout. The decor, largely updated from what appears in the show, blends rustic and modern elements. A vintage illustrated map of Muskoka hangs in the entryway, while large Rothko-esque paintings line the walls of a guest bedroom.

As I step inside, I can feel the pulse of "Heated Rivalry" at every turn. I spot the heather-gray couch where Shane and Ilya promise to be honest about their feelings; the dining room table where Ilya scarfs down pasta in front of Shane's parents; the window-wrapped master bedroom where they say, "I love you," for the first time; and the many, many surfaces where they get, to put it lightly, very physical. I swipe the granite-topped kitchen island, now accented by a complimentary bottle of red wine, and get chills thinking of Williams and Storrie in this exact spot, rehearsing scenes that would change their lives forever.

A sliding glass door leads to the back patio, where many of the finale's most memorable scenes play out. The fire pit where Ilya rests his head on Shane's legs, opening up about his mom's death; the grill where Shane makes a surplus of burgers ("The recipe was for eight. Leave me alone"); the lawn where they juggle a soccer ball while talking about their futures. Down a private stairway to the lake is the floating rock where they share a kiss.

There are also luxe amenities not seen on the show, including a remote-controlled TV that rises from a pale wood countertop in the living room and swivels toward the adjoining kitchen. In the center of the space is a monolithic granite fireplace that anchors the flowing rooms.

The grand scale of the 2,500-square-foot property makes the term "cottage" feel like a misnomer. Downstairs are two guest bedrooms, a master bathroom with a full-length bathtub, a private gym and an expansive home theater with reclining chairs. That night, enveloped in the silence of the woods outside, I imagine which parts of the cottage will get a spotlight in Season 2. By then, this tucked-away property might be the Graceland of Canada.



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THIERRY FRÉMAUX

Variety's International Achievement in Film Award 2026



Too Hot to Handle

As the sexually explicit 'Blue Film' opens, a look back at five other movies that kept the ratings board busy

By Brent Lang

→ "Blue Film," the story of a cam boy (Kieron Moore) whose client (Reed Birney) has up-setting ties to his past, was too hot for Sundance or SXSW, both of which rejected the indie movie. Even after "Blue Film" debuted at the Edinburgh Film Festival to raves, its frank discussion of subjects ranging from pedophilia to sex work proved too much for distributors. After the film sat unsold for months, Obscured Releasing acquired and will release it in theaters May 8. Will the controversy pay off, or will audiences steer clear? Let's see if history is any guide by revisiting movies that tested the notion that all publicity is good publicity.



• Last Tango in Paris 1973

KEY CREATIVES Bernardo Bertolucci (director), Marlon Brando, Maria Schneider
WHAT'S THE FUSS? All about the butter. Censors recoiled at the film's nudity and explicit sex, particularly a scene depicting sodomy with a certain kitchen staple on hand as a lubricant. No less an authority than William F. Buckley decried "Last Tango" as "pornography disguised as art."
THE PAYOFF Oscar nods for Brando and Bertolucci, box office success and landmark status as a film that pushed artistic boundaries. Its legacy is tarnished, however, by Schneider's later claims she felt traumatized by the simulated rape scene.



• The Last Temptation of Christ 1988

KEY CREATIVES Martin Scorsese (director), Paul Schrader (writer), Willem Dafoe, Barbara Hershey
WHAT'S THE FUSS? Turns out devout Christians prefer their Jesus celibate. A scene depicting Christ on the cross tempted by a vision in which he has sex with Mary Magdalene was called blasphemy by religious groups. They launched protests, Scorsese received death threats and a Paris theater was burned down.
THE PAYOFF "Last Temptation" is considered one of Scorsese's greatest films, as well as a testament to his deep faith. As for its director, one of cinema's most famous Catholics, he's continued to explore religion and spirituality in films like "Silence" and "Kundun."



• Basic Instinct 1992

KEY CREATIVES Paul Verhoeven (director), Joe Eszterhas (writer), Michael Douglas, Sharon Stone
WHAT'S THE FUSS? This erotic thriller about a crime novelist (Stone) with a thing for ice picks was an equal opportunity offender. Gay rights groups objected to its portrayal of bisexual women, women's orgs called it misogynistic and Stone alleged a scene where she flashes her vulva was filmed without her consent.
THE PAYOFF "Basic Instinct" was a smash, launching Stone into superstardom and cementing Douglas, fresh off "Fatal Attraction," as Hollywood's go-to guy for kinky shit. Verhoeven would try to rerun the formula with 1995's "Showgirls," to disastrous effect.



• Kids 1995

KEY CREATIVES Larry Clark (director), Harmony Korine (writer), Leo Fitzpatrick, Chloë Sevigny
WHAT'S THE FUSS? The story of NYC teens treating the five boroughs like a tasting menu of drugs, sex and crime didn't fly with the censors or Disney, which barred indie division Miramax from releasing it. Harvey and Bob Weinstein bought back the film and gave it a marketing push that leaned into the controversy.
THE PAYOFF "Kids" launched scores of op-eds decrying the state of our youth. Now it looks more like a time capsule of a pre-gentrified Big Apple than a searing portrait of juvenile delinquency. Sevigny became an indie "It" girl and Oscar nominee.



• Nymphomaniac: Vols. I and II 2013

KEY CREATIVES Lars Von Trier (director, writer), Charlotte Gainsbourg, Stellan Skarsgård, Shia LaBeouf
WHAT'S THE FUSS? Von Trier offered up a two-part erotic odyssey filled with everything from BDSM to extreme close-ups of genitals. Some sex was unsimulated. The MPA slapped the film with an NC-17, prompting Magnolia to release an unrated cut.
THE PAYOFF Critics called the film either a masterpiece or a self-indulgent mess. Audiences steered clear. As graphic as "Nymphomaniac" was, it opened as shows like "Game of Thrones" and "Girls" were pushing the envelope of what was permissible on TV with similarly raunchy scenes.



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Stories That Make Us One

Awards Circuit

By Michael Schneider



Let's Make a Deal

The future of the Emmys is uncertain as awards season gets underway



➔ It's a make-or-break year for the Primetime Emmys. After NBC broadcasts the 78th Emmy Awards on Sept. 14, the current four-network "wheel deal" — in which ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox take turns airing the annual event — expires. As of now, no renewal is in place, meaning we still don't know what the future holds for the show.

I've used this column over the past few years to pitch my idea: a "roadblock," in which every streamer and broadcaster simulcasts the Emmys. That would expose the show (and the nominated programs that it spotlights) to a much wider audience, as opposed to the limitations that come with airing on just one outlet at a time.

The concept of everyone coming together for one evening — and pausing their competition for the good of the overall TV business — had some legs. Then the Motion Picture Academy went and struck a megadeal with YouTube to move the Oscars to the platform in 2029 — in a pact said to be in the nine-figure range.

Jalyn Hall, Daniel Radcliffe, Erika Alexander and Tracy Morgan star in "The Fall and Rise of Reggie Dinkins."

Now I fear the Television Academy might have YouTube envy, and want to make its own deal with a social media platform (Emmys on TikTok? Or Instagram?) or even a global streamer. But I'd advise it to think long and hard about that.

First off, unlike the Oscars, the Emmys are not a global event. The Primetime Emmys focus on shows broadcast by U.S. outlets for U.S. viewers. Sure, some international series and plenty of British dramas make their way to the Emmys, because they're U.S. co-productions. (Apologies to Canada's Emmy-ineligible "Heated Rivalry," which was not.) But this is a domestic award, so there's not much selling point to the idea that viewers in Spain or India could tune in on Netflix.

Also, sealing a deal with just one outlet would alienate everyone else in the Emmy game. I think it would ultimately leave rivals less interested in campaigning for the awards themselves if their competitor had exclusive rights to the ceremony. And there should be a broadcast component no matter what — megahits like "Tracker" and "High Potential" are reminders that broadcast still helps drive awareness and intent to view, even for audience members who watch those shows on a streamer.

So either expand the wheel to include streamers alongside the broadcast networks, renew the plan already in place — or go with gusto for my roadblock idea.

As for this year, Jesse Collins Entertainment is back for a fourth time to produce, and now they must figure out a host (or hosts). NBC, of course, has Jimmy Fallon and Seth Meyers on tap — but both have done the gig and I'm guessing aren't champing at the bit to return. Look deeper inside NBC and Peacock, and there are several options: Keke Palmer ("The Burbs"), Alan Cumming ("The Traitors") and Amy Poehler (the upcoming "Dig") come to mind.

A wild choice could be Seth MacFarlane, who produces "Ted" and "The Burbs" for Peacock — and yes, given the talk over the years about his widely panned Oscar hosting gig, this could be a redemption.

But my real out-of-the-box choice is the stars of NBC's "The Fall and Rise of Reggie Dinkins." This comedy needs more attention, and putting Tracy Morgan, Erika Alexander, Bobby Moynihan and Daniel Radcliffe together onstage would be fun. "Reggie Dinkins" viewers know this cast has hysterical chemistry, and there'd be plenty of room for off-the-cuff improv energy.

In particular, Morgan and Moynihan could bring some "Saturday Night Live" spirit to the show (and perhaps recruit some of their former "SNL" co-stars). Radcliffe knows his way around a stage. And Alexander could make sure the show stays on the rails.

At a recent NBC Emmy luncheon, I broached the notion with the "Reggie Dinkins" cast — and they're all in. "That's a brilliant idea," Alexander said. "How can we make that happen?" Morgan knew: "That's *Variety* right there. He's probably going to make it happen!"

OK, Tracy, let's see if we can convince the TV Academy to take my Emmy roadblock pitch ... and throw in the "Reggie Dinkins" cast as this year's hosts for good measure.

Megahits like "High Potential" are reminders that broadcast still drives awareness and intent to view.



2

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Shailene Woodley and Thomas Doherty

Disney Toast to TV

Soho House Holloway, West Hollywood
APRIL 27

Thomas Doherty joked to *Variety* that he and his "Paradise" co-star **Shailene Woodley** are looking to make a rom-com together. Woodley insisted, "That's not a joke — we're going to make it happen!" "Love Story" star **Paul Anthony Kelly** said he'd love to follow the hit FX series with a film noir: "It would be awesome to do a '30s-style down-on-his-luck character or reenvision [Raymond Chandler's] Marlowe."

'The Devil Wears Prada 2' Screening

Metrograph, New York APRIL 28

At the Instagram and Threads-hosted screening and Q&A, **Stanley Tucci** reflected on returning to play Runway fashion director Nigel Kipling in the much-anticipated sequel. "The night before [shooting], I got so nervous," he said, adding, "But then we started shooting, and then after the first line, I went, 'Oh, yeah, I know how to do it.' It was easy and wonderful, and it felt safe."



Anne Hathaway, Stanley Tucci and Emily Blunt



Bill Pullman, Sally Field and Lewis Pullman

'Remarkably Bright Creatures' Premiere

Netflix Tudum Theater, Hollywood APRIL 27

Sally Field and **Lewis Pullman** star as a widow and a down-on-his-luck musician who form a friendship while working at an aquarium. "The second he came in, there was no 'How do you do' almost. We just began," Field told *Variety* of the pair's chemistry read. "And we improvised, and we began playing with each other in scenes." Pullman said, "She just wanted to jump into it because she's so excited and invigorated and wants to play."



Uzo Aduba



Vin Diesel



Stephen Colbert and Julianna Margulies



Sam Rockwell

William O. Douglas Award Dinner

Beverly Wilshire, Beverly Hills **APRIL 27**

While being honored at the Public Counsel gala, **Kamala Harris** called the Trump administration "corrupt, incompetent [and] callous," and warned about efforts to gut the Voting Rights Act. "They think long term and they are ruthless," she said, adding, "If there's press in the room, I don't care if you quote me — we have to be ruthless, too."



Rita Moreno



Kamala Harris

Chaplin Award Gala

Alice Tully Hall, New York **APRIL 27**

George Clooney got political while being honored at the Film at Lincoln Center benefit just two days after a gunman stormed the White House Correspondents' Dinner. "I disagree with everything that this administration stands for, but there's no place for the kind of violence we saw two nights ago in Washington, D.C.," the Oscar winner said. "Nor is there a room for this kind of violence in Minnesota with Alex Pretti or Renée Good."



George and Amal Clooney

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CANNES 2026

Bonjour, Bardem

BY DANIEL
D'ADDARIO

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY XAVI GORDO

With the Cannes Film
Festival premiere of
'The Beloved' and the
blockbuster 'Dune: Part
Three' later this year,
Javier Bardem is *en vogue*

n!



A

As Javier Bardem was preparing to present at this year's Oscars, one very famous incident loomed large in his mind. "Vanessa Redgrave, back in the '70s," he recalls recently. When the British actress won a supporting actress Oscar for "Julia" in 1978, she referred to critics of her producing a documentary about Palestine as "Zionist hoodlums." Watching the clip now, the scattered boos from the crowd are striking. Later in the ceremony, the screenwriter Paddy Chayefsky, there as a presenter, condemned Redgrave from the stage. Bardem was prepared for similar opprobrium. And he didn't mind. "I was ready," he says, miming a lusty sort of disapproval, "for the 'Boo!'"

Presenting the award for international feature alongside Priyanka Chopra Jonas, though, Bardem got the precise opposite reaction. "No to war, and free Palestine," Bardem declared simply. The crowd erupted. The previous September, the Spanish actor had worn a keffiyeh at the Emmys, where he was nominated for his supporting role in "Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story." On the red carpet before the ceremony, he told *Variety* that he "cannot work with someone who justifies or supports the genocide" in Gaza.

Bardem's outspokenly activist language is potentially risky in the context of an industry where, for instance, Paramount Skydance CEO David Ellison — who may soon control Warner Bros. too — has condemned boycotts of Israel. In Trump's second term, most of Hollywood has been silent at best or actively contorting itself to please the president at worst. Which means that

Bardem has stood out all the more — making activism a cornerstone of his persona.

He has, unlike Redgrave, emerged largely unscathed. What motivates him to speak out? "It's funny," he says, "because the question would be, how come I wouldn't?" He gestures to the tape recorders I've set up between us in a hotel suite in Madrid, the city where he lives with his wife, Penélope Cruz, and their two children. "I've always felt that I have microphones and recorders recording my voice, and I have the right to denounce what I think is wrong." (Bardem, while also criticizing Israel's yearslong response to Oct. 7, refers to the attacks of that day as "a horrible crime committed by Hamas — there's not enough papers and TVs to say it.")

