

Toronto Film Festival to open with 'Dear Evan Hansen'

NEW YORK, July 26, (AP): The adaptation of Broadway hit and Tony-winner "Dear Evan Hansen," Edgar Wright's '60s London-themed "Last Night in Soho," and "The Eyes of Tammy Faye" are just a few of the major films coming to the Toronto International Film Festival this September.

Organizers on Tuesday unveiled a robust slate of premieres for the 46th edition of TIFF, which is returning to an in-person fete. "Dear Evan Hansen," starring Ben Platt and Julianne Moore and directed by Stephen Chbosky, will be the opening night gala on Sept. 9.

"There was no question that Dear Evan Hansen was the ideal film to launch the Festival this year," said Cameron Bailey, Artistic Director and Co-Head of TIFF. "This film is ultimately about healing, forgiveness, and reaffirms how connected and essential we all are to one another. We couldn't think of a more important idea to celebrate this year as we come together once again to share the power and joy of cinema in theatres together."

Chbosky added, "We could not have asked for a more ideal festival, or audience, or moment to premiere our film."

Audiences can also expect a look at Jessica Chastain's turn as Tammy Faye Bakker and Andrew Garfield as televangelist Jim Bakker in Michael Showalter's latest film, as well as director Barry Levinson's "The Survivor" starring Ben Foster as WWII-era boxer Harry Haft.

"Clifford the Big Red Dog," featuring David Alan Grier as the voice of the children's book character, is another gala presentation.

The festival will also host the world premiere of Terence Davies' "Benediction," about English poet Siegfried Sassoon, starring Jack Lowden and Peter Capaldi, as well as Justine Bateman's directorial debut "Violet," starring Olivia Munn.

Previously announced premieres include Kenneth Branagh's "Belfast," Tahir Rana's "Dionne Warwick; Don't Make Me Over," Antoine Fuqua's "The Guilty," writer-director-actor Mélanie Laurent's "The Mad Women's Ball," and Alison Klayman's Alanis Morissette documentary "Jagged." The festival will also host an IMAX screening of Denis Villeneuve's "Dune" to follow its premiere at the Venice Film Festival in Italy.

A few selections from Cannes will also screen including Joachim Trier's "The Worst Person in the World," Jacques Audiard's "Paris, 13th District," and Mia Hansen-Løve's "Bergman Island."

Tribute

Zhang Yimou's "One Second," about a man escaping a concentration camp to see his daughter, will serve as the closing night film in its North American premiere.

Filmmakers Denis Villeneuve and Alanis Obomsawin are among those being honored at the Toronto International Film Festival this September.

TIFF co-heads Joana Vicente and Cameron Bailey said Thursday that Villeneuve will receive the TIFF Ebert Director Award and Obomsawin will be honored with the Jeff Skoll Award in Impact Media at the 2021 TIFF Tribute Awards. Both are Canadian.

Villeneuve is known for directing films like "Prisoners" and "Blade Runner 2049" and was nominated for an Oscar for the 2016 film "Arrival." His new film, an adaptation of "Dune," will be playing at the festival after its world premiere in Venice.

"There is no question Denis is an accomplished and outstanding filmmaker. He has a wonderful body of work and operates at an incredible level of excellence on the world stage," Bailey said in a statement. "Over the years, Denis has brought many of his films to TIFF, so we feel a special closeness to him. It is wonderful to be celebrating his career at this time."

Obomsawin, meanwhile, has been making films for over 50 years, exploring the lives of First Nations peoples. She's a member of the Abenaki Nation.

"The Jeff Skoll Award in Impact Media recognizes leadership in creating a union between social impact and cinema," Vicente said. "As a gifted documentary filmmaker and impassioned storyteller, Alanis brings awareness to vital Indigenous issues and is widely recognized as a national treasure because of her extraordinary body of work."

Previous TIFF Award winners have included Chloé Zhao, Kate Winslet and Sir Anthony Hopkins.

