

## People &amp; Places

## Film

## 'No compromise'

## Andrea finds female anti-hero in 'Nancy'

By Lindsey Bahr

English actress **Andrea Riseborough** ("Birdman," "Battle of the Sexes") may be the MVP of the 2018 Sundance Film Festival, with four films playing in Park City, Utah.

There's "Mandy," a revenge actioner in which she plays Nicolas Cage's object of affection; "The Death of Stalin," from "Veep" creator Armando Iannucci where Riseborough is the dictator's daughter; "Burden," where she makes a Ku Klux Klan member (Garrett Hedlund) start to question his beliefs; And one that is especially dear to her heart, the psychological thriller "Nancy" from filmmaker Christina Choe, about a woman who begins to believe that perhaps she was kidnapped as a child. All of the films are seeking distribution.



Riseborough

Riseborough spoke to The Associated Press about "Nancy," which she also produced, and making it "without compromise."

**AP:** What did you like about the story Christina Choe tells in "Nancy"?

**Riseborough:** She created a whole person and that's painfully rare as a woman to find a character that is not passively penned, you know? She's an anti-hero. Christina's voice is really strong and very funny as well. We have a similar dark and dry sense of humor.

**AP:** How did you go about getting it made?

**Riseborough:** We didn't want to have to bend along the way to any kind of preconceived ideas that sales companies might have before the movie is even made — for her to narrow the character. Often the message of the film gets lost and certainly with female voices there are so few that I wanted to be part of preserving hers as a producer. And letting her have whoever she wanted and give her the platform to create this strange, very real, disenfranchised character, who I totally identify with as well. We see anti-heroes in men all the time in cinema. Most of them are anti-heroes: The flawed genius, the broken superhero, the divorced detective. But so rarely do we see females, real females in film. My relationship to being a woman has changed greatly over the last few years in lots of positive ways. And "Nancy" doesn't adhere to any of those preconceived ideas as to who a woman is.

**AP:** How have you found yourself changing?

**Riseborough:** I think just growing up. I think I came out fighting. I came out of the womb fighting. It always seemed a little odd to me, the double standard. I always felt ill at ease with it. The majority of us are being told we're the minority. It can get quite tiresome. After many years of being patronized in taxi cabs, I sort of put my foot down and said (expletive) this, it's not me. It was never me. I wasn't doing anything wrong. I was just going about my daily life with a vagina and I'm sorry for that, to all who it offends.

**AP:** So you do think it's changing for the better?

**Riseborough:** Well I bloody well hope so.

**AP:** You mentioned preconceived ideas of sales companies, can you expand on how producing it yourself gives a film more freedom?

**Riseborough:** When Christina originally approached me, before she approached me, maybe five years ago, she was trying to sell a project that had a half black cast and basically everybody she went to for financing said, "Good luck with that." That was the response, which was totally expected up until now in my industry. And it's a part of my industry that has really sat so badly with me that I almost stopped doing it. Quite a few times, I've almost stopped wanting to be part of it. Because YOU can be part of perpetuating such negative stereotypes. I feel like with "Nancy," we managed to make the film without compromise. I know a lot of people had a very beautiful experience making it. It was an incredibly efficient set. We had an extraordinary female crew — predominantly female.

**AP:** A predominantly female set is pretty rare too.

**Riseborough:** I think the older I get the more I need more women around me. It just gets, the hunger for wanting women around me gets greater and greater as I get older. And especially on set and to have a safe work environment. Sometimes it's irritating walking onto a set and being one of three women out of 120 people. But I think it's the beginning of something really, really hopeful. I truly believe that only we can close the door, we are the majority.

## Also:

**LOS ANGELES:** Lionsgate has bought North American distribution rights to "Blindspotting," the drama about race relations in **Oakland, Calif.**, that opened this year's Sundance Film Festival. The critically acclaimed film will receive a wide release from Lionsgate's Codeblack Films and Summit Entertainment label later this year.

The movie stars "Hamilton's" **Daveed Diggs** as a man on the last days of his parole. He moves boxes out of houses with his friend (**Rafael Casal**), as they navigate a series of tense situations in their neighborhood involving race and violence.

Diggs and Casal co-wrote the script, which they'd worked on for a decade. First-time feature director **Carlos Lopez Estrada** made the film, which premiered at the Eccles Theatre on Jan 18.

"Blindspotting" the most exciting cinematic take on contemporary race relations since "Do the Right Thing" nearly 30 years ago," wrote Variety's chief film critic **Peter Debruge** in a rave review. "This explosive big-screen collaboration marks a rousing and incredibly timely choice to kick off Sundance 2018, with great potential to serve as a cultural touchstone in months to come."