Still, there'd seem to be no small measure of career peril for Bardem, who's been riding a hot streak lately. Nearly 20 years after his Oscar win for playing the practically satanic villain of 2007's "No Country for Old Men," Bardem is at home in both blockbusters and auteur work. After the Cannes Film Festival this month, where he'll be promoting Rodrigo Sorogoyen's intimate family drama "The Beloved," Bardem will appear in Apple TV's limited-series reimagining of "Cape Fear," taking on the psychopath role previously played by Robert Mitchum and Robert De Niro; the end of the year brings "Dune: Part Three," in which he'll reprise his role as tribal leader Stilgar, a key ally to Timothée Chalamet's conflicted Paul Atreides. He's also filmed "Bunker," a drama that reunites him on-screen with Cruz. All of that might seem in danger of evaporating — for instance, Bardem's fellow Oscar winner Susan Sarandon has said she was fired by her agent for being vocal about Israel's actions in Gaza.

"That tells you how wrong this whole system is," Bardem says. "She was one of the first ones to go there. And then she got that professional punishment." Has Bardem received any at all? "Yes, I've heard things: *They were going to call you about that project, but that's gone. Or This brand was going to ask you to do the campaign, but they cannot.* It's fine. I live in Spain. American studios are not the only place."

What's more, Bardem feels as much support as he does tension. "Some people will put you on a blacklist. I cannot tell you if that's true or not — I don't have the facts. What I do have the facts about are the new people that are calling you because they want you in their project. That makes me feel that the narrative that they've been using for so long is changing." After all, he says, he expected to be booed at the Academy Awards. Instead, "the reaction in the theater was an ovation."



B

Bardem is home only for a short time — he's leaving his family to head to London to star in "Hello & Paris," a romantic comedy in which he plays opposite Kate Hudson, and he's already changed out of the tuxedo he wore for the cover shoot into a graphic tee with a picture of a skydiver and black sneakers. But the Madrid setting is appropriate — we're meeting to discuss a Spanish film. Riding high after last year's "Sirāt" won a Cannes prize and was nominated for multiple Oscars, Spain has three films in competition at this year's fest. (That's one more than the U.S. has, for those keeping score.)

In "The Beloved" (called "El Ser Querido" in Spanish), Bardem plays famed director Esteban Martínez. The auteur casts his daughter, played by Victoria Luengo, with whom he has a complicated relationship, in his new film. Those who might see echoes of "Sentimental Value" — which won Cannes' second prize last year before winning the international feature Oscar Bardem presented — wouldn't be wrong, but "The Beloved" may be more unsparing in its evaluation of both father's and daughter's flaws. It's fur-





Jacket: Brunello Cucinelli; Shirt: Zegna; Pants: Fursac; Sneakers: Zegna

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ther testament to its star's ability and desire to probe the limits of experience.

Bardem, in conversation, compels with grand laughs and passionate argument. "He's a moving human being," his friend and past co-star Julia Roberts says. "The things that he finds funny are incredibly funny, and the things that he's serious about, he's incredibly serious about." On-screen, as well, Bardem has a remarkable gift for going big — part of why his monstrous performance in "No Country for Old Men" is so terrifying is Bardem's commitment to Anton Chigurh's intensity and menace. In the years since, he's been a comically lusty painter ("Vicky Cristina Barcelona"), a bleached-blond, queer-coded Bond villain ("Skyfall") and even the thundering King Triton (Disney's remake of "The Little Mermaid"). Bardem gets to stretch again in the forthcoming "Cape Fear" series (due on Apple TV June 5); his version of Max Cady, the freed convict determined to make his former lawyer's life a living hell, shares a name and a facility for violence with De Niro's version from Martin Scorsese's modern classic, but little else. The projects, too, share only a rough plot outline and a pushed-to-11 sense of drama. "If it was a pure remake, I would have never dared," Bardem says. "But the essence of the craziness, of the nightmare, of the fever dream of 'Cape Fear,' is there."

Bardem knows how to give fever dream. Roberts, who insisted on casting Bardem as her happily-ever-after in 2010's "Eat Pray Love" even after "No Country for Old Men" made him the ultimate baddie, remarks, "I adore him and admire him so deeply. He's also terrifying! This new show he has coming out — I will not be watching this. I barely made it through the trailer!"

But in "The Beloved," returning to the kind of low-key character drama that first got him noticed in movies like "Before Night Falls" and "The Sea Inside," Bardem now plays nothing less and nothing more than a flawed human. In a bit of good news for those who love the actor, the script (written by Sorogoyen and Isabel Peña) gives him plenty of room to vamp.

In one scene, for instance, Bardem's character, who insists on

everyone else's professionalism, has an utterly unprofessional breakdown while filming under the baking sun. "That takes us directly to the toxic masculinity of his generation and his age — which is my age, which is my culture, which is Spain," Bardem says. Born in 1969 under the authoritarian reign of Francisco Franco, Bardem says that he absorbed certain lessons about what it is to be a man. "We were educated in a culture that was giving us all we wanted, and we took for granted that we are way more powerful and more in control — *we are the driving force, as men*. That is absolutely wrong in every sense," Bardem notes with pride that the only characters in "The Beloved" who stand up to Esteban are women.

Bardem's swaggering auteur might not be out of place in the so-called manosphere, the culture of chauvinism that's pushing a generation of boys into misogyny. "I have a 15-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl, so I'm very sensitive in every aspect," Bardem says. "One of the things I'm very afraid of is that we're going backwards." He cites the American president, thousands of miles from where we sit: "Trump, prosecuted for abuse of women, and he's still in the White House and nothing has happened — that gives you a blank check to do whatever you want."

Bardem has a tendency to apologize for his English, which he hardly needs to do. And back when he won his Oscar, he delivered the most emotional section of his acceptance speech in Spanish. "Mama," he said addressing her as she watched from the audience, "this is for you," thanking his grandparents as well and adding, "This is for the Spanish performers who, like you, have brought dignity and pride to our profession."

His mother, Pilar Bardem, was an actress — she won a Goya (the Spanish equivalent of an Oscar) in 1996. And Bardem credits her with shaking him of whatever other cultural messaging he might have received. "My parents separated when I was 3," Bardem says. (Divorce was not then legal, and Pilar Bardem's choice of career further alienated her from her peers. "Being an actress in the '60s and '70s — in Spain, that would have been less than being a prostitute," he says.)

"We were educated in a culture that was giving us all we wanted, and we took for granted that we are way more powerful and more in control — *we are the driving force, as men*. That is absolutely wrong in every sense."

JAVIER BARDEM

Bardem learned early on about the weaknesses underlying men's machismo. "My father was an absence — he did what he could, and what he was able to do obviously was not enough, but I forgive him." Bardem claims his father abused his mother and dominated the family space when around: "He was very imposing, and he suffered a lot for that, because at the end of the day, he was alone." Javier took Pilar, who died in 2021, as his role model: "My mother fought very hard to find her own place and to find her dignity — and I worship her. I worship her sacrifice, and her love and her strength."

The 1997 Pedro Almodóvar film "Live Flesh" is notable in one regard: It brought together Javier Bardem, Pilar Bardem and Penélope Cruz. (At the start of the film, Cruz's character gives birth on a Madrid bus; Pilar Bardem, in a bit of casting kismet, assists her.) This wasn't the first or the last time the future married couple appeared on-screen together; they met when Bardem was 21 and Cruz was 16 in the romance "Jamón Jamón" (which translates to "Ham Ham") and reunited in 2008's "Vicky Cristina Barcelona," playing tempestuous artists in love.

Their real lives are somewhat more sedate. "At home, we don't talk much about work," Bardem says. "We don't have posters or photos or anything that reminds us of what we do for a living" (They did hold on to their his-and-hers Oscars — Cruz won the prize for "Vicky Cristina Barcelona" — but keep them out of sight.) "We don't waste too much time talking about work, though we love what we do. We try to compartmentalize life and fiction."

Roberts, who's been their guest in Madrid, declares, "It just feels good when you're around them and see them as a family. Paella on Sunday — don't miss it!"

All this normalcy presents an unusual challenge when — as they just did — Cruz and Bardem act together. "Bunker," written and directed by Oscar winner Florian Zeller of "The Father," is, Bardem says, "a marriage story." The pair sat and discussed the script — they both liked it and were inclined to

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do it, and in the midst of raising a teenager and a preteen, the idea of catching up at work had its appeal too.

"It's a beautiful story that is going to help us see again," Bardem says. "Because sometimes you are immersed in your daily shit and the kids and the house, and it's like — when do you sit down and look at each other again? When do you start to breathe again, and take the other person in?" Working together forced some reflection. "OK, now we are obliged to sit down, look at ourselves, listen to each other and be in emotional contact for many hours."

Not that that's a hardship. Bardem and Cruz tend to keep their relationship private and usually don't appear at one another's premieres. (The 2022 Oscars, at which Bardem was nominated for "Being the Ricardos" and Cruz for "Parallel Mothers," represented a rare public date night.) But reflecting on the work he just did with Cruz has made Bardem somewhat expansive. "She's a woman I'm so blessed by having had the chance to be at the same time, in the same place, in life," he says. "It's important that you respect and support your partner, but also that you admire that person for what she is, for what she does. Penélope is an amazing, beautiful, good human being — the way she relates to her family, to her friends, to our kids, to me, to herself. It's been a lot of years, and I haven't seen a hint of malice in her." Bardem is, somehow, only just getting started. "On top of that, she's amazingly fucking beautiful!"



Penelope Cruz, director Florian Zeller and Javier Bardem on the set of "Bunker"

he says. "When I see her being photographed on some magazines, I go, *Is that my wife? Jesus, is it? It must be!*"

It's striking that Bardem, for all his contentment in family life, has never been more in demand as an actor: He is due back on the "Hello & Paris" set shortly, after a period of filming that's taken him to locations such as Budapest ("Dune"), Atlanta ("Cape Fear") and the United Kingdom ("F1"). "I don't have musts in my contract that have to do with bigger trailers or luxurious suites," he says. "The only thing I do pay attention to is, no more than two weeks away from my family." Since his older child was born, one or the other parent has remained at home continuously — and on "Bunker," which shot in Madrid, both were home for dinner. "You feel like you're doing a normal job, for once. You wake up, you go to work and you come back at night."

T

Talking to Bardem is not unlike talking to another parent at school dropoff in Brooklyn; his concerns, beyond what film to make next, are similar to my own. Bardem's 15-year-old "got his first phone less than a year ago. No social media, of course," he says. "They work with computers at school, which we are OK with and not OK with." What Bardem and Cruz hope for, the actor says, is that their children learn to sit with themselves, and they've tried to teach them to meditate. "We try to make them understand the importance of being bored, of wasting your time, of sitting down and looking at the ceiling." This refusal to be distracted is where creativity originates. "The younger generation has less patience, less attention, less care in detail," he says. "We are

all living on a fast pace, and it takes a lot of courage to take the time to sit down and enjoy something for what it is, without thinking you are missing something else. It's what we are consuming on a daily basis through our phones — and this attention deficit we are all having."

The failure to pay attention, Bardem says, is why the theatrical experience is so important. "You're going to see images and hear sounds made by others, and your vision is going to be manipulated. You need to be focused, and you need to let yourself go."

Fans of "Dune," the decade's most subversive and intriguing big-screen franchise, will get that experience at the end of the year. Notably, Imax, the defining premium exhibition format, chose to commit its theaters to "Dune: Part Three" over Marvel's "Avengers: Doomsday." (The two films, likely to be among the year's biggest, are both due out Dec. 18.)

When he was in the mix to be cast in one of the many male roles in "Dune," Bardem privately hoped for Stilgar, a leader whose utter belief in Paul's



potential gives the younger man the loyalty of the Fremen. “As much as Aragorn in ‘Lord of the Rings’ — they’re those characters that when you read, you feel like, ‘Wow.’”

“I wanted an actor who would fully immerse himself in Fremen culture and bring it to life,” says “Dune” director Denis Villeneuve by email. “I needed someone who wouldn’t judge this character, and would instead embrace Stilgar’s worldview.”

Bardem brings a direct, unjudgmental approach — and a dollop of wit — to Stilgar’s total devotion to his cause. But is Stilgar’s stated belief that Paul is the Lisan al-Gaib, the prophet the Fremen have been awaiting, accurate? “Whether he is or is not,” Bardem says, “is not relevant. I want to believe he is, and I want my people to believe he is, because we need him.”

“Dune: Part Two,” released in 2024, ended with Paul launching a “holy war” on his enemies, urged on by Stilgar. (“Stilgar is a true tragic figure,” writes Villeneuve. “As human beings, we all need a way to make peace with our human

condition. Some choose religion to achieve this. Stilgar is one of them.”) And Stilgar’s advocacy for Paul, Bardem says, “takes you to a very extreme situation. But that’s what we’re dealing with today. Religious reasoning for bombing countries. Religion is a very dangerous weapon of manipulation and fear, and a tool to excuse the most horrible violence. And you see that in Stilgar — because, in the third one, you’re now seeing the consequence of that.”

“Dune” is, for Bardem, a powerful political statement; it also represents years of his working life, spent alongside Chalamet, the most promising — and polarizing — young actor working today. “It was 2019 when we started shooting ‘Dune 1,’” he says. “It’s been six years, a very important six years in his growing — physically, emotionally, professionally. It has been very, very powerful on his trajectory. He has grown up as an actor and as a person during these three films.” Bardem compares Chalamet to Paul Atreides, who begins in a place of naive curiosity. “He was like, ‘Hey! I’m here! What’s all this about?’ But he’s always been very generous, very intelligent, and always observing. That kid, you could see how much he loves this work, how much he was trying to breathe in everything. He was always observing.”

Bardem bursts into a hearty laugh — perhaps recalling the rollicking Oscar season through which Chalamet just barnstormed. “And now we have to observe him!”

