

FANTASTIC 7

2021

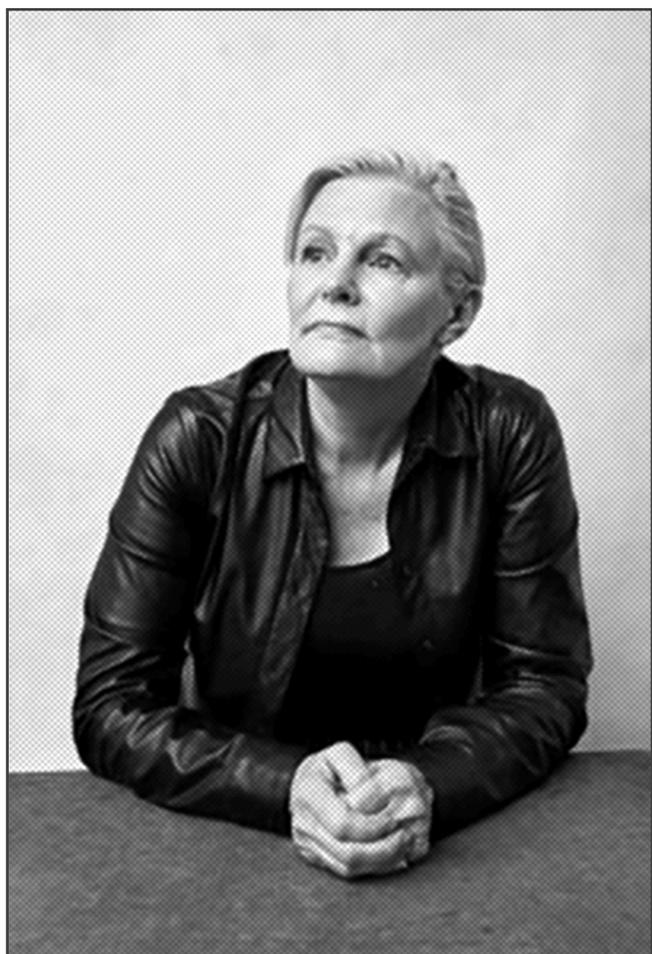


MARCHÉ DU FILM
FESTIVAL DE CANNES



SITGES
INTERNATIONAL FANTASTIC
FILM FESTIVAL OF CATALONIA

Summary



04

**The genesis
of Fantastic 7**

32

**Mary Harron,
Fantastic 7
Godmother,
2021**

Event organized by:



With the support of



7 FANTASTIC PROJECTS

08

30

08

Sitges International
Fantastic Film Festival
of Catalonia

12

Bucheon International
Fantastic Film Festival

15

Cairo International
Film Festival

18

Guadalajara
International
Film Festival

22

South by Southwest

25

Toronto International
Film Festival

28

Whānau Mārama
New Zealand
International
Film Festival

The genesis of FANTASTIC 7



Since its creation, the Marché du Film has relentlessly pursued its commitment to welcome and foster all talents, genres and disciplines in the film industry. This has been particularly true for genre films over the past few years, with our involvement in the Fantastic mixer, Frontières, and Blood Window. Fantastic 7 aims at becoming this special place for all fantastic key players: a place to showcase the most promising projects and to give a voice to upcoming filmmakers.

Jérôme Paillard

Executive Director of the Marché
du Film Festival de Cannes

The Sitges International Fantastic Film Festival of Catalonia is the oldest genre film festival in the world and is especially recognized as a talent factory. Fantastic 7 is precisely that a selection of the best global talent and a reference point for a production that is constantly renewed on the basis of a loyal audience.

Each selection of Fantastic 7 is going to be an exquisite preview of the new trends around the world.

Mònica Garcia Massagué

Foundation General Manager
Sitges – International Fantastic Film Festival
of Catalonia



As in good wines, Fantastic 7 comes to enhance value to the “denomination of origin” (appellation d’origine contrôlée). 7 fantastic festivals each endorsing a project from their region in the fantastic frame of the Marché du Film.

Bernardo Bergeret

Executive Director Ventana Sur/INCAA



FILM FESTIVALS







About SITGES

SITGES – International Fantastic Film Festival of Catalonia is the number one fantasy film festival in the world and represents, at the same time, the cultural expression with the most media impact in Catalonia. With a solid experience, the Sitges Festival is a stimulating universe of encounters, exhibitions, presentations and screenings of fantasy films from all over the world.

The Festival closed its 53rd edition using a hybrid format, combining on-site and virtual formulas, while showing a selection of the very best contemporary fantastic films. The Festival combined the best genre films with a close look at films that have marked the history of fantasy, through a variety of tributes. Once again, the films directed by women had a prominent presence -a clear trend in recent years- and the role of national productions was also predominant.

We celebrated the 100th anniversary of the first great fantastic genre movie in film history, *Das Cabinet Des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*), with its retrospective and an official publication. Our last edition was a real test of resistance and resilience. The physical format included meetings, presentations, Q&A, etc., as it has always been, although complying with current restriction. There was not a big difference in that aspect to ensure the value of attending a festival. International participation was both physical and online, live or recorded depending on the type of guest and the event itself.

About our choice

"The perfect combination of Carpenter's *The Thing*, Lovecraftian horror and black comedy. In other words, a *cañí* (from deep Spain) horror product" And with this pitch, *La Pasajera* ended up being the production sponsored by the Sitges International Fantastic Film Festival of Catalonia. Because if a project is supposed to be representative of its territory, this film by Raúl Cerezo and Fernando González Gómez has arrived to embody the most terrifying folklore to the beat of a Spanish pasodoble; hard to imagine and undoubtedly a promising journey to a new dimension of horror. With *La Pasajera*, Raúl and Fernando, already embarking on their second feature film project, have achieved a new representative within the most genuine Spanish Fantahorror: the black comedy that demolishes stereotypes by abducting them, and we won't go into further details about it. The film chosen for this year's edition of Fantastic 7 is a promising journey with many allusions to the horror movie greats but, undoubtedly, it stands out for its unique personality.

