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Cannes' Fantastic Pavilion Gala Screenings Feature a Woman Who Will 'Crash and Burn Cannes' and 'Bastard Offspring of 'The Sound of Music'' (EXCLUSIVE)

The Fantastic Pavilion returns to Cannes for its second edition, revealing seven Gala Screenings.

This year's selection features "Do Not Enter" by Hugo Cardozo, "Aire, Just Breathe" directed by Leticia Tonos, Doug Rao's "Dirty Boy," Can Evrenol's "Sayara," "Mourir or Not Mourir" by Anaïs Cave and Thomas Combret, Andreas Marschall's "Black.White.Red." and "Vadakkan" by Sajeed A. Raman.

"The Galas proved to be one of our most appealing assets and a massive draw. This year, we are repeating this format in the exact same way: seven screenings, with cast and crew in attendance, at 8pm [CET] at the Olympia Cinema," said Pablo Guisa Koestinger, Fantastic Pavilion executive director and CEO at Morbido Group.

Thanks to the Pavilion, the genre community in Cannes "came together, embraced it as its own and found a place they can call home," he noted.

"They realized they could network and show their projects to genre film festivals, sales agents and colleagues, all within one place."

Now, "Outlander" star Graham McTavish will be spotted in "Dirty Boy," where mental struggles – and "perverted" alter egos – clash with abusive cult leaders.

"It's the bastard offspring of 'The Sound of Music!,'" promised the Scottish actor, known for "The Hobbit" and "Preacher."

According to director Doug Rao, the film is "an extremely personal dive into the themes of mental illness and faith."

"In his search for true identity, our main character Isaac goes on a personal journey from madness to self-denial to spiritual enlightenment, finally accepting his place in the universe. 'Dirty Boy' questions modern treatment and diagnosis of mental health conditions, with the hero himself concluding that perhaps 'madness' simply means not behaving like everyone else."

Cults – and odd rituals – also feature in "Vadakkan," where a paranormal investigator goes to Kerala from Helsinki, asked to investigate a series of murders by his estranged girlfriend.

"India, a cradle of ancient civilizations, teems with tales as diverse and enchanting as its landscapes. Its narrative, much like the pantheon of gods, transcends boundaries, embracing the multifaceted

essence of our cultural heritage,” noted Sajeed A. Raman, glad to finally “share a piece of our heritage with the world.”

“‘Vadakkan,’ meaning ‘The Man From North,’ pays homage to a Dravidian ritual rooted in the ancient Indus Valley civilization: an arcane tradition seldom witnessed by the world. It’s time to unveil the tales of forgotten deities, animistic oracles and their realms to a global audience.”

In “Black.White.Red,” after trying a brand new drug called Flashback, a club owner can suddenly return to long-buried memories of his childhood.

“I hope the viewer goes on a journey and experiences it like a dark dream,” said Andreas Marschall, describing the film as a “balancing act of genre(s) and free association, and the mirror of a dark soul in which the violence of real war is reflected.”

“What was originally a three-part story/installation with numerous pop-culture references to the European genre cinema of the 1970s and 80s, turned more and more into the hellish journey of a male soul, tormented by the memories of a violent father.”

Hugo J. Cardozo’s “Do Not Enter,” about two YouTubers who enter a forbidden place, promises a similarly wild ride.

“It’s total madness! I hope the audience enjoys it as much as we did,” said the director.

“When Guido Rud, CEO and founder of FilmSharks, came up with the idea of working together on a three-picture deal after the huge success of ‘Morgue,’ I thought I was living in a dream. Then, Rene Ruiz Diaz [‘The Gold Seekers’] joined and we made this dream come true.”

Dreams are also a part of “Mourir or Not Mourir,” where a failed filmmaker finds out he only has three months to live. The only way to escape his tragic fate is by making one last movie.

“I’m so happy to present a film made amongst friends at Cannes. Projects made with small amounts of money, yet lots of ingenuity, always had a big place in my life, both as a filmmaker and spectator,” said Combret. Can Evrenol, now behind “Sayara,” added:

“I feel so lucky that Fantastic Pavilion gave our gritty brutal anti-revenge flick such an important window amid an industry that’s battling mediocracy, political correctness and being a ramp-up to digital platforms. Beware Sayara, for she will crash and burn Cannes.”