Bardem is also among the biggest names in a Cannes competition lineup that seems — especially in comparison with recent years, when everyone from Jennifer Lawrence to Demi Moore to Selena Gomez has appeared on the Croisette — heavier on emerging-auteur promise than on star power. But he also comes as an actor with a long, rich history with the festival.

In 2005, for instance, Bardem was a Cannes juror under the Serbian filmmaker Emir Kusturica; his fellow jurors included Salma Hayek, John Woo and Toni Morrison. “We were having fun, and at the same time we were like sol-

“The younger generation has less patience, less attention, less care in detail. We are all living on a fast pace, and it takes a lot of courage to take the time to sit down and enjoy something for what it is, without thinking you are missing something else.”

JAVIER BARDEM

diers,” he says. “We were watching every movie together. It’s a tough job — an average of two to three films per day.” Bardem compares his jury service to acting, in that both jobs require the practitioner to be “a vessel”: “It’s like, ‘I have a responsibility. A lot of people’s work and dreams have been put into this. Pay attention. Don’t have any prejudice. Be fair with your own taste, and don’t be guided by anything else.’”

That was more than 20 years ago, when Bardem was an actor only beginning to make himself known beyond Spanish-language cinema. (His jury gave best actor to Tommy Lee Jones, with whom Bardem would appear in “No Country for Old Men,” another Cannes title, two years later.)

“I’ve been in many realities of Cannes,” he says. “I’ve been a juror. I’ve been recognized with this amazing award, a recognition that, for me, is one of the most important in the world.” (He won best actor in 2010 for Alejandro González Iñárritu’s heartbreaking character drama “Biutiful.”) “At the same time, I’ve been with movies that were killed and got stones thrown at.” (In 2016, Cannes audiences booed “The Last Face,” a Sean Penn-directed drama about humanitarians in Liberia and South Sudan in which Bardem starred alongside Charlize Theron.)

Through good times at the festival and ill, though, Bardem has one consistent through-line: the moment when he’s greeted by the festival’s director, Thierry Frémaux: “I always remember the nice, warm, loving hug of Thierry at the top of those red stairs — knowing the impossible pressure that he has on his shoulders.”

Even a man raised in the culture of machismo can admit it feels heartening to receive a bit of encouragement. “He welcomes you warmly and heartily, because he loves cinema so much that he’s happy you have the opportunity as a filmmaker to see your movie on that screen,” Bardem says, beaming. “That’s what I’m looking for.” ●

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VARIETY



C

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CANNES 2026

The French Connection

How Pierre-Antoine
Capton turned
Mediawan into an
entertainment giant
and built a bridge between
Hollywood and Europe

BY ELSA
KESLASSY

39

A

A lot was riding on the meeting at JP Morgan. It was March 2015, and Pierre-Antoine Capton needed to convince a room filled with 40 bankers and lawyers that they should back Mediawan, a French company he believed could one day be Europe's answer to the Hollywood conglomerates. Capton, a successful television producer, had been enlisted by telecom billionaire Xavier Niel and banker Matthieu Pigasse to raise \$300 million for the new venture, despite the fact that he had no background in finance. For Niel and Pigasse, the idea was simple: raise capital through an IPO, make one major acquisition, cash out and move on. But Capton had different plans.

When asked by the moneymen about his strategy, Capton said, in French, "My strategy for what? It's for you to explain to me what I'm supposed to do." Then he added, "Also, I wanted to tell you that I don't speak English."

"They all looked down at their shoes," Capton says, laughing.

Capton can afford to laugh now — earlier this year, he pulled off one of the biggest M&A deals of the year, acquiring Peter Chernin's North Road Company, a top Netflix supplier and the producer of the streamer's most popular reality hit, "Love Is Blind."

In recent years, Mediawan has been on a spree, buying stakes in Brad Pitt's Plan B and "Slow Horses" producer See-Saw Films. The company has launched an international venture with Margot Robbie's LuckyChap and partnered with LeBron James' SpringHill and Florian Zeller's Blue Morning Pictures. Just over a decade since the meeting with JP Morgan, Mediawan boasts an

annual revenue of roughly \$2.3 billion and has investments in nearly 100 production companies across 15 countries, including France's top two production banners, Chapter 2 and Chi-Fou-Mi. All told, Mediawan's films grossed \$1 billion at the worldwide box office last year and the company controls blockbuster IP like "Call My Agent!" and the animated franchise "Miraculous."

And Capton's not done. He thinks that Mediawan has an opportunity to consolidate companies in its part of the world into an entertainment leviathan not unlike what David Ellison is attempting to build with Warner Bros. and Paramount. "There will be two giants in Europe and maybe two independent giants in the U.S. My ambition pushes me to want to be the biggest and to become one of the future consolidators," he says.

Capton was inspired to build Mediawan out of professional frustration. While he was working as an independent producer, he partnered with Zeller, then a French playwright whose searing family dramas "The Son" and "The Father" were performed to great success on stages all over the world. But when it came time for "The Father" to make the leap to the big screen, Zeller struggled to find financing. "France is good at luxury, good at fashion, but we are also a country of extraordinary creative talent, and we should be helping them reach the world," Capton says.

Capton felt that a company like Mediawan could serve as a bridge between Hollywood and Europe, helping talent on both sides of the Atlantic access capital. The timing was right: Blockbuster U.S. films have long been embraced around the world, but increasingly mass audiences are ignoring language barriers and watching shows and movies from other countries. That's turned everything from "Squid Game" to "Call My Agent!" into global phenoms.

North Road's Chernin says he was drawn to Mediawan for its entrepreneurial culture and global ambition. "Pierre-Antoine is a genuinely creative person," Chernin says. "He watches things; he reads things; he cares about them. Most people are either creative or entrepreneurial. Very few can do both. The fact that he can do both, at least half the time in a different language, makes him remarkable."

C

Capton is surprisingly down-to-earth for a media mogul who counts George Clooney and Emmanuel Macron as friends. He was born into a middle-class family in Normandy, his father, a driving instructor, his mother, the owner of a hair salon. They worked long hours, and Capton says he was partly raised by his grandmother. "We'd watch American sitcoms and all sorts of shows," he says. "I traveled to other places thanks to documentaries. I educated myself with television." No program left a bigger impact on Capton in the mid-'90s than "Friends." He says he was in love with Jennifer Aniston and couldn't wait to watch the next episode every week. It made him think about one day joining the entertainment business as one of the power brokers making things run.

But first he needed his big break. Capton moved to Paris straight out of high school and joined Groupe AB followed by the flagship channel Canal+ as an intern. After he came up with the idea of programming a full season of "Friends" in a 24-episode bloc, Canal+ hired him. But when the company went through major restructuring a couple years later, Capton took a severance package of 50,000 francs and used it to launch Troisième Oeil Productions (now part of Mediawan). Troisième Oeil produced the show "Starmag," which ran for 10 years. Troisième Oeil is now behind some of France's top-rated primetime talk shows, including "C à Vous," which airs on the French public broadcaster France Télévisions and features movie stars, politicians and other prominent figures.

Niel recalls that bringing Capton into Mediawan was almost instinctive. He had charisma, a reputation for relentless energy, a sharp eye for talent and a track record of producing well-loved shows and documentaries. "Pierre-Antoine is the kind of guy who always comes to you with ideas, saying, 'We could do something fun together.' Calling him for Mediawan felt natural," Niel says.

From the beginning, Mediawan's founders stood apart from tradi-

Brad Pitt on the set of Apple's "F1"



tional corporate players. Niel is a self-made billionaire who disrupted France's telecom scene with his company, the internet service provider Free, and investments in tech startups. Pigasse owns left-leaning media outlets including Le Monde.

Capton's initial deals drew skepticism from the industry. When Mediawan's first big acquisition was Groupe AB — a library of 1980s sitcoms — the industry scoffed. "People thought we had raised all that money to buy something unsexy," Capton says.

When Mediawan acquired Mon Voisin Productions, the company behind "Call My Agent!," "people said it had only one show." Yet that program became one of Netflix's biggest French-language hits, and is being expanded into a film that will include cameos from Clooney and Eva Longoria. A U.S. spinoff is in development at HBO, with Plan B and SpringHill producing.

When Mediawan bought Plan B in December 2022 in a deal valued at approximately \$300 million, Capton heard the same doubts. "People said we'd paid too much for a company that's past their prime," Capton says. "And last year, they delivered 'Adolescence' and 'Fl.'"

Elisabeth d'Arvieu, CEO of Mediawan Pictures, who has worked closely with Capton, calls the Plan B deal a turning point. "Until that partnership, we were still essentially perceived as a French group with a

footprint across Europe, and therefore virtually unknown in the United States," she says. "Suddenly, with Plan B, people saw us as a major European studio."

The acquisition also helped Mediawan draw other prestige producers, notably Lorenzo Mieli ("Challengers") and Mario Gianani ("My Brilliant Friend"), who stepped down from Fremantle and partnered with Mediawan in 2024 to launch Our Films, which will be in Cannes with Pawel Pawlikowski's "Fatherland" — one of the six movies that Mediawan will have at Cannes.

But the acquisitions are only half the story. What makes Mediawan's model different is how these deals are structured and financed. The key mechanism is that sellers are paid partly in Mediawan shares. As such, Plan B's Pitt, Jeremy Kleiner and Dede Gardner, North Road's Chernin and See-Saw Films' Iain Canning and Emile Sherman are all now Mediawan stakeholders. "We didn't buy Plan B outright," says Niel. "We became partners with Jeremy, Dede and Brad. We didn't buy Margot Robbie — we became partners with Margot Robbie. We didn't buy North Road — we became partners with Peter Chernin."

For Gardner and Kleiner, the appeal in being part of Mediawan lies in this balance between independence and support. "They embrace independence while strengthening what we do," Kleiner says. Gardner adds, "That mix is very hard to achieve. You're connected to people working in different languages, different systems, different ways of thinking."

Despite its increasing global influence, Mediawan faces the same seemingly insurmountable issue as other production companies do: It doesn't actually own what it makes in the U.S. Instead, it gets a fee for producing its work from the streamers and studios who buy its pitches. "That's the Hollywood model. We're not going to change that; the rights stay with the studios," Capton says. "But at the same time, we earn a percentage of the profits on all transactions."

Capton hints that Mediawan is exploring different ways to bring its shows and films to audiences in the U.S., possibly by distributing the content itself. "If we want to have more rights, we need to become a studio," he says. "That's part of the discussions we're having right now."

Europe is more favorable for independent producers when it comes to rights ownership. French regulation requires platforms to split rights with producers, who get ownership of their IP back after a three-year licensing period. Plan B Europe and LuckyChap International was formed for this very reason. "Getting films and shows financed directly from American commissioners is a big part of our business, but having other mechanisms for getting

stories made and achieved through the U.K., France, Spain, Italy — given that conditions for making things in those places are potentially more favorable to producers — that was appealing," says Kleiner.

"In the U.S., you can make more money up front selling to platforms, but you don't own your IP. In Europe, you make less up front, but you own it," says Chernin. "The question is: Do you want short-term money or long-term value?"

Capton's expanding role as a connector between France and the global entertainment industry has become a strategic asset in its own right. He has developed a close relationship with Macron since producing a documentary on his presidential campaign in 2017. "He is someone for whom I have a lot of respect, and to whom the French creative system owes a lot," says Capton, who recently accompanied the president on a state visit to Japan and South Korea, where he met with Oscar-winning "Parasite" director Bong Joon Ho.

Capton already has a large network in Hollywood as well. Ellison, Paramount chairman and the likely future owner of Warner Bros. Discovery, calls him "a true champion of the creative community — someone who backs talent and storytelling with real conviction."

Capton's role as an ambassador between Hollywood and Europe extends to doing personal favors. When Clooney wanted French citizenship for himself and his family, Capton helped. "I try to build a bridge between two worlds," he says.

Capton has just returned from a six-week sprint through L.A., Mexico, Seoul, Japan and London — meeting with partners, filmmakers, and studio heads along the way. He's buzzing with ideas about collaborations and deals he wants to sign.

"I don't do things for money — that's not what guides me," Capton says. "I love content, and I want to make more of it. If I manage to keep going with the same drive, we're going to win in the end." ●

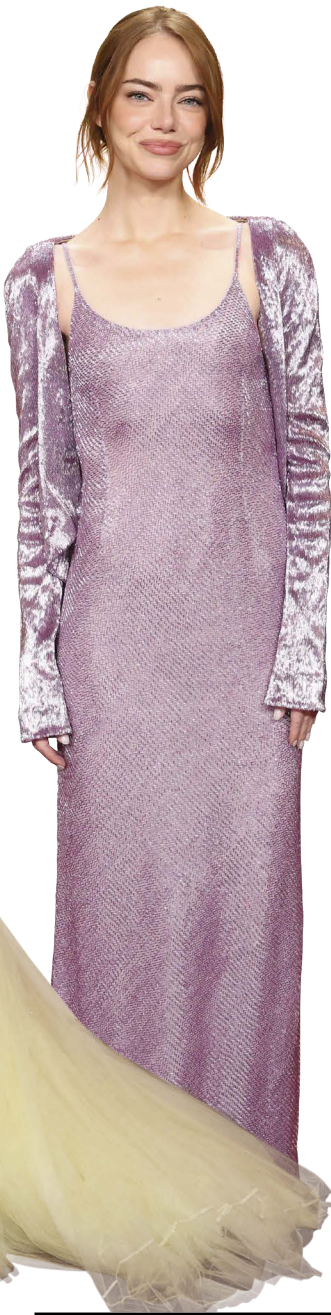
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FELICITY JONES

Jones rang in spring at the 2026 Oscars, wearing a pale-yellow Prada gown, finished with a crystal-scattered tulle overlay and gentle train.



EMMA STONE

At the 2026 Actor Awards, Stone nodded to slinky '90s minimalism in a custom lilac Louis Vuitton slip dress with a matching beaded cardigan.



LAUFEBY

As one of many stars to bring a striking hit of color to the 2026 Golden Globes, Laufey wore a bright orange Balenciaga gown to the ceremony.

CANNES
2026

Flower Power

It's May in Cannes,
and strict black-tie codes
don't stop stars from
embracing bold color

BY ANNA TINGLEY



ROSE BYRNE

Byrne was draped in emerald green at the 2026 Golden Globes, wearing a luxe gown that directly nodded to the now-iconic dress Keira Knightley wore in “Atonement.”

