

VENICE REVIEW DAILY

TFV Talks to Nicola Borrelli

VERDICT: Nicola Borrelli, the Director General of Cinema and Audiovisual at the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities and for Tourism, takes time to speak with The Film Verdict before Venice.

TheFilmVerdict, September 5, 2023

THE FILM VERDICT: Mr. Borrelli, you have an impressive career. Your name, while very important in Italy, is not a so well known outside the Italian industry, yet your work affects both Italian and international industries. What is your role as Director General of Cinema and Audiovisual at the Ministry of Culture, and how does it influence the Italian landscape directly?

NICOLA BORRELLI: Thanks for the compliments. My role as Director has evolved in line with the changes in the industry, such as the regulatory provisions that have intervened over the years at the level of governance and at

Continues next page

OUT OF COMPETITION

COUP DE CHANCE



Venice Film Festival

VERDICT: Infidelity is followed by murder in glamorous Paris in Woody Allen’s smooth-as-silk 50th film ‘Coup de Chance,’ shot entirely in French.

Deborah Young, September 4, 2023

Which of the beautiful Parisians in the cast will enjoy that “stroke of luck” promised in the title of Woody Allen’s milestone 50th movie, Coup de Chance?

Unfolding in the wealthier spheres of French society, the story is an elegant, enjoyable mixture of drama, comedy and romance. All told, this is one of the 87-year-old filmmaker’s bet-

ter recent efforts, though it lacks the literary punch and incisive wit of his golden period.

And although Allen is the New York director par excellence, the film actually gains something by having been shot in French, a language surprisingly in tune with the screenplay’s ironically stylized dialogue. At the Venice out of competition screening where it would

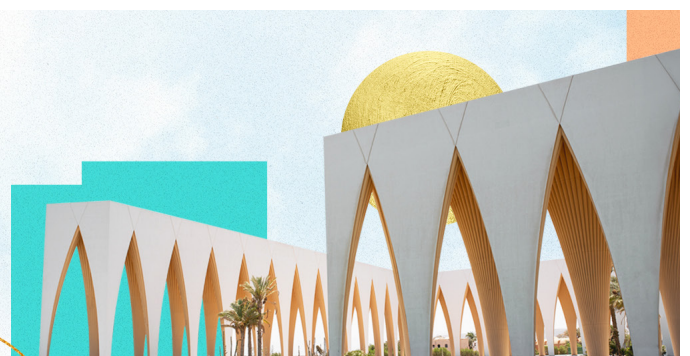
Full review, click here

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Venice Film Festival

COMPETITION

ENEAS

VERDICT: A withering take-down of Rome’s vapid middle class, Pietro Castellitto’s (‘The Predators’) exuberant second feature ‘Enea’ is an amusing, fast-paced game that winks at gangster movies and bows in Venice competition.

Deborah Young, September 5, 2023

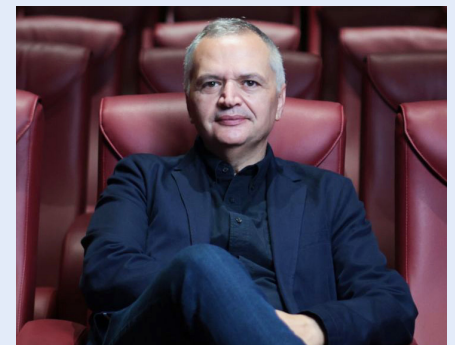
Writer-director-actor Pietro Castellitto taps a rich vein of Italian social satire in his snub to the bourgeoisie Enea, revealing a unique, if somewhat chaotic, creative voice that commands attention. The finishing touches still need to be put on the narrative style, but the foundations are laid for future development.

The 30-year-old protagonists Enea (played by the director) and Valentino (folk singer Giorgio Quarzo Guarascio) are a hoot as daredevil rebels who scornfully trash the vacuous lives and empty souls of their well-to-do parents, while living high on their money. Their upscale search for values and the meaning of existence, at once grotesquely funny and unsettling in the reversals of class, should hit a responsive nerve in young adult audiences who like their messages in bright colors and easy metaphors.

The mischievous spirit of Castellitto’s screenplay, so full of Ostland-esque paradox, was already present in his first film *The Predators* (2020), in which a family of [Full review, click here](#)

Borrelli continued from page 1 the level of strategic, administrative, and organizational skills.

