

SAN SEBASTIAN REVIEW DAILY

ZINEMIRA

20,000 SPECIES OF BEES



Garizia Films, Inicia Films

VERDICT: Extraordinary for its sensitivity and perception, Estibollz Urresolo Sologuren's story of an 8-year-old girl's growing discomfort with being perceived as a boy is a landmark in the filmic discussion of gender, sexuality and identity..

Deborah Young, February 22, 2023

A child's view of her own gender comes increasingly in conflict with the way her family sees her, until things boil over one summer in the glorious Basque countryside in Spain. Making her feature film debut after several shorts and a long documentary, Estibollz Urresolo Sologuren chooses a measured,

naturalistic style to explore the pressing need of eight-year-old Cocó (the remarkable Sofia Otero) to make the people in her world recognize her as the girl she feels herself to be.

Steering away from exaggerated drama and concentrating most of the scenes on the little girl and her

Continues next page

BEYOND THE FESTIVAL

EXPEND4BLES

VERDICT: If Expend4bles were any more by-the-numbers, it would have a numeral in its title. Oh, wait.

Alonso Duralde, September 22, 2023

The fourth film in the Expendables franchise is a dispiriting affair, enacted by performers who collectively appear to be making a valiant effort to create a silk purse out of a sow's-ear screenplay. The idea behind the series has always had potential — round up some beloved action stars of yesteryear and give them one more chance to ply their trade — but the expected fun has never materialized, with this latest entry lacking any sense of urgency, wit, or grace.

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Bees from page 1

mother Ane (emerging Spanish actress Patricia Lopez Arnal), 20,000 Species of Bees (20.000 especies de abejas) opens audiences up to a new understanding of trans kids, especially the idea that it is not the child who needs to transition, it's the family and society who need to change their perceptions. By showing this as a process of growth, albeit one fraught with emotional obstacles, Urresolo Sologuren adds something new to the discourse, while young Otero's entrancing debut holds the attention even without major dramatic quakes. It raises the bar for trans stories and its bow in Berlin's main competition should be followed by a full festival and art house life.

Unlike Lukas Dhont's widely hailed Belgian film Close, which exhibits similar sensitivity in dealing with young people's sexual identity in the face of social prejudice, 20,000 Species of Bees chooses to focus on a single individual whose precocious gender sensibility creates unease in her extended family. The film's title ties in with the social roles which appear rigid and fixed in nature, but which are much more fluid in human society. When Cocó regales her beekeeping aunt with her imaginative interpretation of life in a beehive, she equates herself with the queen bee. It is one of many moments when her

[Full review, click here](#)



Garizia Films, Inicia Films

ZINEMIRA

20.000 ESPECIES DE ABEJAS

CINE VERDICT: La historia sobre un niño de 8 años que siente una creciente desesperación de ser percibido como masculino es extraordinaria por su sensibilidad y percepción. Será un parámetro en la discusión fílmica sobre género, sexualidad e identidad.

Deborah Young, February 22, 2023

La visión de un niño sobre su propio género entra cada vez más en conflicto con la forma en que su familia lo ve, hasta que las cosas llegan a la ebullición durante un verano en la gloriosa campiña vasca de España. Estibollz Urresolo Sologuren, que debuta con el largometraje de

ficción tras varios cortometrajes y un largo documental, elige un estilo medido y naturalista para explorar la apremiante necesidad de Cocó (la notable Sofía Otero), de ocho años, de hacer que la gente de su mundo la reconozca como la niña que ella siente que es.

Alejándose del dramatismo exagerado y concentrando la mayoría de las escenas en el niño y su madre Ane (la actriz española emergente Patricia López Arnal), 20.000 especies de abejas abre al público una nueva comprensión de los niños trans, especialmente la idea de que no es el niño quien necesita hacer la transición, es la familia y la sociedad quienes deben cambiar sus percepciones. Al mostrar esto como un proceso

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VERDICT SHORT

TRAILER OF A FILM THAT WILL NEVER EXIST: "PHONY WARS"

VERDICT: Godard reaches from beyond with one final film, a coarse and compelling act of montage, an expressive audiovisual treatment for a never-to-be-made made feature.

Ben Nicholson, September 22, 2023

Trailer of a Film That Will Never Exist: "Phony Wars" is, in essence, not a film, but the idea of a film.

Jean-Luc Godard apparently made a habit of transforming the treatments or synopses for his films into miniature moving image artworks of their own. His final film is this posthumously released short which is like a bricolage slideshow intended to convey the essence of the feature-length work based on Charles Plisnier's 1937 novel, *False Passports*, which he hoped to make next. The resulting work, which



San Sebastian Film Festival

opens this year's San Sebastian Film Festival, explores key facets of the film through a melange of sound and imagery that is frustrating and invigorating in equal measure.

