

TORONTO
INT'L FILM
FESTIVAL
September 9, 2013

VARIETY

SERENITY MEDIA GROUP

presents

JOURNEY TO RAINBOW ISLAND



a book by

CHRISTIE HSIAO

To be released November 11, 2013

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BASTARDO
by Nejib Belkadhi

Tunisia, France, Qatar
Contemporary World Cinema

TIFF SCREENINGS:		
6 Sept	6:00 PM	Scotiabank 6
8 Sept	6:00 PM	Scotiabank 10
10 Sept	10:00 PM	Scotiabank 10
12 Sept	6:30 PM	Scotiabank 5
14 Sept	9:00 AM	TIFF Bell Lightbox 4



FOR THOSE WHO CAN TELL NO TALES
By Jasmila Žbanić

Bosnia and Herzegovina
Special Presentation

TIFF SCREENINGS:		
7 Sept	7:30 PM	Scotiabank 2
8 Sept	11:45 AM	Scotiabank 5
9 Sept	9:45 PM	Scotiabank 8
12 Sept	11:15 AM	Scotiabank 10
14 Sept	11:45 AM	Scotiabank 11



LADDER TO DAMASCUS
By Mohamad Malas

Syria, Lebanon, Qatar
Contemporary World Cinema

TIFF SCREENINGS:		
6 Sept	4:15 PM	Scotiabank 5
8 Sept	9:30 PM	Jackman Hall
10 Sept	12:00 PM	TIFF Bell Lightbox 4
12 Sept	9:00 PM	Scotiabank 5
15 Sept	5:00 PM	Jackman Hall



MY LOVE AWAITS ME BY THE SEA
By Mais Darwazah

Jordan, Germany, Palestine, Qatar
Discovery

TIFF SCREENINGS:		
5 Sept	2:30 PM	Scotiabank 5
7 Sept	6:45 PM	Scotiabank 11
9 Sept	2:00 PM	Scotiabank 9
12 Sept	6:15 PM	Scotiabank 7
14 Sept	12:00 PM	TIFF Bell Lightbox 4

**Dallas Buyers Club**

Matthew McConaughey and Jared Leto impress in AIDS-era drama.

Reviews p.6**Link with Africa**

German filmmaker returns to Toronto with Moroccan road trip movie.

Film p.2**Studio Stars**

Chris Hemsworth and Olivia Wilde were among those sitting down with Variety.

Film p.4TORONTO INT'L
FILM FESTIVAL

September 9, 2013

VARIETY

SOUND OF MONEY

Toronto Sings Happy Tune with Buzzy Pix

Fest likely to heat up in second half as films including 'Railway Man' draw strong interest from buyers

DAVE McNARY

WITH THE 38th Toronto Film Festival at the halfway point, Harvey Weinstein has raised hopes for a high-powered finish following his company's \$7 million deal for writer-director John Carney's "Can a Song Save Your Life?"

The transaction, which includes a \$20 million P&A commitment, closed Sunday morning, less than 12 hours after the well-received world premiere at the Roy Thomson Hall. TWC and Lionsgate were the final bidders for U.S. rights from sellers Exclusive Media and Likely Story, with CAA and UTA co-representing U.S. rights.

The drama, starring Keira Knightley as an undiscovered singer and Mark Ruffalo as an over-the-hill producer, sparked comparisons with Irish helmer Carney's "Once."

"I can't think of any buyer who wasn't involved," said Alex Walton, Exclusive Media's president of international distribution. "Because of John, we thought early on that we had something special. And we wanted to be sure everyone saw it first so there would be a level playing field."

The transaction was the second major weekend deal at Toronto, following Focus Features' Saturday acquisition of worldwide rights to Jason Bateman's black comedy "Bad Words," also for \$7 million. Those two deals were far in excess of last year's top Toronto transaction of \$3.5



FESTIVAL TUNE-UP "Can a Song Save Your Life," from writer-director John Carney, sold to the Weinstein Co. for \$7 million.

million for "The Place Beyond the Pines."

A24 also locked up North American rights on Saturday for Tom Hardy's "Locke." And Nicole Kidman-Colin Firth starrer "The Railway Man" appears to be one of the most likely films to see a deal by the time the festival ends Sunday, with TWC having made an offer.

Other Toronto films generating interest among buyers included closing-night title "Life of Crime," starring Jennifer Aniston; Fred Schepisi's "Words and Pictures"; Matthew Weiner's "You Are Here"; Mike Myers doc "Supermensch"; Daniel Radcliffe starrer "Horns"; "The Double," starring Jesse Eisenberg and Mia Wasikowska; and Eli Roth's "The Green Inferno," a Midnight Madness entry for which a sequel is already in the works.

SALES P.4

It's a good market for actor-driven titles, and we'll see it reflected in the number of sales this year."

Rena Ronson

SHINGLE BOWS

Trio Launch Ivanhoe Pictures

Friedland, Penotti, Chen Team to finance, produce pix in U.S., Asia

DAVE McNARY

ATRIO OF media-entertainment veterans — financier Robert Friedland, producer John Penotti and Beijing-based media exec Ray Chen — have launched financing and production company Ivanhoe Pictures.

Friedland's Ivanhoe Capital provided the founding venture capital for U.S.-based Sirius Satellite Radio.

Ivanhoe will work on films in America and Asia, focusing on China, India, Korea and Japan. It will be based in Hollywood with offices in Beijing and New York.

Friedland is chairman and Penotti is CEO while Chen serves as exec VP.

FANNING 'ANNE'

'Green Gables' Tuner to Bigscreen

JENNIE PUNTER

"ANE OF Green Gables" will be coming to the bigscreen for the first time as a musical, from Toronto production company the Film Farm.

Based on the classic 19th-century novel by Lucy Maud Montgomery, Canada's long-running musical "Anne of Green Gables — The Musical" celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2014. Actor-playwright Kristen Thomson will pen the adaptation.

Stephen Traynor, Jennifer Weiss and Simone Urdl of Film Farm produce with Side Road Media's Kelley Harron, rights holder of the musical, and Brian Robertson.

LOCAL POWER

'Break Loose' Tops Russian Slate for Fall

DENIS RUZAEV (VARIETY RUSSIA)

THE OUTLOOK for Russian cinema is looking up, with three films in Toronto's Contemporary World Cinema section as well as two big domestic box office hits so far this year. It's a hopeful turnaround from 2012, when the share of local films declined to just 13.8% of the box office and Russian bizzers worked to get more public funds into the film business and counter the decline.

In Toronto, international promotion org Roskino is presenting crime drama "Break Loose," directed by Alexei Uchitel, who was Golden Globe-nominated for his drama "The Edge" in 2011.

Uchitel's production studio Rock Films has two other titles in the World Cinema section: Yuri Bykov's "The Major" and "Friends from France," coproduced by France, Germany, Russia and Canada. The strong slate of new Russian films will also be shown at the DOORS international travelling film market organized by Roskino with support of the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Foreign Affairs in St. Petersburg in late September.

Successes at the Russian box office this year include Anton Megerdichev's subway disaster movie "Metro," which earned \$12 million, and Nikolay Lebedev's "Legend #17," a biopic of the late Soviet hockey star Valery Kharlamov, an even bigger hit with a domestic total of \$29.5 million.

This fall, promising titles on the sked include Fedor Bondarchuk's ambitious epic "Stalingrad," set during one of the greatest battles of WWII. Other notable premieres include Alexandr Veledinsky's generational drama "The Geographer Drank His Globe Away," Renat Davletiarov's retro melodrama "Once," Anton Bormatov's soccer hooligan thriller "Kicking Off" and "Break Loose," opening after its Toronto Film Fest debut.



CRIMER Gangster-themed "Break Loose" screens Friday at Scotiabank 2.



ROAD TO MOROCCO German helmer Caroline Link reveals the country's dangerous side in "Exit Marrakech."

FATHERS AND SONS

Caroline Link Takes a Journey to North Africa

German helmer of 'Nowhere in Africa' returns to Toronto with her latest pic set on the continent

LEO BARRACLOUGH

GERMAN DIRECTOR Caroline Link, who won the foreign-language film Oscar with "Nowhere in Africa," is in Toronto with her latest film, "Exit Marrakech." She feels at home at the festival, Link tells *Variety*.

"I have shown all my movies in Toronto, and I have the feeling that this is a place where they understand me, where they like and appreciate my work," she says.

