



AFI FEST 2018 Announces New Auteurs and American Independents Lineups

Description

Posted by Larry Gleason



Here are the films that will screen in the New Auteurs and American Independents sections at AFI FEST 2018 presented by Audi. Highlighting rising feature film directors, New Auteurs is the festival's platform for upcoming filmmakers from all over the world to showcase their new films. This year, the section is comprised of 18 films, with 12 helmed by female filmmakers.

The American Independents section represents the best of independent filmmaking this year. Pushing boundaries of form and content across narrative and documentary cinema, this section includes 10 films — half of which are directed by women — from both new voices and filmmakers returning to AFI FEST. Five are directed by women.

Free tickets to AFI FEST will be available October 30. [Click here](#) to purchase a Priority Pass for the festival, which provides front-of-the-line admission to all screenings excluding Galas.

Pictured at top: JINN

NEW AUTEURS

ACID FOREST (RUGIL? BARZDŽIUKAIT?)— A wispy stretch of land from Russia to Lithuania is home to an unlikely tourist attraction: a dying forest of leafless trees overtaken by thousands of ancient black birds ruining the area with their acid-fortified feces. With daredevil cinematography and immaculate sound design, Rugil? Barzdžiukait?'s debut is a beguiling snapshot of the juncture between nature's destruction and rebirth. DIR Rugil? Barzdžiukait?. Lithuania

AKASHA – Documentarian Hajooj Kuka makes his attention-grabbing, intelligent debut with AKASHA,

a comedy set in a rebel-held area of Sudan, where fighting has stopped amid the rainy season — and a man, a woman and an AK-47 are entangled in a love triangle. DIR Hajooj Kuka. SCR Hajooj Kuka. CAST Ekram Marcus, Kamal Ramadan, Ganja Chakado. Sudan, South Africa, Qatar, Germany

ALL IS GOOD (ALLES IST GUT) – An arresting portrayal of a woman who refuses to see herself victimized by rape. Intimately and claustrophobically photographed, this humanistic film illustrates a rape internalized — acknowledged though never reckoned with — where a rapist’s presumed authority over a woman’s body is endemic of an oppressive, patriarchal society. DIR Eva Trobisch. SCR Eva Trobisch. CAST Aenne Schwarz, Andreas Döhler, Hans Löw, Tilo Nest, Lisa Hagmeister, Lina Wendel. Germany

AND BREATH NORMALLY (ANDIÐ EÐLILEGA) – Lára is a single mother whose job as an Icelandic border guard is all that’s keeping her afloat. While training, Lára notices that the passport of Adja, a woman from Guinea-Bissau, has been forged. From there, Adja and Lára’s stories diverge and weave together again in Ísold Uggadóttir’s elegantly constructed drama of lives affected by the ongoing refugee crisis. DIR Ísold Uggadóttir. SCR Ísold Uggadóttir. CAST Kristín Thóra Haraldsdóttir, Babetida Sadjo, Patrik Nökkvi Pétursson. Iceland

BLACK MOTHER – From red light districts to lush rainforests, director Khalik Allah’s brilliant film weaves together the sacred and the profane in a loving and lyrical ode to Jamaica and its people, a visual poem that is at once deeply felt love letter and ecstatic street-corner prayer. DIR Khalik Allah. USA

THE CHAMBERMAID (LA CAMARISTA) – Lila Avilés’ debut feature follows Eve, a young maid in a luxurious Mexico City hotel, as she struggles with long hours and monotonous work. THE CHAMBERMAID is the touching story of her ambitions to rise above her current role and find a better life, and of her journey of self-discovery along the way. DIR Lila Avilés. SCR Juan Carlos Marquéz, Lila Avilés. CAST Gabriela Cartol, Teresa Sánchez. Mexico

DEAD HORSE NEBULA – Awarded the Locarno Film Festival prize for Best Emerging Director, Tarik Aktas’ feature debut is either a real or imagined childhood memory of adults attempting to remove the body of a dead horse from an open field. This existential fever dream is a transformative experience, a distillation of the extraordinary suspense of day-to-day existence. DIR Tarik Aktas. SCR Tarik Aktas. CAST Bar?? Mert Bilgi, Ali Yavuz Ilman, Ömer Bora, Serkan Ayd?n, Dilara Topuklular, Hasan Türker, Mümin Süren, Serkan Özsalg?nc?. Turkey

DEAD PIGS (?????) – Five lives collide in Cathy Yan’s quirky and comic debut — a bumbling pig farmer, a salon owner battling gentrification, an American ex-pat looking for the Chinese dream, a romantic waiter and a spoiled rich girl. DEAD PIGS sharply examines a contrasting China, where modern culture clashes with the traditional. DIR Cathy Yan. SCR Catha Yan. CAST Vivian Wu, Yang Hao Yu, Mason Lee, Li Meng, David Rysdahl. China