Just think: for some years now, our Directorate has been extended to cover the audiovisual sector, along with cinema. This is partly due to the big transformation in the market; for example, the raging growth of TV series productions and of our presence

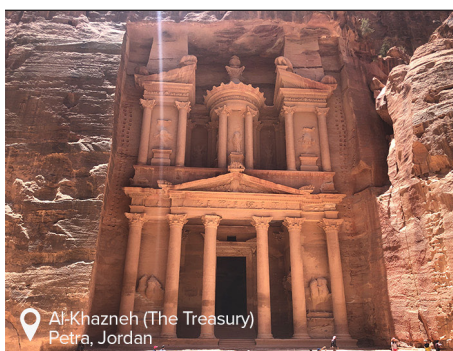


Nicola Borrelli MIBACT

abroad. This is why the cinema and audiovisual law of 2016 and the implementing decrees (updated several times) now support the entire “extended supply chain”, from short films and documentaries to series that are broadcast on TV or directly to digital, to films for theatrical release, up to video clips and video games, as well as the film theaters themselves.

My role in the department that I have the honor of chairing has grown considerably in the last

[Full Interview, click here](#)



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Petra, Jordan

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COMPETITION

GREEN BORDER

VERDICT: Veteran Agnieszka Holland is joined by young female directors Kamila Tarabura and Katarzyna Warzecha for this black-and-white drama about refugees trying to enter the EU, which is more thematically than emotionally resonant.

Boyd van Hoeij, September 5, 2023

The complicated situation on the Polish-Belarrussian border, which is also an external EU border, is of course fascinating fodder for high-stakes drama. But you wouldn't necessarily know that from watching the 150-plus-minute Green Border (Zielona Granica), which is hindered by extremely predictable character development and a mosaic-like approach to narrative, which makes it hard to really get to know and empathise with any of the characters.

The no-doubt well-intentioned project thankfully casts a kind eye on the refugees looking for a better life elsewhere but does them a disservice by treating them as almost

interchangeable supporting characters in their own story. That said, a Venice competition slot should ensure a measure of visibility on the international circuit, plus it's nice to see veteran Polish director Agnieszka Holland (In Darkness, Spoor) sharing directing duties with two young filmmakers, Kamila Tarabura and Katarzyna Warzecha,

who so far have only made shorts. The film is divided into numbered chapters, at least initially. The largest of these chapters consists of the opening forty-something minutes, which look at a family of Syrian refugees and a woman from Afghanistan as they land in Belarus and are then taken to the Polish border. It's here that things get thorny, as Polish border guards don't want to accept these refugees, who were courted by Belarusian President Lukashenko to put pressure on the EU. So the Poles mostly try — very much illegally — to push them back into Belarus, on the other side of a long stretch of barbed wire in a forest (the "Green Border" of the title). This is the start of a horrible cat-and-mouse game with people from far away who become exhausted, wet, hungry, dirty and start to have physical ailments as they are tossed (and sometimes physically dropped or

[Full Review, click here](#)



Hong Kong's Permanent Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism Joe Chi-cho Wong with TFV editor Deborah Young at the Venice Film Festival



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BYE BYE TIBERIAS

VERDICT: Directed by Hiam Abbass’s daughter Lina Soualem, this beautifully layered, quietly intelligent documentary explores her female-centric family’s experiences of dispossession and exile following the 1948 Nakba, seeking to break the silence surrounding trauma.

Jay Weissberg, September 5, 2023

Lina Soualem digs into her Palestinian family’s matrilineal past in her beautifully modulated, emotionally candid documentary Bye Bye Tiberias.

That her mother is Hiam Abbass will be a major selling point, but the actress’ celebrity is a minor element in what’s a moving look at the Palestinian yearning for home and the catastrophic knock-on effect of the Nakba, when Israel dispossessed hundreds of thousands. Abbas grew up with stories of loss, and although she eventually left for France in a bid to distance herself from the trauma, she and her



Frida Marzouk, Beall Productions Raluca

daughter came to realize escape is impossible. “Don’t open the gate to past sorrows” was the family motto, but hiding them doesn’t reduce the cancer, and Soualem’s respectful yet probing exploration highlights the melancholic residue of memory that connects women down the generational divide. Festivals, showcases and streaming sites will get considerable traction from this quietly intelligent film.

