



The first Mongolian director in Cannes' Official Selection



TFV Talks with Zoljargal Purevdash

The director of 'If Only I Could Hibernate' on script labs, working with children and bringing Mongolian cinema to Cannes.

The Film Verdict: So how does it feel to have the first ever Mongolian film in the Official Selection at Cannes?

Zoljargal Purevdash: Very unbelievable. I still can't quite believe it. It's like a dream. People in Mongolia have been very supportive, they see it as an encouragement for the local film industry. They're looking forward to what happens next with the movie, and they want to see it as soon as possible. They've been asking for a trailer, and I have to

[\(Continues page 2\)](#)

OUT OF COMPETITION



KILLERS OF THE FLOWER MOON

VERDICT: Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert De Niro compete to out-grimace each other in Martin Scorsese's latest monumental but lumbering period true-crime thriller.

Stephen Dalton, May 20, 2023

After half a century as America's most universally revered director, it was perhaps inevitable that Martin Scorsese would eventually get around to that most foundational genre in American cinema, the western. Set in early 1920s Oklahoma, *Killers of the Flower Moon* is not quite a cowboy film, but it does tick most of the relevant boxes with its frontier oil-town setting, cattle ranchers, ten-gallon hats and guns for hire. Most importantly, it is

also firmly rooted in homicidal land battles between white settlers and Native Americans. There will be blood.

Backed by Apple studios, *Killers of the Flower Moon* is Scorsese's first feature since his Netflix gangster epic *The Irishman* (2019). Sprawling beyond three-and-a-half hours, it is built on a similarly monumental scale, and features many of the same cast members.

[Full Review](#)

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ZOLJARGAL PUREVDASH*(Continued)*

tell them it's possible. They've been asking for a trailer, and I have to tell them it's not ready yet. And I'm very excited because I've never really been to a festival premiere before for any of my films, as most of my shorts came out during the pandemic.

TFV: This is your feature debut, after a few shorts that also deal with the topic of family. What made you decide this was the right story to tell in a longer format?

ZP: The truth is, when I wrote the script for *If Only I Could Hibernate*, I had no idea you usually do shorts first, and hadn't done any besides one I shot at university. I made those afterwards, when I realized I needed more experience, so there was never any version of this particular story that existed in a shorter format.



TFV: You studied film abroad, before returning to Mongolia. What is it that inspires you cinematically when it comes to your country, and your city?

ZP: I went to film school in Japan, from 2008 and 2012, and even back then every script I wrote was set in Mongolia. I always felt a distance to Japan, and never even



tried to get a job there. I respond to stories set in Mongolia because I know it very well.

TFV: The film received support from various international institutions. Did they all come onboard immediately?

ZP: No. I applied for Berlinale Talents five times, and twice for Talents Tokyo, which was the first lab to accept my project. That's where it all began, because I hadn't really shown the script to many people in Mongolia, so there I was pitching my work and winning an award for it. That convinced me it was a story worth telling, and it's also where I first met my French producer, in 2017. And the labs helped me learn new things, like budgeting and funding strategies.

TFV: The film relies heavily on child actors. How did you find them?

ZP: We did the casting in the actual area where the story takes place, because I needed people who were used to walking around in freezing temperatures, approximately -35 Celsius. They all responded to the material, and while they generally stuck to the script, they were not afraid to voice their opinions if they wanted to put their own spin on the lines.

TFV: Assuming you'll have the time to watch other films in Cannes, what are you most looking forward to?

ZP: [Singaporean director] Anthony Chen's new film, which is also playing in *Un Certain Regard*. He once came to Mongolia for a masterclass, and I really love his work. But I hope to be able to watch as many films as possible while I'm in Cannes.

— By Max Borg

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COMPETITION



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THE ZONE OF INTEREST

VERDICT: 'Sexy Beast' and 'Under The Skin' director Jonathan Glazer makes his Cannes debut with this coldly compelling, boldly experimental Holocaust drama.

Stephen Dalton, May 20, 2023

As Nazi Germany lay in ruins following World War II, long-serving Auschwitz camp commandant Rudolf Höss scoffed at accusations that he had murdered three and a half million people. “No, only two and one half million,” he calmly protested. “The rest died from disease and starvation.”

