



THE FILM
VERDICT
CANNES REVIEW DAILY

24 MAY 2023



COMPETITION



ASTEROID CITY

VERDICT: Scarlett Johansson, Tom Hanks, Jason Schwartzmann and a cast of thousands reach for the stars in director Wes Anderson's visually ravishing retro rom-com.

Stephen Dalton, May 23, 2023

In the future, everyone will be in a Wes Anderson film for 15 minutes. Or maybe just 15 seconds. Indeed, that overcrowded scenario is almost upon us already judging by the feted American writer-director's latest exercise in hyper-stylised highbrow whimsy, *Asteroid City*, a visually ravishing love letter to retro-kitsch 1950s Americana which features a staggeringly busy cast list, even by Anderson's usual maximalist standards.

Filmed in Spain during Covid lockdown, *Asteroid City* stars Anderson regulars Jason Schwartzmann, Scarlett Johansson, Tilda Swinton, Edward Norton, Jeffrey Wright, Adrien Brody, Willem Dafoe, Jeff Goldblum, Rupert Friend, Bryan Cranston and others, while new repertory company members include Tom Hanks, Margot Robbie, Steve Carell, Matt Dillon, Liev Schreiber and dozens more.

[Full Review](#)

Redha Alhaidar

Vision for \$100million Saudi Fund



ROAA Media Ventures Chairman Redha Alhaidar talks cinema & film fund in Cannes

By E. Nina Rothe

As Alhaidar was in Cannes to announce the Kingdom's first film investment fund, we caught up with the businessman and cinema lover at the always abuzz Saudi Pavilion.

It may have been raining outside, but even the rain did not stop Redha Alhaidar from meeting *The Film Verdict ME* at the Saudi Pavilion in Cannes. With an overextended festival going on along the Croisette, the Saudi cinema hub in the International Village seemed always crowded, [\(Continues next page\)](#)



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REDHA ALHAIDAR *(Continued)*

filled with people making deals to amplify cinema in the Region.

Among those industry insiders, perhaps the metaphorical loudest voice belonged to a soft spoken, elegant man with a kind smile but also exuding an air of self-confident success. Alhaidar is that voice, the businessman who is the Chairman of ROAA Media Ventures, "a pioneering holding company at the forefront of Saudi Arabia's rapidly evolving media and entertainment industry," as their online description goes.

When it comes to development in Saudi Arabia, everything points to HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud's 'Vision 2030' -- the Kingdom's vision for a sustainable, successful future which will extend beyond its borders while also remaining true to the country's pillars of culture, religion and humanity. "We intend to provide better opportunities for partnerships with the private sector through the three pillars: our position as the heart of the Arab and Islamic worlds, our leading

investment capabilities, and our strategic geographical position," reads part of the Leadership Message by HRH the Crown Prince During a press conference on Thursday morning in Cannes, Alhaidar announced that ROAA Media Ventures had entered into an agreement in principle with the Saudi Cultural Development Fund and MEFIC Capital to establish a groundbreaking Film Investment Fund for the Kingdom. *TFV Middle East* covered the announcement here but I also wanted to catch up with Alhaidar for an insider's view into the ideas and ideals that shaped the decision, as the \$100 Million Fund is the first of its kind for the Kingdom.



What did Alhaidar hope to achieve with this announcement and the fund? "It's the local narrative -- there are plenty of stories from Saudi which have never been heard," he admitted, even though "we've heard stories from all over the place globally, from Korea, from the U.S. from Europe and I think our stories have never been told." What is exciting about this fund, he said "is to enable Saudi storytellers to tell their stories, which I think are very genuine, very authentic and have a different flavor which will appeal to a varied

audience." In the past ten years, even before the reopening of cinemas in Saudi Arabia, filmmakers from the Kingdom have definitely told stories through their films that have caught on with international viewers. Stories like Haifaa al-Mansour's 2012 *Wadjda* and her 2019 *The Perfect Candidate*, both of which premiered at the Venice Film Festival, as well as Mahmoud Sabbagh's 2016 Saudi romcom *Barakah Meets Barakah*, which premiered at the Berlinale and enjoyed popular success, in the Region and around the world.

