



## VENICE REVIEW DAILY

### VENICE IMMERSIVE

#### VARIATIONS ON 360 DEGREES

**VERDICT:** Various installations in the Venice Immersive put their own stamp on the 360-degree viewing experience.

*Max Borg, September 6, 2023*

As one might expect, the Venice Immersive selection places a lot of emphasis on the 360-degree experience, whether it be an interactive game or a more conventional, passive role for the spectator. So, for our final Immersive dispatch of the festival, this writer decided to do a roundup of the more interesting variations on that theme: three in the main competition and one in the Biennale College Cinema VR out-of-competition strand.

*Continues next page*



### COMPETITION

#### ORIGIN



ARRAY Filmworks

**VERDICT:** Ava DuVernay's "Origin" is a highly ambitious attempt to fictionalize Isabel Wilkerson's theory on the centrality of caste rather than race in determining discriminatory hierarchies, playing to the director's strengths in terms of depicting personal relationships but also her weaknesses in several overly didactic sequences that treat characters and audiences like ignoramuses.

*Jay Weissberg, September 6, 2023*

Just look at the list of foundations and individuals who've put money into Ava DuVernay's didactic explanation of caste versus racism: Melinda French Gates, the Ford Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, Laurene Powell Jobs, Agnes Gund.... It's a rollcall of individuals and organizations worthily put-

ting their dough into equitable society projects, so it makes sense they'd help to bankroll Origin given that DuVernay has become cinema's popular voice of social justice, tackling issues with a flair for drama aimed at mainstream audiences. Selma was a powerful look at a chapter of the civil rights

*Full review, [click here](#)*

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## OUT OF COMPETITION

### HIT MAN

**VERDICT:** Richard Linklater’s farce about a phony hired killer is charming and unpredictable, but it would benefit from dropping the “based on a true story” angle.

*Alonso Duralde, September 5, 2023*

Given the time and effort many artists put into standing out from the crowd, it’s been fascinating to watch rising star Glen Powell turn his personal brand into “indistinct.” In *Top Gun: Maverick*, the joke of his character was that he

was so dry-toast unmemorable that his fighter-pilot call-sign was “Bob.” In *Hit Man*, which Powell co-wrote with director Richard Linklater, he plays a college professor whose bland anonymity makes him a perfect chameleon to run sting operations for the police.

Powell’s Gary Johnson is a divorced philosophy professor who leads a quiet life in New Orleans with his cats and his birds, and his proficiency with electronics scores him a side gig planting hidden mics and cameras for the NOPD. Gary’s devices catch people in the act

[Full review, click here](#)

*Immersive continued from page 1*

The latter was arguably the most harrowing title in the entire selection, at least based on the loglines and what we managed to see during our stay on Immersive Island: *Tales of the March*, directed by Stefano Casertano. Likely to be a hit — in as much as that word applies in this context — among history buffs, the experience is divided in two: the first half is the film, a re-enactment of one of the death marches organized by the SS to move prisoners from concentration camps in Poland to Germany. Tim Stephenson voices Eithan, the protagonist, with narration based on recollections by survivors. While the march itself provides a clear focal point (at least in the early stretches of the film), the viewer is consistently capable of moving around and taking in the full breadth of the surrounding landscape, be it a street or a forest. Adding to the stark realism, the room used for the experience on Immersive Island had its floor paved with gravel.

Once the main segment is over, the 360-degree setting is occupied by various stills, and by clicking on them with the controller we can hear additional testimonies, providing a more complete picture of an atrocity — the last act of the Holocaust — that involved some 700,000 prisoners of the

[Full Review, click here](#)

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Venice Film Festival

## COMPETITION

### ME CAPTAIN

**VERDICT:** Director Matteo Garrone steps back from the edginess of stylized crime dramas and horror fantasies to recount the no less cruel and shocking journey made by two Senegalese teens to Europe.

*Deborah Young, September 6, 2023*

Films about refugees and immigrants have become a sadly prolific subgenre of world cinema in these last decades of mass migration due to wars, terrorism and endemic poverty. How can the horrors faced by Africans who choose to make the journey to Europe be told on film, after the surfeit of news reporting that has, if anything, dulled the audience's natural emotional response to fellow human beings in mortal peril?