The chillingly mundane domestic lives of Höss and his family lie at the centre of *The Zone of Interest*, British writer-director Jonathan Glazer’s first feature in a decade. Hannah Arendt’s over-used quote about the banality of evil is guaranteed to come up in almost every review, but that is understandable, as few films have so perfectly embodied the concept before. A formally austere portrait of Auschwitz that never goes inside the camps, leaving the horror and suffering off screen, the *Sexy Beast* (2000) and *Birth* (2004) director’s fourth full-length work is a coolly detached, unsentimental, unflinching glimpse of Hell with overtones of Michael Haneke. Not

exactly a fun watch, but serious and compelling.

Titled after the euphemistic Nazi term for the network of forced labour and extermination camps around Auschwitz, *The Zone of Interest* is freely adapted from the 2014 Martin Amis novel of the same name. But where Amis used a fictionalised version of Höss as one of several narrators, Glazer has created a forensically researched, tightly focussed, quasi-documentary portrait of the real man and his family. As with his previous feature, the mind-bending sci-fi classic *Under The Skin* (2013), the arty British auteur has radically condensed his source novel into a gripping, unsettling, visually dazzling psycho-thriller. Premiering in competition in Cannes, this left-field masterpiece already feels like a strong contender for the Palme d’Or.

The Zone of Interest announces its uncompromising agenda from the start with an extended shot of an all-black screen [Full Review](#)

COMPETITION



FOUR DAUGHTERS

VERDICT: An enthralling “fictional documentary” by Kaouther Ben Hania exploring the psychological states of a strong-headed Tunisian mother and her four daughters, two of whom joined Islamic State, through staged recreations and interactions with actors playing their roles.

Jay Weissberg, May 20, 2023

A return to non-traditional documentary forms was an excellent move for Kaouther Ben Hania, whose *Four Daughters*, billed as a “a fictional documentary,” brings the Tunisian director back to her strengths at finding creative ways to explore difficult topics. In this instance, it’s the story of Olfa Hamrouni, a strong-minded working-class woman with four daughters, two of whom joined Islamic State in Libya following a wild teenage stage. Olfa is such a trickily charismatic figure, and her two younger daughters so disarmingly articulate, that Ben Hania needed a way to get them to open up without allowing them – Olfa in particular – to hide behind well-practiced responses. To that end, she brought in two actresses to play the missing daughters and star Hend Sabri to impersonate Olfa, leading both sides to interrogate the recreations and

prevent standardized reactions to difficult junctions in their lives. The resulting film is an enthralling hybrid that explores matriarchy, rebellion, and extremist religion’s poisonous misogyny; while the Cannes competition slot is a peculiar fit, it will likely help *Four Daughters* reach the wider audience it deserves.

By the time Ben Hania began shooting, Olfa had been interviewed multiple times by Tunisian media, making it all but impossible to get this deeply self-protective woman to drop the multiple filters that had become second nature to her. In addition, the director didn’t want to focus on the radicalization of her eldest daughters but rather their lives before, encompassing Olfa’s difficult childhood, disastrous relations with men, and deeply problematic censoring of her daughters’ sexuality.

[Full Review](#)



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COMPETITION



ABOUT DRY GRASSES

VERDICT: Nuri Bilge Ceylan's melancholy, dialogue-heavy rumination on personal responsibility, politics and the weight of provincial isolation is intellectually rigorous and always engrossing but largely lacks the well-earned emotional gifts of his more recent masterworks.

Jay Weissberg, May 19, 2023


Does cinema burden any landscape with as much sorrow as Anatolia? For decades the vast

spaces of central Turkey have been used as sites of lassitude and lost dreams, either a crushing

place of exile or a life-sentence of inescapable dead ends for those unlucky to be born there. With masterworks like *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, *Winter Sleep* and *The Wild Pear Tree*, Nuri Bilge Ceylan has significantly contributed to this concept, pushed even further by his long-awaited *About Dry Grasses*. It's a film with the auteur's unmistakable touch, both visually – though it's his first time collaborating with these two d.o.p.s – and thematically with long, indeed very long conversations that directly and circuitously touch on desiccated expectations, personal responsibility in a blighted world, and withered social relations. *About Dry Grasses* is about many things, and while being, as ever, intellectually rigorous, it largely lacks the well-earned emotional gifts of his most recent titles, notwithstanding an award-worthy performance by Merve Dizdar as the film's sole completely sympathetic figure. [Full Review](#)

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UN CERTAIN REGARD



BANEL & ADAMA

VERDICT: French-Senegalese director Ramata-Toulaye Sy's strikingly shot, solid debut set in the Senegalese Sahel features a compelling central figure whose monomaniacal love for her husband sets nature itself against their village.

