

'Producing Houston documentary hit close to home'

NEW YORK, July 5, (Agencies): Whitney Houston's mother had no clue about allegations that her son and superstar daughter were molested as children until the making of the new documentary "Whitney," says the film's executive producer.

Patricia Houston, the sister-in-law of Whitney, is responsible for getting the film, out Friday, to screen. Directed by Kevin Macdonald, "Whitney" paints an intimate portrait of the Grammy-winning pop queen and movie star through interviews with her brothers, her mother, friends, and behind-the-scenes footage. Houston's regal image over the decades was eroded by erratic behavior due to her drug use; she died in 2012, on the eve of the Grammys, after being discovered unresponsive in a hotel bathtub. She was 48.

It's the second documentary on Houston: "Whitney: Can I Be Me" was released earlier this year.

Patricia Houston, wife of Gary Garland-Houston, said it was difficult making "Whitney" because it hit so close to home — and because she was the one who had to tell Cissy Houston not only that there were abuse allegations, but they would be in the film.

"It was deeply a revelation for her. You think about her, and it being a bit overbearing for her to hear — and her kids not telling her. That's pretty tough to have to deal with," said Houston.

Dee Dee Warwick, the niece of Cissy Houston and sister to Dionne Warwick, was the alleged abuser. The alleged incidents took place

when Gary and Whitney were between the ages of 7 and 9 and Cissy was touring. Warwick, who was 18 years older than Whitney Houston, died in 2008.

Suggests

The documentary suggests that the sexual abuse endured by the children was a significant contributor to their struggles with drugs as adults.

"I don't think you can explain anyone's life from one particular event that's happened to them. But I think that it's certainly fair to say that it's maybe, in my opinion, the major contributor to Whitney's unhappiness," MacDonald said. "That and the fact that she never talked about it, and that nobody in the family talked about this and clearly it happened as you'd learned in the film."

MacDonald says the secrets in Houston's life took their toll on the Grammy-winning singer. He cites a clip in the film shot in the mid-2000s that shows her in conflict.

"I think there's an amazing piece of home movie footage in the film, which was from the early 2000s where Whitney is sort of really looking despairing. ... she's talking to herself, really going, 'Nippy calling Whitney. Whitney calling Nippy.' And Nippy was her sort of nickname that everybody close to her knew her as Nippy. And Nippy was the real her, as it were, the intimate her. Whitney was the persona,"

Macdonald said.

"I think what you see in that home movie clip is this confusion that she has. I think it got progressively worse as she got older. The confusion between what's the real me, and what's not the real me. And obviously, the drugs didn't help with that," Macdonald said.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: One of Central Europe's top docu fests, known for cultivating art film and nonfiction work that explores genre boundaries, has adopted a suitably avant-garde look this year, thanks to the work of **Jean-Luc Godard**.

The 22nd Ji.hlava international docu fest, running Oct. 25-30 in the former silver mining town of **Jihlava** in the **Czech Republic**, is not mentioned in the moody one-minute clip posted on YouTube, although its logo appears in the last few seconds.

Instead, a disembodied hand runs a finger across a mobile phone screen menu of photographs, presumably from the life of an older man, murmuring in voiceover.

"And even if nothing turned out how we'd hoped," he intones, "it would not have changed what we'd hoped for."

The voice, Godard's own, riffs on the French New Wave auteur's habit of overlaying philosophical observations to complement his jump cuts and surreal imagery in films such as "Alphaville."

Variety



A model presents a creation by Viktor and Rolf during the 2018-2019 Fall/Winter Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris, on July 4. (AFP) — See Page 17

Film

'All This Victory' stands out with highly relevant topic

Lebanon war tale wins at Karlovy

By Jamie Lang

'All This Victory,' a drama set in 2006 in Lebanon during the war between Hezbollah and Israel, has won the Eastern Promises Works in Progress Award at the Karlovy Vary Intl. Film Festival. The competition is devoted to projects from Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, former Soviet Union countries, and, for the first time this year, the Middle East.