In his program notes, Toronto's artistic director Cameron Bailey writes, "Like a fresher, contemporary Paul Bowles story, 'Exit Marrakech' offers a glimpse of what can happen when a Westerner is confronted with the radically unfamiliar."

"What I'm really tired of are the cliched images we have of Morocco. It's not always sweet, good smelling and lush. People are living in poverty. It's dirty, it stinks. I wanted to make that visible. It has a kind of violence, brutality and danger to it," she says.

"Exit Marrakech" centers on Ben, a 17-year-old German boy (played by Samuel Schneider) who visits his father (Ulrich Tukur) in Morocco. After the two fall out, the boy plunges himself into the street life of Morocco, but when he follows a beautiful young woman (Hafsia Herzi) to her Berber village, he finds he is out of his depth.

Link drew on her own experience 22 years ago when she and her husband, director Dominik Moll, travelled around

Morocco, immersing themselves in the local culture. She returned to the country a few years ago with Peter Herrmann, who had produced "Nowhere in Africa." Link persuaded him to back a project set in Morocco, but, at that stage, without a story, just the idea of a father-son road movie set in motion by a disagreement.

"When I start writing screenplays, I always think about scenes and moments first. It's not a typical way of creating a story," she says.

Herrmann says he had faith in the director. "Caroline is an excellent storyteller, and this is rare in Germany," he says. "She is extremely good at directing actors and has an unbelievable sensibility for the emotional structure of a film."

Link found the story of competition between father and son had a strong resonance in a male-dominated society like Morocco.

"In combination with this culture, I found it more interesting to have a competitive relationship between father and child. I didn't want it to be the father-daughter thing, like in my other movies. I liked the idea of the generational conflict between an older man and a younger man," she says.

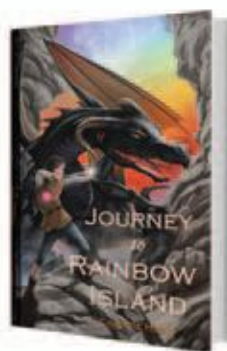
Link's films are not plot driven; she focuses more on exploring emotions and relationships.

"It's a bit of an experiment for me: How far can I go with a movie where I don't really tell a very strong story. It's very much about feelings, moments, situations and atmosphere. Morocco is the third protagonist," she says.



I have shown all my movies in Toronto, and I have the feeling that this is a place where they understand me.

Caroline Link



After its successful pre-launch at the Cannes Film Festival, the children's fantasy adventure book **JOURNEY TO RAINBOW ISLAND** is slated to hit worldwide bookstores and Amazon on November 11th. The beautifully illustrated edition will be accompanied by a riveting video game and mobile applications that Christie Hsiao, the author and founder of **SERENITY MEDIA GROUP**, has designed as an exciting package that will be the cornerstone of a long-running franchise based on her inspiring and endearing characters.

As head of the powerful **SERENITY MEDIA GROUP**, Hsiao has a winning track record in feature films so the enterprising executive simultaneously announced that **JOURNEY** is being developed as a major animated film.

Hsiao created **SERENITY MEDIA GROUP** to create quality entertainment that is uplifting, international in scope, and that catalyzes positive change. She wrote **JOURNEY TO RAINBOW ISLAND** to be a perfect vehicle to advance her vision, and she thought it especially important to reach children with an uplifting and affirmative message.

With a keen eye on global markets, Hsiao situated **SERENITY MEDIA GROUP** to be a unique bridge between Eastern and Western audiences. Born in Taiwan, Christie set the ground-work for her venture by earning her BA in Communications and EastAsian Studies from UCLA, an MBA from Pepperdine University, and topped it off with film studies in New York. **JOURNEY** is a cross-cultural work that perfectly corresponds to both her professional and personal standards.

JOURNEY TO RAINBOW ISLAND tells the story of a remarkable young girl, Yu-ning, who has to find the courage to venture out into a sinister world to re-establish faith and optimism through her purity, innocence and wisdom. Her beliefs are shattered when Rainbow Island, her idyllic home, is attacked by the evil dragon Obsidigon. The wonderfully frightening beast kidnaps Yu-ning's best friend and steals the island's Sacred Crystals. Instead of falling into despair when losing this unspoiled paradise of love and joy, she bravely quests into a series of dark domains full of lost souls to confront the dragon. Along the way she learns to draw on her inner strength and resources and how to use light to overcome darkness.

Hsiao says, "This book is one of my most exciting endeavors. **JOURNEY TO RAINBOW ISLAND** is a story that will inspire children and adults of all ages to believe in themselves and understand that when faced with life's challenges, we can overcome them. We need to trust in ourselves, work together, and never lose sight of our dreams." Christie Hsiao believes in the unique power of a story that is able to raise awareness and to compel public transformation. As creative director for all **SERENITY**'s projects, she oversees all aspects of marketing, business development and expansion. She has chosen **JOURNEY TO RAINBOW ISLAND** to be the first example of where she will take her fast-growing company into the future.

JOURNEY TO RAINBOW ISLAND SET TO TAKE OFF 11.11.13



inspire children and adults of all ages to believe in themselves and understand that when faced with life's challenges, we can overcome them.

CURRYING AN AUDIENCE

Gentle Edge for Indian Pic 'Romance'

PATRICK FRATER

PERVERSELY, THE most interesting feature of "Random Desi Romance" (aka Shuddh Desi Romance), which plays as a gala premiere later this week, may be its ordinariness.

"Romance" is not one of the mold-breaking "Hindie-indies" or new Indian art-house pics. But it's a perfect example of the modern-day Bollywood mainstream.

Mainstream Bollywood has often got away with being more radical than most people imagine. In a country where arranged marriages are still prevalent, Bollywood usually promotes love matches.

Helmed by U.S.-educated writer-director Maneesh Sharma, the standard-fare love triangle, played by mid-level stars Sushant Singh Rajput, Parineeti Chopra and Vaani Kapoor, gets slightly radical in its openness about premarital sex and onscreen kissing.

"We don't normally show our films to festivals, so we were very gratified that Cameron Bailey liked it," says Avtar Panesar, head of international at the film's producer, Yash Raj Films. "The message is that it doesn't matter where you live — you are as modern as you think you are."

REBEL ROUSER

Burnett to Return With Algerian Pic

DAVE McNARY

CHARLES BURNETT, the "Killer of Sheep" helmer who has largely been absent from theaters in the last decade, has come on to helm a movie based on the life of 19th century Algerian leader Abdelkader.

The Algerian Ministry of Culture and Los Angeles-based Cinema Libre Studio have signed an agreement to co-produce. Cinema Libre topper Philippe Diaz is producing with Mustapha Orif, general manager at Algeria's AARC.

Lensing will start in November in Algeria. Burnett also looked at Africa in 2008 docu "Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation."

Abdelkader fought French colonization and raised an army in Syria in 1860 to save more than 12,000 Christians who were in danger of being massacred.

"Due to what is happening in the world right now, I can't see any movie that is more important to be made today," Diaz said.



RACING HEARTS Olivia Wilde and Chris Hemsworth stopped by the Variety studio to talk about "Rush."

STUDIO SCENES

Talent Turns Out to Talk Up Toronto Titles

McQueen, Ejiofor, Gyllenhaal were among bizzers who spoke with Variety Studio interviewers

THE VARIETY Studio raced into action this weekend at the Toronto Film Festival.

Hugh Jackman and Jake Gyllenhaal sat down for video interviews prior to Warners' premiere of "Prisoners" Friday night while Chris Hemsworth and Olivia Wilde stopped by to promote U's racing pic "Rush."

"I likened the story to Magic Johnson and Larry Bird," Wilde said. "They needed each others' competitive spirit to achieve greatness!"

Joining her on Saturday were "12 Years a Slave" director Steve McQueen and cast members Chiwetel Ejiofor and Michael Fassbender were still beaming from Friday night's premiere.

"There's actors and there's ARTISTS," McQueen said of his cast, adding that Ejiofor was fearless in his much-buzzed about perf.

Other guests for the day included Kristen Wiig, "Bad Words" director/actor Jason Bateman, Mia Wasikowska, Jessica Lange, "Gravity" director Alfonso Cuarón, Idris Elba and Julia Louis-Dreyfus.

The Variety Studio, located at Holt Renfrew, runs through Tuesday.

