

## People &amp; Places

## Music

## 'Crime thriller'

## Bowie writes song for Last

NEW YORK, Sept 23, (Agencies): David Bowie has written a song for an upcoming French-British crime series, in the rock icon's first foray into television music in two decades.

Bowie in a statement Tuesday said that he had written an original song for "The Last Panthers," a six-part thriller on Balkan jewel thieves that debuts in November.

"I was looking for one of the icons of my youth to write the music for the title sequence," director Johan Renck, a Swede best known for his music videos, said in the statement.

"The piece of music he laid before us embodied every aspect of our characters and the series itself — dark, brooding, beautiful and sentimental (in the best possible incarnation of this word)," he said.

A collaboration between Britain's Sky Atlantic and France's Canal Plus, "The Last Panthers" stars Tahar Rahim — best known for the French film "A Prophet" — and Samantha Morton, whose credits range from blockbuster "Minority Report" to Woody Allen's "Sweet and Lowdown" to "Control," a biopic on late Joy Division singer Ian Curtis.

The television series revolves around the Pink Panthers, criminal elements from the Balkans — ironically nicknamed after crime comedy films — who pulled off major heists starting in the 1990s.

The music will be Bowie's first for a television series since 1993 when he recorded a soundtrack for a BBC serial based on Hanif Kureishi's novel "The Buddha of Suburbia."

## Interests

A pioneer of glam rock, Bowie has long pursued interests in art and theater and, at age 68, has recently announced a series of new projects.

Bowie is writing for a musical based on cartoon character SpongeBob.

He also penned the music for "Lazarus," a play that premieres in New York in November that is inspired by the science fiction novel "The Man Who Fell to Earth."

Bowie starred in a 1976 film version of "The Man Who Fell to Earth" but did not write the music amid contractual disputes.

Bowie's works include the music for a BBC television version of Bertolt Brecht's play "Baal," in which he acted.

Country music king George Strait wants to be clear.

His upcoming four shows and likely more at MGM Resorts' new Las Vegas Arena next year aren't some re-emergence from retirement.

The 63-year-old may have hung up his touring boots last year after four decades and his record-setting "Cowboy Rides Away" shows, but he's hardly done singing or performing.

"Some people that I have told that I'd be doing some dates in Vegas in 2016 at the Las Vegas Arena, they go: 'Well, you retired. I thought you retired.' Ooh, I just wanna grab 'em and shake 'em. I never said that," he said Tuesday with a flash of his pearly white cowboy smile.

Strait announced Tuesday that he would perform four upcoming shows at the 20,000-seat arena — April 22-23 and Sept 9-10 — and release a new album, "Cold Beer Conversation," available on iTunes and at Walmart stores starting Friday.

One of Eastern Europe's biggest classical music festivals draws bigger and bigger stars every year though its main hall is an acoustic disaster from communist times and the local government of host city Bucharest is in turmoil.

The 22nd edition of the George Enescu Festival, which ended this past weekend, boasted appearances by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Dresden Staatskapelle, the San Francisco Symphony, the London Symphony Orchestra and, after 15 years of negotiations, the Berlin Philharmonic under Simon Rattle.

The 2017 edition will see Milan's La Scala, conductors Valery Gergiev and Antonio Pappano, as well as the superstar Chinese pianist Lang Lang, among others.

"You have the most beautiful festival and the greatest public in the world," Indian-born maestro Zubin Mehta told reporters a day after he conducted the Israel Philharmonic.



Indigo Girls, Army Ray and Emily Saliers perform at the Ryman Auditorium on Sept 22, in Nashville, Tennessee. (AFP)

## Film

## Pitt's 'Big Short' gets release date, AFI Fest premiere

## '99 Homes' leaves the burner on

By Jake Coyle

Ramin Bahrani's "99 Homes" throbs with the public fury and private horror of the real-estate collapse. Set in the Orlando, Fla., suburbs, Bahrani plunges into the ugly, contentious dramas of foreclosure. It's a war movie where thresholds are the battle lines.

"This is our home!" cries Andrew Garfield's Dennis Nash from his doorway when police and a real-estate broker for the bank, Rick Carver (Michael Shannon), collect on his lawn to evict him, his young son (Noah Lomax) and his mother (Laura Dern).