In director Ahmad Ghossein's film, a coproduction between Lebanon, France and Germany, Marwan goes in search of his father, who has refused to leave his village. He finds no traces of him and when the ceasefire ends suddenly, he is forced to shelter in the home of Najib, his father's friend, and some of Najib's friends. As bombs hail down, tensions within the house rise; then a group of soldiers enter the building.

The jury was comprised of Matthijs Wouter Knol, director of the Berlinale's European Film Market, Rositsa Valkanova, a director and producer from Bulgaria, and Rickard Olsson of Berlin-based sales agent Picture Tree International.

Valkanova said the project "stood out in its creative approach to a complex idea and a highly relevant topic." Ghossein and the lead producer, Myriam Sassine of Lebanon's About Productions, had presented it "with precision and deep personal involvement, convincing us of their ability to build a multi-layered film world within a limited space, using minimalistic yet cinematic methods of storytelling."

Valkanova added: "We expect this film to impress and resonate with audiences, as it manages to rise above the particularities of a military conflict, implying questions of existential importance with a bitter smile."

The project will receive prizes worth a total 100,000 Euros, consisting of post-production services at UPP and Soundsquare, and a cash prize of 10,000 Euro from Barrandov Studio.

Olsson added that the 11 projects had filled the jury "with great expectations and made decision extremely difficult. In our hearts, we give 10 special mentions."

Among the other projects were Suzan Iravanian's "Leakage," an Iran-Czech Republic co-production. This is a high-concept arthouse genre film playing on a

number of contemporary social issues such as immigration, the world's oil obsession and female exploitation. It follows a middle-aged woman whose body produces crude oil, and her quest to immigrate to Germany.

"There was a time I became sure that oil as an unreachable commodity is what poisons and metamorphoses our perception of reality," Iravanian told Variety. "'Leakage' for me is the exploration of such manipulated realities within an uncertain geography and a vulnerable community."

Returns

In Jure Pavlovic's "Matriarch," a co-production between Croatia, France, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jasna returns to care for her bedridden mother whose influence still looms large over the house. Forced to face grudges she thinks she left behind, she must decide whether or not to confront her overbearing mother.

"In 'Treasure City' the audience is dropped into the middle of a web of family, sexual, political and romantic relationships where nothing is quite what it seems," director Szabolcs Hajdu explained to Variety. "One event leads to something else, people appear in one situation and reappear in another and by the end the lives of 22 people intersect in unpredictable ways during a 90-minute period on one magical night in the city they share."

Marko Skop's "Let There Be Light" turns on a father trying to exonerate his son, accused of bullying and killing a classmate. "I would like to show how easily we can become enemies to each other," Skop told Variety. "I would like to try to depict evil and the mistakes that can lead to it in our unstable existence."

"Mamonga" is a multifaceted film that toys with the tropes of Balkan cinema in a non-linear narrative structure," director Stefan Malesevich explained to Variety. "The slow-paced long shots are intended to relay the atmospheres of different societies in the Balkans, while engaging the audience in a dialogue regarding topics such as the relation between choice and consequence, outcome and intention, destiny and chance, and good and evil."

"My Morning Laughter" is a coming-of-age movie with a difference: the main protagonist is not a teenager but a 30-year-old," explains debut director Marko Djordjevic. "In a broader sense it is a story about my generation, a generation that was overprotected by our parents, who did their best at shielding us from the awful reality that was lurking outside of our homes."

Latvia, Belgium and Lithuania team on Juris Kurvietis' "Oleg," another arthouse feature in which the protagonist deals with the difficulties of immigration. In it, the titular character is forced to go through a middle-man to find work, as his alien status eliminates traditional legal means of job-hunting. The stress of the situation pushes Oleg towards a break down, physically and psychologically.

Hisham Saqr's "Certified Mail" is the tale of an Egyptian wife and mother struggling with suicidal thoughts who must learn to face them on her own as her husband faces incarceration for a mistake at work.

