

Audrey Diwan eager to bring Venice winner 'Happening' to US

By Lindsey Bahr

French filmmaker Audrey Diwan's life changed forever when her sophomore film "Happening" won the top award at the Venice International Film Festival exactly one month ago. In the four weeks since, Diwan has picked up more prizes, secured a North American distributor in IFC Films and FilmNation and is in the running to represent France at the Oscars in 2022.

"Happening's" Golden Lion win surprised many simply because of the high-profile competition which included the likes of Jane Campion and Paolo Sorrentino. Hers was a subtle film about a college student in France in the 1960s who is seeking to terminate an unexpected pregnancy and stars a relative unknown, Anamaria Vartolomei. And yet it broke through as the unanimous choice for the prestigious prize from a decorated jury that included "Parasite" director Bong Joon Ho and "Nomadland" director Chloe Zhao.

"We really didn't expect anything. There were so many talented people. We were really happy and humbled," Diwan said. "I had so many feelings at the same time. I was thinking about the movie. I was thinking about my actress, I knew it was going to change everything for her. I was thinking about (author) Annie Ernaux because it's a true story and it's her story. And my last thought was that the topic was in everyone's minds."

It's been a banner year for female filmmakers in France. Earlier this year, Julia Ducourmau became the second woman ever to win the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival for her wild body-horror slash

family drama "Titane." Ducourmau's film is also in the running for France's Oscar submission, which was to be decided Tuesday. The last time France selected a woman's film for the Academy Awards was 2015 with Deniz Gamze Ergüven's "Mustang."

"I think it says something really strong about the industry in general. What happened basically is that they allowed more women to do movies," Diwan said. "And it's a mathematical question: If you allow more women to make movies, of course they will be rewarded. But you have to look carefully at the very beginning, at the moment where the industry gives you the money to make your movie."

Different

Diwan didn't actually pick up a camera until she was in her 30s. She studied journalism and political science and wrote novels and screenplays before deciding to direct. Her first feature, "Losing It," came out in 2019.

"I feel now that I'm ready for what I want to do because I've had so many different experiences," Diwan said. "I'm finally ready for it."

"Happening" was not an easy film to get made, despite praise for Ernaux' novel, which was in the running for a Pulitzer. Diwan set out to make something clear-eyed and honest about a young woman from a less privileged background who is desperate to continue her education, as well as the reality of "back alley" abortions.

Although the film is set in the '60s, she's acutely aware that it's still relevant. She wrote the movie with Poland in the back of her mind.

Then on the way to Venice with the finished film she read about the ongoing situation Texas.

"I did this movie for what it means to me. I love to make movies not to give answers but to ask questions," Diwan said. "I feel strongly that somehow the movie meets the moment and we have something to discuss and share around it."

Already, she's been excited by the conversations and reactions to the piece. Recently in Paris, she said, a young male student told her that he was against abortion but after seeing her film he wasn't sure anymore.

"Art matters and can open debates," Diwan said. "Venice was nice because unanimously the jury enjoyed and understood the film. But it means something because they were different genders, ages and from different cultures. That was one of the first times I thought maybe we can share it with lots of different kinds of people."

Should her film be selected to represent France at the Oscars, Diwan said it will only help broaden that conversation. But she's also just looking forward to bringing it to the US, where it will be released in 2022.

"We are proud to bring this amazing film to US audiences and to introduce Audrey as an exciting new voice in cinema," said Arianna Bocco, the president of IFC Films. "The film allows the audience to feel and to be challenged in ways that only the best cinema can do."

Diwan said wants to show the film wherever she can and open up discussion.

"I don't like polemic," she said. "I like discussion." (AP)

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This image released by Metro Goldwyn Mayer Pictures shows Daniel Craig in a scene from 'No Time To Die.' (AP)

Film

Franchise set for a fresh start

About that 'No Time to Die' ending...