— *Variety staff*



There's actors and there's ARTISTS.
Steve McQueen

SALES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"It's a good market for actor-driven titles, and we'll see it reflected in the number of sales this year," said UTA's Rena Ronson. "The financing market is very healthy, and it's led to some potentially great Academy films like 'Inside Llewyn Davis,' 'August: Osage,' 'Foxcatcher' and 'Dallas Buyers Club' — films that the studios are not financing."

Ronson said funding sources are getting more sophisticated. "Five or six years ago, people just wanted to get into it," she added. "Now they ask for more diligent modeling and pre-sales. They're looking at the big picture a little more closely."

Marc Damon of Foresight Unlimited, who oversaw impressive sales last year

on "2 Guns," admitted he was perplexed that activity had not ramped up further but speculated that many deals will need several more weeks to close.

"There are a lot of good films for sale, but I've also noticed that sales take more and more time," he added.

Five-month-old International Film Trust saw solid interest on a pair of projects — Ethan Hawke's "Cymbeline," now in production with Dakota Johnson in the cast; and "Your Voice in My Head," starring Emma Watson.

"I think summer was not easy for putting projects together so the market was not overly saturated," said International Film Trust prexy Ariel Veneziano. "Cymbeline" sold to Japan, Australia, Russia/CIS, Eastern Europe, Turkey and Greece.

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SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Thesp earns place in 'Club'

PETER DEBRUGE

Any doubt that still exists in audiences' minds as to Matthew McConaughey's talents as an actor will no doubt be put to rest by "Dallas Buyers Club," for which the 6-foot Texan star shed 38 pounds to play Ron Woodruff, the unlikely mastermind behind a scheme to circumvent the FDA by delivering unapproved treatments to AIDS patients during the late '80s. But McConaughey's is not the only performance of note in this riveting and surprisingly relatable true story, which co-stars Jared Leto as his transsexual accomplice. Rave reviews for both actors should draw mainstream auds to one of the year's most vital and deserving indie efforts.

Nearly 20 years after launching his career as a hayseed hunk in "Dazed and Confused" and "Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Next Generation," McConaughey subverts that macho image by playing a redneck bigot who becomes the unlikely savior to a generation of gay men frightened by a disease they don't yet understand. Woodruff was straight and reprehensibly homophobic to boot, but his newfound outcast status inspired a sense of empathy toward his HIV-positive peers that not only motivated his actions but also serves as this exceptionally well-handled pic's most valuable takeaway.

What makes the character so interesting is the way a man so driven by selfishness could undergo such a reversal after his own life was threatened. Craig Borten and Melisa Wallack's screenplay wastes little time getting to the diagnosis: After a workplace accident lands him in the hospital, Woodruff is told that he has HIV by a pair of doctors (Denis O'Hare and Jennifer Garner) on the brink of implementing a new double-blind AZT trial. Since best estimates give him only 30 days to live, Woodruff decides he can't risk ending up in the placebo group and devises a way to scam some of the drug.

After a second near-death experience south of the border, Woodruff realizes that AZT only makes his condition worse (especially when combined with his steady diet of cocaine, booze



REDNECK RESCUE Matthew McConaughey transforms himself again, playing an HIV-positive homophobe who helps gets the right treatments to AIDS patients in Jean-Marc Vallée's "Dallas Buyers' Club."

Dallas Buyers Club

Director: Jean-Marc Vallée

Starring: Matthew McConaughey, Jennifer Garner, Denis O'Hare

Reviewed at Toronto Film Festival (Special Presentations), Sept. 7, 2013. Running time: 117 MIN.

A Focus Features release presented with Truth Entertainment of a Voltage Pictures/R Films/Evolution Independent production. Produced by Robbie Brenner, Rachel Winter. Executive producers, David Bushell, Nathan Ross, Tony Notargiacomo, Joe Newcomb, Nicolas Chartier, Zev Foreman, Logan Levy, Holly Wiersma, Cassian Elwes. Co-producers, Michael Sledd, Parry Creedon. Directed by Jean-Marc Vallée. Screenplay, Craig Borten, Melisa Wallack. Camera (color, Panavision widescreen), Yves Belanger; editors, John Mac McMurphy, Martin Pensa; production designer, John Paino; art director, Javiera Varas; set decorator, Robert Covelman; costume designers, Kurt and Bart; sound (Dolby Digital), Dick Hansen; stunt coordinator, Alex Terzoeff; sound supervisor, Martin Pinsonnault; visual effects supervisor, Marc Cote; visual effects, Fake Studio; assistant director, Mark Stevens; casting, Kerry Barden, Paul Schnee, Rich Delia.

With: Matthew McConaughey, Jennifer Garner, Denis O'Hare, Steve Zahn, Michael O'Neill, Dallas Roberts, Griffin Dunne, Kevin Rankin, Jared Leto.

and methamphetamines), leading him to experiment with a cocktail of potential remedies not yet sanctioned by the FDA. The film pits Woodruff against the FDA and Big Pharma — positioning him as the rule-breaking Robin Hood who circumvents their profit-oriented practices in order to get effective treatments into the hands of people.

The drug companies are shown conspiring with hospitals to rush AZT through the system, even when research points to the medicine's immunity-lowering side effects. At the same time, the FDA appears to be dragging out the approval process on other promising options, which means thousands will die before existing products get approved.

"Dallas Buyers Club" unfolds almost like a crazy heist movie: It's the story of how one incredibly motivated creep managed to circumvent the system and redeem himself in the process.

Canadian helmer Jean-Marc Vallée makes no effort to polish Woodruff's unrefined and frequently offensive worldview. Meanwhile, McConaughey never lets himself off the hook with that apologetic wink so often tossed off when actors play someone whose politics they don't necessarily share.

The role calls for nothing short of

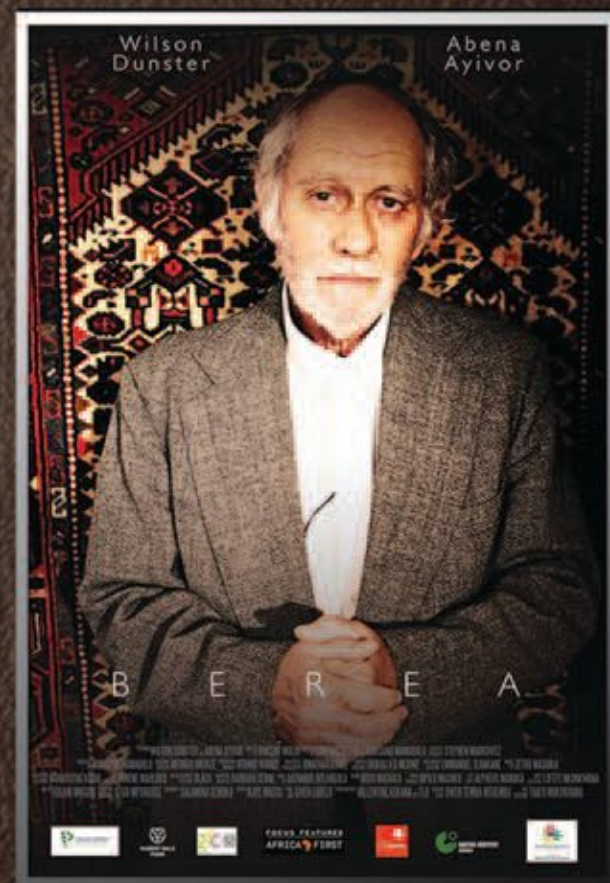
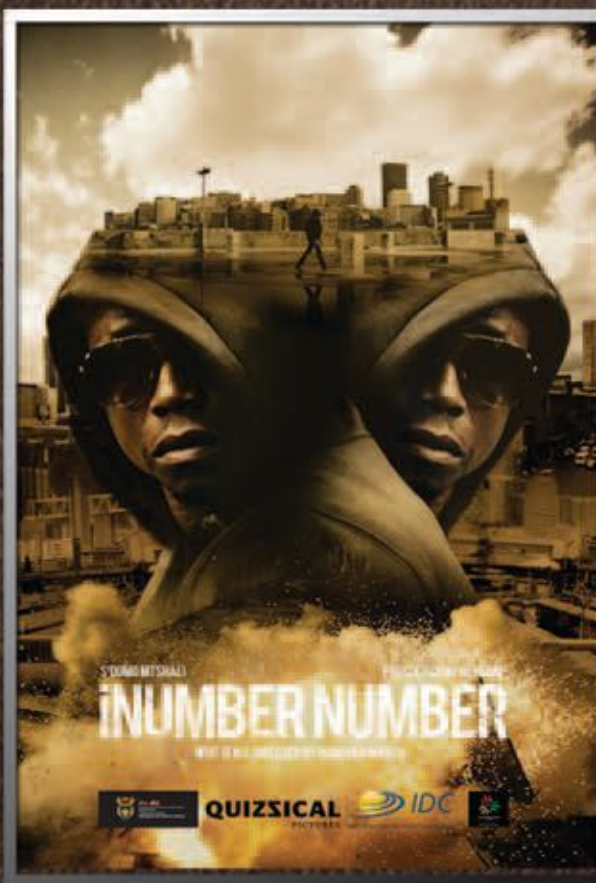
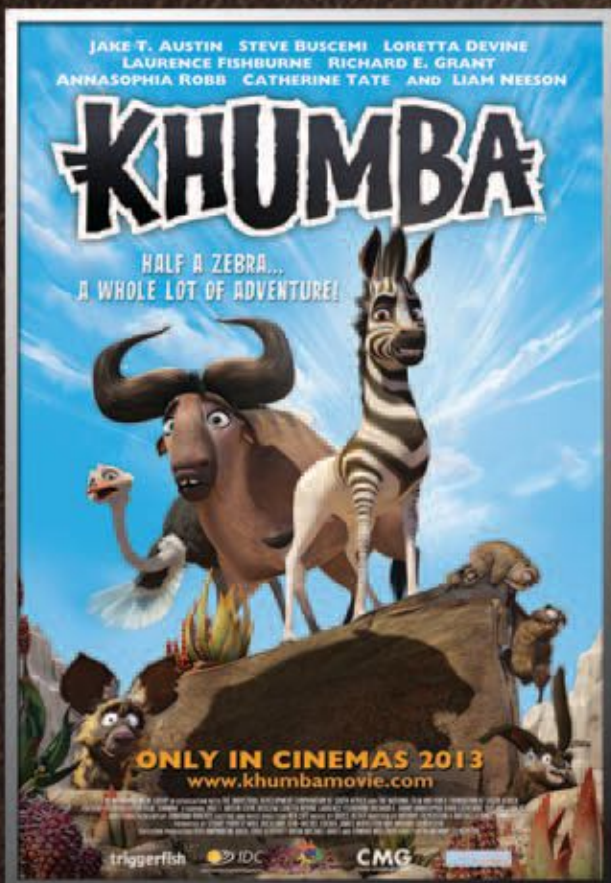
full immersion, and the star — whose recent roles in everything from "Magic Mike" to "Mud" have shown his commitment to total transformation — is almost unrecognizable, apart from his charisma: a bony scarecrow of a man with shaggy brown hair and a Freddy Mercury moustache.

