

People & Places

Film

Furious reaction

Cannes bans future Netflix-backed films

PARIS, May 11. (Agencies): The Cannes Film Festival effectively slapped a ban on future Netflix-backed movies Wednesday after the streaming giant refused to screen its two films in this year's competition in French cinemas.

Although "The Meyerowitz Stories" — starring Adam Sandler and Ben Stiller — and the Korean-American thriller "Okja" will be allowed to compete next week for its top prize, the Palme d'Or, the festival's organisers said they were changing the rules so it can never happen again.

"From now on every film wishing to be in competition at Cannes must be shown in French cinemas afterwards," they said in a statement.



Sandler

They said they had "asked Netflix in vain" for the films to be released in France as well to its 86 million subscribers, but it refused.

The row comes as Netflix is locked in a bitter conflict with big US cinema chains.

Top Hollywood directors including director Sofia Coppola — whose new film "The Beguiled" is also competing at Cannes — have also urged their fans to watch their films on the big screen rather than stream them on tablets and phones.

The crux of the Cannes row turns on French law, which restricts online streaming until three years after a movie is put on general release.

The country's cinema owners reacted furiously last month after three films distributed by streaming rivals Netflix and Amazon were chosen to run for Cannes' top prize.

Festival organisers tried to negotiate a compromise, with a "limited release" of the movies in France mooted.

But faced with the possibility of a Palme d'Or-winning film being shown in only "one or two screens" in France, talks with Netflix broke down.

Release

Amazon, on the other hand, is giving its film, Coppola's "The Beguiled", a proper cinematic release in France, as it did with Woody Allen's Cannes contender last year, "Cafe Society".

Contacted by AFP, Netflix was not available for comment.

Netflix's long-running battle with cinema chains in the US centres on its insistence on releasing its movies online the same day as they hit theatres.

In 2015 most of the big multiplex chains refused to screen the long-awaited Netflix-made sequel to the martial arts blockbuster "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon".

The film reportedly bombed, with Netflix taking the highly unusual step of not releasing its box office figures.

Its online rival Amazon has taken a very different approach.

Rather than confronting the cinema establishment, Amazon Studios courts Hollywood, releasing its films in theatres before they are made available to subscribers.

The Cannes Film Festival, the world's most prestigious, begins next week in the French Riviera resort.

Nineteen films are in competition for the Palme d'Or, with Nicole Kidman starring in three in the official selection.

After a backlash over programming Netflix films, the Cannes Film Festival said that it will, beginning next year, only accept theatrically released films for its prestigious Palme d'Or competition.

In a statement Wednesday, the French festival announced that it has adapted its rules to require that films in competition be distributed in French movie theaters. The festival said it was "pleased to welcome a new operator which has decided to invest in cinema but wants to reiterate its support to the traditional mode of exhibition of cinema in France and in the world."

Cannes this year for the first time selected two films in its official competition from Netflix: Noah Baumbach's "The Meyerowitz Stories" and Bong Joon Ho's "Okja."

The selections prompted immediate criticism from French exhibitors. In France, the theatrical experience is passionately defended. Films are prohibited from streaming or appearing on subscription video on demand for three years after playing in theaters. On Tuesday, France's National Federation of Films Distributors said the Netflix films at Cannes were "endangering a whole ecosystem."

Reed Hastings, Netflix chief executive, responded to the festival's move Wednesday on Facebook. "The establishment is closing ranks against us," wrote Hastings. He called "Okja" "an amazing film that theater chains want to block us from entering into the Cannes Film Festival competition."

The streaming service has been discussing possible deals, including a brief temporary theatrical release, with French exhibitors. The festival said it was "aware of the anxiety aroused" by the Netflix films and has lobbied for a solution. "Hence the Festival regrets that no agreement has been reached," the festival said.

Discuss

The festival's board had convened a meeting Tuesday to discuss the possibility of yanking both films from competition, as recommended by France's exhibitors' association, which is represented on the board. Although the idea was rejected, the festival issued a statement Wednesday expressing regret over Netflix's decision not to release the films widely in French cinemas.

"Cannes is aware of the anxiety aroused by the absence of the release in theaters of those films in France. The Festival de Cannes asked Netflix in vain to accept that these two films could reach the audience of French movie theaters and not only its subscribers," the statement said, adding: "The festival regrets that no agreement has been reached."

Reacting to Cannes' new rule, Netflix's Reed Hastings wrote on his Facebook account that "the establishment closing ranks against us."

