

Variety Critics Name the 12 Best Movies From Cannes 2018

By Peter Debruge and Owen Gleiberman

The 71st Cannes Film Festival may have gotten off to a bumpy start, underwhelming audiences with Iranian director Asghar Farhadi's Spanish-language "Everybody Knows" and taking several days to serve up anything that felt universally praised (eventual Palme d'Or winner Hirokazu Kore-eda's "Shoplifters"), but by the end, even those who had arrived skeptical seemed to agree that the overall quality of this auteur-thin, American-light edition was higher than usual. Looking back on 12 days of discovery, here are a dozen films that most impressed Variety chief critics Owen Gleiberman and Peter Debruge.

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The Image Book

Jean-Luc Godard's momentous new film feels like a bulletin. It's the rare work of his that has the aura of a horror film (it's suffused with images of violence, intertwining old movies and new atrocities), and the world he's looking at through his color-saturated semiotic kaleidoscope is one that's spinning out of control. Godard, who has now come around to ditching actors entirely, works in a free-associational collage mode that suggests MTV meets the Beatles' "Revolution 9." He rips images out of context, crashing together bits of music, old film clips, and video footage of terrorist murders to let us see and hear each one anew. The political killers seem to be carrying out a degraded — or maybe heightened — version of what the movies taught them. On the soundtrack, speaking to us in a voice so low and sonorous and croaky with import that he sounds like Charles Aznavour crossed with Gollum, the 87-year-old Godard says, "War is here." He means that it's here, and that it's coming. —OG

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Happy As Lazzaro

As diverse as the 21 films in Cannes' official competition were this year, none seemed more surprising than Alice Rohrwacher's third feature, which begins as a fanciful modern fable and ends as a wrenching critique of those overlooked and exploited by contemporary capitalism. Adopting a style that recalls Italian filmmaker-poet Pier Paolo Pasolini, the director mixes rugged realism with a dash of the supernatural, presenting a hard-working young sharecropper named Lazzaro who, in his wide-eyed naïveté, could be the Chauncey Gardiner of a tobacco estate in decline — a little soft in the head, but graced with a kind of magic. Though you never know where this movie is headed, something especially unexpected happens at the midway point that sets the already-unique tale on an altogether new course. Some audiences check out when the story shifts, although it is here that as relatively new voices go, Rohrwacher proves she has something fresh to say. — PD

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