Leto's character, Rayon, is sensitive, considerate and not quite self-reliant. In another movie, audiences would root for his sort to escape such a backward place, but here, he's the queer character just nonthreatening enough to break through Woodruff's homophobic defenses, inspiring an act of chivalry in the grocery store that ranks among the all-time great prejudice-melting scenes.

Although shot on a relatively tight budget, the film convincingly re-creates the period via a gritty widescreen look that suits Vallée's naturalistic style.

By choosing such a vocally homophobic antihero, writers Borten and Wallack ensure that no matter how uncomfortable audiences are with HIV or so-called alternative lifestyles, they will recognize Woodruff's knee-jerk bigotry as uncool. The film manages to educate without ever feeling didactic and to entertain in the face of what would, to any other character, seem like a grim life sentence.

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SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Gandolfini Charms in One of His Last Roles

JUSTIN CHANG

For good and for ill, the spirit of Woody Allen continues to loom large over the films of Nicole Holofcener: Her fifth feature, “Enough Said,” could have borne the less elegant title of “Ex-Husbands and Ex-Wives.” Principally concerned with the pleasures, pitfalls and unreasonable expectations that can accompany romance after marriage, this enjoyably meandering ensemble comedy sets up a small Los Angeles-based constellation of characters around Eva (Julia Louis-Dreyfus), a divorced mom warily embracing an unexpected second shot at love. If Holofcener’s recognizable style of barbed yet compassionate emotional probing is showing some mild signs of mainstream blandification, the presence of a wonderful James Gandolfini in one of his final screen performances represents a huge plus that could draw more eyes than usual to this Sept. 20

Fox Searchlight release.

Following her New York-set feature “Please Give,” Holofcener is back in the L.A. she explored in “Lovely & Amazing” and “Friends With Money,” a gently sun-dappled realm populated by middle-class white characters whose various hang-ups and insecurities are held up for gentle comic scrutiny. A decidedly well-off masseuse preparing to send her daughter Ellen (Tracey Fairaway) off to college, Eva isn’t really looking for a boyfriend when she attends a party and meets Albert (Gandolfini), himself the divorced father of a university-bound daughter. But the two hit it off on a first date, during which Eva’s sometimes blunt, awkward remarks find a warm complement in Albert’s humorous, easy-going manner, and things swiftly turn serious for the new couple.

Euphemistically describing her new beau as “not classically handsome,” Eva readily admits that he’s heavier than she would like, and he is, by his own admission, a bit of a slob, with a lightly cluttered house and a garden overrun with weeds. At the same time, he’s tender and sweet; he has an interesting job at a



CHEMISTRY James Gandolfini and Julia Louis-Dreyfus make an appealing couple in Nicole Holofcener’s fifth film.

museum of TV history; the sex is great, if a bit tricky due to body size differences; and Eva feels entirely comfortable around him in a way she hasn’t felt with anyone in years.

While it retains the somewhat shapeless, character-driven story approach that has characterized all the writer-director’s work so far, “Enough Said” hinges on a plot twist that is fairly guessable from the get-go, but the script gets it out of the way early on. Suffice to say that Eva’s ongoing assessment of Albert, compulsively rearranging his pros and cons, leads her into something of a moral gray zone that forces her to grapple with some difficult if hardly new questions: Why are some couples compatible and others are not? How can one woman’s ex be another’s soulmate? Is self-improvement possible, or is happiness more a matter of acceptance and compromise?

The Allen influence is most pronounced in the way Holofcener engages these issues using a mix of tart, offhand observations and earnest philosophical digressions, setting in motion a free-flowing dialogue about issues of life, love, class and contentment. A key voice in the discussion is that of Eva’s massage client Marianne (Catherine Keener), a published poet with an airy, friendly manner and exquisite taste in home furnishings; her own divorce remains enough of a sore spot that she advises Eva to proceed with some caution. Providing another perspective on the matter is Eva’s therapist friend Sarah (Toni Collette), whose own reasonably happy marriage to Will (Ben Falcone) is not without its regular challenges.

While the conversation sparkles and amuses as ever, there are indications here that Holofcener’s uniquely perceptive voice has begun to calcify somewhat into a familiar house style. Immaculately shot by Xavier Grobet, “Enough Said” may be her cleanest, most polished and broadly funny effort to date; its emotional generosity is undeniable, but so is its tendency to smooth over some of the hard, brittle edges that have been the more interesting hallmarks of Holofcener’s work. Doing the most to counteract these tendencies is Gandolfini, his eyes twinkling with good humor in what will likely be remembered as one of his warmest, most vulnerable and enjoyable performances. Never vain or self-conscious, the actor gamely embraces a character whose unhealthy diet and sizable gut are regular subjects of conversation and occasional contempt, making clear that Albert knows his personal defects well and needs someone who can acknowledge them with kind acceptance.

Amazingly, this is Louis-Dreyfus’ first live-action film role since Allen’s “Deconstructing Harry” (1997), and while she’s frequently delightful here, her funny expressions and unthinking outbursts at times suggest glib sitcom beats. Still, by the end, the actress has brought Eva to a place of appreciable depth, aided in no small part by Gandolfini, with whom she generates a marvelous onscreen chemistry.

The supporting cast is excellent across the board, with Collette’s Sarah emerging a tetchy but sympathetic figure, and Keener clearly having fun as an aging hippie turned decor queen.

Reviewed at Toronto Film Festival (Special Presentations), Sept. 7, 2013. MPAA Rating: PG-13. Running time: 92 MIN.

A Fox Searchlight Pictures release and presentation of a Likely Story production in association with TSG Entertainment and Ingenious Media. Produced by Anthony Bregman, Stefanie Azpiazu. Executive producer, Chrisann Verges.

