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### Cannes 2012: Cronenberg, Daniels give lineup a North American spin

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The Cannes Film Festival is set to feature one of the richest North American slates in years, as Lee Daniels, David Cronenberg, Jeff Nichols and Wes Anderson will all screen films in competition at the world's most prestigious film gathering, while an adaptation of a classic American novel will also get the Croisette treatment.

And, oh yes, there's also the premiere of new movies from Brad Pitt and Shia LaBeouf -- and films featuring "Twilight" stars Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart.

The announcement of the Cannes lineup, made by festival general delegate and artistic director Thierry Fremaux at a Paris news conference Thursday, marks the first time since 2008 that four North American filmmakers are to play in the festival's vaunted competition section. It comes at a time when an enervated independent film business has regained some strength in the United States.

The 2012 Cannes competition lineup features new movies from Cronenberg (the drama "Cosmopolis," which stars Pattinson), Nichols (the Southern fugitive story "Mud"), Daniels (journalist thriller "The Paperboy") and Anderson (whose previously announced festival opener, the offbeat romance "Moonrise Kingdom," was revealed Thursday to be in competition).

The section also includes "On the Road," Walter Salles' big-screen take on the Jack Kerouac Beat novel, which stars Stewart.

The festival is scheduled to open May 16 in the south of France and run through May 27. (For the complete list, please [visit the official site.](#))

Equally notable on the global front is the presence of two filmmakers from the Middle East in the competition section-- Iranian Abbas Kiarostami ("Like

Someone in Love") and Egyptian Yousry Nasrallah ("Baad El Mawekaa"). The selection of films from the embattled countries seems designed at least in part to send a message of free expression.

This might be particularly true in the case of Iran. As the country continues to dominate the news cycle, its relationship with cinema has been a complicated one. One of the nation's most prominent filmmakers, Jafar Panahi, remains under a 20-year filmmaking ban by the government because of alleged dissident activities.

But another director, Asghar Farhadi, brought home the country's first foreign-language Oscar when his family drama "A Separation" won a statuette earlier this year.

In a strange turn, although one of 2012's biggest commercial releases, "Twilight: Breaking Dawn, Part 2" won't appear on a Cannes screen, the film's two leads are set to be there, as they seek to take the next step in their post-vampire careers.

The woman known to millions as Bella Swan will tackle the character of Marylou, again forming part of a love triangle (this time between Sam Riley's Sal and Garret Hedlund's Dean). Pattinson turns up as the lead in Cronenberg's adaptation of the Don DeLillo novel about a Wall Street master-of-the-universe type taking a harrowing trip across New York.

Nichols, who gained acclaim with the Sundance and Cannes Un Certain Regard pic "Take Shelter" last year, is scheduled to make his first appearance in Cannes competition. "Mud" tells a fugitive story in Mississippi with Huck Finn overtones; Matthew McConaughey and Reese Witherspoon star.

Daniels, who made a splash with "Precious" on the awards circuit several years ago, is set to bring his new film, which stars a Hollywood-centric cast of Zac Efron, Nicole Kidman, John Cusack as well as McConaughey (yes, he will have two movies at Cannes) and centers on a reporter investigating a death row case in Florida.

As previously announced, the closing-night film is to be "Therese D," the last movie made by French director Claude Miller, who died this month.

Nanni Moretti, the Italian actor and director who won the prestigious Palme d'Or in 2001, is to oversee this year's competition jury. Last year's jury, headed by Robert De Niro, handed the top prize to Terrence Malick's "The Tree of Life."

The festival also said that DreamWorks Animation's "Madagascar 3" is set to play in an out-of-competition slot; the movie features a European setting. The festival usually reserves at least one out-of-competition slot for a Hollywood blockbuster that will open shortly after Cannes, as studios seek to take advantage of the festival's heavy concentration of media.

"Madagascar" aside, a variety of Hollywood stars are to be out in force on the Riviera. The competition selection for "Killing me Softly," a thriller that reunites Pitt with his "Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford" director Andrew Dominik, all but ensures that the actor will once again appear on the Croisette. He turned out last year to support "The Tree of Life."

LaBeouf and Tom Hardy are also to have their new work debut at Cannes, as their period bootlegging drama "Lawless," directed by John Hillcoat, is set to play in competition. The film's rights were sold to the Weinstein Co. at last year's festival.

