

People & Places

Film

Best film

'Splendour' rules APSA

LOS ANGELES, Nov 28, (RTRS): "Cemetery of Splendour," by Thailand's auteur champion Apichatpong Weerasethakul, was named as the best film at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards.

The film is a dreamy rumination on matters political and personal. It takes the form of a story involving the bonding between a hospital worker and a soldier with a mysterious infection. "Splendour," which relied heavily on European production finance, had its premiere in the



Assaf

Un Certain Regard section of the Cannes film festival in May.

The APSA prizes were handed out on Thursday evening at a ceremony in Brisbane, Australia. The ceremony

opened with a tribute to Paris, home of APSA partner UNESCO, and site of the recent terror attacks. "We are greatly moved by your resolve and your strength," said Singaporean filmmaker Anthony Chen, acting as ceremony co-host.

They were selected by a jury headed by Kim Dong-ho, co-founder of the Busan film festival, and also including Iranian actress Negar Javaherian, Bangladeshi writer/director Mostafa Sarwar Farooki, Chinese film maker and Beijing Film Academy professor, Zhang Xianmin, Malaysian film maker U-Wei Bin Haji Saari, and Russian writer/director Alexei Popogrebsky.

Promote

The awards recognise and promote cinematic excellence and cultural diversity in the world's fastest-growing film region. Using a UNESCO definition, the region comprises 70 countries and areas, 4.5 billion people. It is responsible for half of the world's film output.

The APSA UNESCO Award for cultural diversity through film went to Palestinian director Hany Abu-Assad for "The Idol," a film inspired by the true story of 2013 "Arab Idol" winner **Mohammed Assaf**, who has since become an ambassador for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

The best directing prize went to Russia's Alexey German Jr for "Under Electric Clouds." Turkey's writer/director Senem Tuzen won the screenplay award for "Motherland."

■ **Best Feature Film:** "Cemetery of Splendour" (aka "Rak ti Khon Kaen") (Thailand, Malaysia, France, Germany, UK.) Dir: Apichatpong Weerasethakul

■ **Best Youth Feature Film:** "River" (aka "Gingbo") (China) Dir: Sonthar Gyal

■ **Best Animated Feature Film:** Miss Hokusai (aka "Saruberi: Miss Hokusai") (Japan)

■ **Best Documentary Feature Film:** "The Chinese Mayor" (aka "Datong") (China)

■ **Achievement In Directing:** Alexey German Jr for "Under Electric Clouds" (aka "Pod Elektricheskimi Oblakami") (Russian Federation, Ukraine, Poland)

■ **Best Screenplay:** Senem Tuzen for "Motherland" (aka "Ana Yurdu") (Turkey, Greece)

■ **Achievement In Cinematography:** Mark Lee Ping-bing for "The Assassin" (aka "Nie Yinniang") (Taiwan)

■ **Special Mention, Achievement in Cinematography:** Lu Songye for "Tharlo" (China)

■ **Best Performance By An Actress:** Kirin Kiki in "An" (Japan, France, Germany)

■ **Special Mention, Best Performance by an Actress:** Fatemeh Motamed Arya in "Avalanche" (aka "Bahman") (Iran)

■ **Best Performance By An Actor:** Jung Jaeyoung in "Right Now, Wrong Then" (South Korea)

■ **APSA UNESCO Award:** Hany Abu-Assad for "The Idol" (aka "Ya Tayr El Tayer") (Palestine, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, U.K., Netherlands)

