

'Miss Sunshine' star Dano to make directorial debut at Cannes

PARIS, France, April 16. (AFP): Hollywood star Paul Dano's much-anticipated directorial debut, "Wildlife", will open Critics' Week at the Cannes Film Festival next month, the organisers said Monday.

The film by the "There Will Be Blood" and "Little Miss Sunshine" actor features his friend Jake Gyllenhaal, who played opposite Dano in the Oscar-nominated "Prisoners" in 2013.

The film is based on a Richard Ford novel about a teenager watching his parents' marriage fall apart.

Critics' Week director Charles Tesson said it includes an "extremely impressive" performance from British actress Carey Mulligan, who was nominated for an Oscar for her performance in "An Education", the coming-of-age drama based on journalist Lynn Barber's bestselling memoir.

"Paul Dano shows himself to be a true cineaste in his first feature film," Tesson told AFP, "a profoundly human portrait at the disintegration of an American family... done with elegant classicism."

The parallel event for first- and second-time directors, which starts on May 9, the day after the main Cannes festival, also features a parody of the life of a superstar footballer not unlike Cristiano Ronaldo called "Diamantino".

Although its Portuguese-American co-director Gabriel Abrantes has said that the film is "not really about" the Real Madrid star, Tesson said the "delightful off-the-wall" comedy would ring bells with football fans.

Unlike the main festival, which has been criticised for its dearth of female talent, Critics' Week is dominated by films by and about women.

While only three of the 18 films competing for the top Palme d'Or

prize are by women, they make up the majority in the Critics' Week competition.

Indian director Rohena Gera turns the romantic comedy on its head in her first feature, "Sir", Tesson said, a master-servant love story that shakes class and caste taboos starring rising Bollywood actress Tilotama Shome.

"One Day" by the Hungarian Zsófia Szilágyi follows the manic day of an overstretched working mother trying to hold her own and her family's life together, while "Woman at War" is the "funny and stirring" story of an Icelandic environmental activist.

Investigates

Young documentary-maker Anja Kofmel investigates the murder of her cousin, a journalist who was killed during the wars in the former Yugoslavia, in her film, "Chris the Swiss", which is partly animated.

"Sauvage" takes on the rarely touched world of male prostitution while another gritty French film "Sheherazade" dives into the chaotic life of a young prostitute and her boyfriend in the port of Marseille.

French star Romain Duris plays a union stalwart whose wife leaves him with their children in the Belgium drama "Our Battles", which is being shown out of competition.

The line-up for the main competition at Cannes is markedly more political than usual, with an Iranian and Russian director who are banned from leaving their countries, in the running for the Palme d'Or.

It is highly unlikely that Iran's Jafar Panahi and Russia's Kirill Serebrennikov will be able to attend, despite pleas by festival organisers and the French authorities.

The world's biggest film festival runs from May 8 to 19.

Also:

TEHRAN: Iran's banned film director **Jafar Panahi** responded Sunday to his invitation to the Cannes Film Festival, calling it a sign that Iranian independent cinema is still alive despite "many threats".

"This year for the first time in the history of Iranian cinema, two films by Iranian filmmakers are in the main competition at Cannes. This is a sign that Iranian cinema is alive and dynamic," he wrote in an open letter carried by reformist news agency ILNA.

"But clearly this does not please those who want to see the death of independent cinema in Iran under any pretext and with many threats."

Panahi was banned from making films and leaving the country after supporting mass protests in 2009 and making a series of films that critiqued the state of modern Iran.

That has not stopped him from working clandestinely in the country and his 2015 film "Taxi" won the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival to the consternation of his conservative critics back home.

His new film "Three Faces" is one of 17 films competing for the Palme d'Or at Cannes in May, alongside Iran's two-time Oscar-winner **Asghar Farhadi** with "Everybody Knows".

Festival director **Thierry Fremaux** last week pleaded with Iran to let Panahi come to Cannes, while the Society of Iranian Film Directors wrote to President **Hassan Rouhani** requesting permission for him to leave.

"It is certain that... the pressure will continue, but independent cinema will try to preserve its independence with new voices," said Panahi in his letter.

Film

Variety



Miranda Lambert (center), performs onstage during the 53rd Academy of Country Music Awards at MGM Grand Garden Arena on April 15, in Las Vegas, Nevada. (AFP)

Music

Aldean named entertainer of the year for 3rd consecutive year

Lambert, Underwood, Vegas win at ACMs

By Mesfin Fekadu

The 2018 Academy of Country Music Awards marked a memorable night for the victims of the massive Las Vegas shooting, comeback queen Carrie Underwood and triple-winners Chris Stapleton and Miranda Lambert.

