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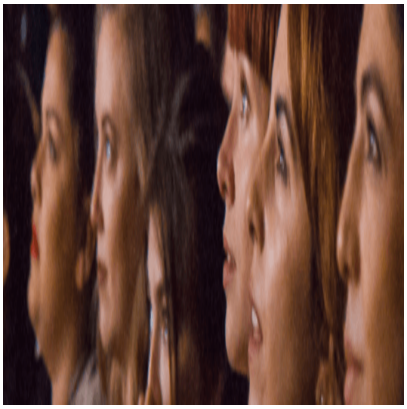


The Week of AFI FEST 2021! Programmer Picks

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson



HollywoodGlee celebrating the start of the 2019 AFI FEST presented by Audi.
(Photo credit: Larry Gleeson)

With the 2021 AFI FEST starting this week, here are the programming teamâ??s top picks:



Sarah Harris â?? Director of Programming, AFI Festivals



PETITE MAMAN

You may not see a more magical and charming coming-of-age story this year than PETITE MAMAN. CÃ©line Sciamma adds to her masterful portfolio with a simple story of a mother and daughter relationship. Eight-year-old Nelly â?? mourning the recent death of her beloved grandmother â?? meets a girl building a tree fort, like her mother once did. Without spoiling the mystery, this film evokes a timeless and enchanting moment â?? one of transition, emotional development and compassion â?? when we begin to understand others. As we continue to navigate daily anxiety or doubt, PETITE MAMAN feels like an exhilarating breath of fresh air. Learn more about the film.

Screening in-person | November 13, 1:15 p.m. | Buy In-Person Ticket(s)

Virtual screening available beginning November 13, 12:00 p.m. PST | Buy Virtual Ticket(s)



THE FIRST WAVE

While we are living in a post-vaccinated and variant-driven pandemic, it is imperative to process this moment in history â?? this moment we are still collectively living in. Matthew Heinemanâ??s THE FIRST WAVE documents one of New York Cityâ??s hardest hit hospitals as the COVID-19 pandemic peaked in Spring 2020, with doctors, nurses and patients fighting to survive. This powerful and intimate documentary reminds us how far we have come and how many lives have been affected. It is a therapeutic watch, forcing us to confront the harsh reality of the disease, creating space to grieve over our collective trauma and be an active witness to history. Learn more about the film.

Screening in-person | November 12, 4:00 p.m. | Buy In-Person Ticket(s)

Virtual screening available beginning November 12, 12:00 p.m. PST | Buy Virtual Ticket(s)

Malin Kan â?? Programmer, AFI Festivals



AHEDâ??S KNEE

Israeli auteur Nadav Lapidâ??s breakout THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER (2014) was a revelation, with bursts of a new cinematic language, expressive cinematography and a barely contained frenetic energy. AHEDâ??S KNEE returns to and intensifies this approach within a meta-narrative that poses complex, radical and even personal questions surrounding national identity, masculinity and the moral obligation of an artist. Itâ??s so smart! Learn more about the film.

Screening in-person | November 12, 4:30 p.m. | Buy In-Person Ticket(s)



Ã?NTREGALDE

Radu Munteanâ??s latest could potentially be described as a critique of altruism under capitalism, but all of that seems momentarily less urgent than the larger concern as to whether our three characters

will survive the night trapped in the bitter cold wilderness. Romanian New Wave filmmakers are masters at illustrating that people doing their best is simply not good enough when the system has been poisoned. All of that is here, entrancing and brimming with dark humor and wit. Learn more about the film.

Screening in-person | November 14, 7:45 p.m. | Buy In-Person Ticket(s)



THE GIRL AND THE SPIDER

Oh, how patiently I have awaited Ramon ZÃ¼rcherâ??s follow-up to THE STRANGE LITTLE CAT (AFI FEST 2013)! Teaming with twin brother Silvan, THE GIRL AND THE SPIDER is the second installment in what they define loosely as a trilogy about human togetherness. Its distinct formal qualities are deeply captivating, nudging you into a different realm of perception, one more attentive to movement, to the profundity of the smallest, oddest moments and the way in which these create a hyper-specific energy or tension. No one makes films like this. Learn more about the film.

Screening in-person | November 13, 8:30 p.m. | Buy In-Person Ticket(s)