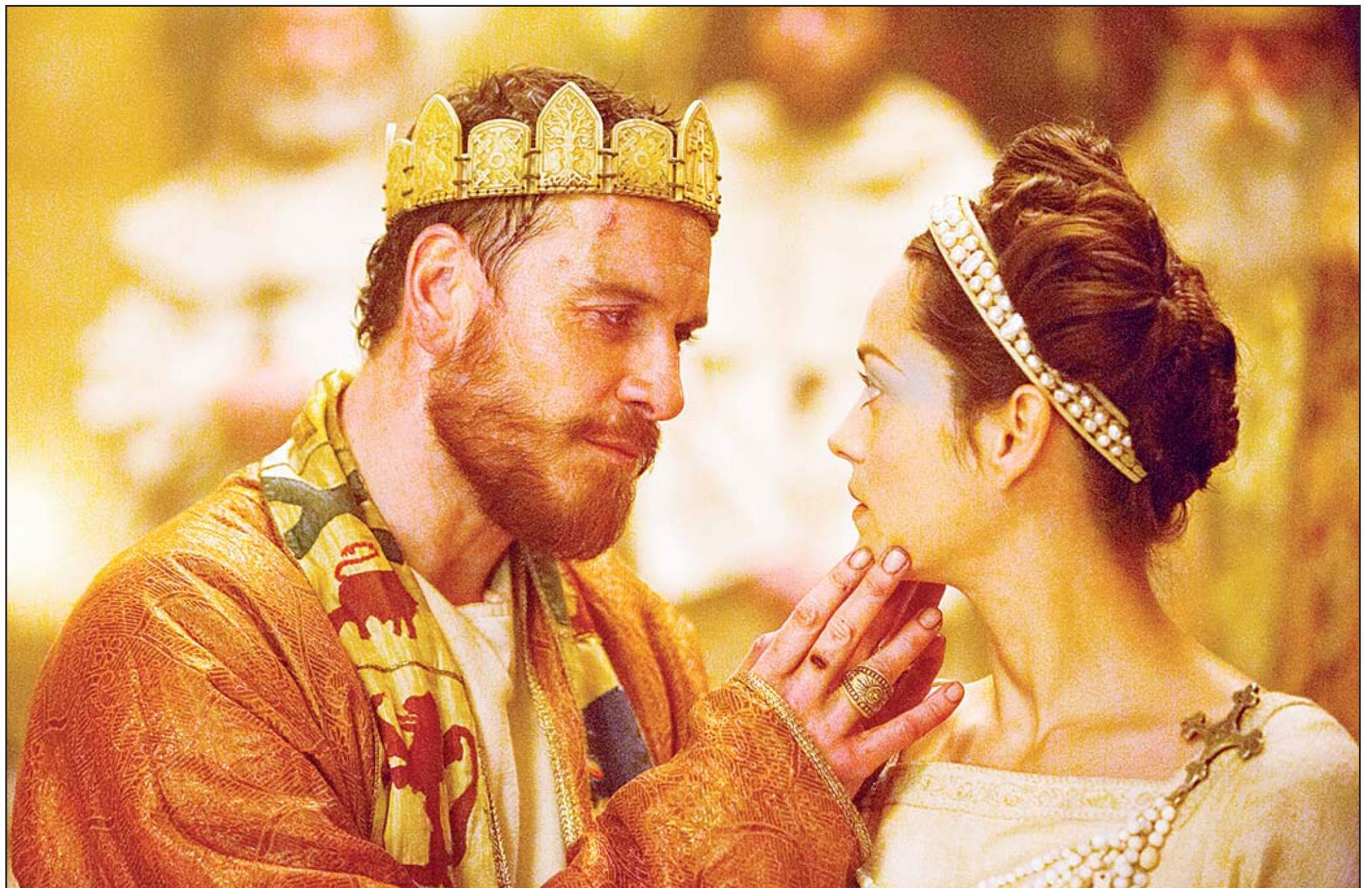
■ **Special Mention, APSA UNESCO Award:** Stephen Page for "Spear" (Australia)

■ **FIAPF AWARD for Outstanding Achievement in Film in the Asia Pacific region:** Esad Younis (Egypt)

■ **APSA Academy NETPAC Development Prize:** Mirlan Abdykalykov for "Heavenly Nomadic" (aka "Sutak") (Kyrgyzstan)

■ **Jury Grand Prize:** Park Jungbum for writing/directing/acting in "Alive" (aka "Sanda") (South Korea)

■ **Jury Grand Prize:** Emin Alper for writing and directing "Frenzy" (aka "Abluka") (Turkey, Qatar, France)



This photo provided by The Weinstein Company shows Michael Fassbender (left), as Macbeth, and Marion Cotillard as Lady Macbeth, in a scene from the film 'Macbeth'. The movie opens in US theaters on Dec 4. (AP)

Film

Canadian content meets Kudos contenders

Whistler may've gotten a shade cooler

LOS ANGELES, Nov 28, (RTRS): The Whistler Film Festival, which dubs itself as Canada's "coolest" film fest, may have just gotten a shade cooler. In time for its 15-year anniversary, the event has landed the Canadian premiere of Oscar hopeful "Carol" for opening night, Dec 2.

Since industry vet Paul Gratton took the reins as the fest's director of programming in June 2012, there's been a snowball effect. That year, Whistler opened with Michael McGowan's "Still Mine," followed by Jason Priestley's directorial debut, "Cas & Dylan," starring Richard Dreyfuss and Tatiana Maslany.

The next year, Gratton scored a coup with the Western Canada premiere of "The Imitation Game."