Jay Weissberg, May 20, 2023

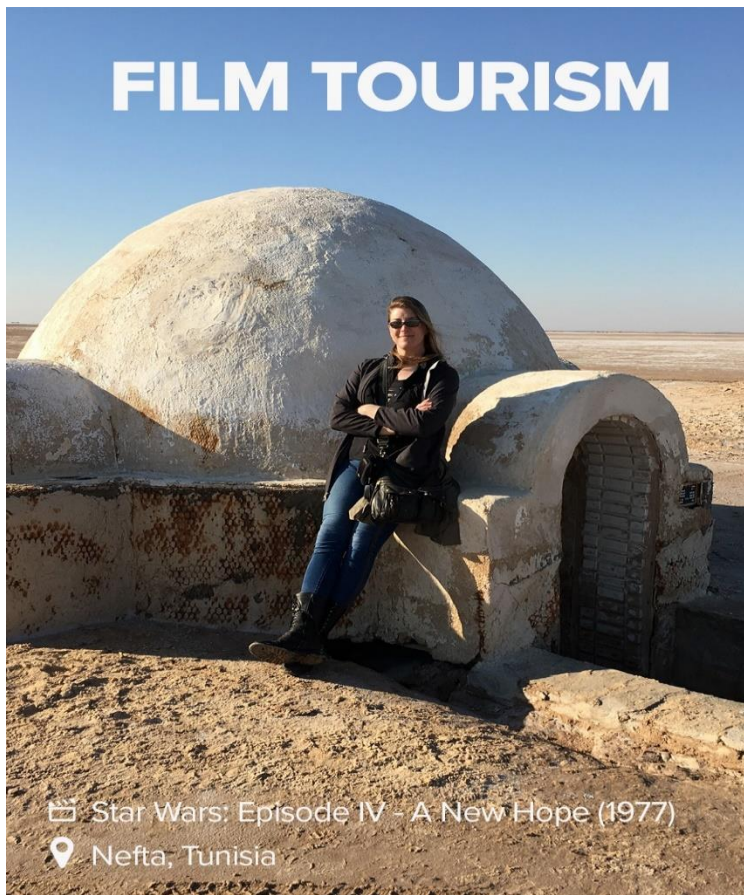
The selfishness of an all-consuming love brings a curse upon a village in the Senegalese Sahel in Ramata-Toulaye Sy's strikingly shot debut

feature *Banel & Adama*. Conceived as an interplay between the concreteness of traditional storytelling and the more fantastic

flights of a distinctly West African magical realism, the film boldly pushes its female protagonist into increasingly unlikable territory and madness, well-paired with shifts in color and light saturation as a drought – or perhaps global climate change itself – devastates a close-knit community. Handsomely crafted and punctuated by beautiful images, *Banel & Adama* sets up its themes at the very start and thereafter offers few surprises; it's a strong first feature but not quite strong enough to lure non-festival audiences.

Running the opening credits in the opposite direction feels like an odd choice at first until we realize that it prefigures a sense of destabilization as well as the main character's refusal to follow the norms of her society. Banel (Khady Mane) loves Adama (Mamadou Diallo) to the exclusion of all else: she bristles at any task that takes her away from being by his side at all times. [Full Review](#)

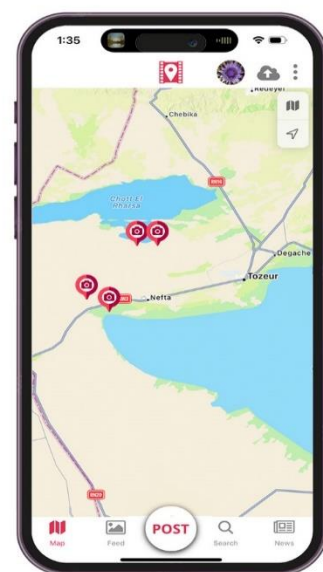
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CRITICS WEEK



THE RAPTURE

VERDICT: A moving Hafsia Herzi stars in a first French feature about a midwife who takes possession of her bestie's baby, throwing friendship and motherhood into question.

Jordan Mintzer, May 20, 2023

In this promising feature debut, French writer-director Iris Kaltenbäck has turned what sounds like a high-concept pitch for a Hollywood comedy — a girl tries to pass off her best friend's baby as her own — into a thought-provoking, emotionally involving look at both motherhood and womanhood. Carried by two excellent leads, *The Rapture* (*Le Ravissement*) premiered in Cannes' Critics Week, where it will hopefully receive the attention it deserves.

