

## SAN SEBASTIAN REVIEW DAILY

### NEW DIRECTORS

#### GAMMA RAYS

**VERDICT:** Canadian director Henry Bernadet paints a big-hearted patchwork portrait of multicultural Montreal in this collaborative teen-driven docu-drama.

*Stephen Dalton, September 29, 2023*

A loosely connected group of inner-city teenagers spend the summer partying, daydreaming, fighting, flirting, arguing with their families and working dead-end jobs in *Gamma Rays*. This warm-hearted docu-fiction hybrid feature from Quebecois director Henry Bernadet is essentially a love letter to multicultural Montreal, whose tourist landmarks and idyllic riverside vistas figure prominently throughout the film's freewheeling patchwork narrative. Following its world premiere in San Sebastian this week, Bernadet's lyrical ensemble drama should pick up further festival play, although its low-key tone and fairly uneventful plot will likely limit its appeal to niche art-house audiences. It opens domestically in November.

*Continues next page*



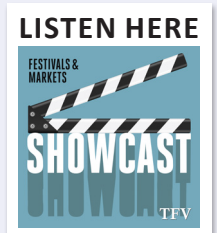
San Sebastian Film Festival

### Art, Redemption and Resistance in Iran: Conversation with Farhad Delaram, director of "Achilles"



TFV's Matt Micucci continues his exclusive coverage of the 2023 San Sebastián International Film Festival, sharing a conversation about one of the gems from its New Directors section. "Achilles" is the brainchild of Crystal Bear-winning Iranian director Farhad Delaram. Inspired by autobiographical events, *Achilles* tells the story of a young filmmakers in the throes of a personal crisis who forms a bond with a mental patient with a mysterious past. The two take

to the road and their short trip becomes a profound journey of self-discovery. In this conversation, Delaram shares some of the challenges, including personal struggles, that he overcame to make "Achilles," and reflects on his path to this moment, post-Berlinale success and the crisis that shaped his artistry.



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# CineVerdict: Víctor Erice

Víctor Erice maestro del cine español recibe el Premio Donostia en el SSIFF.

*Lucy Virgen, September 29, 2023*

En España 1973 se estaba experimentando una lenta apertura cultural, con Franco muy enfermo y las fuerzas armadas más preocupadas por el grupo separatista vasco ETA —ese año asesinó al almirante Carrero Blanco— que por películas levantiscas. No se podía discutir la guerra civil y sus efectos, pero se podían sugerir cosas. Y Víctor Erice es un maestro en hacer sutiles, poéticas y efectivas alusiones.

Ese año su primera película *El Espíritu de la colmena* ganó la Concha de oro, premio a la mejor película en el Festival de San Sebastián. Cincuenta años después, con tres películas más y 83 años de edad Erice regresa al festival hoy, como un maestro del cine español al que le será entregado el Premio Donostia por su contribución al arte cinematográfico; premio que se agregará a otros muchos ganados por cada película.

El espíritu de la colmena se desarrolla en un caserío en Castilla,



en 1940, año del nacimiento de Erice y un año después de que Franco subió al poder. Es la historia de una familia que hace esfuerzos por vivir como si nada hubiera pasado; el padre escribe textos metafísicos sobre sus abejas; la madre escribe cartas que son poco más que botellas arrojadas al mar. Las dos hijas Isabel y Ana, de 8 y 6 años aprenden aritmética en rimas mezcladas con oraciones a las ánimas del purgatorio. El cine se

[Full review, click here](#)

## *Gamma Rays from page 1*

In style and theme, *Gamma Rays* plays like a semi-sequel to Bernadet's debut feature *West of Pluto* (2008), a prize-winning docudrama about another gang of adolescents, this time in the director's native Quebec City. Since then he has made shorts, and episodic series for TV and online broadcast, but he returns to the same teen-centric mosaic formula here using the much larger and more socially mixed canvas of Montreal. Bernadet recruited his young-adult protagonists, all from non-white and immigrant families, via high schools and youth forums in the Saint-Michel and Villeray neighbourhoods, drawing on their own life experiences to create a loose narrative framework.

At its core, *Gamma Rays* is a triptych of character studies, each a stand-alone plotline but loosely intersecting across the film. Fatima (Chaimaa Zinedine) is a street-wise, hot-tempered beauty from a Moroccan family who works a dead-end job as a supermarket cashier. She previously ran errands for a small-time drug dealer whose clutches she is trying to escape, with only limited success. Meanwhile, shy Abdel (Yassine Jabrane), also from a Moroccan background,

[Full review, click here](#)

Sigue el paso del **cine mexicano** y latinoamericano en los festivales más importantes del mundo en

THE FILM  
**VERDICT**

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## HORIZONTES LATINOS



### TOLL

**VERDICT:** Lively characters get involved in a farcical church course designed to rewire gays in the otherwise rather plodding 'Toll' ('Pedagio'), a story about coping with poverty and ignorance in remote Brazil.