Eric J Moore â?? Manager, Programming Operations, AFI Festival

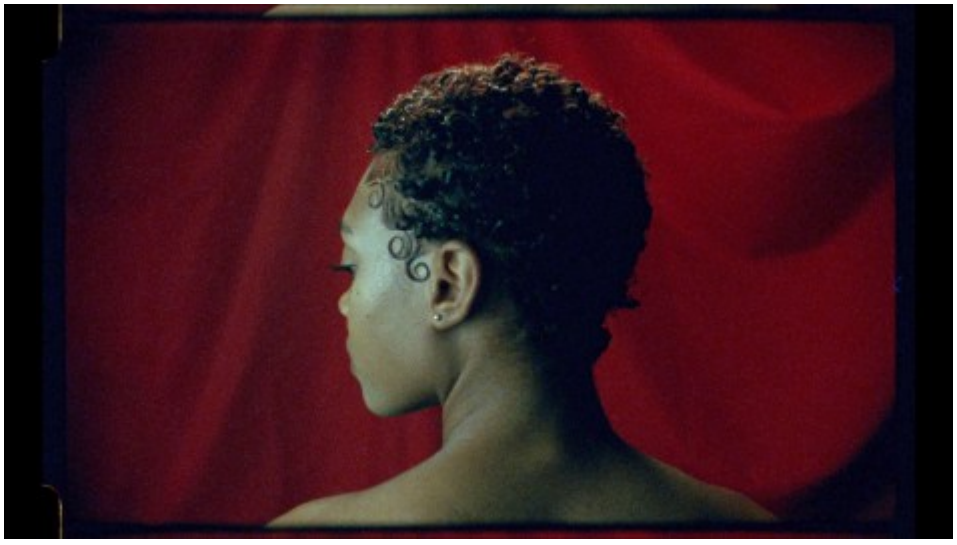


ONLY THE MOON STANDS STILL (æ??æ??ä¾•æ?§)

Writer/director Johnson Cheng returns to AFI with yet another incredibly moving film about the complexities of intergenerational families: a slice-of-life tale of three generations of Chinese women confronting the realities of having to shut down their familyâ??s ballroom dance studio and bid farewell to a life that has defined them for so long. I love how the film tells a story of how time marches forward, whether you are ready or not, and how itâ??s how you choose to face it that really determines who you are. Chengâ??s previous film, LONELY BLUE NIGHT, deservingly won the audience award at AFI FEST 2020. Chengâ??s star is rising, as people are noticing his impressive work â?? for example, producer/director/actress Lena Waithe joined this project as an Executive Producer! I dare you to watch this lovely film and not feel a tear or two welling up in your eyes. Learn more about the film.

Screening in-person as part of Shorts Program 3 | November 12, 9:00 p.m. | Buy In-Person Ticket(s)

Virtual screening available beginning November 11, 12:00 p.m. PST | Buy Virtual Ticket(s)



BABYBANGZ

In British-Nigerian filmmaker Juliana Kasumuâ??s sophomore documentary short, we meet the incomparable Anastasia Ebel, the owner of the BABYBANGZ hair salon, located in Mid-City, New Orleans. I love how through a mix of captured conversations with Ebel and her patrons, along with stunning tableaus of the women sporting their impressive coiffes in verdant Louisiana landscapes, a warm and supportive community of Black women is revealed. These women love their home of New Orleans but are also not shy to reflect on the important issues: like race, gender, gentrification and identity. Kasumu achieves an intimacy with her subjects that isnâ??t easy to gain when entering such a personal and insular world. The BABYBANGZ salon chairs are special, a place where the women feel seen as Ebel provides a space where natural hair can be respected and cared for holistically. For me, the film masterfully tackles some pretty heavy topics, while somehow still making you feel pleasantly embraced. Learn more about the film.

Screening in-person as part of Shorts Program 1 | November 12, 3:00 p.m. | Buy In-Person Ticket(s)

Virtual screening available beginning November 11, 12:00 p.m. PST | Buy Virtual Ticket(s)

Julia Kipnis â?? Programmer, AFI FEST



HIT THE ROAD

HIT THE ROAD is filmmaker Panah Panahiâ??s standout feature debut â?? singular, surprising and unlike any other film in the 2021 AFI FEST program. An endearing yet frenzied family of four â?? an overprotective mother, a hobbling, nonchalant father, a mysteriously anxious older brother and a scene-stealing, rambunctious younger brother â?? traverse an expansive Iranian landscape in a rented SUV on a cryptic road trip filled with dark humor, absurdism and charismatic performances. With a knack for portraying wholesome family dynamics and witty banter, Panah Panahi has certainly inherited the

filmmaking gene from his father, Iranian auteur Jafar Panahi (3 FACES, TAXI). A bold, breakout debut from an assured new voice in world cinema and an impressive addition to the already monumental, illustrious collection of films hailing from Iran. A profound discovery and one of my top five films of the year! Learn more about the film.

Screening in-person | November 13, 3:45 p.m. | Buy In-Person Ticket(s)

Virtual screening available beginning November 13, 12:00 p.m. PST | Buy Virtual Ticket(s)



MEDUSA

MEDUSA is Anita Rocha da Silveiraâ??s vibrant homage to classic horror-satire and Argento-esque, supernatural giallo films. Mariana (played with verve by Mari Oliveira) is part of a virtuous Christian girl gang in Brazil that is hellbent on publicly shaming sinful women and posting humiliating videos of their repentance to social media. Deeply seeded carnal desires bubble to the surface and topple over in this cathartic narrative which fuses the darkly morbid with the sublimely feminine. With lush performances and an infectious score, MEDUSA is a fierce and pointed critique of evangelical fanaticism as well as the ways in which society at large crucifies brazen, liberated women. Witnessing the devout slowly shed their saintly conduct and become their most primal selves is certainly worth the watch. Perhaps thereâ??s a snake-haired sinner hiding in all of usâ?¦ Learn more about the film.

Screening in-person | November 13, 8:30 p.m. | Buy In-Person Ticket(s)

Tickets and Passes on sale here for AFI FEST 2021



Category

1. #AFI
2. #AFIFEST
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Tags

1. Programmer Picks

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