We can only conclude that a subgenre has been born thanks to this Spanish duo: *Cañí* horror*.

*A term to describe the art of winning over other people's wills (possible clue to the storyline).

SITGES



SITGES

54TH INTERNATIONAL FANTASTIC
FILM FESTIVAL OF CATALONIA

7TH - 17TH OCTOBER 2021

sitgesfilmfestival.com

JUST

SPAINTEED

NEW SPANISH BLOODY CINEMA

INTRODUCING

LA PASAJERA

DIRECTED BY

RAÚL CEREZO & FERNANDO GONZÁLEZ GÓMEZ



SITGES
INTERNATIONAL FANTASTIC
FILM FESTIVAL OF CATALUNYA

FANTASTIC7



GOBIERNO
DE ESPAÑA

MINISTERIO
DE CULTURA
Y DEPORTE



THE PASSENGER

A ride-sharing trip takes a terrifying turn when the driver accidentally hits a hiker in a backroad in the middle of the night.



A woman gets hit by a ride-sharing van with several passengers inside while hiking along a backroad in the middle of the night. After picking her up and carrying her into the van to take her to the nearest hospital, the passengers quickly learn they have to follow one rule: never sit next to her.

ORIGINAL TITLE: **La pasajera**
TITLE IN ENGLISH: **The passenger**

DIRECTORS: **Raúl Cerezo, Fernando González Gómez**
CAST: **Ramiro Blas, Cecilia Suárez, Paula Gallego, Cristina Alcázar**
GENRE: **Science Fiction / Horror**
NATIONALITY: **Spain**
PRODUCER: **José Luis Rancaño**

STATUS: **Post-Production**

BUDGET: **3.000.000 €**

Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival (BIFAN)

B.I.G
BIFAN INDUSTRY
GATHERING
2021.7.8 —7.14

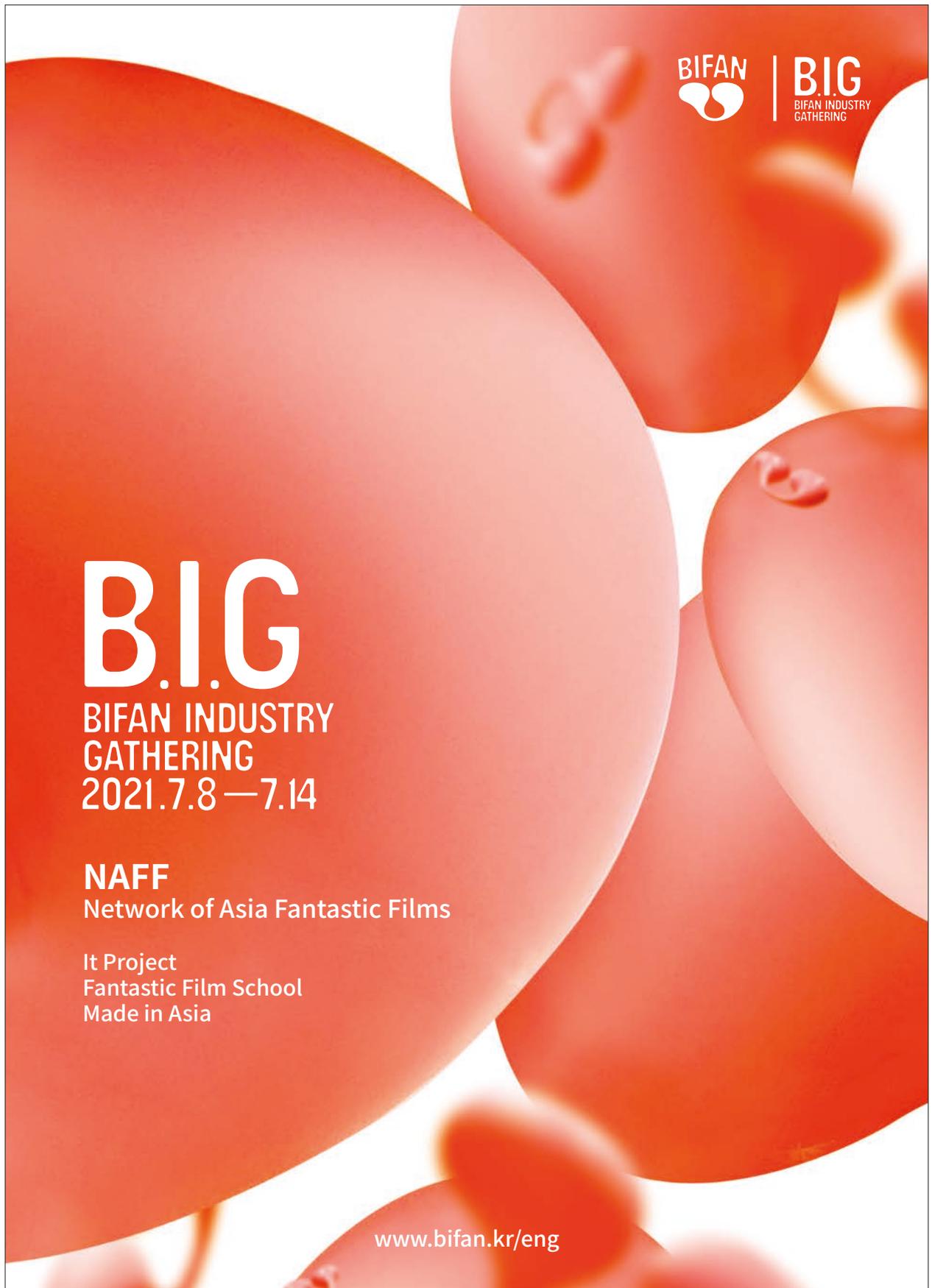


About BIFAN

BIFAN welcomes its 25th edition in 2021, focusing on horror, thriller, mystery and fantasy films, with particular attention to Asian Fantastic Genre Cinema. B.I.G(BIFAN Industry Gathering) comprises: NAFF(Network of Asian Fantastic Films) aims to promote and discover new genre film projects and talents; It Project, the first-ever genre film project market- Fantastic Film School, a professional training program; BIFAN also features Made in Asia, Korea Now, Scary Tales Archive, Beyond Reality XR.