CHASE INFINITI

Infiniti didn’t shy away from a bold outfit for her Oscars debut. At the 2026 ceremony, the “One Battle After Another” star donned a silk lavender Louis Vuitton gown, featuring an asymmetric, multilayered frill draped along the side.

SIMONE ASHLEY

For the “The Devil Wears Prada 2” premiere at Lincoln Center, Ashley went all in on — yes — Prada, wearing a custom chartreuse high-low dress accessorized with rare green Garatti diamonds.

WUNMI MOSAKU

Mosaku marked her second pregnancy with a deeply personal fashion statement. Her neon-yellow Matthew Reisman gown was chosen in part for its symbolic allusion to the Yoruba phrase “Iya ni Wùrà,” meaning “mother is golden.”

This year’s fashion weeks — from New York to Paris — saw some of the most colorful and playful runway shows in recent memory. So it follows that celebrities have reached for color on the red carpet too. Wunmi Mosaku in a high-lighter-yellow gown from Matthew Reisman at the Golden Globes; Emma Stone in a lilac Louis Vuitton slip at the Actor Awards; Simone Ashley in a lime-green Prada dress at the “Devil Wears Prada 2” premiere.

At Cannes, the color is expected to be brighter, louder, bigger. “It’s one of the most exciting festivals for fashion people,” says Dylan Kelly, a fashion creator who

dissects runway and celebrity looks in his viral “Walk With Me” series on Instagram. “It’s a couple months after the major fashion weeks, so there’s a perfect window of time for stylists to pick out new stuff for their clients without it being things we’ve all seen before.”

As the first major film festival of spring, the Riviera red carpet often sees an influx of pastels and floral hues to ring in the season, with even the most restrained dressers stepping out of their comfort zone. (We all remember Isabelle Hubbert’s acid-green fringed gown last year.) With new restrictions implemented in 2025 to curb “naked dresses” and “voluminous” outfits, color has increasingly become a preferred way to stand out on the Croisette.

It’s more than just a seasonal trend or a response to dress guidelines though. Designers this year have indulged in loud patterns and saturated color — clothes that feel unabashedly joyful. It’s a rebuke to the muted palettes and quiet luxury codes that have dominated recent seasons. It’s fun, Prada, awash in canary yellows, lime greens and turquoise blues; Dries Van

Noten, punctuated by hot pinks, tomato reds and corals; Valentino, with monochromatic gowns in sapphire blue and ruby red.

Celebrity stylist Jessica Willis says Cannes is the perfect global stage for stars to debut these looks, many of which were created by newly appointed designers at luxury houses. She’s particularly keen to see Pieter Mulier’s Alaïa Winter/Spring 2026 collection on the Palais steps. “If we don’t see someone in one of the red or yellow ball skirts, I’ll be disappointed.” ●

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2026

12 Films We're Excited to See at Cannes

BY OWEN
GLEIBERMAN
AND GUY LODGE

All of a Sudden (Ryusuke Hamaguchi)

Last time Hamaguchi premiered a film at Cannes, it went pretty well for him: His literate, intimately sprawling grief drama "Drive My Car" won the best screenplay prize en route to a best picture Oscar nomination (and a win for international feature). The Japanese auteur's latest sees him relocating to France for a story of cultural fusion: Cannes regular Virginie Efira ("Benedetta") plays a Parisian nursing home director whose life and outlook are changed by a terminally ill Japanese playwright (Tao Okamoto). Expect Hamaguchi's signature delicacy and perceptiveness, as well as a hefty running time: 197 minutes. — *Guy Lodge*

Right, Isabelle Huppert and Asghar Farhadi on the set of "Parallel Tales"; below, "Camp Miasma"



Right, Rami Malek in "The Man I Love"; below, Sandra Hüller and Hanns Zischler in "Fatherland"

The Beloved (Rodrigo Sorogoyen)

Movies about moviemaking are catnip, and I have a special interest in the rare ones set in the industry's high end — e.g., the way "Sentimental Value" portrayed the relationship between Stellan Skarsgård's legendary director and Renate Reinsve as his troubled actor daughter. "The Beloved" treads similar ground, tracing Javier Bardem as an acclaimed Spanish filmmaker and Victoria Luengo as his less-than-talented actor daughter, as the two reunite to shoot a film. Let the art-meets-life fireworks begin. — *Owen Gleiberman*

From the top: Carole Bethuel; MUBI; Jac Martinez; Agata Grychowska





Butterfly Jam (Kantemir Balagov)

It's been seven years since "Beanpole," the wrenching Russian wartime drama that shot Balagov into the major leagues. Now in exile after condemning Putin's war on Ukraine, and a few years after departing TV's "The Last of Us" over creative differences, Balagov returns with his first American-set feature: a portrait of an aspiring wrestler in New Jersey's Circassian community, with an ensemble that includes Riley Keough, Barry Keoghan and Harry Melling. It will open this year's Directors' Fortnight program — a neat coup for the independent festival sidebar. — *G.L.*

Club Kid (Jordan Firstman)

Firstman was an accomplished short-film maker before becoming a viral comedy sensation in the pandemic era. Now, following a TV role in "I Love L.A." and a wicked self-parody in the queer comedy "Rotting in the Sun," he returns to directing with his first feature — in which he also stars as a fading party promoter forced to grow up when charged with the care of a son he didn't know he had. Will the film, premiering in the Un Certain Regard section, also represent an evolution for Firstman? — *G.L.*

Fatherland (Pawel Pawlikowski)

Pawlikowski, the Polish director of "Cold War" and "Ida," is his own kind of classicist. He started off making documentaries and is a rigorous vérité storyteller, yet every frame of his films can feel as shimmeringly composed as an Ansel Adams photograph. His new movie is the author biopic as road-trip buddy film. It stars Hanns Zischler as Thomas Mann and Sandra Hüller as his actor daughter, Erika, the two of whom embark on a drive across Germany during the Cold War. As a huge fan of movies about conversation, I'm stoked. — *O.G.*

Fjord (Cristian Mungiu)

One of six Neon titles looking to extend the U.S. distributor's six-year stranglehold on the Palme d'Or — and the latest from Romania's only Palme winner — "Fjord" sees Mungiu moving to Norway for the story of a Romanian-Norwegian family relocating to the mother's native village and becoming a point of local suspicion. Mungiu hasn't lost form since breaking out with "4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days." "Beyond the Hills" and "Graduation" were both Cannes prize winners, while "RMN" won raves. And we can expect meaty roles for recent Oscar nominees Sebastian Stan and Renate Reinsve. — *G.L.*

Her Private Hell (Nicolas Winding Refn)

There are certain trigger words that can make you want to see a movie. Here are three of mine: *Nicolas*, *Winding*, *Refn*. Out of sheer curiosity, I'll follow this transgressive prankster anywhere — which, in the case of his first solo feature in 10 years, may mean literally to hell. That's the place from which an American GI (Charles Melton) is out to rescue his daughter, as he crosses paths with a troubled young woman in search of her own father. Will this be one of Refn's postmodern thrillers (like "The Neon Demon," which he brought to Cannes in 2016), or will it be an actual movie like "Drive"? My hope for the latter springs eternal. — *O.G.*

The Man I Love (Ira Sachs)

I like directors like Richard Linklater and Steven Soderbergh, who revel in their eclecticism and are skilled enough to bring it off. Sachs has earned a place in that company. His previous film was the wistful neo-documentary portrait "Peter Hujar's Day"; the one before that was the savage love triangle "Passages." So now, *of course*, he has made a 1980s fantasy musical about an actor (played by Rami Malek) who faces a life-threatening illness. Expect the unexpected. — *O.G.*

Minotaur (Andrey Zvyagintsev)

Arguably Russia's greatest living filmmaker, Zvyagintsev has been to hell and back since his most recent feature, the Oscar-nominated "Loveless," nine years ago: He spent 11 months in the hospital with serious complications from COVID, putting a planned English-language debut on ice. Instead, he returns with a portrait of a Russian oligarch upended by his wife's infidelity.

As ever with this most searing of filmmakers, however, you can look forward to a seemingly personal story to have sharp political resonance. — *G.L.*

Paper Tiger (James Gray)

The celebrated director started out making atmospheric New York crime dramas ("The Yards," "We Own the Night") that were '70s-flavored tone poems. But it's been nearly two decades since Gray worked in the thriller genre. "Paper Tiger" marks his return to it, and in my book that makes it a movie worthy of intense anticipation. Adam Driver and Miles Teller play brothers whose ambition ensnares them in a scheme with Russian mobsters. Scarlett Johansson co-stars in a family drama of high-stakes betrayal. — *O.G.*

Parallel Tales (Asghar Farhadi)

Farhadi is not only one of the masters of Iranian cinema — he's one of the most internationally oriented filmmakers Iran has ever given us. His films have been set in Paris ("The Past") and provincial Spain ("Everybody Knows"), not to mention Tehran ("A Separation") and Shiraz ("A Hero"), and his latest, set again in Paris, is based on the sixth chapter of "Dekalog," the Polish director Krzysztof Kieślowski's 10-part 1989 parable. It's the enticing-sounding tale of an author (Isabelle Huppert) who seeks inspiration from the neighbors she's spying on across the street. Rumor has it that the film's producers want to remake all 10 chapters of "Dekalog." — *O.G.*

Teenage Sex and Death at Camp Miasma (Jane Schoenbrun)

The title alone has your attention, right? Iconoclastic trans filmmaker Schoenbrun's first two features, "We're All Going to the World's Fair" and "I Saw the TV Glow," invited immediate cult status with their blend of horror tropes, personal soul-baring and shape-shifting surrealism. Their latest is described as a queer psychosexual slasher movie starring Gillian Anderson and Hannah Einbinder, but one thing we can be sure of is that it won't be anything you're ready for. — *G.L.* ●

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CANNES 2026

'The White Lotu Crashe Cannes

BY ELSA
KESLASSY

ILLUSTRATION
BY
MAX-O-MATIC

**Mike White's satire about
the rich on vacation heads to
the Croisette for its fourth
season. What could possibly
go wrong?**

46

SS,



I

In Cannes, two rival film teams descend upon the Cannes Film Festival with movies in competition and something to prove. One camps out at a flashy, palatial hotel on the Croisette, while the other is ensconced in a luxurious hilltop hideaway.

That's the premise of Season 4 of Mike White's hit anthology series "The White Lotus," which will deliver a satire on the film industry through its story of American stars coming to the French Riviera — and once again implicating the titular hotel chain.

It's not the first time the Cannes Film Festival has been filmed — "Call My Agent," for instance, shot inside the Palais des Festivals. But it's never been leveraged so grandly. With a budget of around \$120 million, Season 4 is shaping up to be the most ambitious shoot ever to use the festival as its central setting. Production will span roughly seven months and take place across the French Riviera and Paris, with interiors shot at the Château de la Messardière (rebranded White Lotus du Cap), the Hôtel Martinez (White Lotus Cannes) and the Hôtel Lutetia in Paris.

Despite its scale, "The White Lotus" is keeping a low profile. One might expect the south of France to be turned upside down by the HBO production. But while Saint-Tropez's Château de la Messardière has been fully closed, its 32 acres of gardens sealed off from the public, the gated entrance is guarded discreetly by two production workers in street clothes; the crew vehicles are parked at a nearby beach.

Not that it would likely be mobbed even if the production were more noticeable. The show streamed on Prime Video and Canal+ in France (before HBO Max launched its stand-alone service), and has yet to become nearly the phenomenon that it is stateside.

Across cafés, fancy shops and beach bars in Saint-Tropez, reactions ranged from "What's 'White Lotus'?" to "Who's Mike White?" to "I don't watch TV." In Cannes, meanwhile, the Hotel Martínez manager declined to talk due to NDAs, but members of the staff didn't seem aware that the production was coming to shoot — and didn't know the show either.

That hasn't stopped locals from trying to check in. Open casting calls for extras — essential for re-creating the busy festival — have drawn large crowds. And many are discovering the series for the first time in the process.

"I waited in line and it was packed — all ages," says one snack bar worker in Saint-Tropez, who landed a role as a security guard after hearing about the show through a Facebook post that his mother sent him.

Two of his friends also picked up roles as extras.

Within the industry, too, the "White Lotus" buzz is real. French actors turned out in force to audition, with Vincent Cassel — who's starred in U.S. productions from "Black Swan" to "Ocean's Twelve" — landing the role of the hotel manager. The French cast also includes Nadia Tereszkiewicz and Laura Smet, who dropped out of a local TV project to join the production.

As in previous seasons (set in Hawaii, Sicily and Thailand), much of the show's comedy will stem from cultural friction, which France promises to provide in abundance.

And that friction is only amplified by the glamour of Cannes. "When we located the show at the Cannes Film Festival specifically, this idea of fame popped up," producer David Bernad, a close collaborator of White's, said at the Canneseries festival in April. "Who has the world's attention, who are the people that can grab the world's attention, who are the plus-one in a relationship, who's the person that has that power — and how that shapes a dynamic."

Season 4 will track the characters as they navigate "the ups and downs of the festival and the pain of being here and the love and excitement of being here," he said.

A

Among the guests White had invited to this "White Lotus" outing was a character who was no stranger to drama.

White had written a washed-out star who is chasing a comeback, sources tell *Variety*. The role was originally set for Helena Bonham Carter, who exited the HBO production — after nearly a week on set — over "creative differences" involving White's demand for a boisterous performance; within days, she was replaced by Laura Dern. (Dern is playing a character White is developing who will fill a similar place within the ensemble. Given Dern and White's collaborations on the TV series "Enlightened" and the film "Year of the Dog," it may be a more comfortable fit.)



From top: The Martinez Hotel;
Hotel Lutetia

This is familiar territory for White: Before he cast Jennifer Coolidge as the breakout character in Seasons 1 and 2 of “The White Lotus,” he wrote her an unproduced star vehicle called “Saint Patsy” in which Coolidge was to play an actress receiving a lifetime achievement award at a film festival.

