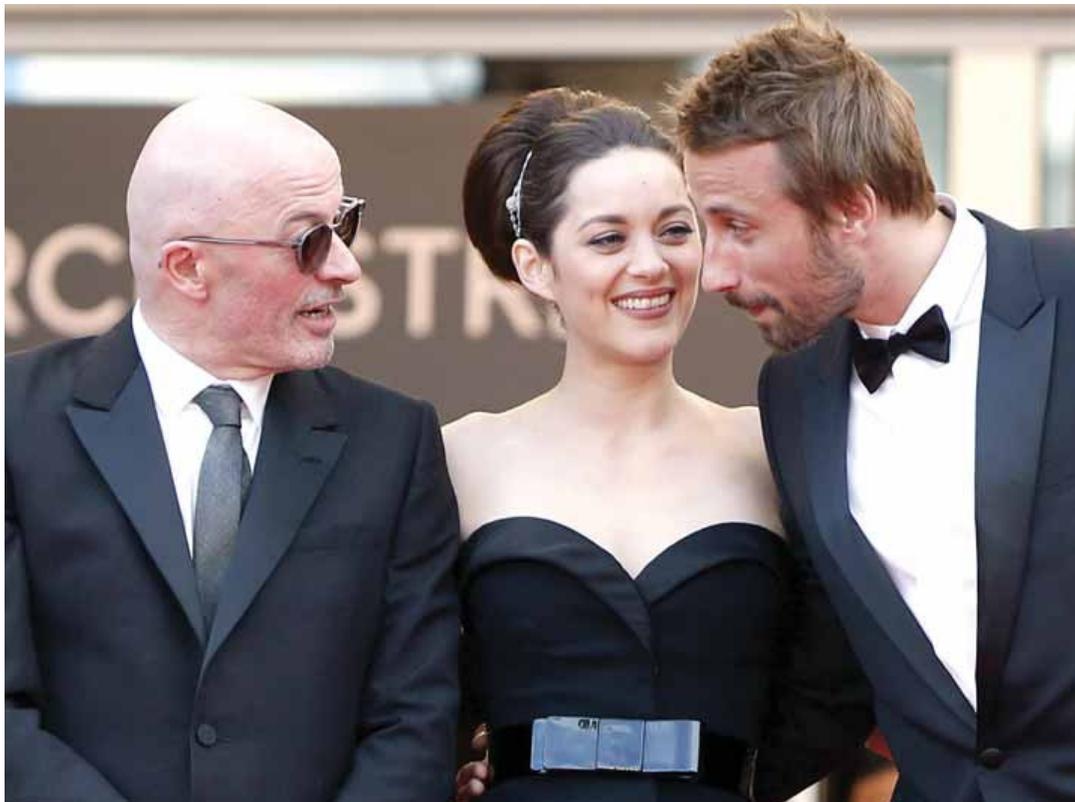


cinema



* (From left) French director Jacques Audiard, French actress Marion Cotillard and Belgian actor Matthias Schoenaerts arrive for the screening of *De Rouille et d'Os* (*Rust and Bone*) during the 65th Cannes Film Festival, in Cannes, France on May 17.

The cocktail at Cannes

By Gautaman Bhaskaran

Much as some Indian writers and directors will argue that cinema cannot be both arty (read meaningful) and glitzy (read commercially successful), European movies have proved them wrong time and again.

One of the Competition entries at the ongoing 65th Cannes Film Festival is Jacques Audiard's *Rust and Bone* in French. This is one of the nicest movies I have seen till now at this 12-day event on the French Riviera. Audiard has created a wide canvas over the years: his *A Self-Made Hero* probed revisionist history, tackled love between a former convict and almost deaf woman in *Read My Lips* and walked into the murky corridors of a French prison in *A Prophet*, which clinched an Oscar nod for the Best Foreign Language Picture. The actual trophy did not come its way.

In his latest, a Cannes Competition entry, *Rust and Bone*, Audiard gets the ravishing Marion Cotillard to play a woman who trains killer whales (the passions people have!). In love and living with her boyfriend, she becomes the centre of a brawl in a club one night, and has to be rescued by the financially-broke boxer doubling up as a bouncer there, Matthias Schoenaerts.

Normally helming character-driven films, and invariably characters who are men, Audiard this time around has a woman protagonist, Cotillard's Stephanie, who after an accident (not very clear how the whale broke loose) finds herself crippled. Boxer Ali (living with his supermarket cashier sister and his little son) meets the disabled Stephanie after a call from her, and after several awkward starts (including a tryst when she asks him not to kiss her on her mouth), they fall in love. But this happens only after a near tragedy which Ali faces, a kind of eye opener and arrogance buster for a man who is used to casual sexual flings and allergic to responsible relationships. And this includes with his own son.

