



Par excellence

As the Festival de Cannes – International film festival – fast approaches, we look at the most anticipated premieres and guests in the context of a long and distinguished history

Celebrating its 78th year in 2025, the Cannes Film Festival will be held from the 13th-14th May at the Palace of Festivals and Congresses (Cannes). Formerly known as the International Film Festival until its renaming in 2003, it provides a premier stage for unveiling new films spanning various genres. Every year, Cannes becomes

a global hub where filmmakers present their work to industry professionals, critics, and the most respected cinema aficionados.

Set to showcase the next drop of blockbuster movies before the world's most elite, including the highly anticipated Christopher McQuarrie's *Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning*, the Cannes Film Festival was originally

conceptualised on a train journey by French diplomat, Philippe Erlanger, in 1938.

During the 1930s, the Venice Film Festival was the only major global film competition. However, it came under criticism for favouring propaganda films due to political pressure from fascist regimes, particularly those led by Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini.

In response, Erlanger proposed the creation of a new festival in France that would promote artistic freedom and impartiality. His vision was to establish a platform where films from around the world could be celebrated on their artistic and cinematic merits, without external political interference.

With no time to waste, plans for the first festival were announced in June 1939, beginning on 1st September, coinciding with the Venice Film Festival –but the festival never took place. As world tensions escalated, many visitors left Cannes following the announcement of the German-Soviet Pact on 23rd August.



Despite the uncertainty, organisers held a private screening of what would have been the festival's first competition film, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* by William Dieterle. On the same day the festival was to open, Germany invaded Poland. The event was postponed, but with the outbreak of World War II and the declaration of war on 3rd September, the festival was ultimately cancelled. The selection that year would have included notable films such as *The Wizard of Oz* by Victor Fleming, *Only Angels Have Wings* by Howard Hawks, and *Union Pacific* by Cecil B. DeMille.

After the war, the idea was revived, and the first official Cannes Film Festival took place in 1946, marking the beginning of what would become one of the most prestigious film events in the world.

This year, acclaimed French actress Juliette Binoche serves as Jury President, overseeing a lineup expected to be particularly strong. Binoche has a long-standing

Left: Bella Hadid ahead of the gala premiere for *Pain and Glory* in 2019 Above left: Juliette Binoche attends *The Last Face* premiere during in 2016 Above right: Brad Pitt at the screening of *Once Upon A Time In Hollywood* in 2019 Right: Uma Thurman in 2017

connection with the Cannes Film Festival, having won Best Actress in 2010 for her performance in *Certified Copy*. She shared her excitement about leading the jury, reminiscing about her first appearance at Cannes four decades ago with *Rendez-vous*. Securing a spot in the festival is highly competitive, with artistic director Thierry Fremaux carefully curating the official selection.

While speculation continues about the full list of contenders, few films have been confirmed so far, including Jim Jarmusch's *Father Mother Sister Brother*, starring Cate Blanchett, Adam Driver, and Tom Waits.

Among the most anticipated submissions is Richard Linklater's French-language *Nouvelle Vague*, exploring the making of Jean-Luc



Godard's *Breathless* and the rise of the French New Wave. Spike Lee is expected to return with *Highest 2 Lowest*, a reimagining of Akira Kurosawa's *High and Low*, starring Denzel Washington. Cannes regular Wes Anderson may also debut *The Phoenician Scheme*, a drama centered on a family business, featuring Benicio del Toro, Mia Threapleton, Michael Cera, Tom Hanks, and Scarlett Johansson.

Other American filmmakers rumoured to be in contention include Ari Aster with the A24 Western black comedy *Eddington*, starring Emma Stone and Joaquin Phoenix; Gregg Araki's thriller *I Want Your Sex*, featuring Olivia Wilde, Cooper Hoffman, and Charli XCX; and Kelly Reichardt's *The Mastermind*, a Vietnam War-era

drama starring Josh O'Connor. Kristen Stewart's directorial debut, *The Chronology of Water*, based on Lidia Yuknavitch's memoir and starring Imogen Poots, is also generating excitement.

Speculation continues about Tom Cruise's previously mentioned film making its debut, potentially premiering around its theatrical release on May 21, though an official decision is yet to be announced.

While the Cannes Film Festival primarily caters to industry professionals, select events and screenings may be accessible to the general public. However, access is typically limited, and interested individuals should monitor official announcements for opportunities to participate. festival-cannes.com ■