In *Me Captain* (*Io Capitano*), acclaimed Italian director Matteo Garrone returns to his roots to dramatize the most classic of adventure stories – two friends who embark on a terrifying odyssey from Dakar to Sicily – in a sort of coming-of-age tale seen through

their eyes. Their motivation might be judged flimsy by some: they are aspiring young musicians who dream of becoming stars and signing autographs in Europe, and they are willing to leave the families they love to follow an illusion. But the sincerity of the two main characters, Seydou (played by the innocent-faced, open-hearted Seydou Sarr) and his marginally more practical cousin Moussa (Moustapha Fall), soon creates a bond of empathy with the audience, making their ordeal very hard to watch indeed.

It is one of the first fiction films to visualize how people cross the Sahara desert on foot and the dangers they face at the hands of unscrupulous human traffickers and armed militia groups, who extract money through graphically depicted torture scenes in ancient “detention centers” in the Libyan desert. Premiering in Venice, this is certainly one of the most impactful Italian films in competition, where a prize would help the Italian-Belgian-French co-prod to find general audiences after the festival hubbub is over.

***Full review, [click here](#)***



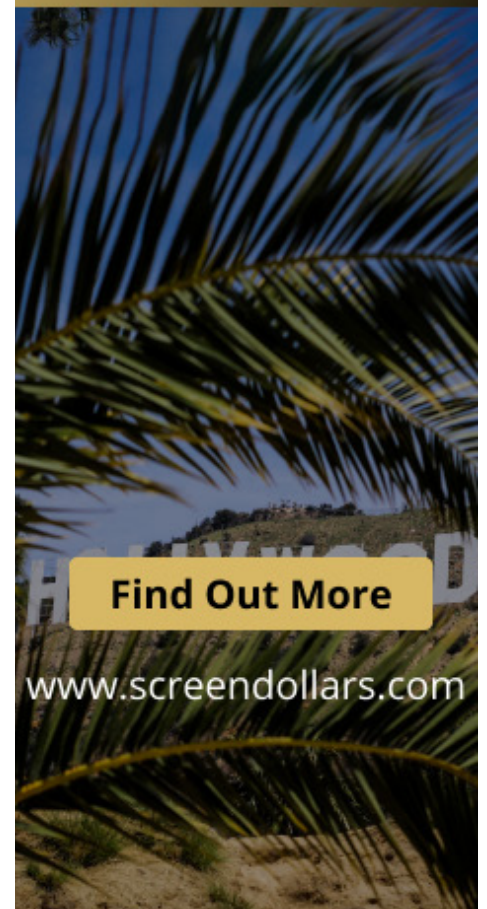
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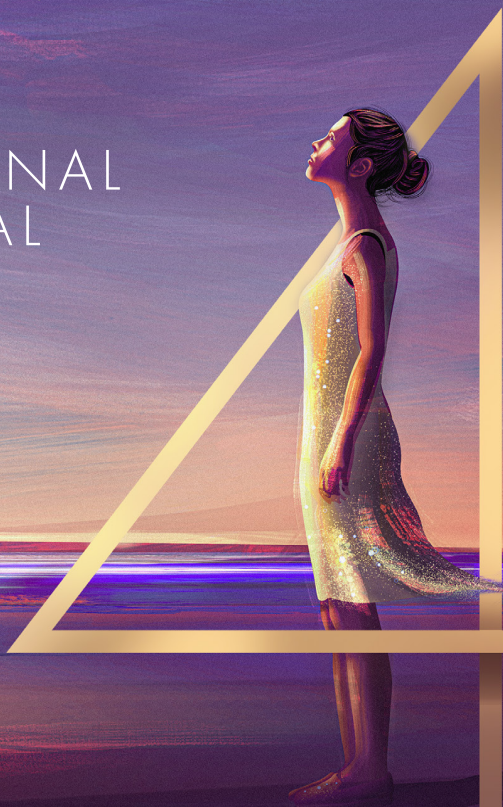
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# OUT OF COMPETITION

## SNOW LEOPARD

**VERDICT:** Rural herders, urban-ite journalists and a young monk consider the fate of a captured, livestock-ravaging wild animal in “Snow Leopard”, an affective, nuanced and multilayered film bowing out of competition at Venice four months after the death of its Tibetan director Pema Tseden.