"I think this fund could bring the Saudi industry to a new level and that is what's exciting about it," confessed Alhaidar, who holds two Masters degrees, one from Georgetown and the other from Harvard. That new level also needs to plan for a kind of illogical refusal of the Saudi art form, as this writer experienced personally during a panel inside the Saudi Pavilion titled 'Filming in Saudi'. At one point, a European guest of the pavilion argued that he had not watched any Saudi cinema and therefore the medium, in his own words, "does not exist."

THE FILM
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COMPETITION



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KIDNAPPED

VERDICT: The devastating true story of a 6-year-old Jewish boy who, in 1858, was abducted by the Papal State to be raised a Catholic provides the ideal framework for director Marco Bellocchio to weave his familiar themes into a tense, edge-of-seat historical thriller.

Deborah Young, May 24, 2023

Kidnapped (*Rapito*) is one of Marco Bellocchio's most successful films, both as a taut thriller that will capture audiences with his terribly human drama, and as a masterful reflection on the themes that the Italian director has worried and revisited over a lifetime of filmmaking: the Catholic church as an anti-liberal indoctrinating machine that steals children's souls, the frailty of personal identity, and the struggle for liberation on an individual and societal level. Graced with gorgeous Italian settings and painterly camerawork, the Italo-French-German production should make a splash in Cannes competition and go on to become one of the top Italian sellers of the year.

The 83-year-old filmmaker has never been in better form than here, where he directs an inspired cast in a screenplay that stays fascinating over a two-hour-plus running time. Based closely on a true story that Steven Spielberg

once considered filming, and freely inspired by a book by Daniele Scalise, the premise is that the power of the Papal State (and the "Papa-Re", the Pope-King) was so great in 19th century Italy that a Pope could apply obscure and highly debatable Church laws to kidnap children from their non-Catholic parents, if they believed the little ones had been baptized as Christians.

This is what happened to Edgardo Mortara, born into a middle-class Jewish family in Bologna, who as a baby was secretly baptized by a housemaid. His case was to become a cause célèbre in Europe and America, and a rallying point for a nationalistic uprising that contributed to the overthrow of the Papal State and the unification of Italy.

Far from being a dry history lesson with pretty backdrops, or the weepy tale of a destroyed family, Bellocchio's *Kidnapped* is a stirring story that reaches [Full Review](#)

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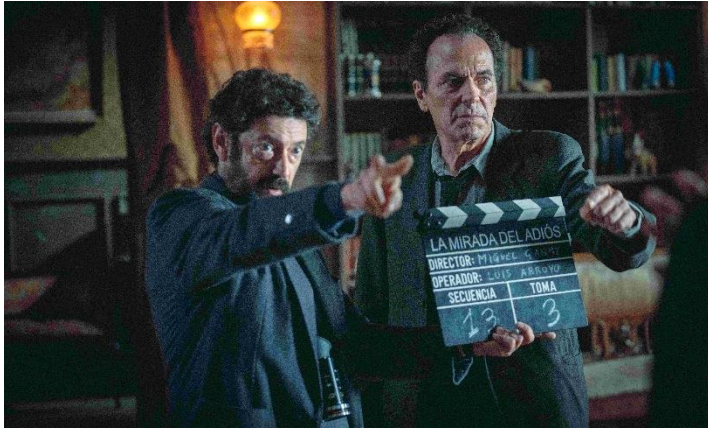
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CANNES PREMIERE



CLOSE YOUR EYES

VERDICT: An atypically told, but typically big-issue film from revered Spanish maestro Victor Erice, 'Close Your Eyes' is a passionate and engaging reflection on art, memory, identity and recapturing time past.