Directed, written by Nicole Holofcener. Camera (color), Xavier Grobet; editor, Robert Frazen; music, Marcelo Zarvos; music supervisor, Liza Richardson; production designer, Keith Cunningham; art director, Luke Freeborn; set decorator, Douglas Mowat; costume designer, Leah Katznelson; sound (Dolby Digital/Datasat/SDSDS), Lisa Pinero; supervising sound editor, Lora Hirschberg; sound designer, Pete Horner; re-recording mixers, Hirschberg, Horner; assistant director, Jesse Nye; casting, Jeanne McCarthy. With: Julia Louis-Dreyfus, James Gandolfini, Catherine Keener, Toni Collette, Tavi Gevinson, Ben Falcone, Tracey Fairaway, Eve Hewson, Anjelah Johnson-Reyes.

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GALA PRESENTATIONS

True WWII Tale Shows an Overly Placid Style

PETER DEBRUGE

Offering closure to a less-told chapter of World War II history, “The Railway Man” retraces the tracks of an exceptional man’s life, as former British soldier Eric Lomax confronts the Japanese officer who tortured him as a prisoner of war nearly four decades earlier. This overly stodgy true story brought audiences first to tears and later to their feet for a rousing standing ovation at the Toronto Film Festival with its placid, postcard-worthy view of how men of a certain generation cope with deep emotional scars, tenderly acted by Colin Firth and Nicole Kidman, as

The Railway Man

Director:

Jonathan Teplitzky

Starring:

Colin Firth, Nicole Kidman, Jeremy Irvine

Lomax and the woman who inspired his healing. Too delicate to entice the masses, “The Railway Man” will likely give a smaller distrib a dark horse in the awards race.

There’s something decidedly old-fashioned — and also dull as dishwater — about Jonathan Teplitzky’s retelling of events: The contemporary sequences, set in 1980, unfold like scenes in a 1940s studio picture as Lomax (played by Colin Firth) meets the unsuspecting Patti (Kidman) in a train compartment. The characters even make reference to David Lean’s “Brief Encounter,” which seems to be running through Lomax’s mind when he later intercepts the elegant stranger at Edinburgh’s Waverly Station.

Lomax is a self-professed “railway enthusiast,” you see. He worked as a signals engineer in the service and never lost his love of trains, despite being forced to build Thailand’s notorious “Death Railway” after being taken prisoner in Singapore, circa 1942. Patti can sense that there’s something not quite right about Lomax when they meet — a certain frazzled professorial quality that masks just how much trauma he’s still coping with as a result of his captivity. It’s not until after the couple is married that she realizes how the nightmares still haunt him, while fantasies of revenge continue to dominate his waking thoughts.

Reviewed at Toronto Film Festival (Gala Presentations), Sept. 6, 2013. Running time: 116 MIN.

(Australia-U.K.) A Screen Australia presentation in association with Silver Reel, Screen Queensland, Creative Scotland, Screen NSW, Lionsgate U.K. of an Andy Paterson, Pictures in Paradise, Trinifold production in association with Davis Films, Latitude Media. (International sales: Lionsgate Intl., Santa Monica.) Produced by Andy Paterson, Chris Brown, Bill Curbishley. Executive producers, Claudia Bluemhuber, Ian Hutchinson, Zygi Kamasa, Nick Manzi, Daria Jovicic, Anand Tucker. Co-producer, Annalise Davis. Co-executive producers, Samuel Hadida, Victor Hadida. Directed by Jonathan Teplitzky. Screenplay, Frank Cottrell Boyce, Andy Paterson, based on the memoir by Eric Lomax. Camera (color, widescreen), Garry Phillips; editor, Martin Connor; music, David Hirschfelder; production designer, Steven Jones-Evans; art director, Nicki McCallum; costume designer, Lizzy Gardiner; sound, Colin Nicolson; re-recording mixer, Gethin Creagh; visual effects supervisor, James Rogers; line producer, Barbara Gibbs; associate producers, Oliver Veysey, Michelle Sahayan; casting, Nikki Barrett. Cast: Colin Firth, Nicole Kidman, Jeremy Irvine, Stellan Skarsgard, Sam Reid, Tanroh Ishida, Hiroyuki Sanada.



TORTURED SOUL Colin Firth is suffering from the trauma of his war experiences in “The Railway Man”

Although Lomax belongs to a support group of sorts back home in Berwick-upon-Tweed, he and a dozen other survivors keep mum about their experience (this code of silence makes the fact that Lomax agreed to tell his story at all a rare thing among former Pacific-theater POWs). Concerned, Patti convinces one of their lot, Lomax’s best friend, Finlay (Stellan Skarsgard), to explain what her husband refuses to discuss, which invites a long flashback in which we learn of the arduous conditions Lomax (played by “War Horse’s” Jeremy Irvine as a young man) and his fellow soldiers faced in the Japanese internment camps. Caught with a contraband radio, Lomax had it worst of all, enduring incredible torture as the Japanese tried to force a confession.

This treatment, which included being beaten with bamboo and waterboarding, would be enough to break anyone’s spirit, and sure enough, Lomax was never the same again — which explains why both he and Finlay are so incensed when the Japanese translator who participated in their torture resurfaces unpunished, finding work as a tour guide at the country’s Kempeitai War Museum in the ’80s. Upsetting as it sounds, everything unfolds entirely according to the parameters of good taste, as Teplitzky gradually reveals the degree of cruelty Lomax faced in captivity, shooting everything in polite period re-creations.

During the first half of the film, Firth has it relatively easy, as Patti accepts Lomax’s suffering vicariously and Irvine’s younger version of the character acts out the full passion play of abuse: beaten, emaciated and still too proud to tell them anything but the truth. However, the equation balances in the end,

as the now-elderly Lomax confronts Nagase Takashi (Hiroyuki Sanada, who looks nothing like younger actor Tanroh Ishida) and subjects him to a fraction of the same treatment. How often have we seen this story from the Nazi side of things, where liberated Jews get the upper hand on their tormentors? Still, though the Death Railway horrors were no less reprehensible, and Lomax would be well within his means to go all Simon Wiesenthal on Nagase, the film takes too respectful a tone for any genuine retribution to occur.

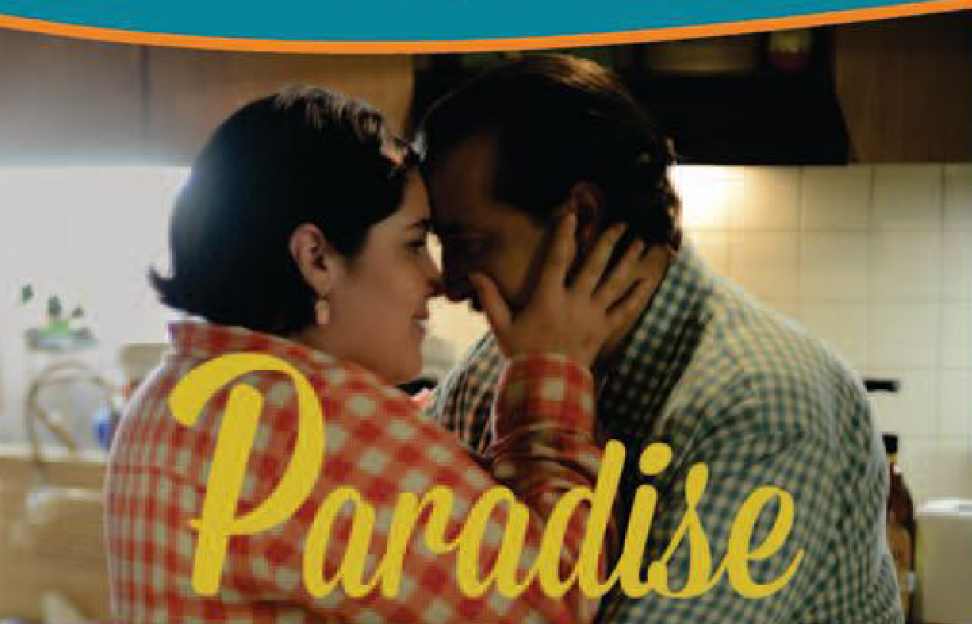
Instead, “The Railway Man” depicts a case of truth and reconciliation before such attitudes became the accepted way of coping with unspeakable human-rights violations. As in “A Single Man,” Firth excels at tapping into deep pools of personal suffering, which comes across all the more poignant when he takes the high road.

