

Abortion drama from Chad stirs Cannes Film Festival

CANNES, France, July 11, (AP) — Mahamat-Saleh Haroun, whose drama "Lingui" has been a standout of the first week of the Cannes Film Festival, has a unique relationship as a filmmaker to his native country of Chad.

Haroun is one of the African nation's only film directors and easily its most prominent. That role — national cinematic spokesman — has given him a heavy responsibility.

"If I don't bring images from Chad, my country will be forgotten," Haroun said in an interview. "I have to make films to give other images of my country, rather than the cliché images of war, et cetera. It becomes more than a passion. It becomes a duty."

Haroun, who has lived in France since leaving Chad in 1982, has set all but one of his eight features there. "Lingui," which is in competition for the top Palme d'Or prize at Cannes, is his first film with a female protagonist.

Amina (played by Achouackh Abakar Souleymane) is a single mother and practicing Muslim whose 15-year-old daughter, Maria (Rihane Khalil Alio) is pregnant. On the outskirts of Chad's capital of N'Djamena, the unwanted pregnancy is a

grave concern. It means certain ostracism for Maria — the same stigma that her mother knows herself.

Abortions are only legal in Chad if the woman has suffered sexual violence or her life is in immediate danger. The high hurdles to abortion mean access is all but impossible and often done dangerously at home.

Subject

"When I'm in Chad," says Haroun, "I have a lot of people telling me: 'You have to make a film about this subject. You are the filmmaker. You have to become our spokesman and make this film, this subject. We can't, because we are afraid of the government. You can.'"

"I belong to the community," he added. "I am the one who can tell stories that they deny."

The title of "Lingui" is Chadian word that translates as "common thread" or "sacred bond." Vividly filmed with vibrant local color and nonprofessional actors, it movingly captures a clandestine sisterhood in a male-controlled society. Haroun considers it a tribute to the nation's women.

For a year, Haroun was Chad's minister of culture before resigning in 2018 after disagreements with the government. In September, he will hold screenings of "Lingui" around the country, he says.

The film has been enthusiastically received by critics in Cannes, something Haroun says is heartening but not totally surprising to him.

"I'm a cooker, you know, so I know when something is well done," he says, grinning.

Only one film from Africa has ever won Cannes' top honor, the Palme d'Or: Algerian director Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina's "Chronicle of the Years of Fire" in 1975.

Haroun has previously taken a prize in Cannes with his civil war-set "A Screaming Man," which won the jury prize in 2010. At the last Cannes, in 2019, Mati Diop's Senegalese drama "Atlantics" won the grand prize. This year, there are two films from Africa in competition; the other is Moroccan director Nabil Ayouch's "Casablanca Beats."

"We are coming and coming and coming," says Haroun, smiling. "We knock on the door. We try."

Film

Variety



Kathryn Winnick, (from left), Sean Penn, and Dylan Penn pose for photographers upon arrival at the premiere of the film 'Flag Day' at the 74th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, Saturday, July 10. (AP)

Film

'Flag Day' reveals Dylan to be a major actor

Penn back in Cannes with daughter

CANNES, France, July 11, (AP) — Sean Penn has been to the Cannes Film Festival about a dozen times — from bumming around with Robert De Niro in 1984 to presiding over the jury.

But his last visit was rocky. Penn's film, 2016's "The Last Face," flopped with critics in way that would make some filmmakers gun shy about returning.

Penn, though, didn't hesitate. On Saturday night, he premiered in Cannes his latest film, "Flag Day," in which he also co-stars.

A few hours before walking down the red carpet, Penn sat comfortably in a hotel bar, excited to be back. The festival is the greatest in the world, he said. "Everyone knows it's the big game."

And it's a game Penn welcomes. Cannes is worth it, even if he takes a few lumps.

"The bad stuff, these days, I've been on such extreme ends on that. It's like: whatever," says Penn. "The thing is: I am confident that I know as much — more — about acting than almost any of these critics. And I'm very confident in the performance I'm most concerned about."

With that, Penn raises his hand and points toward where his daughter, Dylan Penn, is sitting. Dylan, 30, is the star of "Flag Day." She has dabbled before in acting but it's easily her biggest role yet. In the film, adapted from Jennifer Vogel's 2005 memoir "Flim-Flam Man: The True Story of My Father's Counterfeit Life," she plays Jennifer Vogel, the journalist daughter of a swindler and counterfeiter (played by Penn).

Her father's confidence isn't misplaced. Dylan is natural, poised and captivating. She looks a veteran, already, which might be expected of the child of Penn and Robin Wright. And those critics? Variety said the film "reveals Dylan Penn to be a major actor."

But for a long time, Dylan never wanted the spotlight.

"Growing up, being surrounded by actors and being on set, it was really something that didn't interest me at all," Dylan says. "I always thought, and still think, my passion lies in working behind the camera."

But as soon as I expressed wanting to do that kind of thing, both of my parents said separately: You won't be a good director if you don't know what it's like to be in the actor's shoes."

Dylan is stepping forward in movies the same time her father is withdrawing. Penn, 60, is in the midst of shooting Sam Esmail's "Watergate" series for Starz, with Julia Roberts. But he has recently pulled further away from Hollywood. Penn devotes more time to Community Organized Relief Effort (CORE), the nonprofit he started after the 2010 earthquake to help Haitians. Haiti this week again plunged into crisis after the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, a situation Penn calls heartbreaking.

"These people have been working so hard to bring their country up and this kind of horrible violence, cynicism — whatever my suspicions the motivation was," he says. "I'm glad that our teams are safe for the moment, but it's horrible."