It's a scene that "99 Homes" plays out repeatedly, sometimes with tears, sometimes with blood, and always with a tragic sense of invasion for the turned-out families spilled onto sidewalks.

## Emotionless

The central twist of the film is that once Nash, a jack-of-all-trades carpenter whose work has dried up along with new home construction, finds himself out of options, he's lured into work by Carver. He's a Faustian figure: a white-suited devil on a cell phone making a fortune profiting on the misfortunes of others.

But shackled up in a low-rent motel and with his family's survival very much in question, Nash takes the job. He soon finds himself on the other side of foreclosures, explaining to others that they are now trespassing on the bank's property. Gobs of money, some of it underhandedly made, help quiet his guilt.

Garfield, in his first post-"Spiderman" movie and most adult role to date, excels in capturing Nash's desperate transition, from the breathless panic of losing his home to his reluctant and dubious rebirth.

As he so often is, Shannon is a towering force. His Carver is ruthlessly emotionless, rationalizing his role as merely a cog in a system controlled by larger entities: banks, the government. He drives down the block, eyeing each house for repossession. His own mansion, he says, he's had for 18 months but will flip by New Year's. He's a ruthless realist operating in a corrupt system: "Don't get emotional about real estate," he repeats.

The real villain of "99 Homes" lies somewhere off-screen. It's the entire, rigged apparatus — predatory lending, unfair mortgage rates, bailed-out banks — that has produced both the unfairly evicted and the likes of Carver. "America doesn't bail out the losers," Carver says in his big speech. But his hint of relief in the film's climactic moment suggests he, too, feels trapped by the dehumanizing system.

Bahrani, who wrote the script with Ami Naderi, has specialized in socially conscious tales. His first film, "Man Push Cart," tenderly profiled the life of a Pakistani pushcart vendor in New York. His last, "At Any Price," with Zac Efron and Dennis Quaid, was a melodrama of a Midwestern farming family.

His touch isn't always light. It's not every director who will, after stretching out every harrowing moment of Nash's eviction, then cue the arrival of

the son's school bus just when men are emerging with armfuls of their things.

But where many well-meaning social dramas inevitably turn soggy with moralizing, the visceral "99 Homes" keeps its fire.

## Also:

**LOS ANGELES:** Paramount Pictures opted for "Good Morning America" Tuesday morning to announce that Adam McKay's "The Big Short" — with an all-star cast featuring Christian Bale, Brad Pitt, Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling, Marisa Tomei and Melissa Leo — would be getting a December 2015 release. Not only that, but the film will see its world premiere as the closing night selection of November's AFI Fest in Los Angeles.

The film, based on the book by Michael Lewis ("The Blind Side"), tells the story of bond and real estate derivative geeks who saw the housing crash of 2008 coming and bet against the collateralized debt obligation bubble, thus striking it rich. It's kind of like betting the "Don't Pass" line, for the craps players out there. These guys, who were really just trying to stick it to the big banks (which themselves would of course be bailed out), hit the jackpot while the American dream was being flushed down the toilet for regular Joes in the real world.

The announcement comes on the heels of a wave of successful test screenings and at a time when the studio could really use some more fodder for the awards season. Paramount picked up "Anomalisa" at the Toronto Film Festival last week, a challenging animated endeavor from Charlie

Kaufman and Duke Johnson that has inherent limitations as a broader Oscar play.

"The Big Short" will hit theaters in limited release Dec 11 and, as I hear it, could be an awards play for Christian Bale and particularly Steve Carell, with other hopes for best picture and best adapted screenplay lingering. It's a potential power player for New Regency, already riding a one-two best picture punch in "12 Years a Slave" and "Birdman." Like David Gordon Green's "Our Brand Is Crisis," it tackles current events from a dark humor angle and that could resonate amid other, deadly serious contenders like "Black Mass" and "The Danish Girl." The AFI Fest premiere will be held at the TCL Chinese Theatre on Nov 12.

A trailer for the film also debuted Tuesday. "The Big Short" will first premiere at the AFI Fest in Los Angeles on Nov 12.