THE DIVE (HATZLILA) – Following the death of their father, three estranged brothers — two veterans and one heading off to war — return to their family’s kibbutz to fulfill the patriarch’s final wish, setting off a firestorm of unsettled conflicts and long-buried resentments. DIR Yona Rozenkier. SCR Yona Rozenkier. CAST Yoel Rozenkier, Micha Rozenkier, Yona Rozenkier, Claudia Dulitchi, Miki Marmor, Daniel Sabag, Shmuel Edelman. Israel

L'ANIMALE – On the verge of graduation and an uncertain future, a mischievous teenager rails against the societal and familial pressures of her suburban surroundings to seek autonomy in director/writer Katharina Mückstein's masterfully perceptive and effervescent second feature about finding oneself by embracing the caged beast within and feeding its most insatiable cravings. DIR Katharina Mückstein. SCR Katharina Mückstein. CAST Sophie Stockinger, Kathrin Resetarits, Dominik Warta, Julia Franz Richter, Jack Hofer, Stefan Pohl, Dominic Marcus Singer, Simon Morzé, Eva Herzig, David Oberkogler, Martina Spitzer, Lisa C. Nemeč, Johanna Orsini-Rosenberg, Gisela Salcher, Alexandra Schmidt. Austria

LEMONADE (LUNA DE MIERE) – Incredible performances and beautiful cinematography herald a bold new voice in Romanian cinema in this tale of a young mother immigrating to America. Mara struggles to navigate the system, in a fight to bring her son a better life that might cost her everything. DIR Ioana Uricaru. SCR Tatiana Ionascu, Ioana Uricaru. CAST Malina Manovici, Steve Bacic, Dylan Scott Smith, Milan Hurduc, Ruxandra Maniu. Romania, Canada, Germany

ONE DAY (EGY NAP) – This astounding debut feature follows 24 hours in the life of a harried mother as she navigates family work and betrayal. Anna struggles with kids, work and everyday life — but it's an unspoken menace that really threatens this family. DIR Zsófia Szilágyi. SCR Zsófia Szilágyi, Réka Mán-Várhegy. CAST Zsófia Szamosi, Leo Füredi, Ambrus Barcza, Zorka Varga-Blaskó, Márk Gárdos, Annamária Láng, Éva Vándor, Károly Hajduk. Hungary

RAFIKI – Kena likes to kick around a soccer ball with her boys. Bubbly Ziki likes to dance with her girls. Yet when their paths cross, the two fall in love. Banned in Kenya, Wanuri Kahiu's gay romance is delightful and full of life. DIR Wanuri Kahiu. SCR Jenna Cato Bass, Wanuri Kahiu. CAST Samantha Mugatsia, Sheila Munyiva, Jimmi Gathu, Nini Wacera, Dennis Musyoka, Patricia Amira. Kenya

RAY & LIZ – In this immersive debut, director and photographer Richard Billingham returns to the squalid council flat outside of Birmingham where he and his brother were raised, in a confrontation and reconciliation with parents Ray and Liz. A complex and layered visual inquiry, Billingham's probing gaze, rich saturated palette and meticulous compositions reveal a surrealistic beauty in memories of poverty. DIR Richard Billingham. SCR Richard Billingham. CAST Ella Smith, Justin Salinger, Patrick Romer, Deirdre Kelly, Tony Way, Sam Gittins, Joshua Millard-Lloyd. UK

THE RETURN – In Malene Choi's formally daring work of docufiction, the temporary residents of KoRoot — a Seoul-based guesthouse for transnational adoptees seeking information on their Korean birth parents — form a unique bond with one another while they each process the intense emotions inherent in their journey of self-discovery. DIR Malene Choi. SCR Sissel Dalsgaard Thomsen. CAST Karoline Sofie Lee, Thomas Hwan, Seong In-Ja. Denmark, South Korea

SIR – When an unexpected romance develops with her upper-class boss, a strong-willed maid in Mumbai finds herself treacherously close to breaking India's rigid rules of class division. Director/writer Rohena Gera's debut feature boasts a luminous lead performance by Tillotama Shome. DIR Rohena Gera. SCR Rohena Gera. CAST Vivek Gomber, Tillotama Shome. India, France

STYX – Rike (Susanne Wolff) is sailing solo through open Atlantic waters. When she spots a vessel in the distance in a dire situation — a boat, brimming with migrants, is sinking — her voyage crystallizes into a sharp moral dilemma: What is an individual's personal responsibility when faced with the

refugee crisis? DIR Wolfgang Fischer. SCR Ika Kuenzel, Wolfgang Fischer. CAST Susanne Wolff, Gedion Wekesa Oduor. Germany, Austria

TEMPORADA – Settling into a new job in an unfamiliar city, Juliana faces life as a single woman while navigating the financial and emotional tightrope walk that is life among Brazil's working class in this beautiful and engrossing second feature. DIR André Novais Oliveira. SCR André Novais Oliveira. CAST Grace Passô, Russo Apr, Rejane Faria, Hélio Ricardo. Brazil

