

# Lights, camera, action

Packed full of premieres, panel discussions and prize-givings, film festivals celebrate the best that cinema has to offer. Here, **Isaac Davis** explores some of those taking place around the world this quarter



From Gothenburg and Rotterdam in January to Florence and Dubai in December, the global arts calendar is packed with film festivals. Their popularity is easy to understand. For the global film industry, festivals provide a valuable opportunity to see and be seen – to wine, dine and sign that all-important deal. For the public, meanwhile, the best film festivals offer a chance to catch future blockbusters weeks or even months ahead of schedule, and perhaps to see a masterpiece or two that may never receive a major release.

Here, we take a look at four of the world's most influential and glamorous festivals that are taking place in the coming months, which between them have all the cinematic bases covered. Taking place in Europe, North America, Asia and Africa, this quartet of events has been held a total of 169 times – and they continue to go from strength to strength.

## VENICE

First out of the blocks is the venerable **Venice International Film Festival** (31 August – 10 September 2016, [www.labiennale.org/en/cinema](http://www.labiennale.org/en/cinema)), second only to Cannes in the glamour stakes.

Founded in 1932, it's the oldest film festival in the world, but it wears its history lightly – the programme here is usually rich in progressive and inventive movies.

Each year, a jury presents the Golden Lion Award to the best film shown at the festival. Along with the Palme d'Or, awarded each year at Cannes, and the Golden Bear, given to the best film at the Berlin International Film Festival, it's one of the most prestigious prizes in world cinema, and one of the most international – the last seven prizes

have been awarded to films from seven different countries. Sam Mendes, the British director of *Spectre* and *Skyfall*, will serve as president of the 2016 jury, trying to ensure that his jurists don't fall out as they pick from the 20 or so films selected for competition.

## TORONTO

While Venice tends to favour international arthouse cinema, the **Toronto International Film Festival** (8-18 September) ▶

**Main:** Stars such as Scarlett Johansson flock to Venice

# Travel

FILM



Pictured (clockwise from left): Jennifer Aniston; Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt; Leonardo Di Caprio, Carey Mulligan and Baz Luhrmann; Michael Fassbender



has an international outlook, but the emphasis is on Asian movies. Around 300 films are shown at BIFF every year, including roughly 100 world premieres. More than a dozen awards recognise the best movies at the festival, with a special prize reserved for someone who has made an outstanding contribution to the promotion of Korean cinema around the world.



## BUSAN

A month later and 6,700 miles away, the **Busan International Film Festival** (6-15 October 2016, [www.biff.kr](http://www.biff.kr)) gets under way in South Korea's second city. Staged at the spectacular Busan Cinema Center, BIFF has grown into one of the largest and most important film festivals in Asia since it was first staged 20 years ago.

It's a big deal for the industry: each year, the festival welcomes 10,000 guests and 2,000 members of the media. But it also draws huge public audiences: more than 220,000 people attended in 2015. BIFF

## CAIRO

Our final film festival takes place 5,450 miles from Busan, and sits a world apart from it in cultural terms. When the **Cairo International Film Festival** (15-24 November 2016, [www.ciff.org.eg](http://www.ciff.org.eg)) first took place in 1976, it became the first international film festival to be staged in the Arab world. Celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2016, it's a powerhouse event that presents a wide and eclectic variety of films from home and abroad, and a visit to CIFF makes for a fabulous way to end your cinematic year. ■

2016, [www.tiff.net](http://www.tiff.net)) delivers a broader and more mainstream mix of big pictures. TIFF is the first big showcase for many of the autumn's big releases, and draws a heavyweight crowd of stars, directors and industry insiders: Sandra Bullock, Tom Hardy and Kate Winslet all made appearances in 2015.

Unlike Venice, Cannes and others, TIFF is non-competitive – there's no jury to decide on and dish out a string of awards. However, the audience prize is the most influential in the business. Seven of the last eight films to have won TIFF's People's Choice Award went on to be nominated for Best Picture at the Academy Awards, and three (*Slumdog Millionaire*, *The King's Speech* and *12 Years a Slave*) won the Oscar.

