Ken Loach wins Palme dâ??Or at Cannes for â??I, Daniel Blake.â?•

Description

By THOMAS ADAMSON
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Veteran British director Ken Loach won his second Palme dâ??Or at the Cannes Film Festival Sunday for *I, Daniel Blake* â?? a stark portrayal of a disabled manâ??s struggle with the crushing benefits system in northern England.

The 79-year-old was presented the festivalâ??s top prize by actor Mel Gibson at a ceremony on the French Riviera. Accepting the award, the silver-haired Loach punched his fists in the air in victory and said that he hoped his gritty, social realist movie would hold a mirror up to the impact of Europeâ??s policies of austerity on the poorest in society.

Director Ken Loach, centre, actor Mel Gibson, left and President of the Jury George Miller react after Roach is awarded the Palme dâ??or for the film *I, Daniel Blake*, during the awards ceremony at the

69th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, Sunday, May 22, 2016. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)

â??We must give a message of hope, we must say another world is possible,â?• he said.

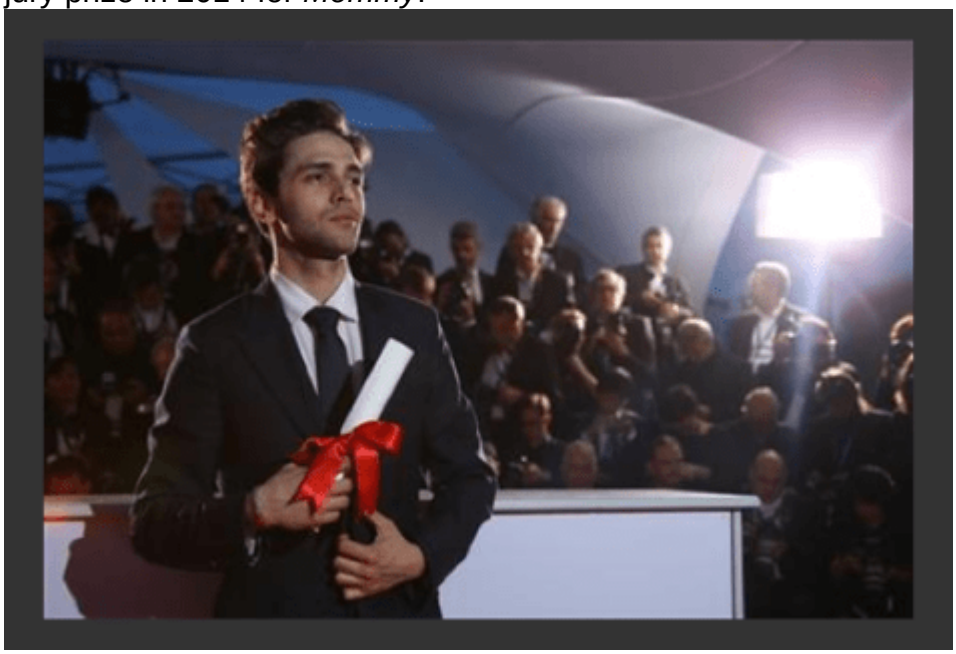
I, Daniel Blake chronicles a middle-aged widower from Newcastle who, after a heart attack, can neither work nor get government aid. It follows the sometimes comic, frequently painful frustrations as he winds his way through an archaic system that seems designed to bring him down.

Like many of Loachâ??s films, social politics is at the heart of *I, Daniel Blake* â?? which many critics have predicted could be his last.

â??There is a conscious cruelty in the way that we are organizing our lives now, where the most vulnerable people are told that their poverty is their own fault,â?• Loach told reporters. â??If you have no work itâ??s your fault you havenâ??t got a job. Never mind in Britain, there is mass unemployment throughout Europe.â?•

Loach has long brought his distinct portrayals of the British working class to Cannes â?? and is more a regular at Cannes than almost any filmmaker. He has had 12 films in competition at the festival over the years, including his Palme dâ??Or-winning *The Wind That Shakes the Barley.*

Canadian director Xavier Dolan picked up the runner-up Grand Prize, which has been seen by some critics as a vindication for him personally after his film, *Itâ??s Only The End Of The World,* garnered lukewarm reviews and triggered a spat between him and certain film critics. The 27-year-old won the jury prize in 2014 for *Mommy*.



Director Xavier Dolan poses for photographers with his Grand Prix prize for the film, *Juste La Fin du Monde* (*Itâ??s Only The End OF the World*), during the photo call following the awards ceremony at the 69th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, Sunday, May 22, 2016. (AP Photo/Joel Ryan)

The jury of the 69th Cannes Film Festival was headed by Australian director George Miller who described the juryâ??s selection as â??two words: rigorous and happy.â?•

The Cannes juryâ??s decisions are famously unpredictable, and take place behind doors closed to the press for the duration of the May 11-22 festival.

Despite mixed reviews, director Asghar Farhadiâ??s film, *The Salesman,* picked up several awards including best screenplay and best actor for Shahab Hosseini.

Romanian director Cristian Mungui, who was a favorite to win the Palme dâ??Or for *Graduation,* won the best director award, which he shared with French director Olivier Assayas for his paranormal thriller, *Personal Shopper,* starring former *Twilight* star Kristen Stewart.

Director Olivier Assayas poses for photographers after receiving the Best Director award for the film *Personal Shopper*, during the photo call following the awards ceremony at the 69th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, Sunday, May 22, 2016. (AP Photo/Lionel Cironneau)

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