The form of the piece is effectively a filmed pamphlet merged with some archival footage and overlaid audio. The images are collages in nature, often with photographs and painted works overlapping with each other or commentary text. The sound oscillates between

utter silence and thundering classical compositions, beginning and ending abruptly and abrasively. The effects vary; a long shot that comprises a violently painted still image and no sound takes on an unnerving air of threat while a joining of some on-screen text saying "But, '68" with dramatic, discordant strings is strikingly potent. Everything is certainly laden with seriousness and import, like the introduction of Shostakovich's 8th

[Full review, click here](#)

Conozca a la crítica y CineVerdict editora...

THE FILM
VERDICT

LUCY VIRGEN



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Periodista, crítica de cine y programadora Lucy Virgen ha escrito para varios periódicos, revistas y ha colaborado extensamente en radio; ha sido jurado en varios festivales. Es la editora fundadora de la revista en línea *El ojo que piensa*. From 2006 a 2010 fue directora artística el Festival Internacional de cine en Guadalajara. Colabora con instituciones cinematográficas en América Latina como Ventana Sur, Proimágenes Colombia, Fondo Fauno en Costa Rica, entre otras.

CINE VERDICT

Contribuye al Diario del SSIFF con reseñas en español

TABAKALERA

ORLANDO: MY POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY

VERDICT: Debuting director Paul B. Preciado's extravagant manifesto pushes the boundaries of feminine-masculine genres as well as cinematographic ones.

Lucy Virgen, February 19, 2023

Writer and LGBT+ activist Paul B. Preciado is frequently asked why he doesn't write his autobiography. "Because f***ing Virginia Woolf wrote it in 1928" is the answer Preciado gives at the beginning of *Orlando, My Political Biography*, his film debut. And then he adds, "and I say f***ing in a tender and full-of-admiration way."

Orlando, My Political Biography



Les Films du Poisson

is listed in the Berlin catalog as a documentary. Right there is where the disruptive agenda of the film begins. We see 24 persons, trans or non-binary, introduce themselves with their real names and add, "I am representing Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*", then they read from

the novel. The *Orlandos* present themselves as if in a scripted fiction film. Each one tells his, her or their story, like in a classic talking-heads documentary. The director is using all the tools in his cinematographic toolbox to tell his story. We could

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PERLAK

PAST LIVES

VERDICT: A remarkably delicate, moving romance destined to be a major indie hit, boasting superb dialogue, terrific performances and an insightful understanding of how the what-ifs of life so often dangle around the perimeters of our lives.

Jay Weissberg, February 19, 2023

There's a scene about three-quarters of the way through *Past Lives* when a married couple talk in bed, he touching on his insecurities and she trying to make him comprehend that their relationship is more inviolate than he's able to believe. The writing is superb, surprising us by how much it matches what we're thinking while being so true to these characters. Listening



A24 Films

to Celine Song's dialogue, we're reminded by just how rare it is to hear honest adult conversations like this in film, ones that don't shout or grandstand but burrow into the emotions in the subtlest of ways. *Past Lives* is a remarkably delicate debut, a romance that

plays on the borders of standard love stories but brings a rich understanding of how love shifts over time, and how the what-ifs in life so often dangle around the perimeters of our lives. The exceptional buzz generated in Sundance will

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PERLAK

FALLEN LEAVES

VERDICT: Aki Kaurismäki's latest is a largely familiar but lovely new work.

Boyd van Hoeij, May 22, 2023

Some world-cinema auteurs are accused of making the same film over and over again as if that were a bad thing. But thankfully, watching *Fallen Leaves* (*Kuolleet lehdet*), the latest working-class tale populated with a handful of loveable sad sacks from Finnish auteur Aki Kaurismäki, confirms the idea that not only can it be a good thing, but it is the very familiarity of the filmmaker's world that can work like a balm. It's the cinematographic equivalent of that one comfy sweater. One the one hand, you