TIFF is scheduled to run as an in-person event Sept. 9-18. The Canadian government has said it will open its border to fully-vaccinated US citizens and permanent residents on Aug. 9 and will expand to the rest of the world by Sept 7.

Film

Variety



This image released by Universal Pictures shows Gael García Bernal, (left), and Alex Wolff in a scene from 'Old.' M. Night Shyamalan's 'Old' easily won a slower weekend at the North American box office with an estimated \$16.5 million in ticket sales. (AP)

Film

Documentary is bookended by tragedy

'Val' offers deep portrait of actor Kilmer

By Mark Kennedy

In his latest film, Val Kilmer gets an unusual screen credit for a bona fide Hollywood movie star: cinematographer.

That's because the documentary "Val" is built on thousands of hours Kilmer filmed since he was a boy — growing up, on movie sets, in cars, in hospitals. This is a lifetime-in-the-making cinematographer's credit.

Thanks to Kilmer's relentless drive to document things, "Val" is a remarkably intimate film and a moving one, too. For a performer who has come off as chilly and difficult, this doc doesn't counter those perceptions as much as explain them.

"I have behaved poorly. I have behaved bravely. I have behaved bizarrely to some. I deny none of this and have no regrets because I have lost and found parts of myself that I never knew existed," he says toward the end. "And I am blessed."

Actually, he leaves much of the talking to his son. The elder Kilmer's voice has been impaired from throat cancer treatments and Jack Kilmer narrates the majority of the film using his father's words, naturally while being filmed. "Now that it's more difficult to speak, I want to tell my story more than ever," says the elder Kilmer.

"Val" would not be the film it is if Kilmer hadn't been an early adopter of hand-held video cameras, giving us home movies, audition tapes and live auditions. "I've kept everything," he confides. His is a legitimate reason to be a hoarder.

Kilmer's screen credits include Batman in "Batman Forever" in 1995, brash fighter pilot Lt. Tom "Iceman" Kazansky in the 1986 hit "Top Gun," and rock icon Jim Morrison in the 1991 Oliver Stone film, "The Doors."

The film lingers on each of those roles but perhaps the most intriguing parts are Kilmer's ear-

nest auditions for roles he never got. For "Full Metal Jacket," he filmed himself using multiple voices to try to seduce director Stanley Kubrick and also made an audition video to play Henry Hill in "Goodfellas." He got neither part.

Directors Ting Poo and Leo Scott have spun a mostly chronological profile, starting with Kilmer's childhood and then giving us an unvarnished look at the star's career, marriage and fatherhood, and ending it post-surgery as Kilmer struggles to be heard.

The filmmakers have a tendency to bring Kilmer to the scene of a favorite place — say, The Juilliard School in New York or a former family home — and then melt back in time by using the old movies. They'll show images of Kilmer's family hiking in the '80s and then revisit the same area with the middle-aged Kilmer. Sometimes the images are forced, as when father and son dress up in cheap Batman and Robin costumes.

Glamour

This is no glamour project. He and his estranged wife bicker over custody of their two children, he is shown laconically slapping bugs with a flyswatter poolside in middle age, and he looks fragile at a Comic-Con, puking at a signing station, a towel over his head as he's rushed out in a wheelchair.

Kilmer — enigmatic to the rest of us — is portrayed as a quirky soul. He is shown shooting Silly String at his loved ones, sobbing as he puts on his late mother's jewelry and pretending to pass out to freak out his son. He is much funnier than we expect and forces us to question why we thought him difficult at all.

The film leans on Kilmer's 2020 bestselling autobiography "I'm Your Huckleberry" — like the line "The distance between heaven and hell is the

distance between faith and doubt" — but has more punch because of the footage.

In one of the rawest scenes, Kilmer attends a fan event for "Tombstone" signing photos and memorabilia. "I don't look great and I'm selling basically my old self, my old career," he says to the camera.