Jason Aldean paid tribute to the 58 people who died at the Route 91 Harvest Festival in Las Vegas last October when he was named entertainer of the year Sunday for the third consecutive time.

"It's been a rough year," Aldean said, thanking those "that showed us love and support over the last six months."

The ACMs brought the country music community back to Vegas six months after the deadly tragedy. Aldean was performing onstage when the shooting occurred.

"You guys are in our hearts always," Aldean said. "We love Las Vegas. Vegas strong."

Though Aldean beat out Stapleton for the top honor, Stapleton's Sunday was met with many high points: His wife, Morgane, gave birth to twin boys; he celebrated his 40th birthday; and the leading nominee, who didn't attend the show, won male vocalist of the year and album of the year, where he won twice as a singer and producer.

Underwood also had a big night, returning to the stage like an A-List veteran in her first television appearance since injuring her face and wrist last year due to a fall at her home. Her powerhouse vocals shined when she performed her new song, "Cry Pretty," earning a rousing — and long — standing ovation from the audience.

Immediately following the performance, she won vocal event of the year for the dance-infused country song, "The Fighter," with Keith Urban.

"I am still kind of shaking right now," she added, appearing teary-eyed.

"Seeing her stand up there and be so beautiful, she's one of the greatest singers of all-time in any genre of music," Lambert said backstage of Underwood. "I am just proud of her and I know how strong she is and how hard she's worked."

But Lambert's hard work also paid off: She made history when she surpassed Brooks and Dunn as the most decorated act in ACM history with 32 wins on Sunday. Lambert won her ninth consecutive female vocalist of

the year trophy and won twice for song of the year — as the performer and co-writer of "Tin Man."

"I cannot believe this. I really can't... I love country music. It's my entire life," Lambert said onstage. "I will never ever take it for granted."

Florida Georgia Line's Tyler Hubbard wore an all-red ensemble and Brian Kelley was in all-white when they hit the stage with pop singer Bebe Rexha to perform the massive hit "Meant to Be," which is spending its 19th week on top of Billboard's Hot country songs chart. It ties Leroy Van Dyke's "Walk On By" as the third longest-running song of all-time on the chart.

Longest-running

The longest-running No. 1 song of all-time on the country charts, Sam Hunt's "Body Like a Back Road," won single record of the year at the ACMs; Hunt didn't attend the show.

Little Big Town sang Elton John's "Rocket Man" in celebration of the icon's new album, "Restoration," which features country singers covering his songs. Kane Brown and Lauren Alaina were impressive when they sang their duet, "What Ifs." Kenny Chesney, Toby Keith, Kelsea Ballerini, Alan Jackson, Lady Antebellum and Dierks Bentley also performed.

McEntire, who performed with Kelly Clarkson, hosted the three-hour show a year after Bryan and Bentley did the job. "It takes one woman to do the job of two men," she said, earning a rousing applause.

Old Dominion won vocal group of the year, besting Little Big Town and Lady Antebellum.

"This is heavy in a lot of ways," lead singer Matthew Ramsey said, holding the trophy in his hand.

"We're so lucky. Look at us, look at us!" he said about his bandmates, all dressed in trendy suits. "We look good. We feel good. We're friends. And we're having a ball. Thank you for letting us make music."

In a post on her website last week, Underwood said her face is "healing pretty nicely" since a November accident that required 40 to 50 stitches to her face — and based on a photo she posted on Instagram late Saturday in advance of her performance on the ACM Awards Sunday, she's right.

While the caption for that post said simply, "Had a great rehearsal for the @acmawards! Can't wait until

tomorrow night!," she wrote at greater length about the injury in the note on her website.

"First off, physically, I'm doing pretty darn good these days!" she wrote. "My wrist is almost back to normal, about 90% there...and the docs say that last 10% will come in time. And my face has been healing pretty nicely as well. I definitely feel more like myself than I have in a while."

'Cry Pretty' is a sweeping power ballad that at times is more reminiscent of Guns N' Roses' "November Rain" than much of her previous work. In the post, she writes of working with writer/producer David Garcia — who's worked both with Christian country artists as well as Florida Georgia Line — and said he's co-producing her forthcoming album with her.