Soualem (Their Algeria) cleverly

opens and closes with her mother, first in 1992 and then today, pointing out the geographical centrality of Galilee, from where you can see Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, countries that received huge numbers of refugees and yet never made them feel welcome. Abbass was born in Deir Hana, close to where her ancestors are from on Lake Tiberias (sometimes called the Sea of Galilee), hearing her mother

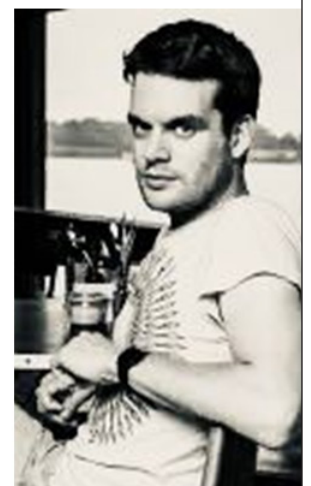
[Full review, click here](#)

Boyd van Hoeij

Boyd van Hoeij, SENIOR CRITIC, is a film writer based in Luxembourg and Paris. He started as a trade critic for Variety and moved to The Hollywood Reporter in 2013, where he worked until he joined The Film Verdict in 2021. Boyd also regularly writes for De Filmkrant (Netherlands) and has contributed to Indiewire and The Atlantic. He was awarded the 2020 Plume d’Or for his work as a critic by the French Union des journalistes de cinéma. Van Hoeij is also the Curator at Large of the Luxembourg City Film Festival, President of the Selection Committee of the Luxembourg Film Fund and has been part of juries and panels at festivals including Cannes, Venice, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Sydney, Palm Springs and Mar del Plata. He has taught film criticism workshops and conducted shot-by-shot analyses of film classics around the world and moderated masterclasses with talents including Quentin Tarantino and Todd Haynes

MEET THE TFV CRITICS
who are at the **VENICE** film festival

THE FILM **VERDICT**



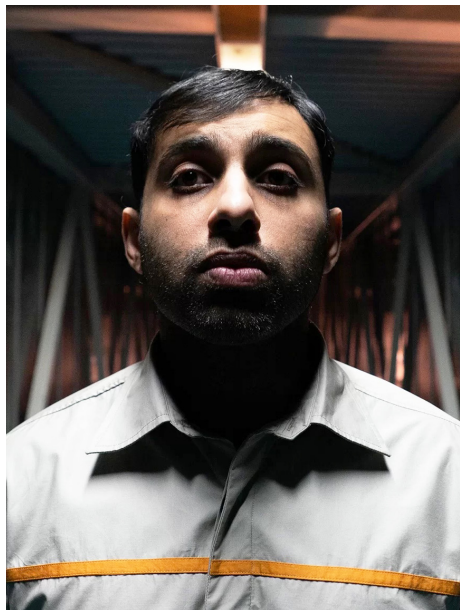
CRITICS WEEK

SKY PEALS

VERDICT: An alienated young man becomes obsessed with his late father’s extra-terrestrial origins in Moin Hussain’s underpowered but appealingly strange inner-space odyssey.

Stephen Dalton, September 5, 2023

A newly bereaved young man has a close encounter of the paranormal kind in *Sky Peals*, the appealingly odd debut feature from British writer-director Moin Hussain. Riffing on ideas of fractured cultural identity and estranged families, Hussain’s bold hybrid blend of science fiction, social realism and ghost story has an autobiographical subtext, its plot partly inspired by the death of the director’s Pakistani grandfather. This is a commendably ambitious first film,



Escape Films

though it ultimately promises more than it delivers, with a consistently low-voltage tone that undersells its rich hinterland of Lynchian weirdness. Following its world premiere in Venice Critics’ Week, *Sky Peals* will next screen at the BFI London Film Festival in October.