About our choice

The film *Lay the Ghost* shows an immoral corporation and selfish human nature in a delicate and emotional way through a tragic secret that runs a generation to another in a family. It is expected that the haunted house where the soul of a child sacrificed for no reason wanders, and the solidarity of girls trying to escape the tragedy created by adults will bring fresh stimulation to the world film industry, hoping for a new angle of the horror genre.



BIG

BIFAN INDUSTRY
GATHERING
2021.7.8—7.14

NAFF

Network of Asia Fantastic Films

It Project
Fantastic Film School
Made in Asia

www.bifan.kr/eng

LAY THE GHOST

Suan, with her ability to see the door to the afterlife, brings back the ghost of her dead sister. Soon, a girl named Jaein resembling Suan's deceased sister appears.



A thirteen-year old girl Suan wakes up from a three year coma that erases her memory of the death of her sister. When Suan returns to school, she meets Jaein, a girl who resembles her sister. Suan remembers her sister's death through Jaein, but it is different from her mother's story. Suan goes to her old home with Jaein to discover the truth.

ORIGINAL TITLE: 영원한 아이
TITLE IN ENGLISH: **Lay the Ghost**

DIRECTOR: **YU Eunjeong**

CAST: **TBD**

GENRE: **Fantasy, Horror**

NATIONALITY: **South Korea**

PRODUCER: **PARK Doohee**

STATUS: **Financing, Casting**

BUDGET: **3,000,000 USD**

Cairo International Film Festival



About CIFF

Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF), one of the oldest cultural events in Africa and the Middle East's mission is to support emerging Arab filmmakers, not only in Egypt but in the wider region, to provide talent with a platform for storytelling through the medium of film and opportunity to develop professional careers in the film industry. The Festival works with local, regional and international partnerships to create initiatives and funds to further equip emerging Arab filmmakers with holistic industry skills to bring their stories to the world as well as promoting film production in the region. The Festival is key to bringing a diverse range of films from around the world to audiences to improve understanding between different nationalities, an opportunity to learn more about different societies with them aim of encouraging dialogue. Every year the Festival connects film industry professionals in the Arab world and the Middle East with their counterparts from other parts of the world to promote crosscultural exchange and foster the growth of the Arab film industry. CIFF is one of the 15 global festivals granted the category "A" status by the International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF) and is also the only Festival in Africa and the Middle East to be recognized by the competitive feature category from the FIAPF.

About our choice

One of the most strong and remarkable projects which took part in Cairo Film Connections latest edition.

A magical realism/coming-of-age drama which turns into a road trip, unfolds in rural Egypt, during a foggy and rainy Easter week.

The tale is the discovery that two kids make when they realize that it's not the mythical monsters and scary things that terrify them.

Screenwriter Ahmed El Zoghby is co-founder of a Cairo film school called Cima.

The lead-producer is Ali El Arabi, a documentary director and producer based in Cairo. El Arabi helmed upcoming doc "Captains of Za'atari,"

CAIRO



43RD CAIRO
INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL

1ST - 10TH DECEMBER 2021

MARK YOUR
CALENDARS FOR
CIFF43

1ST-10TH DECEMBER, 2021



 /cairofilms

 /cairofilms

 /cairofilms

 /cairointernationalfilmfestival

THE LEGEND OF ZEINAB AND NOAH

To delay her mother's funeral, a teenage girl and her friend steal the corpse, escape their village, and embark on a road trip.

The pictures are just references



In a small town in Upper Egypt, on the Wednesday and Thursday preceding Good Friday, Zeinab, a 13 year old adolescent who strongly believes that myths and superstitions are real, with the help of Noah, her 16 year old Christian neighbor, abducts her mother's body. Noah's father died in a fire, and everyone in the small town believes that he died because he wanted to transform his house into a church, and that the house is cursed and haunted by a demon who burns it over and over again. During the escape journey, both Zeinab and Noah are confronted with many of the myths and fears they so strongly believed were true. They form a strong bond and Noah discovers that the demon haunting his house is not from the Underworld.

ORIGINAL TITLE: أسطورة زينب ونوح
TITLE IN ENGLISH: **The Legend of Zeinab and Noah**

DIRECTOR: **Yousry Nasrallah**
CAST (potential cast): **Bassem Samra, Khaled Saleh, Tara Emad, Nelly Karim, Ali Kassem, Bouchra**
GENRE: **Magical Realism, Coming-of-Age**
NATIONALITY: **Egypt**
PRODUCER: **Ali El-Arabi**

STATUS: **Pre-production**

BUDGET: **1,692,901.90 USD**

Guadalajara International Film Festival



FICG

Festival Internacional
de Cine en Guadalajara
Film Festival • México®



About FICG

Guadalajara International Film Festival is one of the largest showcases in Mexico for exhibition, promotion, and distribution of national and Ibero-American cinema. It is a landmark festival in Latin America with a strong industry, which generates a great forum for training, instruction, and creative connection with professionals of international stature.

About our choice

Nino goes into feverous delusions while looking for her mother. It's fantastic how he travels through different paintings. Nino is a kid but the troubles he confronts are full of anxiety, fears, and nervousness. Those paintings have different worlds and techniques that are so magical to watch.