*Deborah Young, September 29, 2023*

Following fast on the heels of Carolina Markowicz's award-winning 2022 feature debut *Charcoal*, her second feature *Toll* (*Pedagio*) reprises the grungy working class lifestyle of rural Brazil where religion rhymes with superstition, gayness is seen as an illness, and criminal activities are viewed as necessary evils for survival.

Once again featuring sure-footed Brazilian art house actress Maeve Jinkings as the single mother Suellen who can't bring herself to accept her son Tiquinho's desire for men, *Toll* is almost a companion piece to *Charcoal*, which won prizes at festivals from Rio de Janeiro to Transilvania (Markowicz was also voted best first-time director at the Cinema Brazil awards.) Here, however, the farcical humor is mostly restricted to Suellen's crazy scheme to convert Tiquinho into a heterosexual family man, while the rest of the film drags its heels describing her tiresome job as a toll booth attendant on a mountain highway. It closes San Sebastian's Horizontes Latinos on a rather dour note, while rightly underlining the section's focus on social themes and new women directors.

Suellen and Tiquinho – who are genuinely close, despite their differing ideas about homosexuality – share a cramped apartment with the laid-back Arauto (Thomás Aquino), a petty thief who more or less lives at Suellen's expense. When she discovers his stash

[Full review, click here](#)

## THE FILM VERDICT INTERNATIONAL CONTENDERS' SERIES

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## A Turn of the Century Dream for Women's Lib in India Leads Pack of Female Filmmaker Visions at San Sebastian Film Fest.

The Film Verdict interviewed Sultana's Dream Director Isabel Herguera about her Competition title *Sultana's Dream*

BY LIZA FOREMAN

SAN SEBASTIAN -- Muslim Feminist writer and social reformer Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain published *Sultana's Dream* in 1905. Spanish filmmaker Isabel Herguera's big screen adaptation of that story, ten years in the making, has made the competition section at this year's festival in Spain.

The story evolves in Ladyland, the Feminist utopia Hossain created. There, women are the dominant gender. Crime has been eradicated because all men are locked away. The workday in Ladyland spans two hours because in the traditional workday, men smoked for at least six hours. Labor-less farming and flying cars are part of Hossain's futuristic universe where female scientists have also worked out how to control the weather.

The film's beautiful imagery, devoid of action heroes, SFX and guns, is based on the author's drawings, which include traditional Indian Mehndi skin art. Using highly creative artistry, these Indian tattoos are turned into a style of animation to beautifully help tell the story.

When Herguera saw the San Sebastian premiere in a high-tech movie theater earlier this week, she says the film felt out of place.

"It felt as if the theater were designed to accommodate those other types of films instead.

"I felt very distanced from the film seeing it in that theater," she added. "I felt like that sort of

I know of other films leading with gender, but I've been buried. I grew up with John Ford and very male director films as a child, and these imprinted my imagination. There are female directors like (the late) Chantal Akerman and

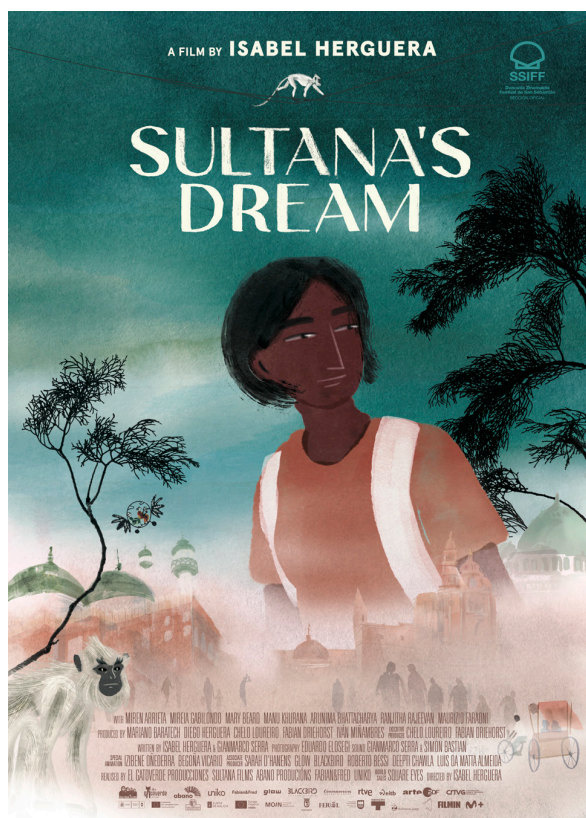
Claire Denis, but I find it's probably not enough. It's a completely different view of things or approach of storytelling. The female. There are different movements physically. It's something I miss. We need more. It's a matter of time."

San Sebastian is doing its part to usher in more change for women filmmakers. Five years ago, the festival signed a gender parity accord. And this is the fourth year it will be issuing a report on parity at the festival.

In 2023, seven of the first or second-time fiction feature film helmers in

competition are women, and many have female-centric films.