But Cannes isn’t just any film festival. Speaking at Canneseries, Bernad recalled an encounter with a waiter that sealed the deal: “We went to dinner, and we had a really specific experience with a waiter and a maître d’, and it was the stereotype.” A show concerned with customer-service dynamics suddenly had a new element to play with: French aloofness. “It was a very funny moment. And I think that it suddenly unlocked what the show is and the dynamics of the show,” he said, adding, “We literally canceled all the other places we were going. We were like, OK, we’re shooting here.”

The culture-clash element fuels the season’s comedy, as sources tell *Variety* one scene that’s been shot depicts a star fighting with a receptionist to have room service delivered after hours.

While the Cannes Film Festival serves as what Bernad calls the “beating heart” of the story, the real action of production will begin once the Croisette empties out. Instead of shooting during the chaos of the actual event, the team will re-create Cannes in the days immediately after it wraps, using the Palais des Festivals, the red carpet and surrounding infrastructure to stage its own version of the festival.

But given that Cannes’ 79th edition is devoid of blockbusters, whatever elements of “The White Lotus” make it into the fest may outshine the official competition. A small crew will capture some color throughout the festival, while White and members of his cast — which also includes Sandra Bernhard, Steve Coogan, Kumail Nanjiani and Rosie Perez — are expected to walk the red carpet at some point during the second week as guests.

French directness has also left an impression on the production team. “It’s liberating,” Bernad said to journalists. “In Hollywood, people are like, ‘Yeah,

great,’ and they leave and they’re like, ‘Wow, this guy’s an idiot.’ So I feel like I have very honest relationships with the French crew.” He added, “It’s the best craft service we’ve had.” He’s also enjoyed seeing “wine glasses everywhere at lunch every day.” Even if no wine is being served, “it feels like an homage to the past in filmmaking.”

For Cannes, the production represents a massive get. After losing out when Season 2 ultimately shot in Sicily, the city mounted a coordinated effort — helped by Canneseries artistic director Albin Lewi — to bring the show to the region.

“They offered them a very tailored setup. All the doors were opened,” Lewi says. City officials also streamlined logistics typically associated with France’s bureaucracy. The production will shoot in Cannes for around 50 days, generating an estimated 17,000 hotel nights.

“When a series shoots for 40 or 50 days, it’s not just about showcasing a location — it’s about bringing the city to life,” says deputy mayor Sophie Mouysset.

The HBO production will, however, depart from the south of France to make way for tourists during the summer, the region’s busiest season. In June, it will shoot interiors at the Hôtel Lutetia — a Parisian landmark built in 1910 that was long considered a second home to Charlie Chaplin and Ernest Hemingway — and in studios before returning to the French Riviera.

Beyond the economic boost for the city, having the Cannes Film Festival serve as the backdrop for the show underscores its enduring pull and aura. Coincidentally, Venice welcomed “The Studio” last month to shoot at a re-creation of the Venice Film Festival — with Seth Rogen, Bryan Cranston and guest stars Madonna and Julia Garner spotted in the City of Canals. But that storyline promises to be nowhere near the scope of “The White Lotus,” which sets its entire season at the event.

“There’s nowhere grander for artists,” Bernad said. “It’s the biggest dream on Earth. I’m like an 8-year-old. All I want to do is have a movie in competition in Cannes and screen at the Palais.” ●

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Euro Trip Before Emmy season heats up, catch up on relaxation with a new adventure

By Emily Longieretta

→ With Oscar season officially over and Emmy season kicking off, it may also be time for a getaway before the madness really begins. (Or, if you can work remotely, in the middle of it!)

And what better way to do just that than an international trip? Here, *Variety* shares suggestions for six cities and where to stay.

● Rome, Italy

For the perfect mix of history and modern charm, stay at the NH Collection Roma

Fori Imperiali. Located in the middle of archaeological treasures, the boutique hotel is in walking distance of the Spanish Steps, the Colosseum, Piazza Venezia and the Trevi Fountain. This is a perfect base for new travelers or returning visitors. Tip: The massive breakfast spread on the roof is a delicious meal with quite a view.

● Barcelona, Spain

Part of the Pulitzer Hotels, Hotel Regina is over 100 years old, sitting in the heart

of Barcelona with 98 renovated rooms. Located perfectly in the Gothic Quarter, Regina is surrounded by stunning cathedrals, medieval streets and a great deal of shopping — from boutiques to top-line designers.

● Paris, France

If you're looking for the best views of the Eiffel Tower, the massive Hyatt Regency Paris Étoile is 34 stories high with 995 modern rooms. Renovated by architect George Wong in 2017, the top floor includes a Regency Club and Windo Skybar with some of the best views of the city. Located in the 17th arrondissement, this spot is a 15-minute walk to the Arc de Triomphe and the Champs-Élysées.

For an upscale stay in the heart of Paris, Hôtel du Louvre is nestled in the heart of the 1st arrondissement. With 164 spacious rooms (including 57 suites), the hotel is directly across from the Louvre Museum

In Ischia, Italy, the Botania Relais & Spa features Michelin Green Star-recognized Il Mirto restaurant.

and adjacent to both the Comédie-Française and Palais Royal. Hôtel du Louvre is in walking distance of the Tuileries Garden and Opéra Garnier. (Plus: bring your dog!)

● Edinburgh, Scotland

When traveling to Edinburgh, especially for the first time, exploring the Royal Mile is a must. One of the best ways to do that is by staying right on the busy street itself at the Witchery, just a stone's throw from Edinburgh Castle. While pricey, the suites are in an actual castle of their own and it's clear why the Witchery is known as one of the most romantic places to stay. Some suites have silk-upholstered walls while

Hidden below the Megaro hotel is a Victorian underground cocktail bar, below; Scotland's the Witchery, bottom, features nine romantic suites, with stunning gothic interiors.



others include heavily draped beds and leather-paneled sitting rooms. If you can't get a room — there are only nine — make a reservation at the restaurant; the romantic, Gothic setting alone in the two dining rooms is worth the splurge.

For a more “Downtown Abbey”-inspired experience, try the Prestonfield House, adjacent to the famous Arthur's Seat that towers over the Scottish capital. Built in 1687 for Sir James Dick, provost of Edinburgh, the mansion was turned into a hotel in 1958. Then, in 2003, it was transformed again when restaurateur James Thomson (who owns the Witchery) restored it to its former glory. The property includes 18 luxury bedrooms and five lavish suites.

For animal lovers, there's a house cat that wanders the property, and morning walks may include up-close encounters with Highland cows or a free-roaming peacock. And, yes, dogs are allowed and welcome.

● London

If you're looking for convenience while visiting London, The Megaro is the place to stay. Located directly across from the busy transportation depot of King's Cross and steps from St. Pancras station, where almost every London Underground line has a stop, The Megaro also includes a major hidden gem: Hokus Pokus, a speak-

It's clear why the Witchery is known as one of the most romantic places to stay.

easy located under the hotel. The bar has a Victorian apothecary feel and yummy, creative cocktails.

● Ischia, Italy

If Capri's crowds aren't to your liking, consider an escape to Ischia, an island in the Gulf of Naples reached by ferry. For accommodations, Botania Relais & Spa is a seven-acre garden retreat focused on open-air living, thermal wellness and connecting to the island. For dining, their Michelin Green Star-recognized Il Mirto restaurant is all the rage. Plus, San Montano Bay and Negombo Thermal Park are close by.

Meanwhile, Palazzo Manzi Terme & Spa, just reopened in April after a three-year renovation, focuses on relaxation and wellness. The 17,700-sq.-ft. spa draws on ancient Roman bathing traditions.



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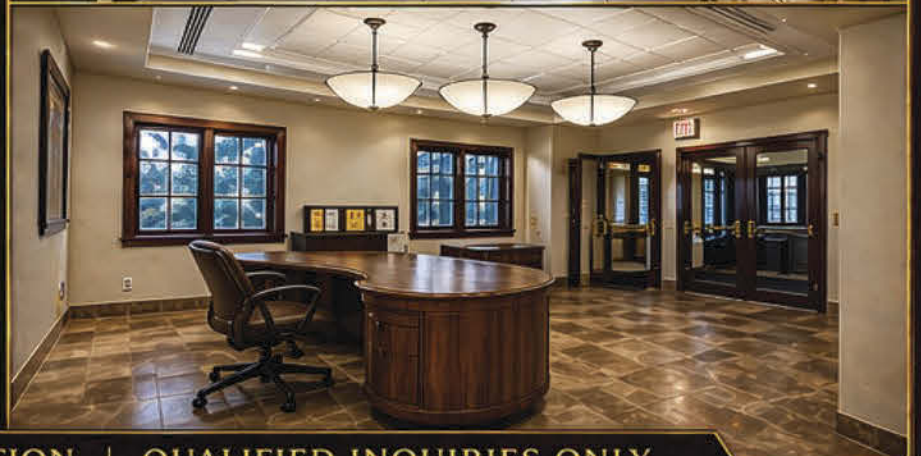


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All Eyes on TV TV's biggest names come together for Variety's annual event

By William Earl



→ The *Variety* FYC TV Fest returns to Los Angeles on May 6, bringing together Emmy contenders and the creative forces behind some of this season's most talked-about series for a day of lively, genre-spanning conversations.

This year's star-studded lineup includes Octavia Spencer, Seth MacFarlane, Josh Charles, Colin Hanks, Constance Zimmer and Billy Magnussen, among others. The event will be attended by an audience of TV Academy and guild voters.

The day kicks off on a comedic note with a conversation around Fox's "Best Medicine" featuring star Josh Charles, who also serves as an executive producer, alongside executive producer Ben Silverman and Liz Tuccillo, showrunner and executive producer. This panel will be moderated by *Variety* TV critic Alison Herman.

Drama takes center stage next with a panel featuring the creators of AMC's "The

Audacity," bringing together showrunner, writer and executive producer Jonathan Glatzer, executive producer Gina Mingacci and cast members Billy Magnussen and Simon Helberg. The session will be moderated by Michael Schneider, *Variety* executive editor, TV.

Later, go behind the scenes of Peacock's breakout comedy series "Ted" as *Variety* sits down with the show's creator, writer, director and executive producer Seth Mac-

Kathy Bates, Jason Ritter and Skye P. Marshall star in CBS' "Matlock."

A "Love Story" panel will pull back the curtain on one of the most intricately crafted episodes.

Farlane, along with actor Alanna Ubach, for a candid conversation on shaping the show's characters and irreverent tone. The session will be moderated by Schneider.

HBO's "It: Welcome to Derry" will take the stage as well, with filmmaker Andy Muschietti, who serves as director and executive producer, and his sister, Barbara Muschietti, who also executive produces. The pair will discuss expanding the "It" film universe into a broader serialized drama for TV, in a talk moderated by Jazz Tangcay, *Variety*'s artisans senior editor.

Variety's session with the supporting stars of CBS' "Matlock" will feature a conversation with actress Skye P. Marshall and actor Jason Ritter, as the duo unpacks the show's character dynamics and what's driving the series' momentum. The "Matlock" panel will be moderated by Emily Longoretta, *Variety*'s director of features.

The panel "Doc Dreams Live: Beyond the Persona" will feature Colin Hanks, director and producer of Prime Video's "John Candy: I Like Me," Andrew Renzi, director of Netflix's "aka Charlie Sheen," and Isabel Castro, director of Netflix's "Selena y Los Dinos." This conversation will unpack the public figures depicted in each doc, navigating legacy and revealing the human story behind the headlines.

FX's headline-making limited series "Love Story" will partake in a panel as well, pulling back the curtain on one of the season's most intricately crafted episodes. Director Gillian Robespierre, writer Juli Weiner, music supervisor Jen Malone, costume designer Rudy Mance and actress Constance Zimmer will break down the storytelling, design and performance choices that brought the episode "Pulling Off a Secret Wedding" to life in a conversation moderated by Tangcay.

Tangcay will also host a conversation about Investigation Discovery's true-crime documentary series "Lost Women of Alaska," with executive producers Octavia Spencer (Orit Entertainment), Matt Robins (October Films) and Christina Douglas (Momentum Content).

Quinta Brunson will be honored at the event with the Mary Tyler Moore Visionary Award, given to an artist who embodies Moore's legacy with groundbreaking achievements in storytelling. Following the presentation, Brunson will have a one-on-one conversation with Schneider.

The event is part of *Variety*'s TV Week, which also includes A Night in the Writer's Room, an evening celebrating scribes; and High Tea: Celebrating Female Directors, an afternoon with some of the most influential women behind the camera.

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Love Is All Around Quinta Brunson's Mary Tyler Moore Visionary Award Closes a Sitcom Circle

By Michael Schneider

→ Emmy-winning “Abbott Elementary” creator and star Quinta Brunson grew up on a diet of Nick at Nite, so she remembers “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” fondly.

“That show went platinum in my household,” she says. “‘The Mary Tyler Moore Show’ was supremely important to me. As a kid, I wasn’t necessarily looking for representation or anything other than ‘this is a really funny show.’ And that theme song is second nature to me!”

Later on, as Brunson pursued her dreams, Moore’s path was a guidepost. So it’s all the more appropriate that Brunson is set to receive the Mary Tyler Moore Visionary Award at *Variety*’s FYC TV Fest on May 6.

“Seeing her first on ‘The Dick Van Dyke Show,’ she gave me this understanding of how the business could work — that you could be a featured player on one show and then a lead on your own show,” says Brunson. “And then have your own business, have your own studio. I remember seeing Mary Tyler Moore on ‘The Oprah Winfrey Show,’ and seeing these two incredible women in media and television just sitting there chatting it up, that was really defining for me. It made me never question whether or not I could do this.”

Even now, Brunson continues to be a student of television. She’s currently rewatching “Girlfriends,” caught up on old episodes of “The Steve Harvey Show” and has given “Dharma & Greg” a try for the first time.

“I remember it from when I was younger, but I never actually watched the series,” she says. “I know it was a big sitcom, and that show was everywhere at the time — but now, I personally barely ever hear it mentioned! It was a very good pilot.”

That’s not all: Brunson is seeking out sitcoms that are long forgotten, like NBC’s “Inside Schwartz,” which starred Breckin Meyer as a sportscaster, whose dating life was interrupted by daydreamed commen-

Quinta Brunson has looked up to Mary Tyler Moore in numerous ways.



tary from real-life sports personalities. It ran for just nine episodes in 2001, but failed to hold on to the audience from its “Friends” lead-in.