GUADALAJARA



GUADALAJARA FILM FESTIVAL MÉXICO



www.ficg.mx

GUADALAJARA



CINETECA

UNIVERSIDAD DE GUADALAJARA



CINETECA FIGG, WHERE STORIES ARE CREATED

#CINETECALOVERS



WWW.CINETECAFICG.COM

FEVER

A film for kids who aren't afraid of fire



Nino is on his way with his mother to sell an old mysterious painting when a raving fever gets him lost in the mayhem. This way the boy takes a remarkable journey through a maze of unique fast-paced adventures encountering the most extraordinary characters and worlds made of drawings, paintings, an old cinema movie and a polynesian paradise. But, will Nino be able to come back to his mother?

ORIGINAL TITLE: **Fiebre**
TITLE IN ENGLISH: **Fever**

DIRECTOR: **Elisa Eliash**
CAST: **Lautaro Cantillana, Macarena Teke, Nora Catalano, Nestor Cantillana**
GENRE: **Fantasy**
NATIONALITY: **Chile, Perú, Brazil**
PRODUCER: **Clara Taricco**

STATUS: **Post Production**

BUDGET: **450.000 USD**

SXSW



About SXSW

The SXSW Film Festival celebrates raw innovation and emerging talent from both behind and in front of the camera. Featuring provocative dramas, documentaries, comedies, genre standouts, and more, the festival has become known for the high caliber and diversity of films presented, and for its smart, enthusiastic audiences.

About our choice

Featuring great performances, expert tension building, and a delightful combination of fun and terror Julian Terry's short film *Don't Peek* was a Midnight Shorts hit at SXSW 2021. Now, longtime SXSW Alum, Timur Bekmambetov is adapting the short into a feature-length film with his team at Bazelevs. We are thrilled to present their collaboration on the feature version of *Don't Peek!* for this year's *Fantastic 7*.



DON'T PEEK

Trapped in a town that bans most electronics, a nerdy teen finds a hidden video game, only to learn the nightmarish reason why some devices should never be turned on...



Following his father's death, Jordan, a techie teen, is forced to leave the city to stay with his grandparents in the Quiet Zone—a place prohibiting most electronics. He uncovers his dad's old 8-bit game system, but through a glitch he encounters a frightening entity communicating through the console making it clear why electronics are really banned here.

ORIGINAL TITLE: **Don't Peek**
TITLE IN ENGLISH: **Don't Peek**

DIRECTOR: **Julian Terry**
CAST: **in progress**
GENRE: **Horror**
NATIONALITY: **US**
PRODUCERS: **Timur Bekmambetov, Majd Nassif, Pavel Bozhkov**

STATUS: **in development**

BUDGET: **10,000,000 USD**

Toronto International Film Festival (Tiff)

tiff



About TIFF

Since its inception, several of the Toronto International Film Festival's distinct programming sections can be recognized as a kind of "state of the union" for respective modes of filmmaking, be it documentary, avant-garde, or, in the case of Midnight Madness, genre cinema. Each year the Midnight section seeks not just to champion the year's buzziest genre films, but also to capture the breadth of voices and sub-genres from around the world, particularly those that subvert and explode traditional conventions of fantastic cinema.

About our choice

Kirsten Carthew's *Polaris* first piqued our curiosity when it was pitched as "*Mad Max set in the Arctic*". Such a premise ignites the imagination with so much potential. We applaud its ambition and especially the promise of a genre epic from a region that deserves more representation. Cinema in general could also use more protagonists that have been raised by a polar bear!

tiff

You'll never make it.

Sometimes less is more.

TIFF Talent Development programmes encourage bold experimentation and new perspectives. You'll learn from industry professionals and connect with other emerging artists. Sound interesting?

Applications open April 2021
tiff.net/industry

LEAD SPONSOR



MAJOR SPONSORS





MAJOR SUPPORTERS




POLARIS

A young girl raised by a polar bear, pursues her destiny after escaping capture by brutal warriors intent on killing her mother.



Set in 2101, against the harsh backdrop of a subarctic wasteland, 11 year-old SUMI, a human- child raised by MAMA POLAR BEAR, narrowly escapes capture from a brutal MORAD hunting party and sets out across the vast winter landscape. When Sumi stumbles across FROZEN GIRL, an unlikely friendship is forged and together they race ahead of the vindictive hunters towards the only guiding light Sumi knows, the POLARIS star.

ORIGINAL TITLE: **Polaris**
TITLE IN ENGLISH: **Polaris**

DIRECTOR: **Kirsten Carthew**
CAST: **All female-identifying cast, including Agee (the polar bear)**
GENRE: **Fantasy, Action, Adventure**
NATIONALITY: **Canada**
PRODUCERS: **Max Fraser, Kirsten Carthew, Paul Cadieux, Alyson Richards**

STATUS: **Post-Production**

BUDGET: **2M USD**



Whānau
Mārama
New Zealand
International
Film Festival



About Whānau Mārama

Whānau Mārama: New Zealand International Film Festival is presented in 13 towns and cities throughout New Zealand as a national event to enhance the appreciation of, and engagement with, global art and culture by providing access to a diverse range of high-quality film.

The festival presents 150-170 feature films spanning all genres with two competition sections for short films – New Zealand's Best Short Film and Ngā Whanaunga Māori Pasifika Shorts.

Whānau Mārama means 'family of light' and this new te reo Māori name was introduced in 2020. The festival is the consolidation of a number of separately evolved festivals into one single event and has been presented as such for 12 years. Its history spans back 53 years to the start of the Auckland Film Festival in 1969 and in 2021 the festival celebrates 50 years of the film festival in Wellington.

Normally taking place in July-September each year during New Zealand's winter months, due to the impact of the global pandemic, the next festival will be in October-December 2021.

Whānau Mārama: New Zealand International Film Festival is operated by the New Zealand Film Festival Trust, a non-profit, registered charitable trust, with major funding from the New Zealand Film Commission.

About Our Choice

James Ashcroft's directorial debut feature film *Coming Home in the Dark* had its premiere at Sundance Film Festival 2021 in the Midnight category.

James continues his exploration of the psychological thriller with his new film, *The Rule of Jenny Pen*, based on a short story by New Zealand writer Owen Marshall. The film is currently in development and will be produced by James and Orlando Stewart.