By Jake Coyle

This story discusses the ending of "No Time to Die." That such a spoiler warning is even necessary is strange in the world of James Bond. Doesn't he save the world and get away with the girl? Isn't that one of the immutable laws of 007, right up there with the tuxedos, Aston Martins and facially scarred villains of seemingly limitless financing? Just as surely as his foes can build a teeming lair in a volcano, Bond has a gadget, and a wry quip, to deploy at just the right time to rescue humankind. So sayeth the Book of Bond.

And yet in "No Time to Die," which debuted with \$56 million in US and Canada theaters over the weekend, the unthinkable happens. For the first time in 25 films — and remember that spoiling warning — James Bond dies.

In Cary Joji Fukunaga's film, Daniel Craig's fifth and final turn as the British spy, there is no doubt — no maybe he escaped if he suddenly found a jet pack or something — to the conclusion of "No Time to Die." He lies on an otherwise deserted island, with nanobots coursing through his blood and bombs falling. It's a new finality for the man with a license to kill, but, apparently, a revocable permit to live forever.

It is, however, only a partial death. Lest you thought the explosions at the end of "No Time to Die" were fireworks for the demise of a many-billions-generating franchise, Bond will most assuredly go on. If you stay all the way through the credits, you'll be comforted by the message: "James Bond Will Return."

"Bond can go on forever," said Barbara Broccoli, Bond producer, in a recent interview. "My father told me that when they were making 'From Russia With Love,' (Bond author) Ian Fleming said to him: 'You know, Cubby, I think Bond will go on well beyond me.' And Cubby said, 'Yeah, and he'll go well beyond me as well.' He will be around forever."

This, then, is purely the finale to Craig's serious and tortured 007 run, one that from the start has edged Bond more into a plausible reality, ushering in once anathema things like grief and pain and romances that last past one movie's runtime. Death loomed from the start. In his first Bond film, "Casino Royale," Bond's heart

stopped, briefly. Tropes weren't abandoned but deconstructed. When prompted by a bartender for his trademark shaken-or-stirred line, Bond replies in "Casino Royale," "Do I look like I give a damn?"

Craig's 15-year era has been longer than any previous Bond actor, and he's grown more evidently weary during that time. In "No Time to Die," the most poignant of Bond movies, Craig steers the character toward family and love — Léa Seydoux's returning Dr. Madeleine Swann is prominent — and deeper emotional terrain than the globe-trotting secret agent has previously traversed. Death arrives not like a shock but the natural culmination of a performance arc that has turned the superspy decidedly mortal.

Novelty

It's also an increasingly popular twist in a Hollywood where franchises are undying and reboots eternal. When intellectual property lasts infinitely, death is a novelty. If the fate of the world is always at stake and the protagonist's future never in doubt, it's a way to tweak a formula. To some, it smacks of meddling with the primal forces of Bond. Film critic Jordan Hoffman called it "New Coke syndrome."

"What kind of world is this?" Hoffman said in a video filmed on his way home from seeing the film. "What's the point? He's supposed to escape. This movie is escapism. This is not a serious movie. This is not a serious franchise."

If anything, the sentimentality of such demises lie not in the character's fate but in an actor's departure. Harrison Ford was ready to be done with "Star Wars," and made his exit absolute in "The Force Awakens." Robert Downey Jr.'s 10-year reign as Iron Man was given an extensive wake in "Avengers: Endgame," a film that toyed with the deaths of half of Marvel's heroes in the lead-in "snap" cliffhanger. Craig, who said after the previous "Spectre" that he'd rather slit his wrists than make another Bond film, will certainly be spared any rumors of a future 007 return.

It's not so different from how some authors have felt about the iconic characters that define them. Arthur Conan Doyle dropped Sherlock Holmes off

a cliff before eventually bowing to public pressure for a resurrection. Ian Fleming penned an obituary to Bond in 1964's "You Only Live Twice" (from which "No Time to Die" cribbs) that proved ultimately false but that included a number of details from Fleming's own life.

"It's very complicated the relationship Fleming had to Bond," Craig, who has had his own up-and-down feelings about the character, said in a recent interview. "He didn't like him. He tried to kill him off. There's not a lot there as far as character is concerned. Fleming called him 'a shadow.'"