“I came across the pilot on YouTube, and now I’m trying to find the rest of it,” Brunson says. “I’m really obsessed with one-season shows from that time, for some reason. A lot of them didn’t get canceled because they weren’t good. There was just so much TV being made that if it didn’t hit that ratings benchmark, it wasn’t going to last that long.”

Brunson is coming off another busy year on “Abbott,” one of the few sitcoms left on broadcast TV that produces an astounding 22 episodes a season. Once the norm, that output size is now considered an Olympic-sized feat.

“Knowing we have a Season 6 on the horizon, which will presumably also be for 22 episodes again, we wanted to start timing and spacing things out differently,” she says. “You don’t want to blow all the possibilities too soon of where these stories can go. Laying this show out from Season 1, I always had different end markers in place for each character, for the school.

But five seasons in, you’re really feeling it: ‘Phew, we got 22 to fill this out.’ It pushes you into areas of expanding in places you couldn’t predict.”

That’s why this year, Brunson and company didn’t take their foot off the gas as they produced two major storylines: Early in the season, “Abbott” had to shut down due to furnace issues, forcing the school to temporarily move to a mall (filmed at the abandoned Westfield Promenade Mall in the L.A. suburb of Woodland Hills, right before it was torn down). And then came a shocker: Late in the season, Janine (Brunson) and Gregory (Tyler James Williams) broke up.

And yes, the fans were up in arms, just as Brunson expected.

“But it’s still shocking when you get the exact reaction you wanted to,” she says. “We are in a modern TV viewing age where people do not have to watch your show. They can watch the phone. There’s a million other things that they could be doing. So you want to make sure that at the very least, you’re surprising.”

Just like Mary Tyler Moore, Quinta Brunson’s got spunk.

A close-up portrait of actress Quinta Brunson. She is smiling gently, looking slightly off-camera to the right. She has short, dark hair styled in a short cut. She is wearing a light beige or cream-colored, long-sleeved button-down shirt with a subtle sheen. A small, round, clear earring is visible in her left ear. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light grey or white.

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We proudly congratulate Quinta Brunson
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Reel Love Cannes topper Thierry Frémaux marks 25 years guiding the fest with a look at the future of cinema

By Elsa Keslassy



Photograph by Marcel Hartmann

→ There is one man at the Cannes Film Festival who is impossible to miss: Thierry Frémaux, the festival's general delegate for the past 25 years. He's the one introducing films at every screening, greeting filmmakers and VIPs at the top of the festival's famous red steps that lead into the Palais theater — and riding his bike between venues. He moves through the world's most glamorous film event with the easy energy of someone who has always cared more about the movies than the showbiz that surrounds them.

Before he was called to Cannes, Frémaux trained in the martial art of judo — a sport that not only promotes physical fitness but relies on the mental discipline of its participants. He even wrote a book about how “judo shaped the man and the film lover that I am.”

That competitive spirit and taste for taking risks still define how he approaches his job.

For those who've known Frémaux since his early days at the festival, he's still the film buff he's always been. “Thierry IS cinema,” says Tom Rothman, chairman and CEO of Sony Pictures Entertainment Motion Picture Group.

Frémaux's bold bets generally pay off, including Coralie Fargeat's body horror “The Substance,” which was submitted to the fest without a distributor in 2024. The film became a sensation at the festival, winning the screenplay award, boosting star Demi Moore's career and going on to earn five Oscar nominations, deservedly winning for achievement in makeup and hairstyling.

“Thierry Frémaux's rightful place is at the top of those Palais stairs,” says Sony Pictures Classics topper Michael Barker. “He defines the culture of cinema, past and present.”

“In Cannes, he can be seen with Guillermo del Toro serenading us with Mexican music, impressing Meryl Streep, arguing over movies with Tarantino and Almodóvar, toasting Michael Haneke and Emmanuelle Riva, and playing midfield on the local soccer field. At the Lumiere Festival in Lyon, his dynamic speeches for Clint Eastwood, Michael Cimino, Scorsese, Deneuve, Coppola or Huppert light up the room. At the Telluride Film Festival, he premiered his debut feature, ‘Lumiere!’ At the Berlin Film Festival, he hosts an annual dinner for the top professionals in international cin-



“Cinema is a religion, and Cannes is the gathering of all the churches.” Thierry Frémaux

ema. He may even be sitting on your row at the Oscars. The guy is EVERYWHERE, tirelessly presenting and protecting films and filmmakers. He’s a world treasure.”

Frémaux, who has been working alongside Cannes Film Festival president Iris Knobloch since her appointment in 2022, feels that the festival’s mission is even more important today because “the industry is in a kind of maelstrom.”

“Can cinema die? No,” he says. What must be preserved is the relationship between films and the public, which only happens in movie theaters and film festivals. “Cinema is a religion, and Cannes is the gathering of all the churches.”

You could have become a top-level athlete. At what point did cinema definitively take over? I practiced judo extensively, as a student, competitor and teacher. I used to explore cities around the world through their judo clubs; one day, I did the same thing with movie theaters.

Like all children, I loved cinema. As a young adult, that love grew. I was destined for a career in science, for which I lacked the talent. So I headed to the his-

Thierry Frémaux, left, with Sean Penn in 2008 when Penn served as the Cannes jury president.

tory department at the University of Lyon, because it allowed me to take film courses.

Where does this passion for cinema come from? My father was a film buff; at the dinner table, we talked about and recounted movies. He even ran film clubs. I was immersed in the great American classics: Ford, Chaplin, Keaton, the Marx brothers. Then cinema became a vehicle for emancipation, a way, as the critic Serge Daney put it, “to feel like you belong to the world.”

There’s a very specific, almost novelistic moment when everything changes for you in college. For my master’s thesis in history, I was heading toward a classic topic. But on the staircase leading to my professor’s office, I proposed a completely new topic: writing about Positif, the film magazine founded in Lyon, a rival to Cahiers du Cinéma. We knew everything about the birth of Cahiers, but nothing about this other provincial generation.

Your thesis on Positif opened up a whole network for you. Is that where you really entered “the cinema industry”? A little. Through Positif, I got to know all those people — the founders, the communists, the surrealists — like Robert Benayoun,

Ado Kyrrou and even Bertrand Tavernier, who was a young editor there and went on to become president of the [Lyon-based cinema museum and organization that preserves and promotes French filmmaking] Institut Lumière in the early 1980s. My thesis was titled “Toward a Social History of Cinema.” I believed that cinema should be studied not as art, not as an industry, but as a cultural and social practice. That’s when Bertrand told me, “Come work with us, too.” I never finished my thesis!

You went from volunteer at the institute to eventually become director. After eight years of volunteering (I was still a judo teacher!), I became the artistic director of the Institut Lumière in 1990, then the director in 1998. It fell to me to be the young film buff who would have to take charge of the Rue du Premier Film, the birthplace of cinema — the Lumière brothers’ cinema — supported by great elders, the people of Lyon to whom I dedicated my first book: Bertrand Tavernier, Bernard Chardère, Jacques Deray and Raymond Chirat.

Did you plan to stay in Lyon your whole life? Of course. Henri Langlois always remained loyal to the Cinémathèque Française, just as Tom Luddy did to the Telluride Film Festival. I was offered positions in Paris, and I turned them down.

A refusal to fit into the system? Yes and no. I can’t stay away from the mountains and Lyon for long! In May 2000, Dominique Paini suggested that I succeed him at the Cinémathèque Française. It was tempting. But the Rue du Premier-Film was a true “labor of love,” and a bond of affection united me with Bertrand Tavernier.

Right after that, Gilles Jacob asked you to succeed him in Cannes. Yes, and how could I refuse? Moreover, Gilles Jacob and the minister of culture, Catherine Tasca, suggested I continue my work in Lyon. That made sense: it’s the same commitment, in the service of public cultural action. I was appointed in the fall of 2000; my first festival was in 2001.

Right from your first edition, you made a bold move by opening with “Moulin Rouge.” Did you already have a strategy to reposition Cannes? Jacob had told me: We need to bring the Americans back to Cannes. I headed to L.A. in January 2001, met Sean Penn — “The Pledge” [which he directed] was in competition — Jim Gianopulos and Tom Rothman, who ran Fox and would become very important to me. They told me: “We have Baz Luhrmann’s new film ‘Moulin Rouge’”; I had seen his film “Strictly Ballroom” at Cannes. Jim came to Paris to

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Cannes' Passion Player Cinema's best share memories of the fest's top man

• Martin Scorsese

Filmmaker

"The very first time I ever met Thierry was when he was doing his Lumière presentations with Bertrand Tavernier. As he spoke, I really felt his great love for cinema and the excitement he had for the magic of the art form. It was infectious. And he still has that love, excitement and passion."



• Josh Safdie

Filmmaker

"When our car arrived at the red carpet and we exited, the opening percussion of the Ronettes' 'Be My Baby' fell in sync with my first steps. It felt cinematic. He later told me he chose the song specifically because he said he felt the spirit of 'Mean Streets' in our film. It was a romantic gesture that feels unique to Thierry and the way he makes a huge operation like Cannes feel intimate."

• Tom Rothman

CEO and chairman of Sony Pictures Motion Picture Group

"My dear friend Thierry IS cinema. He lives it and loves it with a devotion that makes Rick's passion for Ilsa pale by comparison

[appropriately invoking cinema classic "Casablanca"]. For 25 years, he has brought the world what the very best artists have to offer with rare discernment, and I hope like hell he carries on for another 25 years. Bravo to Thierry; consider this the longest standing ovation in Cannes history."



• Coralie Fargeat

Filmmaker

"I was finishing the sound mix of 'The Substance' in Corsica at a time when the film felt abandoned — no distributor, no support and still no news from Thierry Frémaux about Cannes. On the eve of the Cannes announcement, I had convinced myself it was over. Late that night, walking back to my hotel room, I was even texting a friend to say it was finished. Then my phone rang. It was Frémaux, telling me the film was in competition. I screamed. In that instant, everything changed — the film, and my life."

• Isabelle Huppert

Actress

"He who gives so much will finally receive a tribute himself. That way, he'll know the joy of receiving an award. It's like a recognition for a job well done."



show it to us. Gilles and I loved the film. To mark the return of the Americans, it was perfect — especially with a studio like Fox. They agreed to come for the opening. That evening was wild: the film, the reception, Nicole Kidman putting on a brilliant show, an extraordinary red carpet walk, and one of those legendary parties that only Baz knows how to throw.

How would you describe your relationship with Gilles Jacob in your early days?

Gilles Jacob taught me my craft. He had his own personality, the requisite Cannes solemnity; he had established himself as the successor to Robert Favre Le Bret, who had almost "invented" the festival before him. I was young, I had a different temperament; we were entering a new century. Gilles gave me a great deal of freedom. Our unique strengths became those of our "duo."

Even before you started working there, you already knew Cannes inside out. Did that give you a head start?

I think so. I've always been a huge lover of Cannes. I first came here in 1979, when I was very young. I'd cheat to get good seats, argue with the ushers and cobble together makeshift tuxedos. I loved the city of Cannes; I knew the spots, the beaches, the restaurants. I defended the festival when it was under attack. When I arrived to work there, I understood how it operated with the freshness of youth.

When you arrived, the festival was described as losing steam. What do you think was the real problem?

I wouldn't say that. Jacob was aware of the stakes; he knew that Cannes needed American cinema. When I arrived, I remember epic discussions with [then-Variety editor-in-chief] Peter Bart! But Jacob had helped expand the festival's horizons — toward Europe and

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German Films warmly congratulates Thierry Frémaux on his 25th anniversary as General Delegate of the Cannes Film Festival - a remarkable milestone reflecting his exceptional dedication to international cinema.

Over the past 25 years, Thierry Frémaux has guided Cannes to its position as the world's leading film festival, while providing a vital platform for German filmmakers to reach global audiences. During his tenure, Fatih Akin won Best Screenplay in 2007 for THE EDGE OF HEAVEN, and Maren Ade's TONI ERDMANN became a defining success for contemporary German cinema, earning international acclaim and a 2016 Academy Award nomination.

The strong relationship between Thierry Frémaux and German auteurs is reflected in the continued presence of filmmakers such as Wim Wenders, Christian Petzold, Volker Schlöndorff and Valeska Grisebach, among many others.

Most recently, Mascha Schilinski celebrated a major success when her Competition film SOUND OF FALLING won the Jury Prize.

Thierry Frémaux's unwavering support for German cinema over the past 25 years has been instrumental in strengthening its international visibility. German Films expresses its deep gratitude and sincere congratulations on this outstanding anniversary.

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*Merci,
Thierry Frémaux*





Asia — aided in this by someone like Pierre Rissient, an incomparable talent scout. That was invaluable.

Over 25 years, you've profoundly reshaped the structure of the Cannes Film Festival. Did you have a clear vision from the start of what Cannes should become?

No, it would be arrogant to claim that. But I felt capable of bringing fresh energy through my experience as a festivalgoer and film lover. The danger in our line of work — and I'm always terribly wary of it — is becoming complacent in positions of dominance. Yet a festival is the opposite. You have to constantly open yourself up, be on the lookout for new cinemas, countries or directors. Cannes is about celebrating great filmmakers and making wonderful discoveries. Cinema is never the same from one decade to the next; you have to grasp its tremors, its evolutions, know how to take chances and take risks. That's why I was there.

You also repositioned key sections, notably Un Certain Regard. Was the goal to correct an implicit hierarchy at Cannes? Sometimes certain filmmakers viewed Un Certain Regard as a plan B. We refocused it on emerging cinema and created Cannes Première.

Alongside the competition or Un Certain Regard, I wanted to be able to showcase works that fall somewhere in between. Cannes Première speaks for itself. It has nothing to do with "taking films away from

the competition," as has been written. At Cannes, it's all a matter of taste, desire and passion — on the part of both the festival and the artists.

You helped broaden the very definition of what "belongs" in Cannes: documentaries, animation, genre films. Was that a conviction or a battle? There weren't many animation experts, and neither Gilles Jacob nor I were among them. But when Jeffrey Katzenberg showed us "Shrek," there was no doubt it belonged there. That screening, back in 2001, legitimized the presence of animation in the official selection. We never stopped.