Before that happens, Leticia Tonos will show “Aire, Just Breathe”: a sci-fi story about a biologist fighting extinction with the help of AI.

“The road we took with ‘Aire’ has certainly been unique, as we dared to traverse across a rarely explored genre in Latin American and Caribbean cinema,” she said. Last year, the film received the Latido Fantastic Award.

“Fantastic Pavilion is more than just a simple space for the diffusion and strengthening of the fantastic genre. It’s a place where we become free from the visual monotony that afflicts us and we are able to portray deeper themes.”

“Even though the Pavilion was a great success, this year we are trying to create even better conditions to do business. We have new spaces inside and we’ll have fewer cocktails, to emphasize that despite being a joyful venue, we are a business hub,” added Pablo Guisa Koestinger.

“There were fewer movies coming from the U.S., probably due to the strikes, but there is a diversity of storytelling that reflects the same diversity of the countries and cultures represented at this year’s Galas,” he said, adding that new trends often come from different platforms.

“YouTube and TikTok are definitely places where the seeds of the new genre films are growing.”

But while it provides refuge for the genre community, the Pavilion itself is not an “island.”

“We are not isolated from the rest of the market: we are a cell that belongs to a bigger organism.”

“One of the objectives of having a hub in the middle of Cannes is not to segregate ourselves as a community but, on the contrary, to integrate ourselves within the market, navigate freely and tap into the movement where real business is happening.”

The Fantastic Pavilion Galas:

May 15

“Do Not Enter” (“No Entres”)

Paraguay

Director: Hugo Cardozo

Produced by Buenos Aires-based outfit FilmSharks, it focuses on two friends – and wannabe YouTubers – who venture somewhere they shouldn’t. Soon, they will have to face their worst nightmare. Previously, Cardozo directed “Morgue.”

May 16

“Aire, Just Breathe”

Spain, Dominican Republic

Director: Leticia Tonos

With the help of Latido Films, Tonos (“Juanita”) heads to science-fiction territory where a conservation biologist is fighting extinction alongside AI in the near future. Still, the arrival of an enigmatic traveler, full of secrets, will complicate matters even further. Paz Vega stars.

May 17

“Dirty Boy”

U.K.

Director: Doug Rao

Produced by Dirty Boy Films, Mystic Dream and Saint Halo Productions. Its protagonist, Isaac, struggles with multiple personality disorder. Trapped in a cult, he witnesses ritualistic murder. “It was written from a place of intense darkness and a desire to discover the light within it. I wanted to explore the sense that complex spiritual understandings are often borne of great suffering,” said the director.

May 18

“Sayara”

Turkey

Director: Can Evrenol

In collaboration with Inter Medya, Istanbul-born Evrenol (“Baskin,” “Girl with No Mouth”) introduces an unlikely hero: a quiet gym cleaner from Turkmenistan, Sayara, who – when her sister is murdered by a group of politically connected rich kids – begins to follow in her father’s footsteps, seeking a path of revenge. With Duygu Kocabiyik.

May 19
"Mourir or Not Mourir"

France

Directors: Anaïs Cave, Thomas Combret

Presented by Mammouth Cornichon, the film introduces Stan: a failed filmmaker who has only three months left to live. Desperate, he needs to make one last movie to escape his fate, but he has no time and certainly no money. No wonder he will opt for the most frightening directing methods imaginable.

May 20
"Black.White.Red."

Switzerland

Director: Andreas Marschall

Produced by Basel Dream & Vision, it sees a club owner Chemkar – who lives for excess and criminal business – suddenly stopped in his tracks when a mysterious and seductive drug courier Eris brings him a new treat. For a moment, Chemkar believes he has found redemption, but Eris's love doesn't lead to paradise – it leads straight to hell.

May 21
"Vadakkan"

India

Director: Sajeed A. Raman

In the film (backed by Offbeet Media Group), a paranormal investigator heads to India after a series of murders claims seven victims. Thrown into a world of myths, he has to face a sinister spirit. "We have envisioned a cinematic universe rooted in local legends and a narrative that transcends borders and speaks to a larger audience," assured the director.

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