Tune in to see backstage video from "Slab Boys" on Broadway, with co-stars Kevin Bacon and Sean Penn slowly mooning the camera. He calls an early role in "Top Secret" just "fluff" and documents why "The Island of Dr. Moreau" was "doomed." He's such a Method actor that he constructed a backstory for the arrogant Iceman in "Top Gun."

Kilmer is an intense actor, to be sure. When he played Doc Holliday in "Tombstone," he filled his bed with ice for the final scene to mimic the feeling of dying from tuberculosis. To play Morrison, he wore leather pants all the time and blasted The Doors for a year, neither of which helped his marriage.

The film is bookended by tragedy. The weight of loss after Kilmer's younger brother Wesley died accidentally at age 15 hangs over the actor and the documentary returns again and again to home movies the two made, heartbreakingly. And the loss of Kilmer's voice means he must grapple with legacy and death in his 60s.

Even so, a relentless optimism comes through, especially his relationship with his adult children, who clearly adore their dad. "I've lived a magical life," Kilmer concludes. It's hard to argue back.

"Val," a Amazon Studios release, is rated R for language. It hit theaters on Friday and is available on Prime Video on Aug. 6. Running time: 109 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four. (AP)

NEW YORK: An estimated 17 million people in the United States watched the opening ceremony for the Tokyo Olympics held in a largely empty stadium, down 36% from the kickoff to the Rio de Janeiro Games five years ago.

The 17 million includes people who watched the ceremony live on NBC or online when it aired Friday morning and those who saw an edited version on NBC in prime time that night, the Nielsen company said Sunday.

NBC was unable to break down how many people watched live and how many saw the prime-time version. The 26.7 million who saw the Rio opening ceremony included both television and online viewership.

Nine years ago, when the Summer Olympics were held in London, the opening ceremony drew a record-setting US audience of 40.7 million people.

It's difficult to tell how much the sluggish start to the Tokyo Games reflects decreased interest in the Olympics, which were delayed a year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, or profound changes in how Americans watch television. With the explosion of streaming as an alternative, ratings for live television have dropped sharply over the past five years. (AP)

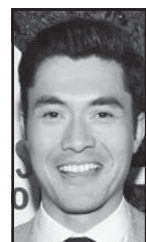
LOS ANGELES: M. Night Shyamalan's "Old" easily won a slower weekend at the North American box office, while the G.I. Joe pic "Snake Eyes" lived up to its name.

Although both fresh offerings from major studios, moviegoers turned out in modest numbers on a weekend where there was the notable distraction of the Olympics as well as rising concerns about the delta variant.

Universal on Sunday said that "Old" grossed an estimated \$16.5 million. Paramount's "Snake Eyes" origin story brought in an estimated \$13.4 million in ticket sales.

While not wildly far apart in grosses, "Snake Eyes," starring Henry Golding as the warrior-in-training, cost significantly more with a reported \$88 million price tag, excluding advertising. Meanwhile "Old," starring Gael

García Bernal and Vicky Krieps as the heads of a family whose tropical vacation turns into a horror when they begin to rapidly age, was independently financed for around \$18 million. Including international grosses, "Old," which is based on the graphic novel "Sandcastle," grossed \$23 million worldwide in its first weekend.



Golding



Krieps

"It's an extraordinary debut," said Jim Orr, Universal's head of distribution. "M. Night Shyamalan is an amazing filmmaker and one of the best in the industry."

Orr said he also expects "Old" will continue to play well in the coming weeks.

Neither audiences nor critics reviewed the two new films

especially well. "Old" has a 52% on Rotten Tomatoes and got a C+ CinemaScore, while "Snake Eyes" is currently at 42% on Rotten Tomatoes with a B- CinemaScore, which historically does not bode well for long-term potential.

Disney and Marvel's "Black Widow" crept ahead to third place with \$11.6 million, bringing

its global total to \$314.9 million, while last week's No. 1 film "Space Jam: A New Legacy" grossed \$9.6 million, down 69% from last weekend. Both are available to watch at home too: "Space Jam" is streaming on HBO Max, while Disney+ subscribers can rent "Black Widow" for \$30. (AP)