It's been a slower market at this year's Sundance. Two films with positive reviews, Amazon's "Don't Worry, He Won't Get Far on Foot" and A24's "Eighth Grade," arrived in **Utah** with distribution in tow, and Netflix and Amazon, which can usually be counted on to spark bidding wars, have been relatively quiet.

Neon and AGBO spent \$10 million for the global rights to "Assassination Nation," a genre action movie that debuted in the festival Midnight section, the biggest deal out of Sundance so far. Among the more notable deals: "Colette" landed US distribution for roughly \$4 million from Bleecker Street and 30West, Sony Pictures Worldwide Acquisitions picked up "Search" for \$5 million, and "Hearts Beat Loud" sold to Gunpowder & Sky. But there's still a lot of films out there looking for a home. Other high profile titles left audiences divided, and there is a fear among distributors about splurging on an indie that could be the next "Patti Cake\$," the rapping drama that Fox Searchlight landed last year for \$9.5 million that bombed at the box office. (Agencies)



Sir Elton John has a performance of two songs before holding a press conference in New York on Jan 24. (AFP)

## Music

## 'Upcoming tour will be my last'

## John to 'go out with a bang'

NEW YORK, Jan 25, (Agencies): Elton John announced Wednesday that he is retiring from touring, with the consummate showman saying he wants to devote himself to his children — but after a final, massive swing around the world.

The 70-year-old British entertainer, revealing his plans at a gala New York event, said he planned to "go out with a bang" with a global tour that will open on Sept 8 and last through 2021.

"It's the last time that I will be touring and traveling the world, because my priorities have changed in my life," John told several hundred journalists and guests after a mini-concert and virtual reality presentation of his career.

"I've had an amazing life. I've had an amazing career," he said, adding: "My priorities now are my children and my husband and my family."

John, who in the 1980s became one of the first openly gay major celebrities, has two children with his husband, Canadian filmmaker and former advertising executive David Furnish.

The original "Rocket Man" said he had no health concerns, despite a scare with a bacterial infection that caused him to cancel South American dates last year. He said he would stay active, hoping to record more albums and write further musicals.

"I will be creative, hopefully, until the day I die," he said.

Sporting a floral coat and jacket with sequined lapels, John promised an extravagant affair for the "Farewell Yellow Brick Road" tour which will open in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

Anticipating 300 shows around the world, the "Farewell Yellow Brick Road" tour could easily become one of the most profitable in music history.

"It's a way of going out with a bang. I don't want to go out with a whimper," he said.

John's theatrics have made him a top attraction in Las Vegas. His second residency, the technically lavish "The Million Dollar Piano," will close in May after more than 200 concerts.

The artist said he still relished pleasing crowds — but, as a septuagenarian, he was more interested in taking his children to soccer practice than in traveling.

"I never thought that I could love anything as much as I love my sons. There's not a word in the English dictionary that describes the love you have for a child," he said.

John made the announcement under the Roman-inspired dome and columns of Gotham Hall, a former bank turned event space in Midtown Manhattan, where guests were offered shrimp tempura hors d'oeuvres.

The self-described Luddite — "I've never downloaded anything, not even porn," he quipped to laughs — offered a virtual reality retrospective of his career on headsets offered to the audience.

## Electrified

The mini-biography starts in 1970 at West Hollywood's Troubadour club, where the little-known pianist, born Reginald Dwight, electrified the crowd. It then takes the viewer on stage with him at his legendary 1975 blowouts at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles.

John, often known as Sir Elton after a knighthood by Queen Elizabeth II, has generated decades of hits such as "I'm Still Standing," "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me" and "Can You Feel the Love Tonight."

His style brought together the old-school rhythm-and-blues piano of early rock 'n' roll with Gospel influences as well as a solid grounding in classical music.

The artist has also earned a fortune as a composer for musicals including blockbuster "The Lion King," "Billy Elliot" and the upcoming adaptation of "The Devil Wears Prada."

Forbes magazine in 2017 ranked him as the 26th highest-earning celebrity, earning \$60 million over the previous year.

After struggles in the past with ad-

dition and depression, John's last studio album, "Wonderful Crazy Night," carried a palpable sense of joy. Last year he put out a greatest hits collection dubbed "Diamonds."

John said he was open to one-off concerts after his tour but that they would likely only be in Britain.

But he has one firm red-line. He said he had instructed his eldest son Zachary, "When Daddy dies, promise me — there won't be a hologram of me going around the world."