NEW ZEALAND

**Whānau
Mārama**
New Zealand
International
Film Festival
2021



28 October
– 5 December
2021

33 Cinemas
in 13 Towns
and Cities
Nationwide

nziff.co.nz

THE RULE OF JENNY PEN

Confined to a secluded rest home, an ailing Judge must stop an elderly tyrant who employs a child's puppet to abuse the home's residents with deadly consequences.



porcelain - Courtesy the artist and Martin Asbaek Gallery
 Maria Rubinke, *Open Minded*, 2011,

When ailing Judge Mortensen suffers a near fatal stroke, he's placed into rest home care. Recuperating in isolation, Mortensen refuses to cooperate with staff or integrate into the community. The situation grows worse when he discovers an aging tyrant covertly tormenting members of the community with a child's puppet 'Jenny Pen'. Dave Crealy has long enjoyed abusing his fellow residents in secret and soon turns his focus on the vulnerable new arrival. As the assaults escalate a diagnosis of onset dementia leaves Mortensen's pleas to staff ignored. But when a series of fatal accidents plague the community, the disillusioned lawmaker is forced to take matters into his own hands and put an end to 'The Rule of Jenny Pen'.

ORIGINAL TITLE: **The Rule of Jenny Pen**
 TITLE IN ENGLISH: **The Rule of Jenny Pen**

DIRECTOR: **James Ashcroft**
 CAST: **Bernard Hill / TBC**
 GENRE: **Psychological Thriller**
 NATIONALITY: **New Zealand**
 PRODUCERS: **Orlando Stewart, James Ashcroft**

STATUS: **Advanced Development / Script**

BUDGET: **4,900,000 €**



FANTASTIC7

2021



MARY HARRON INTERVIEW

Interview by Alicia Reginato, Head of Talent for the Sitges IFFFC

You've had a long career as a film director, and your beginnings were in journalism and in TV. How did that influence you and maybe determine your criteria when you started making films? I think the big thing that affected me in journalism was just doing research. So, a lot of my films are historically based and are very heavily researched. I try to stick as close to the story as I can. When I first started working on *I SHOT ANDY WARHOL*, I became convinced that the truth was usually more interesting than a sort of Hollywood-style biography. And I felt like when people made films about a real-life person, they tried to impose a Hollywood template on things. A sort of traditional story arc. Whereas the reality was usually weirder and more interesting. So that affected me. And then there was just the simple fact that I was just coming from documentary where there's a certain way of filming. You kind of film with what you find in the world. As opposed to coming in with, you know, storyboards. And I'm still more of that kind of improvisatory filmmaker, I think.

Yes, that's true. You mentioned *I SHOT ANDY WARHOL*. In your filmography, there are several films with characters such as Bettie Page, Valerie Solanas, the Manson girls. What is the commonality that you've found within these female characters? These kinds of pop culture icons?

Well, Bettie was obviously someone that people loved, but they were all kind of misunderstood. They were all kind of marginalized people, I would say. Definitely. They all had a certain kind of madness, actually. I suppose you could certainly say if not mad, per se, they had elements of madness. This is also a little bit true of Gala. She's a big part of the new film that I just directed, and that my husband John wrote, about her and Salvador Dalí. Gala is a little bit mad. At least, people certainly thought so. And certainly, a lot of people disliked her. So, I think that, for whatever reason, I'm attracted to these more marginalized, slightly pariah figures.

It's interesting, the commonality of the stories. And it's interesting your take on these stories, these characters, that are perceived

as mad and not maybe necessarily later on viewed as mad because time has passed and we view things differently. So, it's kind of in there, in your work, that these people were beyond their time. Is that part of the attraction for you?

Yes, I mean, I think Valerie was a visionary as well as suffering from mental illness. She was kind of a prophet. I mean, a lot of what she said, which was considered so crazy and outrageous in terms of her analysis of feminism, later became quite accepted. I think that she saw the world with a clarity. She saw the injustice, you know, the insanity of a completely sexist society. And no one listened to her. So, she had that kind of frustration of someone who sees something other people don't see. I find that very compelling.

Another interesting female protagonist was in the series *ALIAS GRACE*. A very Canadian production! What was the difference for you, coming at it as a director? The difference in shooting films versus the mini-series? This one seems to have your handprint all over it: you directed all the episodes, you produced it.

It was very much Sarah Polley's production. She had initiated it and she wrote all the scripts. She initially was going to direct it herself. And when she brought it to me, I said, 'Oh, we should just divide them up between us. You know, I can't possibly direct six episodes of the show. And we should just split them.' She said, 'No, one person has to do them all.' And so, I realized after we started how right she was, because with something like this you really are directing it like one long movie. It was very much like a movie, because it wasn't self-contained episodes. It was like a movie that you shoot for 65 days. The hardest thing was more the endurance test of such a long shoot. Then, generally speaking, I would say that the difference between television and film is that in television the writer is usually more important. Traditionally it's because the writer is creating a world which goes on for years and years, if it's episodic. The director just comes in and does their job and leaves. A mini-series is much more of a collaboration with writer and director. Also, when I read it (*Alias Grace*), I felt like, 'Oh, this could have been written for me'. It seemed just so perfect for me.

Did you enjoy doing it?

Oh, yeah, I loved doing it. I also loved the material. I mean, I'm Canadian and to me it was discovering a whole part of my own culture. Which is this very kind of brutal 19th century history. I think Canadians like to think of themselves as being like Scandinavians, you know, *'we're sensible, we have this social welfare culture.'* And of course, in the 19th century, it was just a very brutal class-ridden system. Not just a racist and classist society, but a very cruel one. And how harsh the treatment of prisoners was, how harsh the treatment of servants was, how terrible the treatment of women was. It was very interesting. One of the things I really loved about Margaret Atwood's book - and Sarah scripts that were very faithful to it - was that it really was like entering another time. A lot of time, when people do a period film, they're not really doing the past. They're just doing modern characters dressed up in old clothes. But this was really like the past is another country. People really did think differently back then. Women thought differently because of the conditioning, because of the society. And I really felt it was very truthful about the time and what a woman's life was like. What was also great was that it went on for so many months, so you really got to dive into it and create a world. So yeah, that project was one of my best experiences.