The always-watchable Hafsia Herzi (*The Secret of the Grain*, *Mektoub, My Love*) stars as Lydia, a hardworking midwife in a Parisian public hospital who, after delivering another successful baby, arrives home to find her long-time boyfriend waiting to dump her. Never one to express her feelings aloud, she doesn't say a word about what happened that night at the birthday party of her best friend, Salomé (Nina Meurisse), even when the latter surprisingly discovers she's pregnant.

Lydia seems to take the news about Salomé well enough, but in reality she's burning inside. Herzi's compelling performance is a mix of compassion and hidden rage, reflected in the world-weary look of a character who could definitely use a little more sleep and tender loving care. Riding the bus home from the hospital after a long shift, she passes out and is later awakened by the driver, Milos (Alexis Manenti), who, like her, is a lost soul adrift in the city of lights.

The two hit it off and hook up for a one-night stand, but Milos doesn't want to take things further.

[Full Review](#)

CRITICS WEEK



THE (EX)PERIENCE OF LOVE

VERDICT: Ann Sirot and Raphaël Balboni's sex comedy, a Critics' Week title, is always light on its feet.

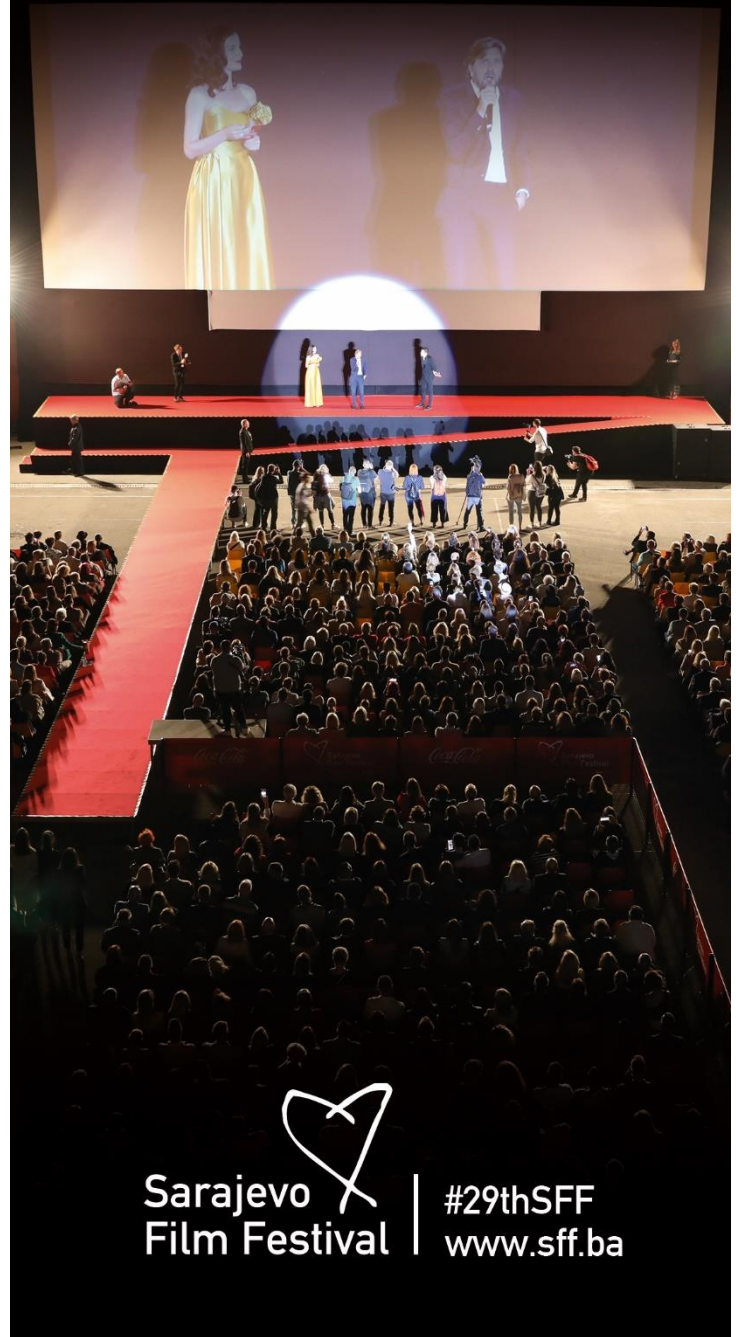
Boyd van Hoeij, May 20, 2023

Belgians do things differently, whether it comes to painting, architecture, making chocolate or governing a country. And this is, of course, also true for their films. The sex comedy *The (Ex)perience of Love* (*Le Syndrome des Amours Passées*) could have only been made in Belgium, even if directors Ann Sirot and Raphaël Balboni (*Madly in Life*) were both technically born in France. The premise is as clever as it is ridiculous: a straight couple looking but so far failing to conceive have to solve their mental blocks by having sex with all their exes again. It's both far fetched and a smart conceit that offers a perfect excuse for a comedy of sexual manners that's funny and always light on its feet — and various other body parts. It premiered in the Critics' Week in Cannes as a Special Screening.

Rémy (Lazare Gousseau) and Sandra (Lucie Debay, from *Madly in Life*) are an ordinary couple in their thirties. They've been trying for a while to have a child but so far, nothing has happened. So their doctor suggests they might suffer from a rare syndrome — first heard about in Seattle, of all places — that can only be solved if both (!) sleep with all their exes again. It's an almost sketch-like set-up, but Sirot and Balboni, who also wrote the screenplay together, spin it into a 90-minute story that's just the tiniest bit baggy, though the target audience will probably be too busy laughing to notice.

The laughs already start when Rémy and Sandra compare their body counts, with one of them having many more exes to chase than the other. But there are all manner of possible hiccoughs, [Full Review](#)

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MEET Nomin Erdine, Mongolian Film Council



Nomin Erdine
Talks to TFFV



Khugnu-Tarni National Park, Uvurkhangai province

The establishment of the Mongolian National Film Council was made possible through the passage of the law on the promotion of cinematography, which provides the legal framework for the Council's activities. This law sets out the Council's powers and functions, as well as its mandate to promote and support the film industry in Mongolia. Also it is important to note that the law on promotion of cinematography was passed in July 2021, and has been effective since 01.01. 2022.