The very last minute of the film is far and away the most effective, suggesting that perhaps the unexpected consequences of Lomax and Nagase’s reunion (captured in the documentary “Enemy, My Friend”) form a richer story than the incidents leading up to it. Regardless, it’s astonishing that Lomax was able to let go of his hatred and still find place in his heart for all things railroad-related, which Frank Cottrell Boyce and Andy Paterson’s script attributes to Patti’s presence in his life.

The secret weapon here is Australian composer David Hirschfelder, who previously collaborated with Teplitzky on “Better Than Sex” and before that on such indelible Oz scores as “Strictly Ballroom” and “Shine,” whose timeless theme conveys all of the hurt and forgiveness which the film otherwise underplays onscreen.

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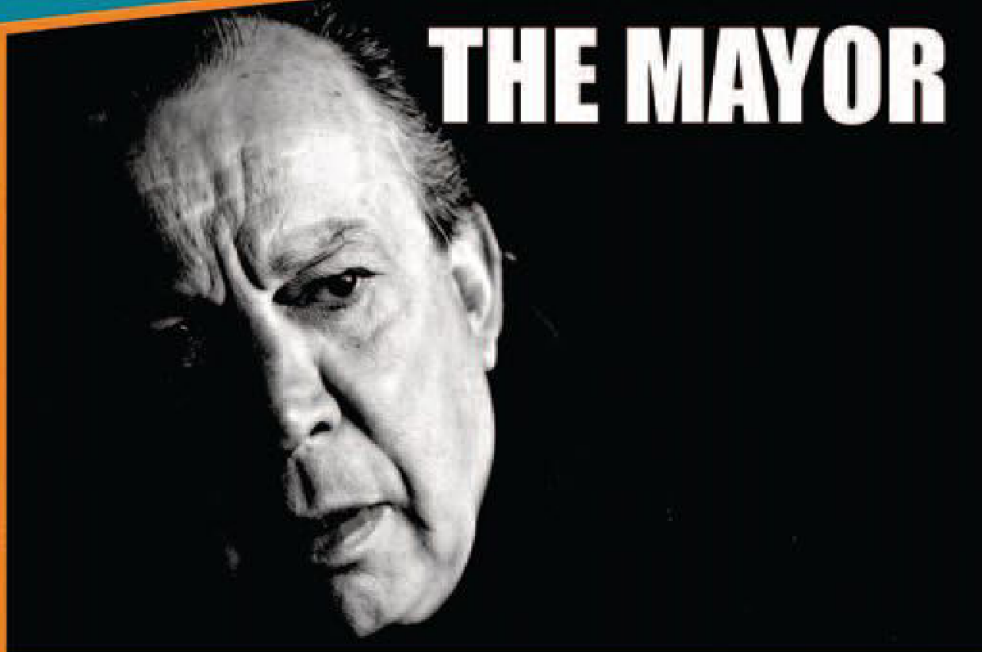


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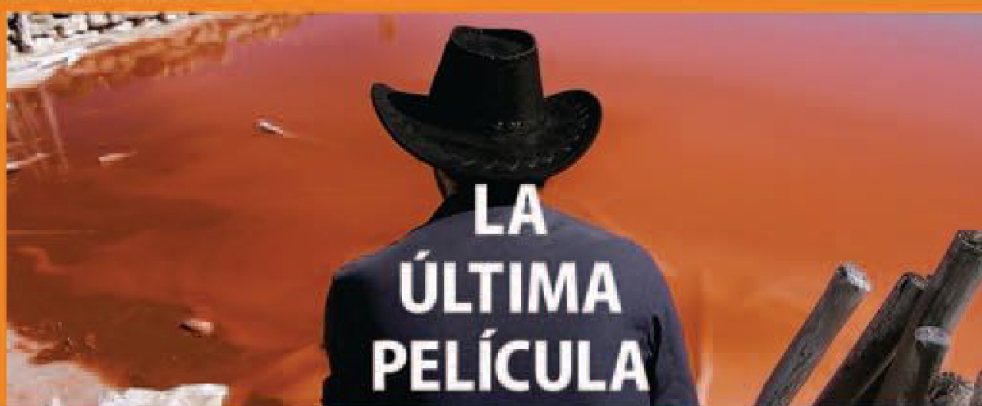


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SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Youthful Helmer's Kinky Noir is His Best

GUY LODGE

Lusciously coiffed Quebecois prodigy Xavier Dolan overreached with last year's "Laurence Anyways," a three-hour transgender saga that overindulged his admittedly striking stylistic affectations. Perhaps even he agreed, since "Tom at the Farm," the 24-year-old hyphenate's delicious fourth feature — and first excursion into genre terrain — is a trimmer, tarter effort all round. Perhaps not coincidentally, it's also his first collaboration with another writer. A kinky queer noir detailing the dangers awaiting a gay Montreal hipster (Dolan) as he journeys to the homophobic heartland for his lover's funeral, it's an improbably exciting match of knife-edge storytelling and a florid vintage aesthetic best represented by Gabriel Yared's glorious orchestral score. Dolan's most accomplished and enjoyable work to date, it's also his most commercially viable.

Opening with a swooning French-language rendition of Michel Legrand's "The Windmills of Your Mind" and closing with Rufus Wainwright's anguished escape anthem "Going to a Town," the film could as easily have cribbed a lyric from Blur's "Coffee & TV": "Do you go to the country / It isn't very far / There're people there who will hurt you / Because of who you are." That's exactly what Tom (a bottle-blond Dolan) learns when he heads to Quebec's rural flatlands to bury his 25-year-old lover, Guillaume.

That involves accepting the hospitality of the dead man's mother, Agathe (Lise Roy), an apparent salt-of-the-earth type living on her late husband's isolated dairy farm with Guillaume's handsome, volatile older brother, Francis (Pierre-Yves Cardinal). Agathe is still blind to her younger son's sexuality, having bought his cover story about a girlfriend in Montreal, though she's irked that said g.f. has skipped the funeral, sending this somewhat fey young man in her place. Francis has known the truth all along, however, and sets immediately about making the



SUSPENSEFUL Based on a stage play, "Tom at the Farm" has elements of both Patricia Highsmith and Hitchcock.

townie feel as unwelcome as possible. That's putting it coyly: Francis assaults Tom both in bed and in a toilet cubicle, threatening him with more considerably more grievous harm if he reveals the true nature of his relationship with Guillaume.

After Tom obtusely reneges on his first opportunity to escape by car, however, the film shifts intriguingly into a defiantly irrational mode of reality and game playing. Increasingly turned on by his vicious tormentor, who in turn interrupts his brutish bullying with isolated moments of brazen flirtatiousness, Tom tacitly acquiesces to stay on at the farm, wearing his lover's clothes, carrying out pastoral chores and accepting Francis' physical abuse. By the time the pair are performing a sensual tango in a honey-lit barn, viewers might think the film has morphed into a warped fantasy perspective — a viewpoint that could as easily be attributed to either man. But when Sara (Evelyne Brochu), both a friend of Tom's and Guillaume's regular beard, arrives belatedly on the scene, the situation careers into even more heated realms of conflict.

Though the film is based on a stage play by Michel-Marc Bouchard (who shares screenwriting credit with Dolan), there's more than a hint of Patricia Highsmith to this heady tale of elastically assumed identities and erotically charged male rivalry; it hardly seems accidental that Dolan's increasingly unknowable protagonist shares a Christian name with Highsmith's devilous antihero, Tom Ripley. (Though still not a natural screen actor, Dolan has hit upon an ideally tailored role for

his poseur-ish charisma and lacquered good looks.) Viewers will either go with the film's gradual dramatic divorce from accountable human behaviour — a move that coincides with its plummeting emotional temperature — and borderline-silly narrative switchbacks, or they won't, but the helmer seems in cool command of the tone throughout.

It's a short leap, of course, from Highsmith to Hitchcock — not that "Tom at the Farm" has anything in common with "Strangers on a Train," barring the obvious homoerotic ancestry. Though he shows an unexpected knack in the film's opening and closing stages for razor-cut suspense, Dolan fosters the Hitch connection mainly through the lush strings of Yared's almost ever-present score, one so uncannily in thrall to Bernard Herrmann that viewers familiar with Dolan's previous output — hitherto reliant on tastefully curated jukebox soundtracks — may initially assume he's sampling extracts from lesser-known film scores from the Golden Age of noir. So overwhelming and insistent as to constitute a narrative voice in itself, Yared's work constitutes a significant formal risk, but its sweeping intricacy stands in sufficiently stark contrast to the film's otherwise contempo-chic construction to make it a thrilling one.