Although *Sky Peals* was filmed in various locations around the northern English county of Yorkshire, the story most takes place in hazy nocturnal No Man’s Land, both literally and psychologically. Adam Muhammed (Faraz Ayub) is a self-absorbed thirtysomething who works a numbing night-shift job at a fast-food diner in a 24-hour motorway services area. Glum and withdrawn, Adam seems almost catatonically alienated from events around him. His English mother Donna (Mike Leigh veteran Claire Rushbrook on reliably solid form) is selling the family house and moving away, forcing her clueless son to finally face up to adult responsibility and fly the nest. Meanwhile, Adam’s long-estranged Pakistani father Hassan (Jeff Mirza) keeps leaving him voicemails, urgently

[Full review, click here](#)

VENICE FAST FACTS

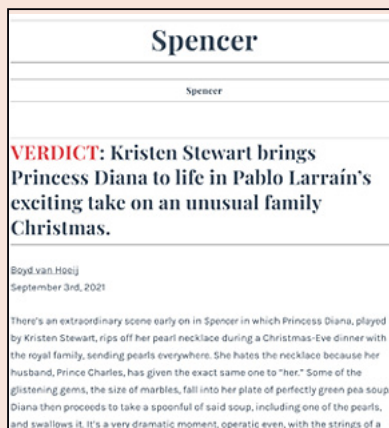
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2019



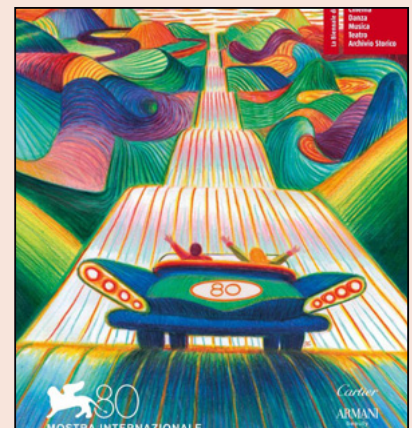
The decision to include 1978 rape convicted Roman Polanski’s film *An Officer and A Spy* was met with outrage.

2021

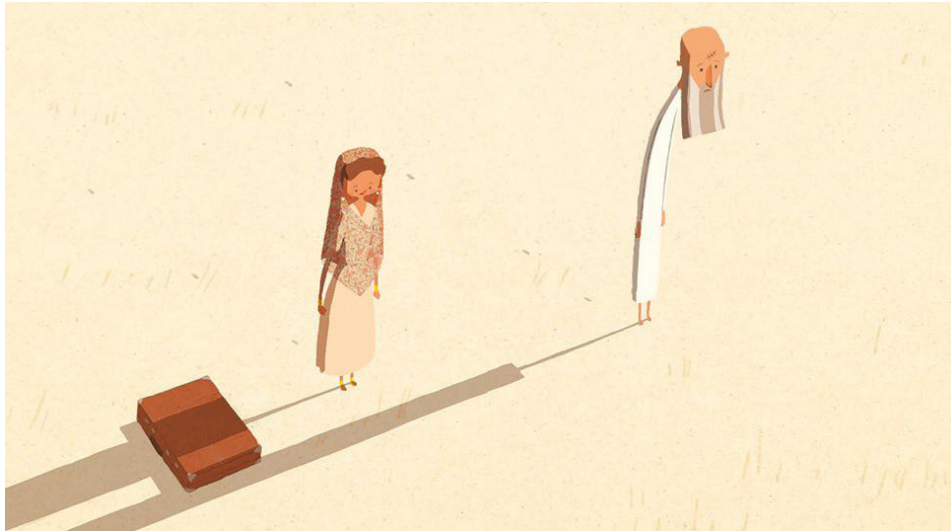


[The Film Verdict](#) is launched at the Venice Film Festival to make up for the declining international industry reviews.

2023



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Venice Film Festival

VERDICT SHORT

IN THE SHADOW OF THE CYPRESS

VERDICT: Unspoken traumas are made manifest in the beautifully drawn and profoundly moving animated allegory, *In the Shadow of the Cypress*.

Ben Nicholson, September 5, 2023

Shirin Sohani and Hossein Molayemi's delicately wrought animation, *In the Shadow of the Cypress*, depicts a difficult familial relationship.

A father and daughter live in a small house by the ocean, physically and emotionally isolated – from the outside world and one another. The father is a former sea captain who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder that comes crashing unbidden into their humble home in irresistible waves. When one day a whale is beached right outside their door, the duo is forced to confront the enormity of what ails their lives. Combining a bruising psychological realism with some wonderfully employed animated flourishes that seem to manifest the emotional tumult, Sohani and Molayemi's film is a triumph.