Deborah Young, May 23, 2023

It has been 30 years since Victor Erice won the Cannes Jury Award with his mesmerizing salute to art and the artistic process, *El Sol del Membrillo* (*Dream of Light/The Pear Tree Sun*, 1992), preceded by Spanish classics *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1972) and *El Sur* (1983). In the long interval, Erice has made short films and other. But as the director-writer Miguel of *Close Your Eyes* (*Cerrar los ojos*) morosely remarks, writing short stories is entertainment; writing a novel is serious business. And so it is with this fourth feature, a long and serious rumination on the value of art – whether in the form of movies, music, photographs, dance – and the heightened emotional response it evokes in those attuned to its message.

The Proustian undertones also emerge strongly – though never so blatantly that they hit you over the head – in another theme that runs through the film, that of recapturing lost time, particularly one's youth and early ambitions along with the people who once mattered so much, only to be lost in fading memories over the passing years. *Close Your Eyes* is the frantic search to recover memory and sensations that belong to another period of life, and the optimism that this is possible, with effort.

Erice's many fans will be surprised at the sheer amount of storytelling that keeps a film (almost three hours long) running smoothly, especially after the non-narrative brilliance of *Dream of Light*.

[Full Review](#)

PREMIÈRE-ESTRENO



CERRAR LOS OJOS

CINEVERDICT: "Cerrar los ojos" es una apasionada y atractiva reflexión sobre el arte, la memoria, la identidad y la recuperación del tiempo pasado. Una película del venerado maestro vasco-español Víctor Erice, contada atípicamente, pero que típicamente aborda grandes temas.

Deborah Young, May 23, 2023; Traducido por Patricia Boero

Han pasado 30 años desde que Víctor Erice ganara el Premio del Jurado de Cannes con su hipnotizador saludo al arte y al proceso artístico, *El Sol del Membrillo* (1992), precedido por los clásicos españoles *El Espíritu de la Colmena* (1972) y *El Sur* (1983). En el largo intervalo, Erice ha realizado algunos cortometrajes. Sin embargo, (como observa morosamente su personaje, el director y guionista Miguel de *Cerrar los ojos*), escribir cuentos es un entretenimiento; escribir una novela es un asunto serio. Y lo mismo ocurre con este cuarto largometraje de Erice, una larga y seria reflexión sobre el valor del arte -ya sea en forma de películas, música, fotografías o danza- y la fuerte respuesta emocional que suscita en quienes están en sintonía con su mensaje.

El trasfondo proustiano también emerge con fuerza - aunque nunca es tan obvio como para golpearte en la cabeza- en otro tema que recorre la película, el de recuperar el tiempo perdido, en particular la juventud y nuestras primeras ambiciones, junto con las personas que una vez nos importaron tanto, sólo para perderse en recuerdos que se desvanecen con el paso de los años. *Cerrar los ojos* es la búsqueda frenética por recuperar la memoria y las sensaciones que pertenecen a otro período de la vida, y el optimismo de que, con esfuerzo, esto es posible.

Los muchos admiradores de Erice se sorprenderán

[Full Review](#)

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CREATURA

by Elena Martín

QUINZAINÉ
DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT
CANNES 2023

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UN CERTAIN REGARD



THE BURITI FLOWER

VERDICT: Portuguese-Brazilian directors João Salaviza and Renée Nader Messoria return to Cannes with a complex, highly-charged chronicle of how different generations of a Brazilian indigenous community fight back against intruders on their ancestral lands.

Clarence Tsui, May 23, 2023

"In 2018, filmmakers João Salaviza and Renée Nader Messoria ushered Brazil's indigenous Krahô

people into the limelight with *The Dead and the Others*, a film which documents the traditions and

beliefs of the much-endangered community (population: just under 3,000) through a teenager's fictionalised struggle against his destined future as the shaman of his tribe. The Portuguese-Brazilian duo's new collaboration could be considered a follow-up of sorts. Once again it's set among the Krahô, and again it revolves around their defiance against an unwanted fate.