Clarence Tsui, September 6, 2023

Pema Tseden’s *Snow Leopard* (Xue bao) is at once a gritty social-realist drama about the economic hardship among livestock herders in China’s rural hinterlands, a CGI-laden fantasy about karma and spiritual enlightenment, and a very subtle allegory about a beleaguered community’s troubled co-existence with disruptive outsiders.

The multi-layered and ceaselessly vociferous *Snow Leopard* is a powerful reminder of the recently



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deceased Tibetan filmmaker’s undimmed humanism, his ease in accommodating different visual styles to his poetic universe, and his deft representation of socio-political issues which might still be taboo for China’s rigorous censors today.

The first of two films Pema Tseden managed to finish shooting before he died of a heart attack in May, *Snow Leopard* is a powerful and unquestionably appropriate showcase of the filmmaker’s flair and

also his vigorously open approach in embracing different artistic influences and social perspectives. Bowing out of competition at Venice, where Pema Tseden’s three previous features also premiered, *Snow Leopard* is bound for broad gallops across festivals after its next stop at Toronto, and should serve as an effective entry point for the filmmaker’s new converts in potential retrospectives.

[Full review, click here](#)

# METAVERSE TRIUMPH:

OLDENBURG FILM FESTIVAL, MILC PLATFORM, AND THE FILM VERDICT SET THE STAGE FOR INNOVATION

Elevating its 30-year legacy, the Oldenburg Film Festival collaborates with MILC Platform and The Film Verdict to pioneer its entry into the Metaverse. Immerse yourself in the virtual realm of Oldenburg, engage in illuminating panel discussions, and revel in a thoughtfully curated collection of festival films. Unveiling this September at [metaverse.milc.global](https://metaverse.milc.global)

**VENUE:**

## GIORNATE

### FOLLOWING THE SOUND

**VERDICT:** “Following the Sound” ticks all the boxes for nipponophiles seeking some extremely austere storytelling and swathes of slow-moving, soothing imagery set in a small, serene town in Japan.

*Clarence Tsui, September 6, 2023*

A young bookstore employee befriends two strangers, walks around town with her headphones on, learns to make omelettes and dabbles in art. Offering a slice of everyday life unfolding in a neat and defiantly non-descript Japanese city, *Following the Sound* (Kanata no uta) is a soft, soothing visual experience in which ambience reigns supreme over those oh-so-worldly matters of characterization, narrative or meaning. With his



©Nekojarashi

fourth feature, Japanese filmmaker Kyoshi Sugita has delivered something akin to the cinematic equivalent of a Muji-manufactured monochrome jigsaw puzzle.

Following the Sound is the latest of a recent string of Japanese independent productions in which emotionally suppressed individuals attempt to establish some kind

of human connection with new acquaintances in a small Japanese town. Bowing at the alternative Giornate degli autori sidebar at Venice, Kyoshi Sugita’s latest film – one that is set nearly entirely within the confines of one small, single precinct in the provincial city of Ueda (population: 152,904) – joins

[Full review, click here](#)

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## ORIZZONTI



Unifrance / Jean-Louis Fernandez.

### FOR NIGHT WILL COME

**VERDICT:** A fascinating but underpowered story of a family hiding a secret about one of them from the neighbours.

*Boyd van Hoeij, September 6, 2023*

A French family moves to a new place in a rural village in *For Night Will Come* (*En attendant la nuit*). What the villagers aren't initially aware of is that the tenebrous and toothy teenage son of the family, Philémon, is somewhat unusual in nature. It's not hard to guess where this is all going, of course, so Rouzet clearly didn't want to make a mystery film. Instead, we get a deliberately paced portrait of the family dynamics inside the new family home, where the curtains remain drawn during the day, and the neighbourhood dynamics surrounding them. While the avoidance of genre trappings for as long as possible is an interesting conceit — Julia Ducournau's *Raw* this is not — the final result doesn't quite offer a full meal. That said, this Orizzonti title does suggest Rouzet is a patient and elegant observer of behaviour that's typically human — and some that's not.

