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Inside the 2012 Cannes Film Festival, By Adrienne Papp

By Adrienne Papp | June 02, 2012



The Cannes Film Festival is the world's most exciting and celebrated cinematic extravaganza. This year the 65th Cannes Film Festival had a U.S. presence that was considerably larger than in past years. The festival's official poster, an Otto Bettmann photo of the ever-glamorous Marilyn Monroe blowing out a birthday cake candle, was a reminder of the enduring power of Hollywood glamour, and the 80 by 40-foot version of the image dominated the outside wall of the Palais des Festivals. Other locations around the event were decorated with large photos of some equally well-known Hollywood luminaries, including Orson Welles, Rita Hayworth, Clark Gable and Judy Garland.

If the golden age of Hollywood was a visual theme for the event, which ran from May 16-27, when the curtain finally went down on Sunday it was however the European filmmakers who took most of the top prizes.

The festival opened Wednesday night with Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom* a quirky feel good sixties-era film about a young boy and girl who fall in love and run away together, and capped the awards on Sunday by honoring one of Cannes favorite directors, as Michael Haneke won the Palme d'Or for a second time with his film *Amour*, about the power of love and imminent death. The Austrian director's touching and understated film was a showcase for two iconic French acting octogenarians, 85-year-old Emmanuelle Riva and 81-year-old Jean-Louis Trintignant, who portray an elderly couple coping with the wife's debilitating stroke. Cannes jury member Jean Paul Gaultier praised the two actors and the "incredible connection" they conveyed in the film.

Haneke has been well-represented at Cannes over the years, and previously won the Palme in 2009 for *The White Ribbon*. He is only the seventh director to take the top prize twice.

The festival jury awarded the second-place Grand Prize to Matteo Garrone's Italian satire *Reality*, while Ken Loach's whiskey-tasting comedy *The Angels' Share* won the third-place Jury Prize. Mexico's Carlos Reygadas was named

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best director for his surrealism-tinged family story Post Tenebras Lux.

The best actor prize went to Mads Mikkelsen as a man ostracized by his small-town community when he is accused of child abuse in The Hunt. Jury member Ewan McGregor said Mikkelsen had given a beautiful performance whose "wonder is in the subtlety ... but with complete conviction with his character."

The Prize for Best actress was won jointly by Cristina Flutur and Cosmina Stratan, as friends separated by faith in Cristian Mungiu's Romanian movie Beyond the Hills. The drama of love and faith in a remote Romanian monastery also won the award for best screenplay.

The Camera D'Or for best first feature was awarded to Benh Zeitlin's Beasts of the Southern Wild, which also won Sundance's Grand Jury Prize in January. The prize winners were chosen from among 22 contenders by a jury that included Italian director Nanni Moretti, actors Ewan McGregor and Diane Kruger, director Alexander Payne and fashion designer Jean-Paul Gaultier. Some of the critical favorites that were shut out of the prizes include In the Fog by Sergei Loznitsa, Holy Motors by Leos Carax, Rust and Bone by Jacques Audiard, On the Road and Mud, (despite favorable reviews for actors Garrett Hedlund and Mathew McConaughey respectively.)

Once again Cannes proved that it stands alone as a unique celebration of the creative spirit, a place where European elegance and Hollywood glamour come together in an event that celebrates the enormous diversity of filmmaking from all corners of the globe. Now we'll have to wait and see if Amour can follow the success of 2011's The Tree of Life and The Artist all the way to the Academy Awards.



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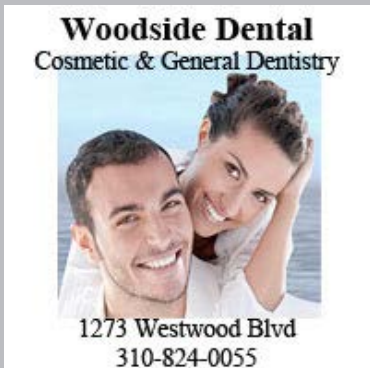
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