Interesting, I was thinking about how you were saying it was a different time. And I mean, we don't have to look that far back. In *CHARLIE SAYS*, there is this idea of what the Manson women thought they should be doing - whether it was brainwashed or not - it was not even that long ago. It's interesting that it's such a repeated motif in a lot of your movies, and in your work. You know, I grew up in the 60s and early 70s as a young girl and teenager and I really remembered, even back then, resenting a certain thing about hippie culture and the way women were presented. The sort of Earth Mother idea. Which was basically women serving men. Even back then I had a resentment towards what was in fact a very sexist culture. Funnily enough, the Manson Girls are a kind of crazy version of what was normal in hippie culture. There was a certain kind of sexual freedom that really benefited men. I think a lot of women at that time were having a certain kind of sex... it was a bit like, *'Oh, if you if you don't have sex with me, you're not free, you're not liberated.'* For me *CHARLIE SAYS* was a way to explore something that I remembered. It was a time that I knew and felt like it deserved to be explored.

Going back to after I *SHOT ANDY WARHOL*, when the possibility to direct the adaptation of *AMERICAN PSYCHO* came out there were other directors in the loop, from what I've read. Other names were being tossed around, from Stuart Gordon to David Cronenberg, but the producers opted for you. How was that whole operation?

Actually, they had all been attached earlier. What happened was the film was in development for many years. I would say that at least five years. I think Stuart Gordon might have been attached first and then someone else. Then Cronenberg was attached and he wanted to do it with Brad Pitt, and Brad Pitt dropped out. I think that Cronenberg wasn't really interested in the nightclubs and the restaurants, which I kept saying was something that really interested me: the social comedy aspect. Then he moved off of the project a year or two before I came on. By that time there were several scripts floating around. They contacted me right after Sundance, after I *SHOT ANDY WARHOL* was at Sundance. I think that at that point,

they realized that it would be very good PR to have a woman director. That it would save them many problems. That if they went in with a male director there were going to be huge problems. But then they had a long and crazy history because I wanted to cast Christian Bale and then Leonardo DiCaprio decided he wanted to do the lead role. And I didn't want him. Christian Bale wasn't famous at that point. So, there was a period of a few months where I was fired from the movie because I wanted to work with Christian and not Leonardo, and they brought on Oliver Stone. So, there was a point when it was going to be an Oliver Stone movie with Leo. And then they just couldn't come to terms on the script so they brought me back.

And the rest is history. How did you feel about the fact that you were in a way being brought onto kind of - how should I say this? - to soften the PR angle of it. I mean, I know you were excited to do it, but did you feel pressure?

Oh no, no, I didn't care. I mean, to me, I felt like a woman was the only person who could do it really. I felt that it actually gave me a freedom. Far from softening it - it allowed me to be tougher, because I wasn't worried about being accused of being sexist. I had just done a movie about a radical feminist. A movie about the most extreme radical feminist. As I started working on it (*American Psycho*), I thought of Guinevere Turner, because we were already working on *Bettie Page* together at that time - because that film took years to do. So, I thought, you know, Guinevere and I get on really well... we have the same sense of humor, the same sensibility. And I think that once Guinevere started working on it with me - you know, Guinevere is a lesbian, she had just done the first successful lesbian romantic comedy. We felt that no one could tell us what is sexist, you know? No one could talk down to us. We came in very confident in our take and I think a man would have been much more cautious, like, *'Oh, can I show this? Can I show that?'* While we simply just felt like if we think it's okay to show, then it's okay to show. And also, neither of us was that interested in the violence. We also felt like the book, with Brett being gay, that his book was very much a critique of masculine culture anyway - straight masculine culture. It's just that people weren't seeing that. But we felt it was very clear, and that's what we wanted to underline.

So, you had a good experience with that film. In fact, it sounds like it was more liberating in a way...

Yeah, I felt like even though I knew I would be attacked for it - and I was, for the violence... I mean, obviously, I wouldn't say it's easy taking on anything that's super controversial. There were a lot of people saying, *'Oh, you're encouraging serial killers'* and everything, and that's a little bit worrying of course. You can't help but think, *'What if somebody goes and murders somebody and they say it's because of my film.'* I mean, people do all kinds of crimes. Look at *TAXI DRIVER* or look at how people blamed JD Salinger for *CATCHER IN THE RYE*: *'I read CATCHER IN THE RYE and I decided to shoot the president.'* The connection between a real-life crime and somebody reading a book or seeing a movie, is usually quite strange and tenuous. But you're still worried about it as a creator. Although in the end, I don't think that happened. At the same time, I felt like our job is to do the movie. Our job is to do something that we feel is truthful. To do this critique. I think the film does that in a sort of black comic way. It says it in a horror way. It says something about late capitalism in America. I think that's why people still like the movie.

It definitely does. Do you think that horror and fantasy as a specific genre requires a specific language? Cinematically speaking, when you are shooting these horror scenes or scary scenes, or however you want to call them.

One thing that I do like about horror and fantasy is that it's so flexible, so infinitely flexible. I think what I like about horror/fantasy is that it gives you a lot more freedom than other genres. I think horror is the only genre where you're really allowed an unhappy ending. Horror is the only one where the leads can die at the end, and everyone says 'Yes, that's fine. Yes, of course, they die.' In everything else there is a certain kind of pressure to be uplifting or be positive. And I think with horror, it's a kind of more anarchic genre. And I think that lots of people have found ways to say interesting things about their society. I mean, look at GET OUT. It said more about racism than a lot of the more kind of serious movies about race in America. Horror films can say things about women. They can say things about aging. Like what Cronenberg did with aging and sickness – fear of the body. At the same time, because they're suspenseful, they're entertaining. So as long as you make it suspenseful in some way, then I think you have more freedom than in any other genre.