Philémon Feral — the surname can't be a coincidence — is a pale and withdrawn teenager most of the time, someone who prefers to stick to the shadows. His mother Laurence (Elodie Bouchez, *Wild Reeds*) is the mothering type, doing everything she can for her brood, even when she's at work as a nurse who takes blood donations. Together with Philémon's father (Jean-Charles Clichet) and younger sister (Laly Mercier), they form a tight family unit, a necessity, given the fact they want to hide the true nature of

[Full Review, click here](#)

### DORMITORY

**VERDICT:** Turkish rookie director Nehir Tuna has made a beautifully played and shot if somewhat opaquely told coming-of-age story set in a rarely-seen world.

*Boyd van Hoeij, September 6, 2023*

An impressionable teenage boy is sent to a boarding institution for his religious upbringing but what he finds there isn't necessarily what you might call angelic behaviour in *Dormitory* (*Yurt*), the stylish feature debut from Turkish director Nehir Tuna. Set in 1997, when tensions between secular and religious Turks were causing a lot of friction, this coming-of-age film shot mostly in crisp black-and-white explores issues that might seem black-and-white to some — religion offers a moral compass while secularism is dangerous, for example — but that instead contain more complex and fascinating gray areas.



La biennale di Venezia.

Though perhaps a little too opaque in its relationship details, this visually potent and strongly acted debut nonetheless offers proof of arresting filmmaking skills, making Tuna a name to watch. *Dormitory* premiered in Venice in the Orizzonti section.

Ahmet (relative newcomer Doga Karakas) is 14 years old when he's sent to a yurt, or Islamic dormitory, where he receives part of his religious education and has to sleep at night with the other boys. But most of them aren't exactly angels. This fascinating paradox could either suggest that the boys are in dire need

[Full Review, click here](#)

# Italy Pavilion Interview: With the Stars Away, Business Comes into Play in Venice

*The Film Verdict sat recently with Roberto Stabile, advisor for international relations and head of special projects at DGCA-MiC/Cinecittà, to discuss business in Venice and the Italian film industry's plans with China.*

By Liza Foreman

The Hotel Excelsior Venice Lido has long been a focal point for delegates and stars gathered for the annual Venice International Film Festival.

For the 80th edition of the festival this week, the beach hotel which houses both the Venice Production Bridge film market and the Italian Pavilion was less about glitz, and more about business, with the Lido's star turnout impacted by the ongoing Hollywood strikes.

Inside the Italian Pavilion, this year's lineup of conferences and talks was well attended. It helped create a pavilion space that Italo exec Roberto Stabile calls: "A place where the Italians must feel at home and all others must feel at home in Italy.

"What we say is that the pavilion is 'Casa Italia'. It's very important for us. We create the conditions to support work for our professionals. At the same time, we organize meetings with foreign delegations, and there are conferences," he said.

Stabile and his colleagues have been in the news this week with the signing of a memorandum of cooperation with Hong Kong.

"The memo aims to help the distribution of Italian films, as well as future collaboration with the special



administrative region of China." Stabile added: "It's not always easy to work with China due to political, cultural and economic difficulties."

As part of the agreement, Italy will hold an 'Italian Screens' exhibition this year from November 23-27 in Hong Kong.

The 'Italian Screens' is a global initiative that presents the best Italian films, released in the past year, with the help of its regional embassies and ambassadors to help find local distribution for

its films. Italian Screens (New Italian Cinema Goes Abroad) aims to strengthen existing distribution networks and open new territories to Italian films. The Hong Kong deal is the big announcement for Italy, but a major push to promote Italy's film industry worldwide continues, overseen by Stabile.

Italian Screens and the Italy Film Distribution Fund, which supports the distribution of Italian films overseas, are high on the list of Stabile's priorities.

We are pushing Italian Screens," he said. "Wherever Italy has an embassy, we organize the showing of new films, screen in cinemas, invite local distributors, and show that local people like our films.

**[Full Article, Click here](#)**



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