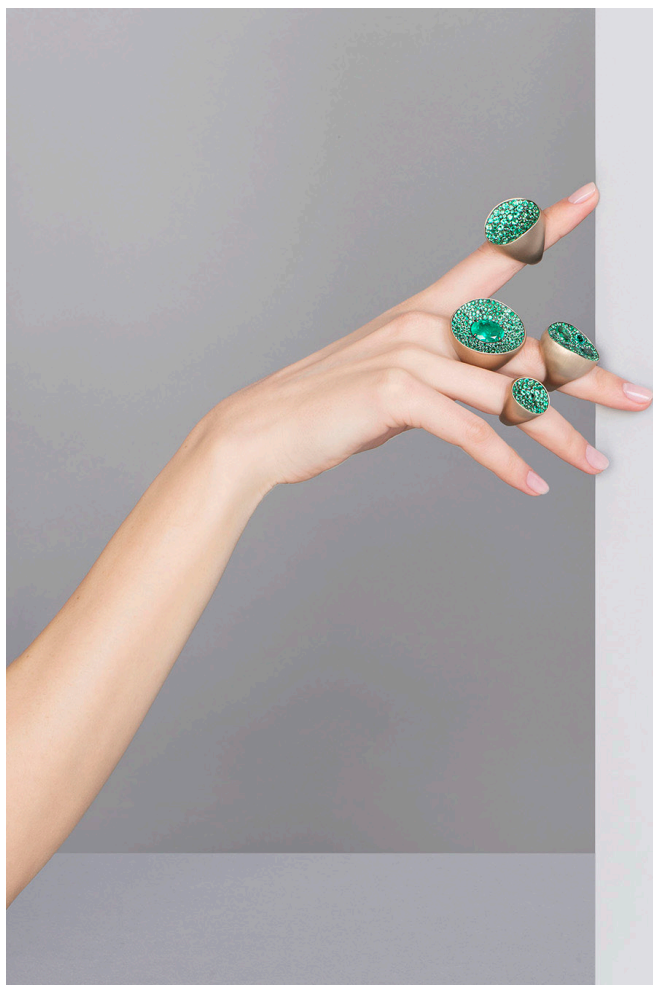


know what to expect, and on the other, the filmmaker's minute variations on familiar things add that frisson of freshness that keeps it exciting. Kaurismäki's first feature in six years and 20th overall premiered in competition in Cannes and should see solid arthouse

returns for the Finnish maestro.

The two protagonists are people whose largely uninteresting lives are the stuff of stonefaced comedy. Part of what makes their lives quietly funny is the underlying desperation that never quite goes

[Full review, click here](#)



ANTONINI
MILANO

PERLAK



Cannes Film Festival

PERFECT DAYS

VERDICT: In this low-key but charming Cannes competition contender, German art-house veteran Wim Wenders delivers a poetic paean to Zen and the art of toilet maintenance.

Stephen Dalton, May 25, 2023

Veteran German New Wave pioneer Wim Wenders takes us on a tour of Tokyo's public toilets for his first dramatic feature in six years. This might sound like the punchline to a joke about how far the director of *Paris, Texas* (1984) and *Wings of Desire* (1987) has slipped in critical standing since his revered, prize-winning career peak. But *Perfect Days* turns out to be a surprisingly charming, haunting, moving work with deliberate echoes of Japanese cinema legend Yasujiro Ozu.

With Wenders shifting focus to documentaries in his later career, this Cannes competition contender is only his third fiction feature in the last 15 years. With its meditative mood and wistful, personal tone, *Perfect Days* is likely to meet a warmer welcome than the poorly received flops *Every Thing Will Be Fine* (2015) and *Submergence* (2017), reconnecting the 77-year-old auteur with his art-house roots.

Perfect Days began as a proposal from a Japanese company inviting Wenders to shoot a series of short fictional films centred around a recently installed array of architecturally striking public toilets in To-

[Full review, click here](#)

TABAKALERA



Rotterdam

LA PALISIADA

CINE VERDICT: An oblique, inventive anatomy of an investigation and execution in '90s Ukraine, and a legacy of Soviet violence passed down to today's generation.

Carmen Gray, January 29, 2023

In a dingy underground cell, a man convicted of a police colonel's murder is shot dead at point-blank range. It's 1996, and Ukraine has gained independence after the fall of the Soviet Union, but the death penalty persists as a hangover of those times (the signing of Protocol No 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights, which ended capital punishment, would happen a few months after.) The killing is carried out coolly and efficiently, the corpse is whisked out in a body bag, and the floor hosed down, as if this is all a matter of course. And the discoloured tiles suggest this is not the first prisoner to have shed blood here. This state-sanctioned execution is the core around which Ukrainian director Philip Sotnychenko has built his fragmentary, oblique and impressive film *La Palisiada*, screening in the Tiger Competition at Rotterdam.

An enigmatic opening prologue set in the present day, with a young generation of Ukrainian artists, culminates in another shocking gunshot. Sotnychenko leaves it to the audience to connect the dots between the film's many episodes and digressions, refusing to simplify a society that speaks the language of absurdi-

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