It also seems like it's finally getting its due in a way, with PARASITE having won Oscars, for example. It's finally getting the kind of credit that it deserves. So, its perception has definitely evolved and it is being seen as a complex genre.

No film has said as much about class as PARASITE has in any recent Oscar race, and, yes, in such a subtle and complex way. I think that the horror element made it entertaining enough that people could swallow it. There was a wonderful film by a young Australian woman, RELIC, about aging. It's about three women alone in a house. I'm sure you screened it at Sitges. It said an incredible thing about mothers and daughters and aging and everything. So yeah, I think there's a real opportunity to say something through this genre. I think the new respect given to the horror genre actually started with GET OUT. To have a genre film so lauded during award season was incredible, and of course Jordan Peele loves genre, and was playing with that genre. Hitchcock, for example, never won an Oscar. So, it's changing.

I've been working in a genre Festival for almost 20 years now, and the number of female directors has dramatically increased over the years. Why do you think that is?

I think it is women making more films. I think that women have *entrée* in areas that are less prestigious. And I think because genre is less prestigious than, for example, a big Hollywood blockbuster film, women had an *entrée*. I always say that the lower the budget, the more *entrée* women have into it. I think that's true. Almost all my films have been very low budget. So, I think that's part of it. And then I think women also saw that there was a way to say things in horror that maybe people would listen to more so than compared to, say, a straight political film where they don't. Also, it's interesting, there are a lot of great female characters in horror. You have, for example, 'the final girl'. I think there's a whole classic horror that is about a woman and her fears, her terrors of unknown assailants, of being stalked, of somebody coming out of the dark... that I think all women grow up with: a certain fear. And I think that women were an audience for these kinds of films. They were the characters in these movies, and then women thought, 'Well, we can make these too.' I think I felt that with AMERICAN PSYCHO. In that film, you're dealing with the

fear of the bad date that goes wrong. What if you get invited home by somebody, and it's Patrick Bateman, you know? I think that women feel they have a stake in all these stories.

Yeah, I agree they do have a sensibility in this genre. I just found it curious that they didn't seem to be getting the offers to do it. I think the reason why women weren't getting the offers was partly because hardly any women were making films. And then I think that there was an idea of women not doing action films. That women should do Romantic Comedy or 'weepies' or, you know, Melodrama. And so, I think that it's really only in the last 10 years or so, maybe 20 years, that that's been overturned as more women have started doing it. Obviously, there's no reason... I mean, why should women do Romantic Comedy? It's really on your own sensibility, you know, whether you do Romantic Comedy or not. For example, you have the Soska Sisters - who are great, these Canadian sisters - their stuff is very extreme, you know, very inspired by Cronenberg and everything. And it's like, 'Why wouldn't women do body horror?' You know, women and our bodies - we're taught to focus on them from a young age. So, of course, we'd be interested in horror that involves the body, you know?

Yeah, I mean just the fact that we deal with having a period. We deal with blood since we're like, twelve?

Exactly. So, it's like, don't tell us about it. We know. Just giving birth and pregnancy is a horror movie. I just did something actually, someday it'll see the light of day. I did a thing for Quibi - Quibi was this big thing that Jeffrey Katzenberg did that then went bust. Mine was a kind of - I didn't write it - but it was a series. Like a movie, divided up into little pieces about a pregnancy. So, it was kind of ROSEMARY BABY-ish. ROSEMARY'S BABY is, for me, a seminal movie. And of course, when I got pregnant, I made my husband John watch it. I said, 'You got to see this!' Because as a woman, pregnancy is kind of your own personal horror movie, as much as I loved being pregnant! Because suddenly, it's that thing of like - you're morphing. And weird things are happening, and there's some alien being inside. So, you know, who knows about horror better than women?

On the flip side, with these genre films... As a spectator, when you're watching a film, can you tell when the film has a woman behind the camera versus a man?

I think I am - and this is not always true - but I am able to see what they call the male gaze. And I can tell whether the director's identifying with the victor or with the camera. Whether they're showing us through the eyes of the predator, or identifying with the woman who's running away. I think there are subtle things like that about how things are shot, when women's sensibility stands out. It also depends on how much you're doing a classic genre film, which tends to follow certain rules, and how much you're doing a more 'outsider' horror film. Of which there's more leeway. THE BABADOOK, for example, was really interesting. It's hard to imagine a film dealing with so much about a mother and child, with so much about female guilt... There are certain films that are a little hard to imagine a man having directed that.

I feel that way watching a lot of your films. I just feel like the identification with the women characters is... it's special.

I felt that very strongly in AMERICAN PSYCHO. I think that a male director... take for example in the final violent sort of explosion when Christie, the prostitute, is killed. The point of



Mary Harron at the set of *The Notorious Bettie Page* (2005).

view there does switch. It's almost always Bateman's point of view, except for two bits, the scenes where Christie is involved. It's because she is the main victim I wanted to focus on. And when she's on camera, you start to see the scenes from her point of view, you're very aware of her anxiety, her tension, and her growing unease. Then it's very much from her point of view as she's watching him. That was a deliberate move. I didn't want her to be just objectified, so to speak. I can also really tell – I think younger male directors may be better at this – but I can really tell when a man has directed something with prostitutes. They tend to direct them as if it's all sort of really sexy. Whereas, you know, it's prostitution. It's a job and women are not having a good time. It's there to make money and get out of there. So, in those cases I can really see the difference between male and female direction.

You've done a lot of adaptations in your career. What is that like for you? What's that process?