The film drops us directly into the

middle of an episode in which the father is lashing out violently. A window of the house already sports a historic crack that has been mended but is now shattered by something being hurled through it. His fit of anger is uncontrollable and as his daughter attempts

to calm him he throws her to the ground – this is the final straw. She decides she can no longer stay at their home, but when she goes to leave the following morning, she is faced with the whale stuck on the coastline. While she is adamant about saving the whale, her father becomes frustrated as their efforts fail, and retreats to his old, wrecked ship – a mausoleum anchored just offshore.

Given its lack of dialogue, weighty themes, and the leviathan of a metaphor at its centre, *In the Shadow of the Cypress* manages to be impressively understated. The work done on the depiction of the two characters is excellent, but it is in the external representations of inner conflict that the film is truly

[Full review, click here](#)



VERDICT SHORT

SEA SALT

VERDICT: The inconsistencies of adolescence are the challenges of burgeoning womanhood are central to Leila Basma's knotty and intoxicating coming-of-age short.

Ben Nicholson, September 5, 2023

Borderlines and forms of liminality abound in *Sea Salt*.

Seventeen-year-old Nayla (Nathalie Issa) seems to be approaching a multitude of crossroads in Leila Basma's evocative portrait of late pubescence. As with all of the best films that address this period of any character's life, the act of progressing forward – of determining the correct path – is not just beleaguered by potholes, but an entirely awkward and discomfiting endeavour.

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Location Flashback

Via Aurelio Saffi, Tuscany

Life Is Beautiful (1997)



In this scene, five years into their marriage, Guido Orefice (Roberto Benigni) gives his wife Dora (Nicoletta Braschi) a ride to work on his bicycle, their 5-year-old son Giosue (Giorgio Cantarini) riding in the front basket

The film was an overwhelming critical and commercial success, over \$230 million worldwide, including \$57.6 million in the United States and one of the highest-grossing non-English language movies of all time.

The movie won the Grand Prix at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival, nine David di Donatello Awards (including Best Film), five Nastro d'Argento Awards in Italy, two European Film Awards, and three Academy Awards, including Best Foreign Language Film and Best Actor for Benigni, the first for a male non-English performance. The National Board of Review included it in the top five best foreign films of 1998.

The film was inspired by the story of Rubino Romeo Salmoni and his book *In the End, I Beat Hitler*, which incorporates elements of irony and black comedy. Director Roberto Benigni, who is gentile consulted with the Center for Documentation of Contemporary Judaism, based in Milan, throughout production

Via Aurelio Saffi is a short sloping street near the Abbey of Saints Flora e Lucilla, a Medieval abbey in Arezzo, Tuscany. Construction of the church began in 1278 and by 1315, the adjacent monastery was built, but the church was rebuilt starting in 1565 under the designs of Giorgio Vasari. The work was completed in 1650 when the bell tower and presbytery were finished. The film was shot in the centro storico (historic centre) of Arezzo, Tuscany. The scene where Benigni falls off a bicycle and lands on Nicoletta Braschi was shot in front of Badia delle Sante Flora e Lucilla in Arezzo



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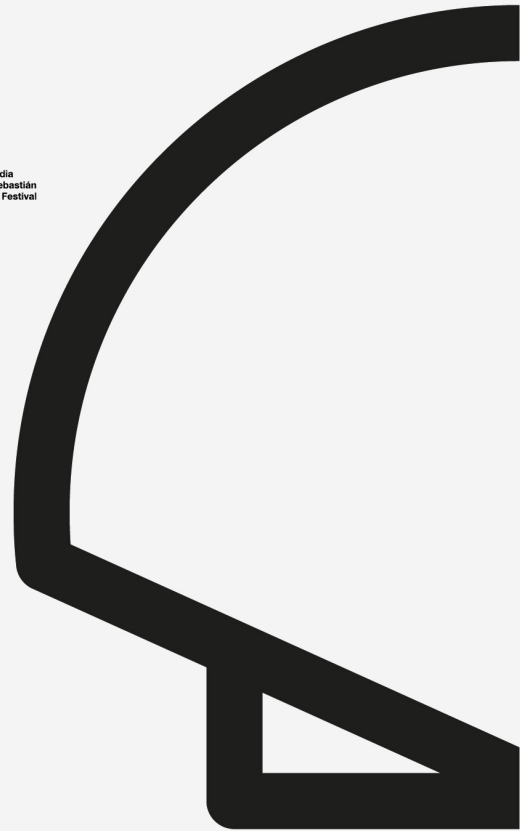


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