

'I didn't want to abandon the notion of the play'

Coen premieres a stark 'Macbeth,' with Denzel and McDormand

NEW YORK, Sept 26, (AP) — Joel Coen, in his first solo outing as a filmmaker, premiered a strikingly stark, black-and-white adaptation of Shakespeare's "Macbeth," with Denzel Washington and Frances McDormand, at the New York Film Festival on Friday.

"The Tragedy of Macbeth," which on Friday night was to open the 59th New York Film Festival, isn't a mud-and-blood adaptation set on medieval Scottish fields, but a minimalist, noir nightmare, cloaked in shadow and fog, and boxed in an academy-ratio square frame filled with austere, expressionist imagery.

"I didn't want to abandon the notion of the play," Coen told reporters after a screening. "It was taking a play and making a movie of it that was interesting to me, not trying to make a play into a movie. I didn't want to hide the play."

"A lot of the motivating impulse in terms of design was taking things away," he said.

The film, which a24 will release in theaters Dec. 25 and which will debut in January on Apple TV+, was the most anticipated premiere of the New York Film Festival. The festival is part of newly revitalized Lincoln Center and runs through Oct. 10. The eagerness for "The Tragedy of Macbeth" was owed in part to it being Coen's first film without his brother, Ethan, who has recently withdrawn from filmmaking. But it was also due to the star power of its lead actors — Washington as Macbeth and McDormand as Lady Macbeth.

For both performers, the film is a capstone.

"This is a fascinating journey for me. I went to school 1,000 feet from here and played 'Othello' at 20 — didn't know what I was doing," said the 66-year-old Washington, who starred in the play as a student at Fordham's Lincoln Center Campus. "It's a long thousand feet."

Washington has acted in other Shakespeare productions, including "Julius Caesar" on Broadway in 2005. To Washington, it's a foundational part of himself as an actor.

"It's the ultimate challenge. It's the ultimate reward," said Washington. "It's where I started and where I want to finish."

For McDormand, 64, the connection in particular to "Macbeth" goes back even further.

Adaptation

"The first thing that got me hooked on wanting to be an actor for the rest of my life was the sleepwalking scene from 'The Tragedy,'" she said. "I did it when I was 14. I've pretty much been practicing and rehearsing for it for 50 years. It kind of had a fated inevitability to it."

McDormand also played Lady Macbeth at the Berkley Rep in 2016. For years, McDormand said, she's urged Coen, her longtime husband, to direct a production of the play. After sitting in on their rehearsals, Coen eventually came around to doing it as a film. He wrote the screenplay adaptation envisioning something less like Orson Welles' 1948

"Macbeth" or Roman Polanski's 1971 version, and more with the austerity of a Carl Theodor Dreyer film and the chiaroscuro glow of F.W. Murnau's "Sunrise."

"It pays homage to both the cinematic and the theatrical traditions that this play has sat in," said Bertie Carvel, who plays Banquo. "(Joel) used the word 'sculptural,' and very few other words. What was clear was that it was about taking things away and getting out of the way of the play."

Another thing that differentiates this "Macbeth" from others is the ages of its lead performers. As a play about ambition, some — like Polanski's co-author Kenneth Tynan — have claimed it's inherently a tale for younger actors. McDormand and Washington disagreed.

"There's a built-in sense of urgency," said Washington. "This is it. This is the last go-around. And they've been stepped over by the king. And they want it. And we understand."

"You might think maybe they don't understand, but — guess what — we understand," agreed McDormand. "When we first talked on the phone, Denzel and I, what we both understood about each other is that there's always been a fight. We've fought it as gracefully as possible but the fight's never going to be over. So, you know, we brought that to it."

"We still knew how to fight. Maybe we were limping a little bit," she added, laughing. "But the fight was still there."

Film

Variety



US actress Jessica Chastain and Denmark actress Flora Ofelia Hofmann, (left), receive an ex-aequo Donostia Shell award at the 69th San Sebastian Film Festival, in San Sebastian, northern Spain, Saturday, Sept. 25. (AP)

Film

A blurred movie year comes into focus at New York Film Fest

Women top at San Sebastian fest awards

SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain, Sept 26, (AP) — Female actors and filmmakers swept the top awards at the San Sebastian film festival on Saturday, with the Golden Shell for the best film going to "Blue Moon" ("Crai Nou") by Romanian director Alina Grigore.

American actress and producer Jessica Chastain was honored for her portrayal of Christian televangelist Tammy Faye Messner in "The Eyes of Tammy Faye" at the 69th edition of Spain's biggest film festival.

Chastain shared the best leading performance award with 16-year-old Flora Ofelia Hofmann Lindahl, who starred in the Danish film "As in Heaven" ("Du som er i himlen"). Tea Lindeburg received the best director award for the same film.

It was the first time that the film festival gave gender neutral awards, without any separate categories for men and women.

Tatiana Huezo's "Prayers for the Stolen" ("Noche de fuego") won the prize for the best Latin American film.

Other winners included Claire Mathon, who received the cinematography award for "Undercover" ("Enquête sur un scandale d'état") and Lucile Hadzihalilovic whose film "Earwig" earned her the festival's special prize, an honor she also received in 2015.

Meanwhile, a movie year of fits-and-starts, delays and reversals has sometimes been difficult to track. Knowing just where and how a new movie premieres has become a sport of its own. Even for those closely following new films, it's been a sometimes exhilarating, sometimes befuddling half-virtual, half-in-person year of moviegoing.

But at the 59th New York Film Festival, which began Friday, an abnormal movie year comes into sharp focus. The New York Film Festival, which is put on by Film at Lincoln Center, isn't the sum

total of everything worth seeing in 2021, but it's about as close as most festivals get. Over the next two weeks, 32 feature films will unspool in New York's main slate, along with companion sections, revivals and tributes.