Hastings added: "See Okja on Netflix June 28th. Amazing film that theater chains want to block us from entering into Cannes Film Festival competition."

Meanwhile, sources say Netflix has begun negotiations with The Jokers, a French distribution company, and the CNC, France's National Film Board, to obtain a temporary visa that would allow it to release Bong Joon-ho's "Okja" and Noah Baumbach's "The Meyerowitz Stories" day and date on its streaming service, along with a one-week theatrical rollout in several theaters. The limited release would allow Netflix to get around France's strict regulation forbidding films that have been in wide theatrical release from being made available on an SVOD platform for three years.



This file photo taken on May 20, 2016 shows US actress and member of the jury Kirsten Dunst posing as she arrives for the screening of the film 'The Neon Demon' at the 69th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. (AFP)

Film



Actress Ashley Tisdale attends the world premiere of 'Snatched' at the Regency Village Theater on May 10 in Westwood, California. (AFP)



Parks



Johnson

Variety

NEW YORK: Michael Parks, a prolific character actor who found early fame in 1960s countercultural roles and later became a favorite of directors including Quentin Tarantino and Kevin Smith, has died. He was 77.

He died on Tuesday in Los Angeles, his agent, Jane Schulman, said on Wednesday. No cause of death was announced.

In a career that spanned six decades, Parks acted in more than 100 films and TV shows. Many of his early starring roles were in anti-establishment '60s-era films such as "Wild Seed," "The Happening," with Anthony Quinn, and "Bus Riley's Back in Town," alongside Ann-Margret.

Parks also starred as a disillusioned, motorcycle-riding newsman in the 1969 series "Then Came Bronson." For the series, Parks, who recorded a number of albums throughout his career, sang the popular closing theme song, "Long Lonesome Highway." (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson told GQ that the idea of putting his acting career on hold to run for president is a "real possibility," although he's cagey on where he stands on many issues or even if he'd associate with a political party.

In fact, Johnson said that he was approached last year by the Trump and Clinton campaigns about an endorsement, but he declined.

"I feel like I'm in a position now where my word carries a lot of weight and influence, which of course is why they want the endorsement," Johnson said. "But I also have a tremendous amount of respect for the process and felt like if I did share my political views publicly, a few things would happen — and these are all conversations I have with myself, in the gym at four o'clock in the morning — I felt like it would either (a) make people unhappy with the thought of whatever my political view was. And, also, it might sway an opinion, which I didn't want to do."

After the Washington Post ran an op-ed suggesting that he would be a viable candidate, Johnson said that he thought it was "fun to read." (RTRS)

'Traffic-stopping paintwork'

LA car culture inspires 'Lowriders'

LOS ANGELES, May 11, (AFP): From James Dean and the Beach Boys to "The Fast and the Furious," southern Californian pop culture is all about cars, surfing, movies and year-round sun.

Yet the decades-old practice of "lowriding" in the barrios of East Los Angeles — perhaps the most vibrant expression of car culture — remains almost invisible to the outside world.

Peruvian filmmaker Ricardo de Montreuil's debut English language feature "Lowriders" is the first major movie inspired by the tradition of mainly Mexican-American men cruising the streets in souped-up cars with chassis that sit low on the road.

"The brilliance of the film, what they did so well here, is that any time you can go to a film and learn something that you had no idea about... that makes for a very interesting story," actor Theo Rossi ("Sons of Anarchy" and "Marvel's Luke Cage"), told AFP.

"It's the same thing we've seen with films like '8 Mile' and even 'Saturday Night Fever' back in the day, where you were like, 'Man, I didn't even know that was the way the disco scene was in 1970s New York.'"

A story of inter-generational rivalry and artistic awakening, shot on location with real-life lowrider clubs, "Lowriders" follows Danny (Gabriel Chavarria), a talented graffiti artist.

He is caught between the lowrider world of his recovering alcoholic father Miguel — Oscar-nominated Demian Bichir ("The Hateful Eight," "Alien: Covenant") — and his hot-headed, volatile brother Ghost, played by 41-year-old Rossi.

Invest

America saw an explosion in automobile sales in the "Rebel Without a Cause" era of the 1950s as the road network was built up, part of the post-war economic boom, and the number of cars doubled in a decade.

Beginning with James Dean's 1949 Mercury Coupe and kept alive by the "Grease" generation — lowriding has

been taken over by LA's huge Mexican population who invest their time, money and dreams in their rides.