This year, "Carol" ups the ante once more. The period pic, directed by Todd Haynes, based on a Patricia Highsmith novel, is toplined by Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara.

"You can see the progression and you can see how the distributors are beginning to see the value of Whistler," Gratton says. He adds that the fest's timing, which is strategic in its proximity to awards season and a key point in film release schedules, is not inconsequential.

His vision for the future: "More and more of that."

Among this year's selections: 10 features directed by women; the Canadian premiere of Robert Carlyle's directorial debut, "The Legend of Barney Thomson"; Chet Baker biopic "Born to Be Blue" with Ethan Hawke; Brian Helgeland's "Legend"; "Trumbo" with Bryan Cranston; Patricia Sims' William Shatner-narrated doc, "When Elephants Were Young"; and the world premiere of Frank Henenlotter's first non-genre film,

"Chasing Banksy." Canadian thriller "Numb," will close fest on Dec 6.

Gratton wants Whistler to become a mini-Sundance for Canadian films, which account for about half the selections.

"I love that model of having the big American movies draw attention to a showcase where Canadian movies can shine," he says.

As the festival has grown, it has been attracting more distributors and sales agents to the white peaks of the Canadian Rockies.

Expected industry guests this year include Voltage's Nicolas Chartier, Radiant Films' Mimi Steinbauer, Cineplex's Michael Kennedy, Shoreline's Morris Ruskin, along with other execs from the likes of Elevation Pictures, Mongrel Media, Shomi and Vimeo.

After 15 years, Whistler has become about more than just skiing. It means business.

Canadian screenwriter **Elan Mastai** ("What If") couldn't have predicted that a chance meeting with scribe **Jonathan Tropper** at the Whistler Film Festival would result in a \$1.25 million sale for his debut sci-fi novel, "All Our Wrongs Today," and a movie deal with **Amy Pascal**'s new shingle.

Mastai and Tropper were in Whistler in 2013 to take part in Variety's annual 10 Screenwriters to Watch event. A friendship bloomed and Tropper not only introduced Mastai to his lit agent, whom they now share, but also gave invaluable career advice.

Sharing

"We don't get out much, we writ-

ers," jokes **Phyllis Nagy** ("Carol"), who attended Whistler as part of last year's 10. When it comes to sharing writing insights, she equates scribes to superstitious baseball players.

"It's as if you let that information into the ether, it somehow saps your power to do it."

But, like Mastai, Nagy appreciated a chance to commiserate with fellow scribes, as well as Whistler's laid-back, calming vibe. "It didn't feel like anyone was competing with anyone," she recalls.

"The reality for feature film writers is that you rarely get to spend time with other writers," Mastai says. "Being able to actually get together with the whole group was a really eye-opening, fascinating, and fun experience."

"I feel very grateful to have been part of it because even now, two years later, this is something that continues to pay dividends for me personally and as a screenwriter."

"Star Wars" has a Thanksgiving treat for impatient fans — a new, minute-long spot for "The Force Awakens," which features a better look at **Adam Driver**'s villainous **Kylo Ren**, who — while initially believed to be a Sith thanks to his red crossguard lightsaber — has been revealed to be a member of the mysterious Knights of Ren, and a devoted follower of Darth Vader. In one of the new shots, we even see Daisy Ridley's Rey firing a blaster at Ren, who manages to deflect the shots with his blade.

While the first trailer for the holy-anticipated sequel began with the ominous voiceover, "There has been an awakening... have you felt it?" the new promo reveals a little more of that conversation, believed to be between

Kylo Ren and First Order boss Supreme Leader Snoke (Andy Serkis), who has remained unseen in the promotional materials for "Episode VII" so far (much like Mark Hamill's Luke Skywalker).

The footage also places a greater emphasis on some of the film's battle scenes, featuring shots of **Oscar Isaac**'s Poe Dameron as the X-Wing fighter engages in an explosive dogfight with the First Order's TIE Fighters.

"Star Wars: The Force Awakens" opens in theaters on Dec 18. The film recently received a PG-13 rating, only the second film in the franchise to do so.

"Gods of Egypt" director **Alex Proyas** and the film's studio, Lionsgate, have issued apologies for the lack of diverse casting in the mythological action film, which has generated controversy for its predominantly white cast.

Proyas issued a statement apologizing for the lack of racial diversity in the cast on Friday. "The process of casting a movie has many complicated variables, but it is clear that our casting choices should have been more diverse. I sincerely apologize to those who are offended by the decisions we made."