Documentaries spoke to me more: I was crazy about the films of Chris Marker, Ophüls, Lanzmann, Wiseman, etc. "Bowling for Columbine" in competition was a given because of how powerful the film was. The idea of inviting more documentaries also came from the sheer pleasure of screening Agnès Varda's "Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse" at Cannes 2000. That's how the "special screenings" were born.

And genre cinema? From my own status as a "provincial" cinephile and from the company of my peers. We must always fight against a certain academicism, a certain "officialdom" of auteur cinema. There are auteurs everywhere ... as long as they are auteurs. Cannes has embraced all types of cinema and has "de-ostracized" them. Remember "Oldboy," which won the Grand Prix in 2004? Today ["Oldboy" direc-

tor] Park Chan-wook is president of the Cannes jury, much to the pride of Bong Joon Ho, who won the Palme d'Or 15 years later. Korean cinema is grand cinema.

The judgment of critics, festivalgoers, and professionals counts for a great deal. They elevate the films; they validate our selections.

You also created Cannes Classics. It came from the Lumière Institut. In the past, film heritage was the preserve of film archives. Then, with the advent of VHS and the proliferation of television, American studios got involved, especially Warner Bros. when Warren Lieberfarb invented the market for DVDs there.

In Lyon, I wanted to create a festival dedicated to heritage professionals, as well as film buffs and historians because the digital age offered classic cinema a new future. Cannes was my priority; I started in 2004, then the Lumière Festival in 2009.

Cannes Classics established itself right away. Following our lead, Venice launched Venice Classics, and other festivals followed suit. Cannes Classics brought together a professional community that felt welcome on the Croisette.

Today, the industry is going through a period of major turbulence. Is this the deepest crisis you've ever experienced?

Yes. COVID caused what two world wars did not: the closure of movie theaters. Meanwhile, audiences were consuming cinema on the small screen: the triumph of streaming platforms, a crisis in theater attendance. Today, the industry is in a massive maelstrom. Before, there were two blockbusters a month. Now, there are fewer. What we've known has become fragile. Can cinema die? No. Cinema as an art form and as a language is not in danger. Cinema is everywhere. What needs to be saved are the theaters, a certain idea of the relationship between creations and the audience. Just as literature and readers cannot survive without bookstores, cinema cannot survive without theaters.

There have been several societal and cultural shifts over the past 25 years, notably the #MeToo movement, which has transformed the world of cinema. How has Cannes addressed this revolution? By echoing it. In the past, the major scandals at Cannes were "La Maman et la Putain" or "La Grande Bouffe" — freedom of expression versus moral conservatism. Those remained artistic controversies. The #MeToo revolution and the Black Lives Matter movement challenge society more broadly; institutions must also question themselves.

It was in Cannes that the first march for

Festival regular Kristen Stewart — she bowed her directorial feature debut, "Chronology of Water" there last year — wipes lipstick off of Frémaux's face at the 2016 Cannes premiere of "Personal Shopper."



Gaumont congratulates Thierry Frémaux
on receiving the well-deserved
Variety International Achievement in Film Award 2026!

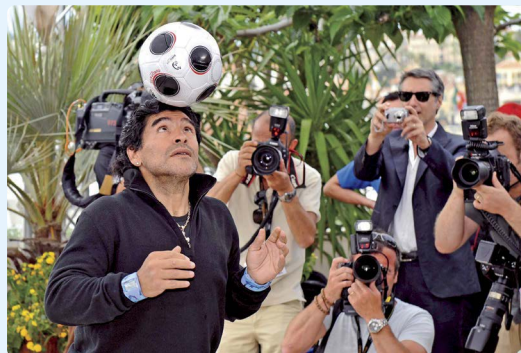
gender parity took place, and it was the first festival to sign the charter. This march on the stairs of the Palais brought together 82 women representing the rare 82 female directors that had been selected for competition over the festival's history, compared to hundreds of male directors. It was a milestone moment, led by Agnès Varda, who had long been so alone, and Cate Blanchett, then president of the jury. People of all generations had become aware of the changes. And we must not believe that the process is complete; we are in dialogue with organizations to exchange ideas and continuously improve the situation.

Do these new expectations, particularly regarding gender parity, influence how you select films? One point must be emphasized: Cannes is merely at the end of the chain. When there are more female directors in cinema, they are represented in the official selection. We see this in emerging cinema, in our selection of Cinéfondation films, in the short film competition and in *Un Certain Regard*. This proves that things are moving in the right direction. A cultural event should not be a place of division. It requires everyone to be tolerant and respectful of others' ideas. Cinema is also an instrument of peace.

How do you navigate this in the selection process? Our mission is not: "I like it, I don't like it," nor is it "it's good, it's not good." It's what does this film say about cinema? Certainly, I believe in the power of culture, in the power of cinema to address major themes. But if Andrzej Wajda's "Man of Iron" won the Palme d'Or, it's first and foremost because it was a beautiful film by a great director, even if the film depicted a Poland in crisis.

Does that change anything in the way you approach films? We have a clear principle: when in doubt, given equal quality, we favor the cinema that is less well-represented. We also keep an eye on those who have never been to Cannes so as not to give the impression that we always favor the same people. **This year, did you find the ideal balance between established auteurs and the new generation?** We have "veterans" but also many newcomers. What I made very clear from the start is that everyone is welcome at Cannes. There is no aristocracy. The 3,000 films submitted for selection have all been viewed. Our decisions are independent, but every film has a chance.

If you had to sum up your vision of Cannes in a single image, what would it be? Cinema is a religion, and Cannes is the gathering of all the churches.



Clockwise from top: "Maradona by Kusturica's" Diego Maradona at Cannes in 2008; U2 played on the Palais steps in 2007; Buster Keaton and Marceline Day in "The Cameraman."

Memory Box Frémaux reflects on some top festival moments

What are your three favorite memories from Cannes over the past 25 years? To avoid making anyone jealous, I'd pick three non-cinematic events: Diego Maradona's visit, the U2 mini-concert and hosting José Bové, an environmentalist activist whom I respect deeply.

What was the most difficult moment of these 25 years? The pandemic. In 2020, we tried until the very last moment to make the festival happen. In 2021, I had the intuition, back in January, to postpone the festival to July. That edition remains a wonderful memory for everyone.

Of your 25 Palmes d'Or, which one do you consider the most important or significant for cinema? It's impossible to answer that question. The Cannes competition is like a major sporting event: there's an element of chance, but it's always the great champions who win.

If you had to choose the three films presented at Cannes under your direction that you're most proud of, which ones would they be? I'm proud of all the films presented.

What are your 10 all-time favorite films? Louis Lumière's "Workers Leaving the

Factory," Buster Keaton's "The Cameraman," Jean Renoir's "The Lower Depths," Christian-Jaque's "A Revenant," Alfred Hitchcock's "Vertigo," Jean-Luc Godard's "Pierrot le Fou," Sergio Leone's "Once Upon a Time in the West," Bernardo Bertolucci's "1900," Ingmar Bergman's "Fanny and Alexander," John Cassavetes' "Opening Night."

I've only chosen filmmakers who are no longer with us. And tomorrow, I'll give you another list. And the day after that, yet another!

Which film did you have to defend the most in front of your selection committee? "Irréversible" by Gaspar Noé. The film was hard to watch, but it was clear we were dealing with a great filmmaker.

Is there a film you weren't able to get selected and that you still regret? "Lost in Translation" in competition, in 2003. I thought it was "a great little film" or "a little great film." It went to Venice... which didn't put it in competition.

And the one you regret most having selected in hindsight? None. You don't regret when you love.

— Elsa Keslassy

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Hear Her Roar Kering's Women in Motion honoree Julianne Moore takes action for equality

By Angelique Jackson

→ Two years ago, Oscar winner Julianne Moore sat in a cozy armchair high atop a luxury hotel on the Croisette for one of Kering's trademark Women in Motion talks during the Cannes Film Festival. The crystal-blue waters of the South of France made a stunning backdrop for a powerful conversation about how Moore has seen female representation change over the course of her three-decade career.

One of the most noticeable differences was career longevity for actresses. "We're now seeing women represented through all stages of their lives," said Moore, who this year is Kering's Women in Motion honoree.

She also praised the generation of rising stars who've been unafraid to seize the reins of their careers early on.

"Expectations have changed about what's possible for women to achieve," Moore added, saluting Sydney Sweeney (her co-star in the thriller "Echo Valley")

and Zendaya for producing their own projects. "Certainly, when I was Sydney's age, that's not something I ever considered."

Behind the camera, Moore not only worked with a growing number of women directors, but the crews — camera operators, sound engineers, grips and electricians — noticeably skewed more female.

"It's getting better, but we're really far from gender parity. We have a long way to go," Moore cautioned. "But we've gone further, I think, in the last 30 years maybe than we have before ... Every step forward is a step toward progress."

For Moore, and Kering, that march continues. Since 2015, the luxury fashion group has partnered with the Cannes Film Festival to spotlight the achievements of women in cinema and address the systemic issues of gender inequality in the entertainment industry with their annual Women in Motion awards ceremony.

Moore will be feted alongside Italian filmmaker Margherita Spampinato, who will receive the Emerging Talent Award, during the black-tie soirée at Cannes on May 17.

This award recognizes a female director for her first feature film and provides a €50,000 grant to concretely support the filmmaker in making their second feature. Spampinato, whose debut feature "Gioia Mia" premiered at the Locarno Film Festival last year, was selected by her predecessor, Brazilian director Marianna Brennand. It's a unique way of passing the baton and creating a sorority of women behind the camera who can empathize with one another's journeys.

As Kering's honoree, Moore joins an esteemed lineup that boasts Nicole Kidman, Viola Davis, Michelle Yeoh, Jane Fonda, Geena Davis, Susan Sarandon, Isabelle Huppert, Patty Jenkins, Gong Li, Salma Hayek Pinault and NBCUniversal Entertainment chair Donna Langley.

"Julianne Moore fully embodies the spirit of Women in Motion," said Kering chairman François-Henri Pinault, announcing her selection. "Through the consistency of her artistic choices, the depth and complexity she brings to her performances, and her longstanding dedication to advancing meaningful representation both on and off screen, she has helped redefine what it means to be a leading woman in cinema. Her career and her commitment clearly mirror the values Women in Motion has championed since its inception."

Indeed, Moore's acting resume is stellar. Her Emmy, Golden Globe and BAFTA-winning filmography includes "Still Alice," "May December," "The Kids Are All Right" and "Boogie Nights." Plus, she became the first American woman to win top honors at Berlin, Venice and Cannes for her performances in "Far From Heaven," "The Hours" and "Maps to the Stars," respectively. Moore is also a New York Times best-selling children's author and the founding chair of Everytown for Gun Safety's Creative Council.

"Julianne Moore does not use cinema to reassure," said Iris Knobloch, president of the Festival de Cannes. "For 40 years, she has chosen characters who destabilize, who suffer without resolution, who refuse easy sympathy and in doing so, she has claimed territory on screen that did not exist before she walked into it."

Likewise, Thierry Frémaux, general delegate of the Festival de Cannes, hailed Moore as "one of the greatest actresses of contemporary cinema."



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Making Magic Josh Groban forged a unique path to the music business and Hollywood

By Hunter Ingram



→ Josh Groban's first impressionable experience with the Hollywood Walk of Fame is tied in his memory to a passion that, at one time, could have taken him down a completely different career path. As a kid, his father would frequently take the Los Angeles native to a magic shop on Hollywood Boulevard.

Coming and going from the shop, he would stroll the Walk of Fame, starstruck by the names beneath his feet.

"I remember thinking about how absolutely iconic and cool it is that these names are down there," Groban tells *Variety*. "Never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd be one of them."

Unlike his career in sleight-of-hand magic, Groban will defy those wildest dreams on May 6, when he will receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. The classical/operatic/pop crossover crooner

has built a career that few, even himself, could've predicted. He's taken what could have been a life spent comfortably packing concert halls around the world and diversified it with celebrated acting credits, two Tony-nominated Broadway runs and cultural recognition that classical vocalists often don't enjoy.

In many ways, Groban's career has always been tied to Hollywood. "I didn't have the usual avenues that musicians have when they become successful, like a radio hit or MTV or that kind of highway to stardom," he says. "So everything that made me popular with people really relied on crossing over into different forms of media."

Before he even released his debut album in 2001, Groban worked with Celine Dion on the 1999 Grammy Awards telecast and even landed a guest star role on "Ally McBeal" that showed off his pipes. From there,

the Grammy-winning vocalist played the world's largest stages with the biggest talents, but it always ran parallel to his increasing relevance to pop culture. He popped up as himself in everything from "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia" to "CSI: NY"; he appeared on multiple film soundtracks, including "The Polar Express," with his song "Believe" remaining a holiday staple. Fifteen years later, he still gets stopped for his self-deprecating appearances on "Glee."

"There is a part of me that is weird and tells jokes, but I felt like I had to be the guy that's on the billboard," he says. "You've got to be the serious guy who sings the serious music. Something like 'Glee' was my way of letting off some steam for the very, very controlled first five years of my career."

But whether it's classical music, covers or his duet with Oscar the Grouch, Groban always goes back to the music. He's dabbled in many genres, a nod to his youth when he was shuffling between stalwart crooners and electronic grunge. To this day, he has a guiding principle for his musical taste: "All you have is your internal compass that tells you, does this give me goosebumps or not?" he says.

Twenty-five years in, those goosebumps are taking him to new arenas: his upcoming tour with special guests like Jennifer Hudson, his return to Vegas with his "Gems" Caesars Palace show and his new album, "Cinematic," filled with covers from film theme songs, including classics from "Skyfall," "The Lion King" and "Against All Odds." But it's "Moon River" from "Breakfast at Tiffany's" that stands as his undisputed favorite for one reason — he sings alongside his father, Jack, on the trumpet.

Groban considered two giants in the field, Wynton Marsalis and Terence Blanchard, for the song's instrumental break, but then it hit him that his father was perfect for the solo. "He's 80 years old, and it's my favorite duet I've ever done," he says.

And none of it would've happened if he had stuck with magic. Luckily, he botched his audition for junior membership to the Magic Castle.