Once the valedictory sendoff for Craig has concluded, the search for a new Bond will begin. Producers Broccoli and Michael Wilson have said they won't start until next year. They've put no parameters on who might fit the role except to say that James Bond is inherently a male character. They've been mum on how the franchise will resume after the conclusion of "No Time to Die" except to say that it will be a clean slate. The next film could pretend Bond never died, or allude to it in some way. When Craig took over the role, plans had once been afoot for more of an origin story approach that tracked the formation of James Bond as we know him — a possibility this time, if the producers elect to cast a younger actor.

The mood, too, could bounce back from the doom-laden — and maybe inevitably will.

"Lighten up, 007," suggested Los Angeles Times film critic Justin Chang, "and for the sake of variety, may your inevitable next incarnation be a breezier one."

Wilson once called the James Bond films not one long series but "a series of series." With the end of this one, a new Bond will be born, a new chapter begun. Many have longed to see Idris Elba (now 49) inherit the role, while others are rooting for the up-and-coming "Bridgerton" star Regé-Jean Page. Many more names, of course, will be floated. But whatever the future holds for Bond, "No Time to Die" insured that perhaps more than ever before, it will be a fresh start. James Bond may perish, but in franchise moviemaking tomorrow never dies. (AP)

KENNETT SQUARE, Pa: US President Joe Biden attended his nephew's wedding in Pennsylvania on Monday before returning to Washington for the week.

The president and his wife, Jill Biden, attended the wedding of Cuffe Owens, the son of Biden's sister Valerie Biden Owens, to Meghan O'Toole King. King is a former cast member on "The Real Housewives of Orange County," while Owens is an attorney.

The event was held at Biden Owens' home.

King shared a photo of the two on Instagram in September, writing "meet my man."

Joe Biden had a quiet weekend in Wilmington, Delaware, visiting church early Sunday but otherwise keeping to his home.

King was previously married to retired MLB player Jim Edmonds. (AP)

NEW YORK: Kim Kardashian West, sporting a hot pink catsuit, skewered everyone from her mom's boyfriend to her famous tape and estranged husband Kanye during her first turn hosting "Saturday Night Live."

"I know, I'm surprised to see me here, too," she began her opening monologue Saturday after her appearance sparked a back-and-forth on Twitter among fans and detractors. "I mean, I haven't had a movie premiere in a really long time."

And she poked more fun at herself, noting she's more than just a pretty face, "and good hair, and great makeup and amazing body." One thing she isn't, she said, is a gold digger, something she had to ask mom Kris Jenner's boyfriend Corey Gamble how to become.

Noting her sentencing reform work helping to free innocent people from prison as she studies law, Kardashian West said that passion has her following in her attorney dad's footsteps (Robert Kardashian helped represent O.J. Simpson).

"It's because of him I met my first Black person. Wanna take a stab in the dark on who it was," she said, referring to Simpson.

Simpson was acquitted of two counts of murder in the 1994 fatal stabbings of his ex-wife, Nicole Simpson, and Ronald Goldman,

but a civil court jury found him liable and ordered him to pay \$33.5 million.

Kardashian West threw in a joke about Kanye's failed bid for president, and her stepparent Caitlyn Jenner's bid for California governor.

"I'm here to announce that I'm running. ... I'm just kidding," she



Kanye



King

smiled.

Kanye accompanied Kim to New York for her SNL appearance on NBC. She filed for divorce in February after six years of marriage. The two, who share four children, have been photographed together several times in recent months.

The musical guest, Halsey, was

perfection, accompanied for one song by Lindsey Buckingham on guitar. Halsey tweeted out a photo of herself pumping breast milk backstage before the show. She gave birth in July.

Kris Jenner and sister Khloe Kardashian popped up in a couple of sketches, including one where cast member Aidy Bryant

and Kim switched bodies.

In a spinoff of "The People's Court," Kim parodied sister Courtney by playing a bored judge, including her sibling's penchant for PDA with boyfriend Travis Barker. She ruled over Kris, Khloe and members of the cast playing Kanye and Kim sisters Kylie and Kendall Jenner. (AP)