**LOS ANGELES:** Steven Spielberg's "Bridge of Spies" will close the 2015 Hamptons International Film Festival, which also has added movies to its slate that include buzzy titles "Room," "Anomalisa," "Brooklyn," "Suffragette" and "Experimenter," among others.

Meanwhile, the festival's series of public conversations will feature Emily Blunt, already set to be honored at the festival; Michael Moore, whose "Where to Invade Next" is part of the fest's lineup, and Dan Rafter, who is the subject of the festival's opening night film, "Truth."



British band One Direction member Harry Styles performs on stage as part of the apple iTunes Festival 2015, at the Camden Roundhouse in North London, on Sept 22. (AP)



Underwood



50 Cent

## Variety

**LONDON:** Singing a live-streamed concert in London, seven-time Grammy award winning American country singer Carrie Underwood said she thinks her style of music knows no boundaries because it's about "real people" everywhere.

"I definitely get that country music has most of its culture in the United States and in the southern part of the States. But we sing about real people and real stories and people that work hard, and I feel like that's universal," Underwood told Reuters on Monday night at London's Roundhouse music venue.

"So country music has evolved a lot over the decades and I feel like there's a lot of artists like myself that are just working hard to break stereotypes and just bring good music to everybody," Underwood said before stepping on stage to perform for the live-streamed Apple Music Festival.

Underwood, 32, rose to fame after winning the musical talent contest "American Idol" in 2005. After her debut album "Some Hearts" was voted the top country album of the past decade by trade publication Billboard, she said she'd felt under pressure for the follow-up, but now has her career in hand.

"I felt like there was a lot of pressure on my second album, and like my first headlining tour. There's certain things that have been in my career that I felt like I was just needing them to work," she said.

"So I don't feel like I have to top what I did last time and because of that I feel like I'm able to make better music and be more creative and just do things that are good for the sake of being good and not like for the sake of trying to sell albums or trying to get played on the radio". (RTRS)

**HARTFORD, Conn:** Rapper 50 Cent is suing a former consultant in federal bankruptcy court in Connecticut, alleging the

man improperly acted as his agent and collected fees in advance for projects without his permission.



UNICEF and United Nations Goodwill Ambassador Shakira (center), is escorted by her security as she leaves the UN headquarters, on Sept 22 at United Nations headquarters. Shakira held a news conference on early childhood education. (AP)

The lawsuit filed Tuesday seeks at least \$810,000 from Andrew Jameson, who 50 Cent's lawyers say improperly negotiated

## Combs leads Forbes' highest paid rap stars

**LOS ANGELES, Sept 23, (RTRS):** Rapper Sean 'P. Diddy' Combs led Forbes' list of the world's highest paid stars in hip hop music on Tuesday, edging out Jay Z and Drake for the top spot.

Harlem native Combs, 45, made an estimated \$60 million between June 2014 and June 2015 according to Forbes' calculations, from investments outside of music, such as his TV network Revolt and Ciroc vodka.

His albums includes 2001's "The Saga Continues" and 2010's "Last Train to Paris," and he's working on a new record.

In second place is rap mogul Jay Z (real name Shawn Carter), the 45-year-old founder of Roc Nation music group, who earned an estimated \$56 million from business ventures in music, sports and lifestyle.

deals on the rapper's behalf, including one for a reality show with E! Entertainment. 50 Cent is also seeking an accounting from Jameson of any other deals.

A message seeking comment was left for Jameson at his Los Angeles office. The rapper, who was born Curtis James Jackson III, filed for bankruptcy protection in July after a New York City jury ordered him to pay \$7 million to a woman who said he posted online a sex tape she made with a boyfriend. (AP)

**ALBANY, NY:** Celebrity chef Sandra Lee says she is cancer free and feeling good months after a double mastectomy.

The 49-year-old Food Network star shared the news Tuesday morning on ABC's "Good Morning America". Lee was hospitalized last month and had to have additional surgery after struggling with infection following her original operation in May.

She made her first public appearance since then on Sunday, when she walked the red carpet at the Primetime Emmy Awards in Los Angeles.

Lee says she will wait until next year to decide whether to undergo reconstructive surgery. Lee is also a cookbook author and magazine publisher. She is the longtime partner of New York Gov Andrew Cuomo. The couple shares a home in Westchester County. (AP)