

cinema



* Clockwise from left: *Cogan's Trade*, *On the Road* and *Prometheus* may be some of the movies that make it to the final list in this year's Cannes Film Festival.

In the can?

The official list for the Cannes Film Festival is always eagerly anticipated. **Gautaman Bhaskaran** looks at some of the potential entries this year



The other name for Cannes may well be controversy. Last year, the Festival's 64th edition ended with one, when the legendary Danish director, Lars Von Trier, was declared persona non-grata and asked to leave the French Riviera. His "crime"? He had joked at a press conference — following his doomsday movie, *Melancholia*, about the earth colliding with a rogue planet — that he was a Nazi. Journalists at the gathering had laughed. Nobody took him seriously. Nobody could. But the Festival did, and threw him out, although the helmer quickly said he was sorry.

Jewish sentiments invariably run high all over the world, and I was told later that Cannes had been inundated with telephone calls and e-mails condemning Von Trier's statement, obviously said in jest.

The Festival had been in a quandary, not knowing how to react to the director's comment and the pressure that was being exerted by the world outside Cannes. So, the Festival told the man to leave, although the jury chaired by Robert De Niro bravely or defiantly awarded the Best Actress Palm to Kirsten Dunst for her role in *Melancholia*.

This year, controversy has preceded the 12-day Festival by a full six weeks. The event begins to roll on May 16. Some 14 days before Cannes announces its official line-

up on April 19 in Paris, the Internet was abuzz with a "leaked" list of 24 films, which surprisingly included hot favourites like Terrence Malick, David Cronenberg and Paul Thomas Anderson.

However, there is something amiss about this "leak". The Festival director, Thierry Fremaux, and his deputy, Christian Jeune, are still watching movies, probably late into the night, to put together the selections before April 19. It is hardly likely that the list is complete or even near complete. Again there are some films in the "leaked" list that may not be ready for Cannes, such as Paul Thomas Anderson's *The Master* and Terrence Malick's untitled Ben Affleck-Rachel McAdams romance (officially listed as *The Burial on the leak*).

Whatever, Fremaux was really angry. He called the list a lie and said: "The selection is in my head. It's disgusting to play with such a thing. There is a code of conduct for Cannes and it must be respected. Those who don't respect the code will never come back to Cannes."

He had pronounced his judgement, and I know Cannes is perfectly capable of implementing it.

Years ago, a critic as renowned as Francois Truffaut writing for the celebrated *Cahiers Du Cinema*, was banned from attending the Festival because of his vitriolic criticism of the French movies chosen by Cannes. Later, of course, the

Festival forgave him and honoured him and his great cinema that he went on to make.

Notwithstanding this, our boys in Bollywood have been merrily mouthing their own list of probable films. Actor Arjun Rampal thought that a work like Madhur Bhandarkar's *Heroine* would (or should) make it to the Croisette (Cannes' beach front). Sudhir Mishra's *Inkaar* also deserved to be there, he averred.

Readers may remember that Bhandarkar and Aishwarya Rai had announced the launch of *Heroine* at Cannes last year. (Weeks later, Rai was found to be pregnant, and a livid Bhandarkar had to choose another star, Kareena Kapoor, after Rai quit.) Was Rampal hoping that a movie launched at Cannes had greater chances of being included in the Festival?

Unfortunately, this may not always be the case. Mani Ratnam announced *Raavan/Raavanan* (Hindi/Tamil) at Cannes, but it was picked up by Venice.

Some other names are flying about, waiting to catch a flight to Nice, the airport for Cannes. They are Anurag Kashyap's *Gangs of Wasseypur* with Manoj Bajpai, Nawazuddin Siddique (who played Intelligence Bureau officer Khan in *Kahaani*) and Richa Chadda (Dolly in *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!*), and Dibakar Banerjee's *Shanghai* with Abhay Deol, Prosenjit Chatterjee, Emraan Hashmi and Kalki Koechlin.

A few weeks ago, Tamil superstar Kamal Hassan's *Viswaroopam* was, if the Indian media was to be believed, firmly placed on the Cannes' official list. The reports even said that the film would be part of the top Competition and that a nine-member jury (headed by Italy's Nanni Moretti) would judge whether it deserved a Palm d'Or! Obviously, Kamal's PR was working overtime trying desperately to get the movie into Cannes. Kamal, whose fortunes have not been on the high for some years now, needs all the publicity now. And much of Indian media is so callous (and dumb) that it does not even bother to check facts before publishing what is handed over by PR guys.

I am sure there are many other Indian films in the race for Cannes. But, then, this is so every year — and the country ends up with a blank. *Udaan* was at the 2010 Festival, which picked an Indian work after several years.

Outside India, there are guesses galore. Walter Salles' adaptation of the 1957 Jack Kerouac novel that defined the Beat generation, *On the Road*, and David Cronenberg's *Cosmopolis*, the screen version of Don DeLillo's novel about a fateful day in the life of a rich financier are being talked about.

So are the Brad-Pitt-starrer Andrew-Dominik-helmed *Cogan's Trade*, and Jacques Audiard's (remember his Oscar-nominated *A Prophet*) suspenseful romance with Marion Cotillard, *Rust & Bone*. And will John Hillcoat's *Lawless* (on the Great Depression) and Derek

Cianfrance's *The Place Beyond the Pines* (with Ryan Gosling, whose *Drive* was a hit at last Cannes) be out of the labs to meet the Festival deadline?

Some of the other names/titles being tossed about are Michael Haneke's *Amour* (starring Isabelle Huppert) and Ken Loach's *The Angel's Share*. Both directors are past Palm d'Or winners — Haneke with *The White Ribbon* and Loach with *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*.

American cinema hopefuls include James Gray with *Low Life*, Andrew Dominik's *Killing Them Softly* and Ridley Scott with *Prometheus*.

The French team's wish list has Alan Resnais' *Vous n'avez encore rien vu*, with Mathieu Almaric, Leos Carax' *Holly Motors* (starring Denis Lavant, Michel Piccoli, Kylie Minogue and Eva Mendes), and Francois Ozon's *Dans La Masion*, with Kristin Scott Thomas.

Asian grapevine offers *Stocker* by Korea's Park Chan-wook, *Like Someone in Love* by the Iranian, Abbas Kiarostami, and *The Land of Hope* by Japan's Sono Sion.

Most of these movies are big in their own way, and it is likely that many will walk up the Red Carpet — jostling with gorgeous evening gowns and smart tuxedos, blinded by popping flash-bulbs and deafened by hooting fans.

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