"I've had a good run, I think you'd admit that," John said Wednesday, adding that he wanted to "leave people thinking, 'I saw the last tour and it was fantastic.'"

The 70-year-old singer, pianist and composer said he wanted to spend time with his family. His children will be 10 and 8 when the tour ends in 2021, and John said he hoped he might be able to take them to soccer practice. "My priorities now are my children and my husband and my family," he said. "This is the end."

John made the announcement at an event in New York in which he sat at a piano and performed "Tiny Dancer" and "I'm Still Standing." He wore his signature glasses and a colorful suit jacket that read "Gucci Loves Elton."

His final tour — dubbed "Farewell Yellow Brick Road" — starts on Sept 8 in Allentown, Pennsylvania. It will consist of 300 shows in North America, Europe, Asia and South America. Tickets go on sale beginning Feb 2.

Interest in the announcement was so high his website crashed. He wrote on Instagram that "EltonJohn.com will be fully back online as soon as possible."

John said he decided on his retirement plans in 2015 in France: "I can't physically do the traveling and I don't want to," he said.

He said he may do a residency after the tour wraps, but ruled out the idea of using a hologram of himself. He called it "spooky" and "a bit freaky," and said he told his kids to "promise me that there won't be a hologram of me."



Indian Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone poses for a picture as she attends the 'HT India's Most Stylish Awards 2018' in Mumbai late on Jan 24. (AFP)



Kunis



Smith

## Variety

**CAMBRIDGE:** **Mila Kunis** is being honored with a parade and roast at Harvard University.

The "That '70s Show" actress is being honored Thursday as Woman of the Year by Harvard University's Hasty Pudding Theatricals. The group calls Kunis one of Hollywood's "most sought after, vivacious, and engaging actresses."

The **Ukraine-born** actress earned a Golden Globe nomination for her role in 2010's "Black Swan." She also starred in "Bad Moms" and is the voice of Meg Griffin on "Family Guy."

Hasty Pudding is the nation's oldest collegiate theatrical organization. It's been naming a Woman of the Year since 1951 but in recent years it's come under fire for excluding women from performing in its annual shows. (AP)

**NEW YORK:** **Mark E. Smith**, the curmudgeonly frontman of The Fall whose ranting vocal style was the post-punk band's most constant element over four decades, died Wednesday, his manager said. He was 60.

The **Manchester** native last year canceled a seven-date stretch of concerts in New York, with his manager citing "a mix of bizarre and rare" medical issues "connected to his throat, mouth/dental and respiratory system."

The manager, **Pam Vander**, did not reveal further details as she announced his death on Twitter but said a full statement would come later.

The famously temperamental singer was the only consistent member of The Fall but even with revolving lineups the band proved highly prolific, releasing its 32nd studio album last year. (AFP)

**MIAMI:** Pop star **Enrique Iglesias** on Wednesday accused his former label Universal of short-changing artists while benefitting from the soaring growth of streaming as he filed a lawsuit for breach of contract.

"Universal has been systematically underpaying Iglesias' streaming royalties by calculating those royalties at a small fraction of the contractually required 50 percent royalty rate," said the lawsuit filed in Miami, where Iglesias lives.

The lawsuit alleged that the 42-year-old heartthrob has lost millions of dollars "even

though Iglesias has generated sales of a magnitude rarely attained in the music industry."

Iglesias said that the Universal Music Group, which is the world's largest record

label conglomerate, refused his requests to inspect its records.

The son of legendary Spanish crooner **Julio Iglesias**, Enrique has achieved a



Puerto Rican singer Luis Fonsi performs during the Latin Grammy Acoustic Sessions in Mexico City on Jan 24. (AFP)

booming international career with his fusion of ballads, reggaeton and pop as well as his on-stage sex appeal. (AFP)

**LOS ALTOS:** Two freelance journalists have won the first American Mosaic Journalism Prize for stories about the struggles of US immigrants and others who the prize founders say have been underrepresented or misrepresented.

**Jaeah Lee of San Francisco** and **Valeria Fernandez of Arizona** each will receive \$100,000, making it one of the richest prizes for journalism. By comparison, Pulitzer Prize winners generally receive \$15,000. The prize was created by the Heising-Simons Foundation, a family-run charity in **Silicon Valley**.

The award was for a selection of work by independent reporters that appeared in print, digital, audio or TV mass media between July 2016 and August 2017.

"In today's journalism, freelancers are both vulnerable and valuable," the foundation said in a Tuesday statement announcing the awards. "With trimming of newsroom staff, many journalists are working without the support of an institution and with limited resources. And yet, some of the most important works of journalism come from these freelance journalists who commit long periods of time to their stories." (AP)