Meanwhile, as even Dolan's detractors have come to expect from his work, the film looks as gorgeous as it sounds, with Andre Turpin's rich, crisply composed lensing effectively playing the landscape's bleak, affectless minimalism against its deep autumnal coloring. Working, as ever, as his own costume designer, Dolan makes even mud-splattered workwear look a tiny bit fabulous.

Reviewed at Venice Film Festival (competing), Sept. 1, 2013. (Also in Toronto Film Festival — Special Presentations.) Running time: 103 MIN. Original title: "Tom à la ferme" (Canada-France) An MK2 presentation of an MK2, Sons of Manual production in association with Arte France Cinema, Arte/Copinova 9. (International sales: MK2, Paris.) Produced by Xavier Dolan, Nathanael Karmitz, Charles Gillibert. Executive producer, Nancy Grant. Directed, edited by Xavier Dolan. Screenplay, Michel-Marc Bouchard, Dolan, based on the stage play by Bouchard. Camera (color), Andre Turpin; music, Gabriel Yared; production designer, Colombe Raby; costume designer, Dolan; sound, Sylvain Brassard; line producer, Carole Mondello; associate producer, Lyse LaFontaine. With: Xavier Dolan, Pierre-Yves Cardinal, Lise Roy, Evelyne Brochu, Manuel Tadros, Jacques Lavallee, Anne Caron, Olivier Morin. (French dialogue)



POM WONDERFUL Lucky McKee and Chris Sivertson's in-joke sends up horror sexploitation.

MIDNIGHT MADNESS

'Die' Has Fun with Genre

DENNIS HARVEY

Indie horror specialists Lucky McKee ("May," "The Woman") and Chris Sivertson ("The Lost," "I Know Who Killed Me") team up on "All Cheerleaders Die," a campy bloodfest very different from the grimly serious if sometimes blackly comedic genre exercises they've made separately since 2001, when they co-directed a short under the same title. This saga of ill-fated pom-pom girls who return from death to wreak vengeance will amuse if not wow jaded horror fans; more gullible ones, however, may miss the joke and think this is simply a particularly dumb example of the kind of supernatural sexploitation it's sending up. Home-format prospects look decent, theatrical ones thin.

The opening introduces us to suburban Cali Blackfoot High's cheer squad, led by creme-de-la-mean-girl-creme

All Cheerleaders Die

Director: Lucky McKee, Chris Sivertson
Starring: Caitlin Stasey, Sianoa Smit-McPhee

Alexis, aka Lexi (Felisha Cooper), though in her reckless braggadocio, she executes a high jump that ends in a fatal head injury. Three months later, the other cheerleaders are starting senior year, with

Lexi's demise leaving one slot open for a newcomer.

It's won by hitherto disinterested Maddy (Caitlin Stasey), who gets in because she's acrobatically flexible and was once the dead girl's best friend. Little do her teammates suspect that Maddy has only joined in order to avenge her pal's death. She takes particular offense at the fact that replacement leader Tracy (Brooke Butler), a seemingly bitchy blonde who's secretly nice, and Lexi's star-quarterback former boyfriend, Terry (Tom Williamson), scarcely waited for the corpse to cool before starting to date.

Viewing all this with dismay is goth girl Leena (Sianoa Smit-McPhee), who

until now apparently enjoyed intimacies with Maddy not strictly emotional in nature. She's lurking around, spying on her ex's Sapphic seduction of Tracy at a party in the woods, when a violent girls-vs.-boys argument results in a deadly car accident. Leena uses her trusty magic Wiccan stones to revive the deceased, and by morning, several not-so-dead cheerleaders are back in class — albeit with two sisters (Reanin Johannink and Amanda Grace Cooper) now inconveniently stuck in each other's bodies, and all afflicted by a new desire to suck the life force from any nearby male — specially obnoxious football-playing ones.

Mashing together elements redolent of "The Craft," "Species," "Pet Sematary" and anything featuring toned young bobs jiggling booty and tossing hair in slo-mo, "All Cheerleaders Die" has fun with its umpteen cliches. Still, the satirical edge is underplayed enough to make some viewers wonder whether the film is faux-stupid or the real thing. The most overt gags are musical: two interludes in which the Prague Symphony Orchestra provides utterly incongruous flowery-string-section backing, and a final credits crawl mocking such sequences' tendency to cram in too many last-minute "various artist" tunes to pad an original-soundtrack release.

McKee and Sivertson's in-joke is a fond, briskly diverting homage, but not a truly inspired one.

Reviewed at Toronto Film Festival (Midnight Madness), Sept. 6, 2013. Running time: 89 MIN.

A ModernCine production. Produced by Andrew van den Houten, Robert Tonino. Executive producer, Arrien Schittkamp. Directed, written by Lucky McKee, Chris Sivertson. Camera (color, HD), Greg Ephraim; editors, Ben La Marca, Zach Passero; music, Mads Heldtberg; production

designer, Krista Gall; art director, Mars Feehery; costume designer, Oneita Parker; sound, Ed White; sound designer/re-recording mixer, Andrew Smetek; assistant director, Cassandra Laymon; casting, Lindsay Chag. With: Caitlin Stasey, Sianoa Smit-McPhee, Brooke Butler, Tom Williamson, Amanda Grace Cooper, Reanin Johannink, Jordan Wilson, Leigh Parker, Chris Petrovski, Felisha Cooper.

FILMS FROM ISRAEL AT THE TORONTO INT'L FILM FESTIVAL 2013



BETHLEHEM

Director: Yuval Adler

Producers: Talia Kleinhendler & Osnat Handelsman-Keren, Pie Films Ltd. – Israel / Diana Elbaum & Sebastian Delloye, Entre Chien et Loup – Belgium / Steve Hudson & Sonja Ewers, Gringo Films – Germany

Screenplay: Yuval Adler & Ali Waked

International Sales: Westend Films – Eve Schoukroun

E-mail: eve@westendfilms.com

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SUN	SEP 15	18:30	SCOTIABANK THEATRE 4

PRESS & INDUSTRY:

SUN	SEP 8	16:30	SCOTIABANK THEATRE 5
WED	SEP 11	14:15	SCOTIABANK THEATRE 7



THE WONDERS (PLAOT)

Director: Avi Nesher

Producers: Mashe Edery, Leon Edery – United King Films
David Silber – Metro Communications
Avi Nesher – Artomas Communications

Screenplay: Avi Nesher & Shaanan Street

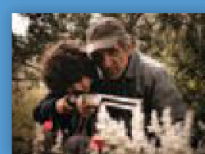
World Sales: Ronna B. Wallace, Eastgate Pictures, LLC

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SUN	SEP 8	18:45	SCOTIABANK THEATRE 4
TUE	SEP 10	15:15	TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX CINEMA 2
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PRESS & INDUSTRY:

MON	SEP 9	11:30	SCOTIABANK THEATRE 9
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A PLACE IN HEAVEN (MAKOM BE GAN EDEN)

Director: Joseph Madmony

Producers: David Mandil, Moshe Edery, Leon Edery - A Place in Heaven LP

Screenplay: Joseph Madmony

Sales Contact: Movie Plus Productions

E-mail: leelu@movieplus.info

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WED	SEP 11	18:45	SCOTIABANK THEATRE 4
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PHILIPS

GALA PRESENTATIONS

Canet Can't Wrap Up Crime Redo Fast Enough

SCOTT FOUNDAS

After transposing an American detective novel to France for his hit directorial debut, “Tell No One,” thesp-helmer-scribe Guillaume Canet inverts the equation for “Blood Ties,” which adapts French director Jacques Maillot’s 2008 crime drama “Les Liens du sang” to the 1970s New York of “The French Connection” and “Serpico” fame. Result is a sluggish, dramatically undernourished saga that somehow manages to exceed the original pic’s running time by 40 minutes without adding anything appreciable to the story or characters. Canet’s name plus a starry ensemble cast (including Mrs. Canet, Marion Cotillard) should ensure reasonably brisk world sales, though the pic’s excessive length and dour tone will limit audience appeal — especially in North America, where “Tell No One” racked up an impressive \$6.1 million.