These include Raven Jackson's *All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt*, focusing on black women in the southern USA. Producer Adele Romanski said at the press conference that the film, "Gives a much needed space to tell the truth of black women."



theater needs action films, but something intimate like *Sultana's Dream* ... I don't know."

Herguera says she has been "in a tunnel for ten years" completing the film and she has "not paid much attention to recent box office trends." But now the film is out, she's hoping the story makes a mark in the spirit of its activist author.

"I know that *Barbie* was released, and it was like *Ladyland*, and I

[Complete article, click here](#)

# THE FILM VERDICT

## INTERNATIONAL CONTENDERS' WEEK

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## MADE IN SPAIN

### MATRIA



New Europe Film Sales

**VERDICT:** Álvaro Gago's first feature is the moving and humorous portrait of a hardworking yet almost powerless woman, in which the myth of matriarchy in Galicia is debunked.

*Lucy Virgen, February 18, 2023*

Before *Matria* was a fiction feature film, it was a short documentary by the same name that followed Francisca, the woman who looked after of director Álvaro Gago's grandfather and who also worked in a canning factory. The short film won a prize at the Sundance Festival and was nominated for a Goya Award; but its director wanted to tell the full story.

All over Spain it is said that Galicia is a matriarchy. The very idea is ridiculous if we contrast it to the story of *Matria*: the film's protagonist, Ramona, has no power over her own life. In all of her relationships, whether with a partner, her daughter or her friends, the others are always at an advantage. Ramona takes care of all the housekeeping in her own home. She also has two very physically demanding jobs: doing the cleaning and looking after an elderly man, and working on a cannery (and later on a fishing boat). Who is dominating whom?

'Matria' is not some new feminist term; it has been used in ancient Greece, where they used to say, "Earth is the mother and matria is the emotional country." For director Álvaro Gago, the naming of

[Full review, click here](#)

**CINE VERDICT:** Álvaro Gago hace con su ópera prima el retrato de una mujer conmovedor y lleno de humor que es contrario a la idea del matriarcado en Galicia.

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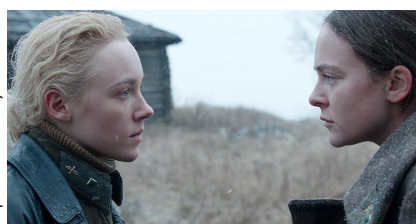
# FEST clips

## The Tokyo International Film Festival (TIFF) Official Line Up

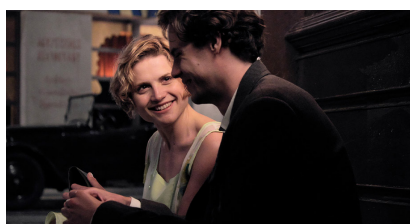


The festival offerings of the 36th edition includes 20 world premieres across its two competitions The festival will feature 15 titles in its main Competition section led by Japan and China, which each have three films in the selection. Line up includes:

All photos courtesy of TIFF



Air



Blind at Heart

### MAIN COMPETITION

#### (Ab)normal Desire

Directed by Kishi Yoshiyuki  
Japan

#### Air

Directed by Alexey German Jr.  
Russia

#### Blind At Heart

Directed by Barbara Albert  
Ger-Switz-Lux

#### Dwelling By The West Lake

Directed by Gu Xiaogang  
China

#### A Foggy Paradise

Directed by Kotsuji Yohei  
Japan

#### Gondola

Dir Veit Helmer  
Ger-Georgia

#### The Gospel Of The Beast

Directed by Sheron Dayoc  
Phil

#### A Long Shot

Directed by Gao Peng  
China

#### The Persian Version

Directed by Maryam Keshavarz  
U.S.

#### Roxana

Directed by Parviz Shahbazi  
Iran

#### Sermon To The Birds

Directed by Hilal Baydarov  
Azerbaijan

#### The Settlers

Directed by Felipe Gálvez  
Chile-Arg-Neth

Full listing, [click here](#)



Roxana



The Gospel of the Beast

TIFF runs Oct. 23 to Nov. 1

## Sundance 2024 site is now live



<https://festival.sundance.org>

The nonprofit Sundance Institute announced the Festival site, ticketing details, and on sale dates. Find everything you need to know on the Festival site, from a breakdown of this year's ticket offerings to a comprehensive "How to Fest" guide for both in-person and online attendees.

Ticket packages for the 2024 Sundance Film Festival are on sale starting October 18 with individual tickets available for purchase starting January 11. With a variety of ticketing options, the Festival will continue to provide audiences with access to meaningful, culture-shifting stories

The 40th edition of the Festival will take place from January 18-28

### DOK Industry Podcast 2023



#### Creativity Through the Lens of AI

Step into the captivating realm of AI-driven storytelling creations. In conversation with Mads Dambso, the producer and creative technologist behind the groundbreaking film "About a Hero" – the first feature-length movie co-developed with AI – we explore the essence of AI-human creative exchange and learn how we can go beyond the limits of our imagination with new generative tools.

Dok Leipzig runs Oct. 8 - 15



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