But the fight in the new film, which premiered in Cannes's Un Certain Regard sidebar, is more expansive, its story much more epic in scale. Set against the backdrop of a real-life demonstration against then-Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro's attempts to allow commercial mining companies and agrobusinesses to exploit long-protected tribal reservations, *The Buriti Flower* chronicles the different ways with which the Krahô have tried and tragically failed to resist [Full Review](#)

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Awards clips



Nights Gone By

Doc Alliance Nominations Announced

The Doc Alliance network of documentary film festivals supports emerging talents in European documentary film. Each of the seven festivals (CPH:DOX, Doclisboa, DOK Leipzig, FIDMarseille, Ji.hlava IDFF, Millennium Docs Against Gravity FF and Visions du Réel) as well as this year's guest festival DokuFest have nominated one short and one feature-length documentary film from its past programme.

The 16th Doc Alliance Award will be presented at the award ceremony of this year's guest festival DokuFest in Prizren (4 – 12 August). Additionally, all nominated films will be screened at the festival.

The winning films will be decided by three film professionals with different experience in the industry: Anna Berthollet (CEO, Sales & Acquisitions at Lightdox), journalist and programmer Arnaud Hée (La Cinémathèque du Documentaire) and festival programmer Jonathan Ali (Third Horizon, Tribeca Film Festival).

For more information, [click here](#)

Best Feature Nominees

a-B-C-D-e-F-G-H-i-JONESTOWN
director: Jan Bušta
nominated by Ji.hlava IDFF

Christina / Kristina
director: Nikola Spasic
nominated by FIDMarseille

*Death of a City /
A Morte de uma Cidade*
director: João Rosas
nominated by Doclisboa

Disturbed Earth
directors: Kumjana Novakova and
Guillermo Carreras-Candi
nominated by DokuFest

Nights Gone By / Antier noche
director: Alberto Martín Menacho,
nominated by Visions du Réel

Polish Prayers
director: Hanka Nobis, nominated
by Millenium Docs Against Gravity

*Silent Sun of Russia /
Vi er Rusland*
director: Sybilla Tuxen
nominated by CPH:DOX

Three Women / Drei Frauen
director: Maksym Melnyk
nominated by DOK Leipzig

Best Short Film Nominees

Blackbird
director: Judith Auffray
nominated by Ji.hlava IDFF

Adjusting / Prilagodjeni
director: Dejan Petrović
nominated by DokuFest

Darkroom
director: Asli Baykal
nominated by Visions du Réel

*May the Earth Become the Sky /
Face-s-ar pământul cer*
director: Ana Vişdea
nominated by Doclisboa

Nothing Runs Like a Deere
director: Max Göran
nominated by CPH:DOX

*The cervix pass /
Le passage du col*
director: Marie Bottois
nominated by FIDMarseille

waking up in silence
directors: Mila Zhluktenko and
Daniel Asadi Faezi,
nominated by Millenium Docs
Against Gravity

*Why my mum loves
Russel Crowe*
director: Emma van den
Berg, nominated by DOK Leipzig

Darkroom



Awards clips

Hanging Gardens and *The Blue Caftan* win big at the 7th Critics Awards in Cannes

The Arab Cinema Center's Critics Awards were handed out this week and among the big winners were some festival favorites and award nominated titles.



The annual ceremony has been held on the sidelines of the Cannes Film Festival since 2015. It is organized by Mad Solutions in partnership with the IEFTA and the Arab Cinema Center.

Iraqi filmmaker Ahmed Yassin Al-daradji's *Hanging Gardens* won the award for best film, while Tunisian filmmaker Youssef Chebbi received the best director award

for his film *Ashkal*. Best actor and best actress, respectively, went to Adam Bessa for his performance in the Tunisian drama *Harka* and Lubna Azabal for her performance in *The Blue Caftan*. The film's co-writers, husband and wife team Maryam Touzani (she is also the director of the film) and Nabil Ayouch were awarded best screenplay.

Hanging Gardens tells the story of a young Iraqi rubbish picker who discovers an American sex doll in the Baghdad dumps and thus finds himself in a place where friends become enemies and nothing is certain anymore.



Blue Caftan

VERDICT: After her award-winning 'Adam', writer-director Maryam Touzani affirms her strong storytelling skills in a hugely touching love story set in an old Moroccan medina, where Lubna Azabal battles illness to be with her homosexual husband Saleh Bakri.