As "Cry Pretty," "I wrote it with three incredible women: Hillary Lindsey, Liz Rose, and Lori McKenna, who also write under the name Love Junkies," she wrote. "I joined one of their writing sessions last year to see if we could come up with some magic...and we did! The title refers to when emotions take over and you just can't hold them back. It really speaks to a lot of things that have happened in the past year and I hope when you hear it, you can relate those feelings to those times in your life. It's emotional. It's real. And it ROCKS!"

A list of winners at the 53rd annual Academy of Country Music Awards, held Sunday at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas.

- Entertainer of the year: Jason Aldean
- Album of the year: Chris Stapleton, "From A Room: Volume 1"
- Single record of the year: Sam Hunt, "Body Like A Back Road"
- Song of the year: "Tin Man," Miranda Lambert
- Male vocalist of the year: Chris Stapleton
- Female vocalist of the year: Miranda Lambert
- Vocal Duo: Brothers Osborne
- Vocal group of the year: Old Dominion
- Vocal event of the year: Keith Urban and Carrie Underwood, "The Fighter"
- New female vocalist of the year: Lauren Alaina
- New male vocalist of the year: Brett Young
- New vocal duo or group of the year: Midland (Agencies)

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Features

ARABIC TIMES

TUESDAY, APRIL 17, 2018

LOS ANGELES: After a wobbly start, **Dwayne Johnson** muscled his way to a No. 1 opening for "Rampage" — but just barely. Close on its heels was the word-of-mouth sensation "A Quiet Place" in its second week in theaters, and not too far behind that was the Blumhouse horror "Truth or Dare" in a competitive weekend at the box office.

Warner Bros said Sunday that "Rampage" earned an estimated \$34.5 million in its first weekend in North American theaters.

Based on the classic arcade game, "Rampage" carried a sizable budget of at least \$115 million. Although "Rampage" pulled in mixed reviews (it's at 50 percent on Rotten Tomatoes), audiences were more enthusiastic, giving it an A- CinemaScore. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: "Rampage" just narrowly won the domestic box office, but the **Dwayne Johnson** film is proving to be a force overseas.

Internationally, "Rampage" earned \$114.1 million in 61 territories. With a domestic release of \$34.5 million, the Warner Bros and New Line video game adaptation has made \$148.6 million globally.

"Rampage" had the strongest opening in **China**, taking in \$55 million from 21,500 screens. In the **UK** and **Korea**, it made \$5.7 million each on 907 and 895 screens, respectively. Other big markets include **Mexico** (\$4.8 million from 2,831 screens), **Malaysia** (\$3.5 million from 590 screens), **Indonesia** (\$3.1 million from 687 screens), and **Russia** (\$3.1 million from 2,668 screens). The next key territories to launch will be **France**, **Germany**, and **Japan**. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Dwayne Johnson's "Rampage" ran away with the weekend box office in **China**. The other significant opener "Annihilation" took third spot as Hollywood titles claimed the top three Chart places.

"Rampage" earned \$55.1 million according to local data tracker Ent Group. It played on some 21,500 screens, which translated as approximately 125,000 screenings per day. The total included \$4.5 million from 504 IMAX screens.

The score is one of the strongest China openings for a Warner Bros title. Significantly, it was 34% better than Johnson's "Jumanji."

"Ready Player One," now in its third week of release, added \$14.5 million from 51,000 screenings per day. Its cumulative has now hit \$193 million, after 17 days. (RTRS)



Johnson



Krasinski

LOS ANGELES: The top prize at the Hong Kong Film Awards was earned by **Ann Hui's** wartime drama "Our Time Will Come." The film also ran out as the numerical winner, collecting five awards on Sunday night from its 11 previous nominations. For Hui, it was her sixth time as winner of the best director prize.

The annual event was given a

boost by the presence of Indian superstar **Aamir Khan** was on hand to hand out prizes. Khan is in **Hong Kong** to promote the theatrical release of his "Secret Superstar," which has already become a major hit in **China**.

Another notable winner was **Louis Koo Tin-lok**, who won the best actor award for action film "Paradox." Widely popular, Koo

picked up his first ever acting prize just a few weeks ago, for the same film, at the Asian Film Awards.

As yet, there have been no reports of TV coverage of the event being disrupted in mainland China. In past years, live transmission of the Hong Kong awards has been cut due to political sensitivities surrounding winning films "Ten Years" and "Trivisa." (RTRS)