In addition to issuing filming permits, the Council is also responsible for administering an incentive program that provides financial support to filmmakers. Under this program, filmmakers can receive up to 45 percent of the filming cost for projects that are produced in Mongolian territory with minimum spending of 500,000 USD. This is expected

to significantly boost the local film industry, and encourage more filmmakers to choose Mongolia as a filming location.

Furthermore, the Film Support Fund, which is also established under the act, can provide funding for both domestic and international joint film projects.

This means that filmmakers in Mongolia can potentially access additional resources and support for their projects, and collaborate with international partners to create high-quality films that showcase Mongolia's unique culture, landscapes, and stories to a global audience.

continued next page



Tujiin Nars Forest, Selenge province

Mongolia is a land of diverse natural landscapes, ranging from the Siberian forest to the Gobi desert of Central Asia. Its expansive plains, towering mountain ranges, tranquil lakes, rushing rivers, and enigmatic caves create a rich tapestry of geological and biological diversity that provides unique opportunities for filmmakers and photographers. The country experiences all four seasons, which means that it offers a range of different land-scapes depending on the time of year. The winter months bring snow-covered mountains and frozen rivers, while the spring and summer months offer verdant greenery, blooming wildflowers, and rushing water-falls. Autumn brings an explosion of color as the leaves of the trees turn vibrant shades of red, orange, and yellow. Mongolia is also home to many rare and fascinating animals, including the snow leopard, the Gobi bear, the wild ass, and the Mongolian gazelle. Filmmakers and photographers interested in documenting endangered wildlife can find ample opportunities to do so in Mongolia. The country has many protected areas, such as the Altai Tavan Bogd National Park, where these animals can be found in their natural habitats.

Incentives

Location Incentive

30% location expense reimbursement if USD 500,000 is spent within specific requirements on a film project being produced in Mongolia.

Cultural Incentive

An additional 10% in incentives for productions that highlight Mongolian culture and heritage.

Salary Incentive

5% rebate for the salaries of foreign artists and workers who have worked on films made in Mongolia.

Post-production Incentive 30% reimbursement for productions that receive location bonuses if sound and video editing are done in Mongolia and a large number of Mongolian citizens are employed.

If Only I Could Hibernate Selected for Un Certain Regard

If Only I Could Hibernate, directed by Zoljargal Purevdash is the first Mongolian film to play in Official Selection at Cannes.

Set in Ulaanbaatar, the film follows a 15-year-old from a poor neighborhood who is determined to win a science competition to earn a scholar-ship. When his illiterate mother finds a job in the countryside, she leaves him and his younger siblings to face a harsh winter alone and he needs to find a job to look after them all.