Lionsgate also acknowledged the need for more inclusive casting in a statement obtained by Variety, which reads: "We recognize that it is our responsibility to help ensure that casting decisions reflect the diversity and culture of the time periods portrayed. In this instance we failed to live up to our own standards of sensitivity and diversity, for which we sincerely apologize. Lionsgate is deeply committed to making films that reflect the diversity of our audiences. We have, can and will continue to do better."



Star Wars fan Michael Bender poses with the latest Stormtrooper gear at his home in Pasadena, California. Bender is anticipating the saga's latest installment — "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" — that hits screens on Dec 18. (AFP)



Hathaway



Bloom

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Oscar-winning Hollywood actress **Anne Hathaway** and her husband, producer **Adam Shulman**, are expecting their first child, according to the website of celebrity news outlet E!

"Anne is in her second trimester and feeling great!" a source close to the 33-year-old told E! News.

Hathaway, who earned an Oscar in 2013 for her performance as Fantine in "Les Misérables," married Shulman in 2012. He is a year older than her. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: **Ron Howard** will direct a movie adaptation of the **J.P. Delaney** thriller "The Girl Before" for Universal.

Michael De Luca is producing with Imagine Entertainment's Howard, **Brian Grazer** and **Erica Huggins**. Imagine's **Tyler Michael** will be exec producer and **Elishia Holmes** will exec produce for Michael De Luca Productions.

Universal bought the movie rights to "The Girl Before," a novel that Ballantine Bantam Dell Random House will publish in the fall of 2016. The story involves a traumatized woman who falls in love with a minimalist house and the man who designed it — only to discover that another woman died at the house three years earlier. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: "Salem" star **Janet Montgomery** has been cast opposite **Orlando Bloom** in the psychological drama "Romans," which has started shooting in the UK.

Bloom stars as a man still trying to come to terms with repercussions resulting from childhood sexual abuse at the hands of a trusted and idolized priest.

Montgomery will star as the character's wife, struggling to deal with a husband that seems unable to love her back. The drama is directed by the Shamassian Brothers ("The Pyramid

Texts") from a screenplay by **Geoff Thompson**. "Romans" is produced by WSG Entertainment's **Sheetal Vinod**

Talwar as well as **James Harris** and **Mark Lane** of The Tea Shop & Film Company and **Jasper Graham** of

Dreamscape Films. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: **Hou Hsiao-Hsien's**

'Zoolander 2' trailer sets comedy record

LOS ANGELES, Nov 28, (RTRS): Paramount Pictures' "Zoolander 2" has broken the record for the most online views for a comedy trailer since the promo launched Nov 18, having been watched 52.2 million times in its first week of release.

Stiller directs himself as Derek Zoolander in the comedy sequel. The film also stars Owen Wilson, Will Ferrell, Penelope Cruz, Kristen Wiig, Fred Armisen, Milla Jovovich, Christine Taylor, Justin Theroux and Kyle Mooney.

In the film, Stiller's fashion model Derek Zoolander teams up with his rival Hansel (Wilson) to prevent the assassinations of the most beautiful people in the world — including stars like Justin Bieber, Miley Cyrus, Demi Lovato, Usher and Lenny Kravitz. The trailer also includes cameos from Benedict Cumberbatch and Bieber.

"The Assassin" has topped a poll published by Sight & Sound magazine in which 168 UK and international film critics nominated their top five films of the year. **Todd Haynes**' "Carol" came second and **George Miller**'s "Mad Max: Fury Road" was third.

The results mark 2015 as a year of strong female characters and stories, with seven of the poll's top 10 films having striking female leads. It was also a good year for documentary features, with **Asif Kapadia**'s "Amy" and **Chantal Akerman**'s "No Home Movie" both in the top 10.

Other US movies in the top 20 included **Paul Thomas Anderson**'s "Inherent Vice" in joint ninth position, **Charlie Kaufman** and **Duke Johnson**'s "Anomalisa" and **David Robert Mitchell**'s "It Follows" in joint 11th place, and **Pete Docter**'s "Inside Out" and **Sean Baker**'s "Tangerine" sharing 14th place. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Trumpet player and singer **Cynthia Robinson**, an original member of psychedelic funk pioneers Sly and the Family Stone, has died, the band said in statement on Friday. She was 71.

Robinson was one of the first women horn players to be featured prominently in a top American pop band and also provided vocals to such hits as "Dance to the Music" with Sly and the Family Stone. (RTRS)



Indian Bollywood actors Sharman Joshi (left), Zarine Khan (center), and Karan Singh Grover pose for a photograph during a promotional event for the forthcoming Hindi film 'Hate Story 3' in Hyderabad on Nov 27. (AFP)