Honestly, it's just so much easier. In a way, the easiest thing I ever did was *AMERICAN PSYCHO* because, you know, there was a book. There was a text. Also, *THE MOTH DIARIES* was a book. It simply gives you an existing world, you don't have to create it. And usually, in other projects, like *I SHOT ANDY WARHOL* or *THE NOTORIOUS BETTIE PAGE*, or even *DALÍ LAND* – the new one – it's just years and years of research and constructing a world. The other thing that I like about adaptation, which I obviously also enjoyed with *ALIAS GRACE*, is that I don't know all the answers, you know? And when people say, 'Well, why didn't Grace do this?' Well, I don't... For one, Grace was a real person so who knows why she did what she did. But also, it's a book so, you know, ask Margaret Atwood. I feel like I am just serving somebody's vision I'm trying to interpret and I don't have all the answers, which I like, actually. I like that it's someone else's. I don't know... for some reason I like that!

Kind of sounds like a refreshing loss of responsibility.

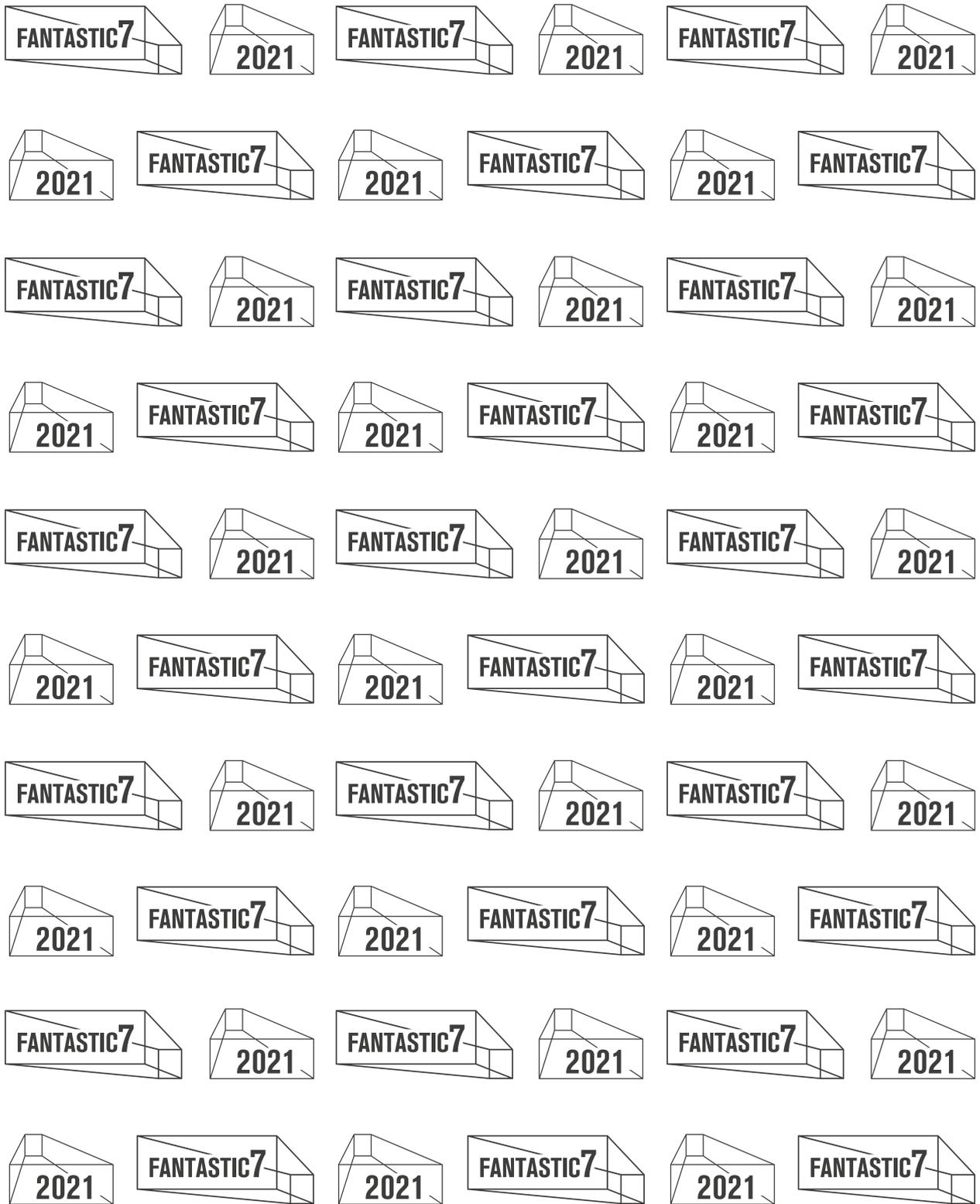
Yeah, I think what happens is you're finding your way with it. Which is quite interesting. You're discovering it, as you work on it. You discover the answers. Or your interpretation of an answer.

It's funny, because that kind of brings back into the investigative background, even though it's not in documentary, but there's a seeking within the work.

Yes. And I always enjoyed that part very much. Before I did documentaries, I was a researcher in television documentaries. So, I did a ton of research on different films. A lot of things about artists, including Warhol. You would read everything about the artist and kind of reconstruct their world and talk to everybody you could find who knew them. And I really enjoyed that part of it. I don't think I would ever lose that interest. But then again, for example, Guinevere Turner and I have just written something that I think is going to be the next thing I do. It's based on a crazy experimental novel. Again, that was another world you know. That was also kind of violent, also kind of horror, in fact! So, I like both, you know? I go from one to the other.

What is it that you most love about genre?

I think that is primal. It's very close to a dream and nightmare. It gets very deep and kind of beyond your rational self. And films are like dreams, so it gets to an exciting place. I love Dario Argento and I always think, '*If you can do something visually so beautiful that is like a dream*'... Not that I'm that kind of director really, but I admire it. I'm not a surrealist, but I love Cronenberg and I love David Lynch. I love people who get into that very deep dream world. I'm not that kind of person. I don't have that kind of mind. But I love watching it. And I love that aspect of the genre.



MARCHÉ DU FILM
FESTIVAL DE CANNES



SITGES

INTERNATIONAL FANTASTIC
FILM FESTIVAL OF CATALONIA