AMERICAN INDEPENDENTS

THE BIGGEST LITTLE FARM – Filmmaker John Chester documents the eight-year effort of an ambitious, life-changing personal venture: moving out of Los Angeles with his wife and building a diverse, sustainable farm. As the farm's ecosystem begins to awaken, the couple explores the complexity of coexisting with nature and all its intricacies in this poignant documentary. DIR John Chester. SCR Mark Monroe, John Chester. USA

BLOWIN' UP – BLOWIN' UP is an intimate portrait of a New York criminal court and the rebel heroines working to change the way women arrested for prostitution are prosecuted. Stephanie Wang-Breal's essential and fascinating documentary reveals the complex hurdles sex workers must face, and the steadfast efforts of those helping to change their lives. DIR Stephanie Wang-Breal. SCR Stephanie Wang-Breal. USA

COMMUNION LOS ANGELES – A dystopian vision of the present, this experimental documentary uses poetic time-lapse photography. An indistinguishable swell of half-audible monologues, radio frequencies and voicemails maintains a decidedly unsettling distance, even as the rhythms of reoccurring highway vistas, flickering street signs and neon-lit strip malls beckon you to fall under its trance. DIR Peter Bo Rappmund, Adam R. Levine. SCR Peter Bo Rappmund, Adam R. Levine. USA

FAMILY – When her estranged brother calls in an emergency, workaholic Kate Stone (Taylor Schilling) reluctantly agrees to babysit her tween niece Maddie. Kate's life quickly spins into chaos as one night turns into a week. She doesn't think things could get much worse, until she learns Maddie wants to run away from home to join the life of the Juggalos. DIR Laura Steinel. SCR Laura Steinel. CAST Taylor Schilling, Bryn Vale, Brian Tyree Henry, Jessie Ennis, Blair Beeken, Matt Walsh, Allison Tolman, Eric Edelstein, Kate McKinnon, Fabrizio Guido. USA

THE GRAND BIZARRE – The debut feature of acclaimed experimental animator Jodie Mack is a playful, eye-popping trip around the world, through its fabrics and textiles and their place in a busy international market: bright swaths of fabric, scarves and rugs dance along shorelines, in airport carousels and clotheslines to the pulse of irresistible pop soundscapes. DIR Jodie Mack. USA

THE GREAT PRETENDER – In Nathan Silver's latest comedy, four New Yorkers intersect within the framework of Mona's (Maëlle Poesy-Guichard) autobiographical play. Furthering the themes of self-delusion Silver explored in THIRST STREET (2017), the film's artificial hues of violet, yellow and green visually serve to blur the characters' real lives with the play they're all unwittingly performing in. DIR Nathan Silver. SCR Jack Dunphy. CAST Esther Garrel, Keith Poulson, Linas Phillips, Maëlle Poésy. USA

HER SMELL – In HER SMELL, Becky Something (Elisabeth Moss) battles addiction and personal

demons while trying to maintain her celebrity and creativity as lead musician of a '90s punk-rock band. Backstage, Becky comes unhinged, bantering maniacally to her bandmates, friends and family as mascara runs down her face. With an uneasy, bass-heavy score and lengthy tracking close-ups, this is a nightmarish, abrasive ride to rock bottom. DIR Alex Ross Perry. SCR Alex Ross Perry. CAST Elisabeth Moss, Cara Delevingne, Dan Stevens, Amber Heard. USA

JINN – Being a teenager can already be dramatic. Now add religious conversion, first love, and having to change your favorite pizza topping. When her mother joins a local mosque, Summer is forced to explore whether she too wants to convert to Islam. Nijla Mu'min's coming-of-age story grows into an exploration of spirituality seen through the eyes of a girl trying to find her place. DIR Nijla Mu'min. SCR Nijla Mu'min. CAST Zoe Renee, Simone Missick, Kelvin Harrison, Jr., Dorian Missick, Hisham Tawfiq and Kelly Jenrette. USA

RELAXER – Indie film at its most raw is on display in this latest collaboration between director Joel Potrykus and his actor/muse Joshua Burge as Abbie, whose latest challenge forces him to stay on the couch while Y2K looms large. Lucky for him, there's plenty of milk. DIR Joel Potrykus. SCR Joel Potrykus. CAST Joshua Burge, David Dastmalchian, Andre Hyland. USA

THE WEEKEND – In Stella Meghie's charming and witty romantic comedy, a comedian (Sasheer Zamata) hauls the baggage of her defunct relationship on a weekend getaway with friends, which happens to include her ex-boyfriend (Tone Bell) and his new girlfriend (DeWanda Wise). DIR Stella Meghie. SCR Stella Meghie. CAST Sasheer Zamata, Tone Bell, DeWanda Wise, Y'Lan Noel, Kym Whitley. USA



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