Full review, [click here](#)



Producers Guild Awards 2024

The Producers Guild of America (PGA) and its Presidents, Stephanie Allain and Donald DeLine announced that the 2024 Producers Guild Awards will take place on Sunday, February 25, 2024 at Fairmont Century Plaza in Los Angeles, CA.

The upcoming event will mark the 35th annual PGA Awards ceremony, an award show that continues to be a cornerstone of

the film and television industry, celebrating the work and accomplishments of producers.

PGA Awards Key dates

Eligibility Period for 2024 Producers Guild Awards

Theatrical Motion Pictures;
Animated Motion Pictures;
Documentary Motion Pictures; Television Series/Specials;
Streamed or Televised Motion Pictures; Sports Children's and Short Form
Jan 1, - Dec 31, 2023

Notice of Producing Credits Form Deadline

Documentary Motion Pictures:
Friday, September 1, 2023

Television Programs (Television Series/Specials; Streamed or Televised Motion Pictures); Sports Children's and Short Form)
Friday, September 29, 2023

Theatrical Motion Pictures and Animated Motion Pictures
Friday, October 13, 2023

Nomination Polls Open

Sports, Children's and Short Form
Thursday, December 14, 2023:

Television Series/Specials and Streamed or Televised Motion Pictures:
Thursday, December 14, 2023

Theatrical Motion Pictures and Animated Motion Pictures
Thursday, December 21, 2023

Final Polls Close

Sports, Children's and Short Form:
Thursday, February 8, 2024

Theatrical Motion Pictures; Animated Motion Pictures; Television Series/Specials; Streamed or Televised Motion Pictures:
Thursday, February 15, 2024

For more key dates and eligibility, please [click here](#)

Market **news**

Eastbound Westbound launches on Apple +



Eastbound Westbound - A Winemaker's Story From Bordeaux And California began streaming on APPLE TV + this month in English speaking countries.

Bordeaux independent film producer .E Studi'Oz, launches an original wine documentary that traces, and demonstrates the historical and unwavering links between the United States, Bordeaux and its wines. An investigation like no other, Eastbound Westbound lets the viewer understand how this Franco-American friendship around Bordeaux wines had its starting point in the 18th century around the greatest connoisseur of fine wines and lover of Bordeaux, the American Thomas Jefferson, US Ambassador to Paris and third President of the United States.

This modern and fast-paced cinematic documentary was conceived from an original idea by Gerard Spatafora and

TVCO CLINCHES FILMS FOR DISTRIBUTION



Vincenzo Mosca,

Rome-based international sales company TVCO acquires *Il Vento Soffia Dove Vuole (Where the Wind Blows)*, and *Les Poings Serres (Clenched Fists)*,

Il Vento Soffia Dove Vuole (Where the Wind Blows) is produced by Emanuel Caruso "and *Les Poings Serres (Clenched Fists)*, was written and directed by Vivian Goffette

"Acquiring these two exceptional European films not only showcases TVCO's commitment to remarkable storytelling but also highlights our dedication to bridging cultures and captivating audiences worldwide," said. CEO of TVCO, Vincenzo Mosca, "We believe in the power of thought-provoking narratives that delve deep into the human experience, and these films embody that essence perfectly," Mosca explained.

Frédéric Lot, co-written by Jeffrey Davies, and directed by Julien Couson, founder of PMG Productions.

In addition to this first opus, E Studi'Oz will develop other topics, covering other regions in the coming months to expand the Eastbound Westbound Series. With this goal and to develop its offer, E-Studioz is launching a crowdfunding as an Initial Coin Offering (ICO) with the Token WINETV.

Through crowdfunding, investors will enable E Studioz to produce, and co-produce with directors, around ten original works a year and will set BlueWine.com to stream hundreds of programs dedicated to the world of wines and spirits. Within 4 to 5 years, this large catalog of content will also enable BlueWine.com to be distributed as a thematic channel by major telecom operators

For more information,
please [click here](#)

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