In an interview with *The Hollywood Reporter*, Audiard said: "My movie is based on a short story by Craig Davidson. It was, first of all, a literary pleasure. I hadn't read a short story that affected me so much in a long time. I was working on my last film, *A Prophet*, and I talked about it with my screenwriter and that's when it became a movie project. Each film has a tendency to produce the next one. The whole men's society — prison, minuscule scenery with no light and no women [in *A Prophet*] — after that we wanted to create a love story, with light and wide screen shots"

Garnering more stars from critics than *Rust and Bone* has been *Beyond the Hills*. It could

not be more apt for it comes at a time when the rift between religious-superstition and secular pragmatism is deepening. This is glaring in India. Directed by the gifted Romania's Cristian Mungiu (whose abortion drama, *4 months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* won the Palm d'Or at Cannes a few years ago), *Beyond the Hills* unfolds in a remote monastery, where there is no electricity, no running water and little trace of modernism. Headed by a local priest, the Orthodox monastery houses an order of young nuns, who call the man papa.

One of the highly devout nuns is a young woman, Voichita. Unease begins to simmer when her childhood friend, Alina, comes to visit her. Alina hopes to persuade Voichita to leave the monastery and come away to Germany. In an undercurrent of lesbian tension — which Alina wants to rekindle and Voichita tries repressing — life continues with Christian pronouncements (The West has lost the true faith... When sins are forgiven, man finds peace).

However, Alina would have none of these, and when she thwarts attempts to tame her by getting physically and verbally abusive, the priest and the nuns see no option but to tie her up, provoking in her a rage that is seen as demonic.

The third movie at Cannes that was engaging was Thomas Vinterberg's *The Hunt*. One of the creators of *Dogma 95* (a formula to take cinema back to its roots — no artifice

Salute to Uday Shankar

The Cannes Film Festival paid tribute to Uday Shankar the other evening by screening his 1948 movie, *Kalpana*, in the prestigious Classics Section. Digitally restored by Martin Scorsese's World Cinema Foundation from an original dupe negative preserved at the National Film Archive of India with the active help of and funding by Shivendra Singh and Shankar's family, *Kalpana* was screened to a full auditorium and in the presence of Shankar's widow, Amala, and daughter, Mamata.

In a moving speech, 93-year-old Amala said that France held a special place in her heart, because it was in Paris that she had first met Uday as a 11-year-old girl.

Kalpana — looking as fresh as if it had just popped out of the cans — is a black and white spectacle which uses dance and music to narrate the story of a meek writer who struggles to sell his script, and is taunted and rejected by many, including a formula-driven producer.

Interestingly, as Amala herself said, *Kalpana* goes beyond cinema, dance and music to critique a young India torn between idealism and means to get rich quickly. The dilemma of several political isms and the animosity that some politicians had for others of their ilk find a covert expression in *Kalpana*. But these cannot be missed, and the issues raised in the work are still relevant in today's India.

Uday Shankar took four years to make the movie, the only one he ever made. He died in 1977.

that is) along with Lars Von Trier (European cinema's enfant terrible), Vinterberg broke dramatically on the international scene in 1998 with *The Celebration*. The film, screened at Cannes, was a delightful mix of comedy and tragedy where a happy family reunion is blown away by the revelation of childhood sexual abuse. The air is vitiated and the pretence of joy disappears.

In what is considered as the Danish director's most gripping movie after *The Celebration*, *The Hunt* takes us back again to paedophilia. Only that this time, the man, a kindergarten school teacher, has been wrongly accused. Propelled by Mads Mikkelsen's hauntingly restrained acting, the film impacts you with not a single false note.

Narrating what is the core point — the way gossip and children's imagination can prove horribly ruinous — *The Hunt* underlines the fragility of trust even between two best friends.

Lucas (Mikkelsen) is a respected member of a small deer-hunting community who is trying to salvage his life after a messy divorce and job loss when a little girl (daughter of his best friend), provoked by an Internet image, says that the man exposed himself.

This starts the movie's nightmarish chain of events, and though the innocent Lucas is exonerated in the end, the last frame reveals how some accusations stick. Stories of witch hunt and child sexual abuse are common, have been presented on the screen for years. Yet, *The Hunt* shocks us, particularly because of the way the community is blinded by hearsay and gossip.

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