"My secret coin fell on the ground, my hanky fell out of my pocket," he says. "Everything that could have gone wrong went wrong, and I think it is my signal that I fell into the right job."

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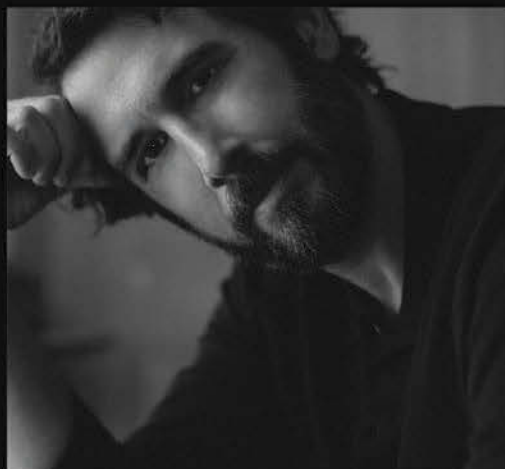
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reviews



Meryl Streep, Anne Hathaway and Stanley Tucci rekindle their old dynamic in “The Devil Wears Prada 2.”

FILM REVIEW / GUY LODGE

Recycled Fashion

Meryl Streep is once again the queen bee in a sequel that walks the walk of its predecessor but won't last beyond a season

The Devil Wears Prada 2

Director David Frankel
Distributor 20th Century Studios
Screenplay Aline Brosh McKenna
Cast Anne Hathaway, Meryl Streep, Emily Blunt, Stanley Tucci

➔ Midway through “The Devil Wears Prada 2,” as Runway magazine faces the latest of many challenges to its future integrity and potentially even existence as a publication, now-jaded journo Andy Sachs bemoans the corporate repackaging of so much media into a smaller, cheaper, more efficient and less valuable facsimile of itself. She’s too polite to say “enshittification” — the buzzword that the internet has lately applied to this trend, with particular regard to online platforms — but it hangs almost audibly in the air. That’s a gutsy idea to invoke in a sequel aiming to recapture the glories of a much-loved media property from 20 years ago. The good news is that “The Devil Wears Prada 2” is not willfully enshittified. It’s a sequel made with intelligence and respect for both its predecessor and the legions who still love it, so much so that it functions less as a follow-up than as a kind of



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tribute act, albeit one featuring all the original talent — picking out the comic and dramatic highs from the first film and faithfully replaying them with the same moves and cadences. But it is, by almost any metric, a lesser movie: narratively, emotionally and cinematically flatter, buoyed by game performances that nonetheless steadfastly fail to surprise. And in almost every way that it falls short, it illustrates something that's been taken from mainstream Hollywood moviemaking since 2006.

All of which is to say the original film's artistic accomplishments are perfectly possible to emulate — or imitate outright, as the sequel (again directed by Frankel, and written by Aline Brosh McKenna) is mostly content to do. But that intangible touchstone status is harder to repeat, even as the new film likewise aims to capture the fraught spirit of its moment. That's clear from the opening scene, which reintroduces Andy (a sleek Anne Hathaway, no longer gawky and hideous-skirted) as the socially conscious investigative journalist she always wanted to be, collecting an award for her work at fictitious left-leaning paper the New York Vanguard — right at the very moment that she and all her colleagues are fired by text, as yet another legacy publication bites the dust.

If this early turn will be greeted with sighs of recognition by anyone working in journalism, the chaser is less familiar: Andy is swiftly headhunted to be the new, extremely well-paid features editor of none other than Runway magazine, currently weathering a PR storm over a story that saw it accidentally endorse a sweatshop fast-fashion label. If Andy is there to give the embattled brand some



Emily (Emily Blunt) returns as a Dior executive.

serious journalistic cred, that cuts no ice with her old tormentor Miranda Priestly (Meryl Streep): As imperious and impossible to please as ever, she sets about challenging and belittling the new girl as if no time had passed at all.

The essential dynamic is unchanged, so nostalgists can revel in the first film's catty office politics, the unfailingly delicious chill of Streep's withering delivery ("You are such a ... fffffavorite," she tells one cameoing super-celeb with a calculated hesitation that would cut mere mortals to the quick) and the counterbalancing warmth of Stanley Tucci's long-suffering creative director Nigel, still there to give Andy a tough-love pep talk at the most opportune moment.

As for Andy, she's still out of place, but now with a grown authority that makes her a less vulnerable

heroine, and so a less compelling one. She's also handed a frictionless nonstarter of a romantic subplot with a blandly amiable Australian contractor played by "Colin From Accounts" star Patrick Brammall. The stakes aren't as high for any individual character as they are for Runway itself, as the film's glitzy Milan-set third act ultimately comes down to a battle for the magazine's soul between billionaires with varying degrees of moral virtue — pretty true to life, perhaps, but not the stuff of great drama.

There's fun to be had along the way, be it in the amusingly brittle dialogue or the bird-of-paradise spectacle of Molly Rogers' costumes — though the baroque absurdist touch that couture doyenne Patricia Field brought to the first film is missed, as is the way they were showcased by the film's crisp, gleaming look. Though DP Florian Ballhaus returns here, the grayish veil cast over scene after scene in "The Devil Wears Prada 2" tidily demonstrates how significantly standards of studio-movie lighting have shifted in recent years: Miranda Priestly would certainly have some words on this front.

Ultimately, however, the film's chief pleasures are those of practiced professionals doing their job, and doing it well. None of the stars here is slacking, and their combined, easily resumed chemistry ensures that this sequel, for good long stretches, feels like old times — even if it's hard to imagine fans of its predecessor cherishing repeat viewings to quite the same extent. Something that hasn't changed, moreover, is Streep's effortless MVP status: Her Miranda may now be too familiar to be menacing, but the hushed, lacerating economy of her line readings, the glassy reserve of her body language, the layers of passive-aggressive meaning she compacts into one arched brow or tight half-smile, all invite a kind of in-the-presence-of-greatness awe. "Boy, I love working," says Miranda quite sincerely, and so, it seems, does Streep. And work, as this alternately breezy and quite pessimistic crowd-pleaser is quick to remind us, isn't to be taken for granted.

There's fun to be had, be it in the amusingly brittle dialogue or the spectacle of Molly Rogers' costumes.



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All these activities, as well as social events, the VPB Focuses (that will be announced soon) panels and the VPB services (Market Screenings, Exhibition Area, AD opportunities, Industry Gold Club), are conceived in order to increase business-to-business exchanges among European and International professionals.

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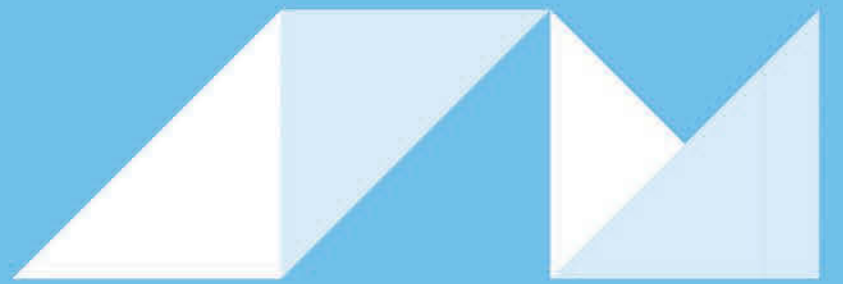
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TV REVIEW / ALISON HERMAN

Scary Island

A new adaptation of the classic novel conveys the horror and tragedy of children trying to survive

The Lord of the Flies

Platform Netflix **Premiere date** May 4
Episodes 4 **Creator** Jack Thorne **Cast** Winston Sawyers, Lox Pratt, David McKenna, Ike Talbut

→ “The Lord of the Flies” is the kind of show you praise by emphasizing how hard it is to watch. Adapted from William Golding’s classic 1954 novel by Jack Thorne (co-writer of “Adolescence”), directed by Marc Munden (“The Sympathizer”) and originally aired by the BBC before coming to Netflix in the U.S., the four-episode series doesn’t make any major changes to Golding’s potent allegory for the thin line separating civilization from savagery. The story of British schoolboys marooned on a remote tropical island without adult supervision isn’t modernized — it retains its World War II backdrop — or gender-swapped, like Showtime’s “Flies”-inflected “Yellowjackets.” It also doesn’t have to be. Simply watching these boys, played by a uniformly terrific cast of child actors, succumb to their worst instincts is harrowing enough to make you long to look away — even if you’d be missing some gripping drama.

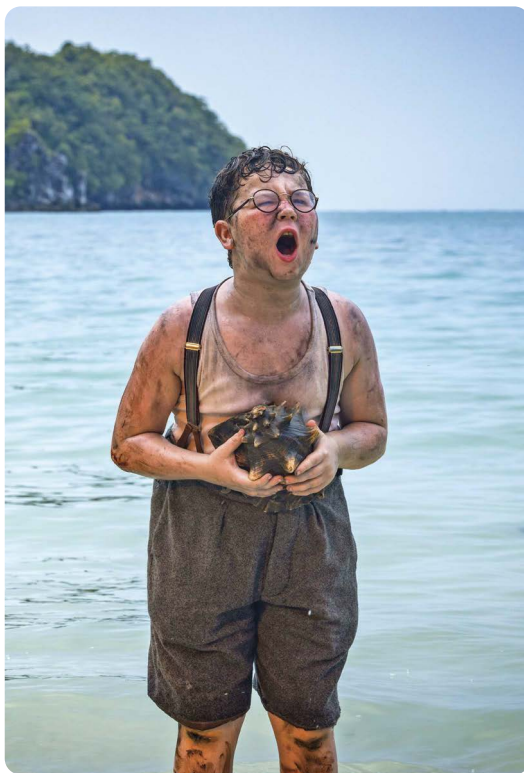
Each chapter of Thorne’s take is dedicated to a specific survivor of the plane crash that strands these Englishmen-to-be in the South Pacific:

Piggy (David McKenna), the pudgy, bespectacled asthmatic who’s smart enough to see the need for toilets and shelters; Jack (Lox Pratt), the sneering bully who benefits the most from the breakdown of order; Simon (Ike Talbut), the sensitive soul dismissed by the others as “batty”; and Ralph (Winston Sawyers), the popular boy initially voted chief of the makeshift tribe who relies on Piggy’s advice. One advantage of watching rather than reading about these children — including the “big’uns” looking after their (even) younger peers — is that they’re quite visibly *children*. This isn’t a teen soap where supposed 16-year-olds could order a martini without getting carded. Even the most monstrous of the

islanders are young and impressionable enough to demand our empathy. We feel for these characters more than we judge them.

To the extent Thorne augments Golding’s story, it’s by adding more backstory about the boys’ home lives to explain what they have to lose, or gain, from a blank slate. But this work is just as ably accomplished by the ensemble’s high caliber of performance. McKenna and Pratt are standouts as, respectively, the most vulnerable and the most rapacious members of the community, but not a single actor comes off stiff or unnatural. Given that some are barely older than toddlers and much of the dialogue retains Golding’s midcentury diction, which can sound formal to our modern ears, it’s quite the feat. Sawyers does project more uncertainty than confidence as a character who’s meant to be a natural leader, though under the circumstances Ralph’s nerves are more than reasonable. More curious is the decision to make the character biracial, but not comment on the shift in a story that otherwise seizes on social divisions. Perhaps there’s only so much that can be squeezed into four hours of screen time.

Shooting on location in Malaysia, Munden plays up the hallucinatory effects of the boys’ isolation, which leads to paranoid fears of a mythical “beast” and cultish rituals built on a Darwinesque faith in survival of the fittest. Perspective is distorted, conveying both sweaty tropical heat and feverish anxiety. Saturation is upped, with trees glowing green by day and turning a nightmarish, surreal red by night. By the time the series’ namesake, a severed pig’s head surrounded by gnats, starts speaking to Simon in plain English, it’s almost expected. “The Lord of the Flies” doesn’t update its source material so much as forcefully convey the horror and tragedy of collective survival curdling into deadly brutality. The allegory is obvious. The humanity, for better and for worse, is what the show gives a youthful face.



David McKenna stars as the pragmatic Piggy.

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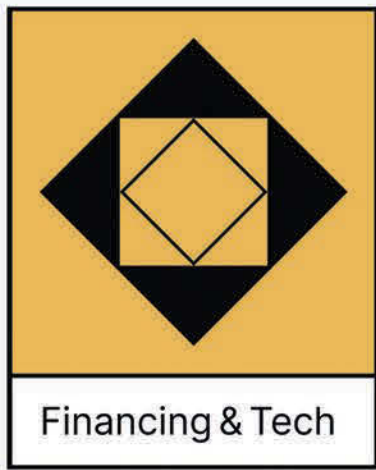
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Javier Bardem with the best actor award for "Biutiful" at the 63rd Cannes Film Festival in May 2010



Bardem Is 'Biutiful'

→ Javier Bardem is no stranger to Cannes. In 2005, he was on the jury that gave Belgium's Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne their second Palme d'Or for "L'Enfant." In 2007, he returned with what would become his signature role in "No Country for Old Men." But he outdid that movie with 2010's "Biutiful."

The film marked director Alejandro González Iñárritu's return to Spanish-language filmmaking after "21 Grams" and "Babel," but kept those films' extremity of tone. Bardem played a career criminal and psychic who learns that he's terminally ill. With the time he has left, he attempts to atone for mistakes made, including inadvertently causing the deaths of a group of Chinese migrant workers.

It was heavy stuff. *Variety's* review out of Cannes declared that Iñárritu was "stuck in a grim rut," but praised Bardem's "intensely physical and, indeed, beautifully controlled performance." A movie that threw endlessly escalating obstacles its protagonist's way was anchored by

an actor who bore these trials with grace. Bardem, best known for the nihilism of his "No Country for Old Men" villain, was, here, human.

Bardem went on to receive an Oscar nomination, his third, for "Biutiful" — but that came after the rapturous reception the performance got on the Croisette. In a tie with Italian performer Elio Germano from the film "La Nostra Vita," Bardem received the best actor prize from Tim Burton's Cannes jury. Bardem's soon-to-be wife, Penélope Cruz, and his mother, Pilar Bardem, watched from the audience as Bardem accepted the honor — one of global cinema's most prestigious — and cemented himself in Cannes history. — *Daniel D'Addario*

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