Mechanics transform regular second-hand cars into bold assertions of their personal style and status with the help of top graffiti artists who add the traffic-stopping paintwork.

Since the 1960s, car clubs have been competing at shows, not unlike county fairs or rodeos, where they are judged on the custom detailing, painting, interior design and hydraulic modification.

Authorities, said to be concerned by the spread of Latino culture, banned the craze on public roads in the 1970s by passing laws dictating a car's frame had to be a certain height off the ground.

But mechanics discovered that hidden hydraulics could help vehicles to "hop" up to 1.57 meters (five feet) on their rear wheels at the flip of a switch.

Originally confined to the mostly Mexican-American neighborhoods of East LA, the tradition has spread across southern California as far as the Mexican border.

These days wealthy collectors from across the world order custom-made lowriders.

Rossi, a New Yorker who lived for 15 years in the lowriding hub of East LA, had to be persuaded to audition for "Lowriders," as he was focusing on his final episodes as Juice in FX's long-running "Sons of Anarchy."

He says people expecting "The Fast and the Furious" will be surprised by a didactic and enlightening exposition of southern California's history and culture in what is essentially a family drama.

"That's a scary word to people nowadays in the movie business. A lot of people want to hear 'comic book' and 'action' and all these words that make for giant summer films," said Rossi, who can currently be seen on Netflix as Shades in Marvel's "Luke Cage."

"But at the end of the day this is a family drama wrapped up in the beauty of the lowriding and graffiti world."

"Lowriders" has mostly favorable reviews and 60 percent "fresh" score

from reviews collated by movie website Rotten Tomatoes.

Andrew Barker of Variety magazine bemoaned a "rather shopworn story" but added that "a trio of finely calibrated performances" and an "authentic sense of place" ought to help the movie find its audience.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Jack O'Connell, Chloe Moretz, and Josh Gad are starring in "Party of the Century," centered on Truman Capote's Black and White Ball with shooting starting later this year in New York City.

Gad will portray Capote. Robert Pulcini and Shari Springer Berman are directing and Tim Perell will produce the film through his shingle Process Media.

Bankside Films will exclusively handle foreign sales at the Cannes Film Festival, with CAA and Bankside Films co-representing North American rights.

Hilary Davis, Stephen Kelliher, and Patrick Howson will executive produce for Bankside Films. Head Gear Films will provide production financing with Phil Hunt and Compton Ross acting as executive producers.

Capote held the ball in 1966 at the Plaza Hotel in New York City to honor Washington Post publisher Katharine Graham.

Pulcini and Springer Berman said, "Our film is a delicate balance of worlds converging at a pivotal moment in time. Jack, Chloe and Josh are brilliant performers who can embody these worlds while bringing the electricity and pathos required to make the story fly."

"Party of the Century" is an unexpected love story between O'Connell's working-class elevator operator and Moretz's Hollywood ingenue, both of whom score coveted invites to Capote's Black and White Ball.

O'Connell co-starred in Jodie Foster's financial thriller "Money Monster." He will next be seen in Netflix TV series "Godless" from Steven Soderbergh and Scott Frank.

LOS ANGELES: ESPN sportscaster Chris Berman's wife of 34 years was killed in a car crash in the couple's home state of Connecticut, authorities said on Wednesday.

Katherine Berman was driving on Tuesday when her car struck a sport utility vehicle in Woodbury, causing her car to

roll down an embankment and overturn, according to an accident report from Connecticut State Police.

She and the occupant of the other car, an 87-year-old man, both were killed, officials said. The cause of the collision was under investigation.

Katherine Berman's death came one day before Chris Berman's 62nd birthday on Wednesday.

Berman has long been one of the biggest stars on ESPN, which is owned by the Walt Disney Co and is one of the most watched networks on cable television. (RTRS)

LIMA: Kylie Jenner, the fashion model and younger half-sister of Kim Kardashian, was forced to use an oxygen mask after suffering difficulty breathing during a trip to the Peruvian city of Cusco, high in the Andes.

Jenner, 19, posted pictures on Snapchat social media showing her being treated with an oxygen mask in her hotel room in the historic mountain city.

"At this altitude of 11,000 feet above sea level, you can feel nauseous, have headaches, feel like you're having the worst hangover ever," said a paramedic treating the cosmetics mogul in the video she posted. "Kylie's getting oxygen so she'll feel better." (AFP)



Actors Charlie Hunnam (left) and David Beckham pose for photographers upon arrival at the premiere of the film 'King Arthur: The Legend of the Sword' in London on May 10. (AP)