Based on a roman a clef by authors Michel and Bruno Papet, Maillot’s film (also set in the 1970s) starred Canet as a Lyonnais police officer thrust back into the life of his criminal brother (Francois Cluzet) when the latter is released after a lengthy prison sentence. Scripted by Canet and James Gray (whose 2007 “We Own the Night” also featured siblings on opposite sides of the law), the new pic hews rather closely to the events of the first, until a Grand Central Station climax that significantly alters the fate of one major character.

Opening scenes show Brooklyn cop Franck (Billy Crudup) and sister Marie (Lili Taylor) collecting their newly paroled brother Chris (Clive Owen, looking suitably paunchy and disheveled), free after serving nine years on a murder conviction. It’s a bittersweet reunion, stepped in long-simmering resentments, among them Chris’ beef that Franck never visited him in jail. Still, Chris seems to make a concerted effort to go straight, taking a job at a local garage and trying to patch things up with his drug-addled wife (Cotil-



THICKER THAN WATER Clive Owen and Mila Kunis are among the starry cast of Guillaume Canet’s “Blood Ties.”

Reviewed at Cannes Film Festival. Also in Toronto (Gala Presentations). MPAA Rating: R. Running time: 142 MIN. (France) A Mars Distribution release of a Les Prods. du Tresor, Worldview Entertainment, Canoe Films, Mars Films, Wild Bunch, Le Grisbi Prods., France 2 Cinema, Chi-Fou-Mi Productions, LGM Cinema, Treasure Co. production. (International sales: Wild Bunch, Paris.) Produced by Alain Attal, Guillaume Canet, Hugo Selignac, Christopher Woodrow, John Leshner. Executive producers, Kerry Orent, Chris Goode, James Gray, Vincent Maraval, Molly Connors, Sarah Johnson Redlich, Maria Cestone, Hoyt David Morgan. Directed by Guillaume Canet. Screenplay, Canet, James Gray, based on the screenplay “Les Liens du sang” by Jacques Maillot, Pierre Chosson, Eric Veniard and the novel “Deux Freres, un flic, un truand” by Michel and Bruno Papet. Camera, Christophe Offenstien; editor, Herve De Luze; music, Yodelice; music supervisor, Raphael Hamburger; production designer, Ford Wheeler; art director, Henry Dunn; set decorators, Heather Loeffler, Cherish M. Hale; costume designer, Michael Clancy; sound, Michael Barosky; casting, Avy Kaufman. With: Clive Owen, Billy Crudup, Marion Cotillard, Mila Kunis, Zoe Saldana, Matthias Schoenaerts, James Caan, Noah Emmerich, Lili Taylor, Griffin Dunne. (English dialogue)

lard), teenage son and younger daughter. But before long, Chris’ volatile temper gets the better of him at work, while a subsequent attempt starting a legit business — a hot-dog stand in Prospect Park — literally goes up in smoke.

Viewers familiar with Canet primarily from “Tell No One” (his subsequent ensemble dramedy, “Little White Lies,” was a hit in France but didn’t travel as far offshore) may be surprised to find that “Blood Ties” offers little conventional thriller architecture, or action on par with “Tell No One’s” celebrated highway foot chase. Instead, the pic is fundamentally a family melodrama, detailing the various compromising positions in which the characters find themselves until something — or someone — has to give. While Chris begins courting a shy, lonely office girl (Mila Kunis) from the garage, Franck takes up with ex-flame Vanessa (Zoe Saldana), whose vengeful husband (“Rust and Bone” star Matthias Schoenaerts, in one of the pic’s livelier perfs) has just been arrested by Franck on a weapons charge. Meanwhile, Chris’ gradual return to the criminal underworld — beginning with a brazen contract hit — threatens to derail Franck’s rising police career.

Though Maillot’s film suffered from similar overplotting (and even included a couple of additional characters), it nevertheless managed to make all the intrigue more involving, where-

as here the tension rarely rises above a low boil. In what feels like a strained effort at seriousness, Canet distends many scenes with long pauses and pregnant glances on either side of the action — upwards of 20 minutes could be cut without losing a single line of dialogue — and has everyone deliver their lines in a breathy whisper, as if Chris and Franck’s ailing paterfamilias (James Caan) weren’t the only one missing a lung. And, where the original film’s Canet and Cluzet were effortless in their brotherly bond, Owen and Crudup don’t seem so much estranged as outright strangers. Even the usually unimpeachable Cotillard is oddly adrift here, struggling with an unidentifiable foreign accent whose origins (eventually revealed as Italian) generate more suspense than pretty much anything else in the movie. The rest of the mixed Yank/Euro cast speak Brooklynese with varying degrees of success.

Most of Canet’s filmmaking energies seem to have gone into affecting a convincing period feel, from the plethora of wide-body sedans in varying shades of rust to the finely cultivated sideburns and mustaches and a double album’s worth of choice soul and rock tunes. Lenser Christophe Offenstien’s suitably grimy, washed-out color palette and production designer Ford Wheeler’s nicely aged sets similarly contribute to an authentic, pre-gentrification vibe.

SCENE


FOX SEARCHLIGHT PARTY

SPICE ROUTE, TORONTO, SEPT. 7

Sarah Paulson and Paul Giamatti had a laugh at the Fox Searchlight party, where things were looking pretty sweet for the distrib, which is seeing critical kudos and Oscar buzz roll in for "12 Years a Slave"—one of four pics the company celebrated Saturday night.

SONY CLASSICS DINNER

CREME BRASSERIE, TORONTO, SEPT. 7

"This is a great chance to catch up — and point out that we have nine movies at Toronto this year," Sony Pictures Classics co-prexy Michael Barker noted at the specialty distributor's annual soiree attended by filmmakers and talent from fest titles including "Kill Your Darlings" (middle) and "Only Lovers Left Alive" (right).



Nancy Utley, Emilia Clarke, Steve Gilula at Fox fete



Daniel Radcliffe, John Krokidas at Sony Classics dinner



Jeremy Thomas, Carter Logan, Jim Jarmusch, Michael Barker, Tom Bernard

Wednesday, January 25, 1950

VARIETY

25



M. P. Daily says the picture is superb.

A strong item. Film Daily calls it fine, tense,

emotional, dramatic, brimful of action,

big league. Boxoffice comments a meaty bit

of stern entertainment. Should prove a

profitable booking venture. The Exhibitor

cheers it as taut, well-directed, well-acted,

THIS 'FEMALE' MEANS BUSINESS!

much suspense. Harrison's reports tense

suspense. Should go over. The Independent

applauds it as action to hold an audience

in suspense. Unusual twist. Showmen's

says suspense and action at high-pitch

throughout, exciting entertainment.

Word of mouth to put it across in any

situation. The Reporter notes fast

action, thrilling, always suspenseful.

Exhibitors will not regret booking it.



"DEADLY IS THE FEMALE"

starring

PEGGY CUMMINS
JOHN DALL

A KING BROTHERS PRODUCTION
with BERRY KROEGER • MORRIS CARNOVSKY
Produced by MAURICE and FRANK KING • Directed by
Joseph H. Lewis • Screenplay by Mackinlay Kantor
and Millard Kaufman

From the SATURDAY EVENING POST Story
"GUN CRAZY" by Mackinlay Kantor

... thru UA

Shooting to Thrill

Before "Bonnie and Clyde," there was "Gun Crazy," Joseph H. Lewis' erotically charged noir about a weapon-loving couple. Known as "Deadly is the Female" when it was released in 1950 and scripted by the blacklisted Dalton Trumbo, 'Gun Crazy' screens in a restored 35mm print at noon today at the Bell Lightbox 4.



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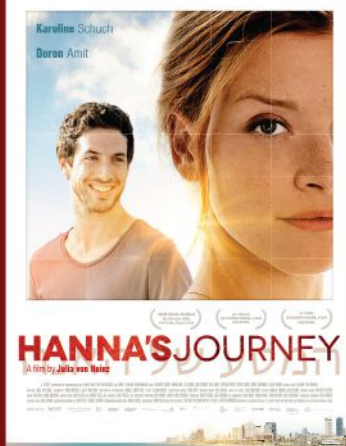
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*They did something terrible that can ruin their future.
But who knows what?*

World Premiere @ Toronto Film Festival

Mon	9th	21h45	Scotiabank 4	
Wed	11th	18h45	Scotiabank 2	
Thu	12th	10h15	Scotiabank 3	(Press & Industry)
Sun	15th	21h15	Scotiabank 1	

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