It is a co-production between Purevdash's Mongolian production house Amygdala Films and Paris-based Urban Factory headed by producers Frédéric Corvez and Maeva Savinien.



What's Shooting In Mongolia

Documentary films have become very popular in Mongolia, and NHK and BBC are among the major organizations that have made many documentaries in the country within a year. In addition, both TBS and Hive Media Corporation have produced parts of their series in Mongolia. The filming of the BBC TV series *Chinggis Khan* was also shot there.

The Altai Mountains of Mongolia were the filming location for the feature film *Eagle Hunter 2016*, while the Gobi location served

as the shooting location for the feature film *The Story of the Weeping Camel*.

Since its inception, the Mongolian National Film Council has issued permits for approximately 20 films to be shot in Mongolia. Prior to the establishment of the Film Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued permits for filming in Mongolia. One of these films has recently applied for the incentive program, and shooting for this project is scheduled to begin in May.

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Marché news

Italy named Country in Focus 2024



The 74th Berlin International Film Festival will feature Italy, after the postponements caused by the pandemic, as “Country In Focus” for 2024.

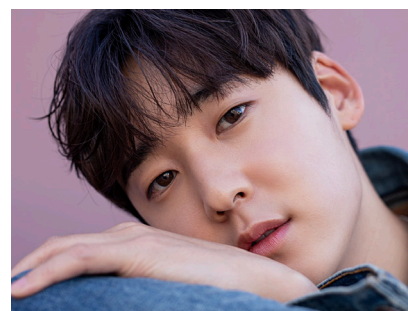
On 20 May, the official agreement was signed in the professional space of the Italian Pavilion - created by Cinecittà at the Cannes Film Festival - by Berlinale Managing Director **Mariette Rissenbeek** and **Roberto Stabile**, Head of Special Projects of the Directorate General for Cinema and Audiovisual of the Ministry of Culture (DGCA-MiC)

The forthcoming Berlinale will host an important delegation from Italy - including institutional representatives, sales and Film Commissions - in order to promote the Italian audiovisual system as a whole in all sections of the EFM, with in-depth sessions and activities involving all the different categories of the industry. The goal will be to present new incentives and encourage co-production agreements with Italy and to encourage the development of film projects, networking, financing, production and distribution.

“It will be an important moment to turn the spotlight on our industry in a period of great change and growth” said **Roberto Stabile**.

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Honorary Male Set to Film in New York City



Margaret Cho & Kevin Woo

Honorary Male boards Emmy®-nominated comedian **Margaret Cho**, Broadway’s **David Burtka** Korean American K-Pop sensation **Kevin Woo**, Emmy®-nominated actress, **Amy Hill** as Aunt Flora and acclaimed Drag Queen and actor **Willam Belli** playing the maniacal drag antagonist, Peaches. Oscar® and Emmy®-nominated two-time Golden Globe®-winner, Bruce Davison, rounds out the cast as Pop.

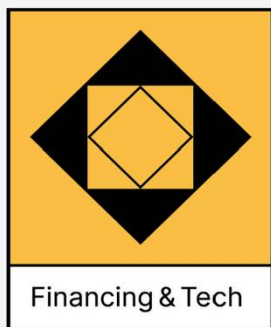
Written by Amy Mäki and Luis S. Canete, this laugh-out-loud adventure, featuring a diverse LGBTQ+ and Asian cast, will be directed by Martin Rosete (*Remember Me*) and is slated to begin principal photography later this year.

Honorary Male follows Drag Queen Chip (Burtka), an insecure, hopeless romantic who teaches disco dancing at a nursing home. Disastrous in his own attempts at finding true love, he unwittingly embraces a Chinese American family that is desperate to produce an heir. Their plan is to fix Chip up with a woman, promising him a successful relationship if he hangs up his stilettos. Chip reluctantly accepts the challenge but is torn because he develops strong feelings for another family member, Longwei (Woo), who is definitely off limits.

Luis S. Canete states, “The film couldn’t come at a better time as anti-drag bills are being introduced in the US and LGBTQ+ rights worldwide are being challenged. We address a lot of serious social issues by wrapping them in comedy, yet the audience will be left feeling relieved with a positive message about the future.”

Alan Green of OneTwoThree Media is handling international sales at Cannes and can be contacted directly at alan@onetwothree.media. See: www.bonachiafilms.com

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