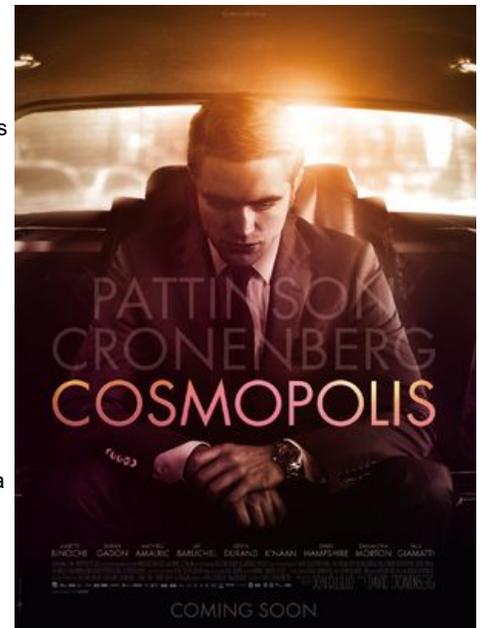
For reasons of quality, release strategy or even readiness, a number of high-profile films did not make the Cannes lineup. Derek Cianfrance's crime drama "The Place Beyond the Pines," Paul Thomas Anderson's Scientology-tinged tale "The Master," James Gray's immigrant film "Low Life" and Chan-Wook Park's Gothic mystery "Stoker" are considered Oscar contenders but will not appear at Cannes, likely turning up at fall festivals instead.

Many eyes, however, will be on Michael Haneke, the Austrian filmmaker who won the Palme d'Or the last time he came to the Croisette, in 2009, with the World War I-era drama "The White Ribbon."

Haneke this year is to bring "Amour," a drama starring French actress and sometimes collaborator Isabelle Huppert. The story centers on an elderly couple and their grown daughter (Huppert) whose bonds are tested after an attack. Huppert was the chair of the jury that handed Haneke the Palme d'Or for "Ribbon," to some cries of favoritism from those who disagreed with the choice.

The director's main rival for the 2009 Palme is also to be returning, as Jacques Audiard ("A Prophet") is set to take his "Rust and Bone" to the Croisette. The new film stars Marion Cotillard as a trainer of killer whales (!).

Audiard's French countryman Alain Resnais, who is nearly 90 years old, is scheduled to premiere his new film, "You Haven't Seen Anything Yet," in competition. So is Cannes veteran Ken Loach, who is to unspool the street-wise tale "The Angels' Share."



Some of the festival's higher-profile films -- including "Moonrise Kingdom" and "Lawless" -- come in to Cannes with U.S. distribution in place, although many of them -- including "Cosmopolis," "Mud" and "On the Road" -- do not.

Meanwhile, the festival's Un Certain Regard section will screen the Sundance buzz title "Beasts of the Southern Wild," the magical-realist tale about a poor girl on the Mississippi Delta that Fox Searchlight will release this summer. Un Certain Regard typically plays a high-profile Sundance title, with "Blue Valentine," "Precious" and "Martha Marcy May Marlene" all screening in Un Certain Regard in past years.

Also of note: Cronenberg's son, Brandon Cronenberg, is to premiere his new film, "Antiviral," in the section, making for a rare, Ken Griffey-like father-son combo on the Croisette.

As an event that merges glitz with top-level filmmaking, Cannes is an unusual hybrid. But the 12-day event nonetheless remains a make-or-break event for some of the world's most high-profile filmmakers.

Cannes has enjoyed a particularly influential run of late. A number of 2012 best-picture contenders started their campaigns when they world-premiered to strong buzz at last year's festival, including "The Artist," "Midnight in Paris" and "The Tree of Life." The Ryan Gosling-Nicolas Refn collaboration "Drive" also launched at Cannes before going on to critical and some commercial success upon its fall release.

Cannes 2011 was also an eventful year in other ways. The festival was marred by controversial statements from Lars von Trier, who in promoting his film "Melancholia" claimed that he was a Nazi. The remarks prompted the festival to take the unusual step of declaring the filmmaker a persona non grata. Von Trier does not have a new film completed this year, avoiding the ticklish question of whether he could be reinstated.

But the biggest story from 2011 was unquestionably "The Artist," which in the initial announcement was not even playing in competition. It was then upped to that prestigious category, was snapped up by Harvey Weinstein on the eve of the festival, and began its now well-known magic-carpet ride.

"The Artist" is to make its presence felt on the Croisette this year as well: Berenice Bejo, the female lead in the silent film, is set to serve as emcee for the opening and closing night ceremonies.

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-- Steven Zeitchik

[twitter.com/ZeitchikLAT](https://twitter.com/ZeitchikLAT)

*Upper photo: A scene from Kristen Stewart's "On the Road." Credit: MK2 Productions*

*Lower photo: A poster for Robert Pattinson's "Cosmopolis." Credit: Alfama Films*

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