"The Flying Circus" is a true story from the life of director Fatos Berisha in which four actors illegally cross Balkan borders during wartime to try and meet Michael Palin under the guise of attending a theater festival.

"Monsters" follows what could be the last 24 hours in the relationship of a long-time married couple. It's the directorial debut for Romania's Marius Olteanu.

"Our agenda is rather simple," Karlovy Vary head of film industry office Hugo Rosak told Variety ahead of the festival. "We want to have our Works in Progress selection well represented geographically to really find jewels in the entire region that we call 'East of the West.' Of course, these projects need to have an international potential and trigger interest."

He also explained the addition of the newly-eligible Middle Eastern countries.

"We have seen a lot of high quality talented debutants from the region of Middle East that in our opinion deserve to be elevated," he explained. "Part of our new KVIFF Eastern Promises brand is to allow projects from this region to travel internationally because many are very strong but may not have as many available platforms where they can shine." (RTRS)

Features

ARABIC TIMES

FRIDAY-SATURDAY, JULY 6-7, 2018

LOS ANGELES: Universal's "The First Purge" has opened with a solid \$2.5 million at 2,350 North American locations on Tuesday night.

"The First Purge," Blumhouse's fourth installment in the horror franchise, expands to 3,031 theaters on Independence Day with forecasts for a \$25 million launch in its first five days. It has a two-day head start on Disney-Marvel's "Ant-Man and the Wasp," pegged for an impressive debut of \$70 million to \$80 million for Friday-Sunday with previews launching Thursday night.

Two years ago, "The Purge: Election Year" took in \$3.6 million in Thursday-night previews prior to its Friday opening.

"The First Purge" is an origin story set in a dystopian America, in which the New Founding Fathers of America decide to make all crime legal for 12 hours — resulting in violence exploding across the nation. The film stars Y'lan Noel, Lex Scott Davis, Jovian Wade, Luna Lauren Velez, and Marisa Tomei. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Scarlett Johansson is under fire for her next project with former "Ghost in the Shell" director Rupert Sanders.

The actress is set to star in the crime biopic "Rub & Tug," based on the real life story of Dante "Tex" Gill. Gill was a trans crime boss of the 1970s who ran several illegal massage parlors. In real life, Gill lived his life as a trans man, which led a lot of folks to inquire why a trans actor wasn't considered for this role.

When the website Bustle reached out to Johansson's representative for a statement about the vocal concerns, it was sent this response from the actress: "Tell them that they can be directed to Jeffrey Tambor, Jared Leto, and Felicity Huffman's reps for comment." (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: The 10th Lumiere Festival in Lyon, France, is bringing the heritage film sectors of western and eastern Europe into focus as part of its International Classic Film Market (MIFC) this year, with a keynote by Sandra Den Hamer, director of The Netherlands' EYE Film-museum in Amsterdam, and a

look at Poland's ambitious film restoration program.

As this year's "Great Witness," Den Hamer will offer insights from her unique experience in both market co-ordination and festival management as she introduces the 6th edition of the Lumiere Festival's MIFC, which runs Oct 16-19. She will also take part in several events during the



Johansson



Leto

market.

Prior to joining the EYE Film-museum, Den Hamer served as the director of the Rotterdam Film Festival, from 2000 to 2007, as well as coordinator of CineMart and the Hubert Bals Fund.

As EYE director, Den Hamer oversees an institute that plays a key role in The Netherlands' film heritage and preservation sector as

well as in cinematographic innovation and promotion. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Outgoing Berlin Film Festival director Dieter Kosslick will receive the inaugural Force of Nature Filmmaking Award at the 2018 Sam Spiegel International Film Lab.

The organizers of the Film Lab,

the Sam Spiegel Film and Television School, created the award to honor extraordinary personalities committed to the development of cinema. They said Kosslick was receiving the honor for the impact his work has had on German and world cinema, adding that he also inspired the establishment of the Jerusalem Film and Television Fund in 2008. (RTRS)