"The mandate of the festival has always been to take stock of the year in cinema," says Dennis Lim, the festival's director of programming. "Besides being a strange year, I think it was also a really strong year."

In recent weeks on Lincoln Center's campus, the Philharmonic, the Metropolitan Opera and New York City Ballet have all returned to their indoor stages. Down the street, Broadway's top shows are back.

After the pandemic forced last year's New York Film Festival to host virtual screenings and drive-ins around the city, the annual parade of top international filmmakers and some of the year's most acclaimed films will return to Lincoln Center.

"There was this disruption that happened. We're all coming back from that," says Eugene Hernandez, director of the festival. "For us, as a festival, we decided to prioritize the in-person experience."

Standouts

While some films, like "The Tragedy of Macbeth," will be debuting for the first time, the New York Film Festival is a highly curated collection of films that have been standouts at other festivals this year. That includes Jane Campion's gothic Western "The Power of the Dog"; Pedro Almodóvar's tender motherhood tale "Parallel Mothers"; Joanna Hogg's exquisite memory piece "The Souvenir Part II"; Cannes' explosive Palme d'Or-winner "Titane," from French filmmaker Julia Ducourneau; Norwegian director Joachim Trier's piercing character study "The Worst Per-

son in the World"; Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul's meditative "Memoria," with Tilda Swinton; Berlin's Golden Bear-winner "Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn" from Romanian filmmaker Radu Jude; and Ryusuke Hamaguchi's Haruki Murakami adaptation "Drive My Car."

Part of what makes the New York Film Festival distinct is that, while there are red carpets and standing ovations, the Upper West Side gathering has always put sober reflection above spectacle. To the festival organizers, the debate and conversations that happen around movie screens are, ultimately, the point of the festival.

"We're in agreement that festivals are about the big-screen experience. They are about bringing people together," says Lim. "Last year, going virtual was I thought necessary and an important thing to do. But it's a different time and a different climate, and we need to respond accordingly."

Some screenings have become unexpectedly timely. Just days after the death of pioneering filmmaker Melvin Van Peebles, a new restoration of his landmark 1971 film "Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song" will premiere Sunday timed to its 50th anniversary. Van Peebles' death Tuesday at the age of 89 prompted an outpouring of tributes for the groundbreaking independent filmmaker.

Proof of vaccination will be required for all festival attendees, and there won't be any concessions. The biggest COVID-19-related hurdle, Hernandez said, is sorting out travel restrictions for filmmakers and casts. Who can and can't attend is still changing daily.

Screening won't just be at Lincoln Center. To help foster a wider resurgence for New York moviegoing, screenings will also be held at arthouse theaters in Brooklyn, Harlem and the East Village.

But at Lincoln Center, said Hernandez, "It feels like a different place than it has for a long time."

Features

ARABO TIMES

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2021

LOS ANGELES: Elon Musk and singer Grimes have ended their romantic relationship after three years.

The Tesla and SpaceX founder tells the New York Post's Page Six that he and the Canadian singer are "semi-separated."

But he says they remain on good terms, she still lives in his house in California and they continue to raise their 1-year-old son together.

"It's mostly that my work at SpaceX and Tesla requires me to be primarily in Texas or traveling overseas, and her work is primarily in L.A.," Musk told the Post. "She's staying with me now and Baby X is in the adjacent room."

A message seeking comment from a representative for Grimes was not immediately returned.

The 50-year-old entrepreneur has had six children from previous relationships. One of them died as a baby. He has been married three times, including twice to "Westworld" actress Talulah Riley. (AP)

NEW YORK: Actor Michael K. Williams died of acute drug intoxication in what New York City's medical examiner said Friday was an accidental death.

Williams, known for playing Omar Little on "The Wire" and an Emmy Award nominee this year, had fentanyl, paraffluorofentanyl, heroin and cocaine in his system when he died Sept 6 in Brooklyn.

Williams, 54, was found dead by family members in his penthouse apartment. Police said at the time that they suspected a drug overdose.

The city's Office of Chief Medical Examiner said it would not comment further. A message seeking comment was left with Williams' representative.

Williams had spoken frankly in interviews in recent years about his struggle with drug addiction, which he said persisted after he gained fame on "The Wire" in the early 2000s.

"I was playing with fire," he told the Newark Star-Ledger in 2012. "It was just a matter of time before I got caught and my business ended up on the cover of a tabloid or I went to jail or, worse, I ended up dead. When I look back on it now, I don't know how I didn't end up in a body bag."

New York Police Commissioner Dermot Shea said in an

interview shortly after Williams' death that he had spoken with the actor earlier this year about collaborating with the department on community outreach. (AP)

NEW YORK: R. Kelly's fate is now in a jury's hands after weeks of testimony in his sexual miscon-



Williams



Musk

duct trial.

The panel of seven men and five women began deliberating racketeering and sex trafficking charges against the R&B superstar, ending the day without reaching a verdict. They are due back in court on Monday to resume their work.

A couple hours into the deliberations, the jurors sent the judge a

note asking to review a transcript of testimony and evidence regarding a woman who claimed Kelly sexually assaulted her in 2003 when she was a 21-year-old radio station intern. She testified she was kept locked up in a recording studio for days and drugged before the assault.

Prosecutors and defense attorneys finished their closing

arguments this week.

Kelly "believed the music, the fame and the celebrity meant he could do whatever he wanted," Assistant US Attorney Nadia Shihata said in federal court in Brooklyn in a fiery rebuttal to the defense's closing argument that portrayed Kelly as a victim of false accusations. (AP)