Promised

During the pandemic, CORE has erected testing and vaccination sites, including one at Los Angeles' Dodger Stadium, and dispensed millions of shots. In movies, Penn still has a pair of upcoming roles he says he promised to do years earlier. But beyond that?

"Then I just don't know. I'd be very surprised. I don't think I would start a movie without knowing if it was going to be a movie. And I don't think I'd direct something that wasn't a movie unless it was on the Broadway stage," he says, and then smiles. "There's a simpler way of saying that: I'm not interested in directing for the small screen."

Penn is increasingly at odds with Hollywood's dominant priorities. He's never made a franchise film. He laments Marvel movies and "how much it's taken up the space and claimed so much time in the careers of so many talented people." He misses cinema that isn't "just razzle-dazzle, Cirque de Soleil movies."

So-called "cancel culture," he has issues with, too. Arguing that today he wouldn't be allowed to play gay icon Harvey Milk (2018's "Milk"), Penn

recently said that soon only Danish princes will play Hamlet.

But his biggest gripe may be with the onset of direct-to-streaming film releases. "The way I've always put it is: It's not the girl I fell in love with," Penn says.

MGM will release "Flag Day" theatrically Aug. 13; Penn considers himself "lucky to have a movie that's going to be a movie." But it took years to reach this stage. Dylan first read the book when her father optioned it when she was 15. Many possible iterations followed — Penn didn't initially plan to direct — but the prospect of doing the film with Dylan was appealing.

"I have always thought if she wanted to do it, I'd encourage it," Penn says.

For Dylan, the father-daughter relationship of "Flag Day" — Jennifer tries to help and stabilize her scamming father but also inherits some of his more destructive, conman habits — is a half-reflection of their own bond together.

"She always strived to have this really honest, transparent relationship with her father which she never got it in return," Dylan Penn says. "I've tried to have that with my dad and got it in return."

"It made us a lot closer than we've ever been," she adds. "Of course, there were times when I talked back or had an attitude, but it was like: You can't. This is your boss. This is work. This is not your dad right now."

Dylan grants the experience was so satisfying that she'd like to continue acting. Her dad, she feels, may be "passing the torch a little bit," she says. Hopper Jack Penn, her younger brother, also co-stars in the film. The rest of the cast is more veteran, including Josh Brolin and Regina King. Original songs by Cat Power, Eddie Vedder and Glen Hansard contribute to the score.

But the most vibrant parts of "Flag Day" are the scenes between Dylan and her dad.

"Dylan is — and I can say this in equal parts for my feeling about her as a person and as an actress — as uncontrived as it gets," Penn says. "That's a great quality to play off of."

CANNES, France: Léa Seydoux, one of France's most famous actors, may miss the Cannes Film Festival after testing positive for COVID-19.

Seydoux has been fully vaccinated but she tested positive while working on a film, her publicist **Christine Tripicchio** confirmed Saturday. She is asymptomatic and isolating at home in Paris, hoping that negative tests on consecutive days could allow her to still attend the festival in the south of France.

Seydoux was set to be one of the most ubiquitous stars at Cannes this year. She stars in four films at the festival, including three that are vying for the top Palme d'Or award — an honor she shared in winning with 2013's "Blue Is the Warmest Color."

At Cannes, Seydoux stars in **Wes Anderson's** "The French Dispatch;" in **Arnaud Desplechin's** "Deception;" in **Bruno Dumont's** "France;" and in **Ildikó Enyedi's** "The Story of My Wife."

On Saturday, Cannes organizers trumpeted the success of the festival, which is requiring either proof of full vaccination or a negative test within 48 hours for entry to the festival hub. Masks are required inside theaters.

Cannes is also testing around 4,000 people daily. Frémaux, artistic director of the festival, said Saturday there were zero positive tests on Friday. (AP)

DALLAS: An unopened copy of Nintendo's "The Legend of Zelda" that was made in 1987 has sold at auction for \$870,000.

Heritage Auctions in Dallas said the video game sold Friday.

The auction house said it was a rare version that was created during a limited production run that took place during a few months in late 1987. The Legend of Zelda is a popular fantasy adventure game that was first released in 1986.

"The Legend of Zelda marks the beginning of one of the most important sagas in gaming; its historical significance can't be understated... it is a true collector's piece," **Valerie McLeckie**, Heritage's video game specialist, said in a statement.

In April, the auction house sold an unopened copy of Nintendo's Super Mario Bros that was bought in 1986 and forgotten about in a desk drawer for \$660,000. (AP)

Features

ARABIC TIMES

MONDAY, JULY 12, 2021

ST PAUL, Minn: Actor **Kevin Costner** will appear at the Minnesota State Fair in September.

The St. Paul Pioneer Press reported Wednesday that Costner's country-rock band, Modern West, will perform at the fair's grandstand on Sept. 3.

A live question-and-answer session with Costner will follow.



Anderson



Seydoux

The evening will conclude with a screening of Costner's film "Field of Dreams."

Tickets will go on sale starting at 1 pm on July 21. They will cost between \$25 and \$75.

Costner has received two Academy Awards, a Golden Globe Award, a Primetime Emmy Award, and two Screen Actors

Guild Awards.

Costner began his acting career with **Sizzle Beach, U.S.A.** (1981). Following a few minor supporting parts, he rose to prominence with his portrayal of Eliot Ness in **The Untouchables** (1987). Costner is the singer in Kevin Costner & Modern West, a country rock band which he founded with

the encouragement of his wife **Christine**. In October 2007, they began a worldwide tour which included shows in **Istanbul** and **Rome**. The group also performed at NASCAR Sprint Cup Series races at Daytona International Speedway and Charlotte Motor Speedway in **Concord, North Carolina**. (Agencies)