

# The Telegraph

## Venice Film Festival: the films to look out for

With the Venice Film Festival opening today, Robbie Collin picks the films likely to cause a stir.



By Robbie Collin 7:00AM BST 28 Aug 2013

### **Gravity (Alfonso Cuarón)**

#### *Opening film*

Alfonso Cuarón's most recent film, *Children of Men*, played in competition at Venice in 2006: this year he returns to the Lido with another science-fiction drama in the prestigious opening night slot. *Gravity* stars Sandra Bullock and George Clooney as two astronauts who come treacherously unstuck from their moorings during a space-walk. The film was shot in 3D, and the trailer promises thoughtful use of that technology along with a tense and pared-down plot – and a lifetime-worth of nightmares for agoraphobics.

*Screening on Wednesday 28th August*

### **Bethlehem (Yuval Adler)**

Listen carefully enough in the weeks before any film festival and you always hear whispers of minor gems worth seeking out, and this Israeli thriller, which will screen

in the Venice Days sidebar, is already the cause of some early excitement. In his debut feature, Yuval Adler explores the relationship between an Israeli secret service officer and his teenage Palestinian informant; Adler's script, co-written by the journalist Ali Waked, is informed by first-hand testimony from both sides of the conflict.

*Screening on Wednesday 28th August*

### **Philomena (Stephen Frears)**

Could Stephen Frears's new drama, about a woman who tracks down the child she gave up for adoption as a teenager, win Dame Judi Dench her third Best Actress Bafta? Awards season might still be some months off, but a successful Venice premiere could propel Philomena towards triumph, or at least some nominations, in the New Year. That's exactly what happened to *The Queen*, which Frears brought to Venice in 2006, and word is Dame Judi's performance is more than up to the task.

*Screening on Saturday 31st August*

### **The Wind Rises (Hayao Miyazaki)**

Venice has been a long-term supporter of the Japanese animation house Studio Ghibli, and awarded Hayao Miyazaki, its co-founder and most prolific director, a lifetime achievement award in 2005. Miyazaki's new picture is a fictionalised biopic of Jiro Horikoshi, a designer of military aircraft during the Second World War. That's emotive stuff for a cartoon, and *The Wind Rises* has already sparked various outcries in Japan and South Korea. Will it prove as controversial on the Lido? We shall see.

*Screening on Saturday 31st August*

### **Parkland (Peter Landesman)**

Since graduating with honours from the High School Musical franchise, Zac Efron has become an unlikely toast of the festival circuit: he was the best thing in Ramin Bahrani's *At Any Price*, which played in competition at Venice last year, and four months earlier Lee Daniels's *The Paperboy* made him the talk of Cannes. This year he returns alongside Paul Giamatti, Jacki Weaver and Billy Bob Thornton in this ensemble drama set in the Dallas Parkland hospital on the day of John F Kennedy's assassination. Attendees will be hoping for something more than a retread of Emilio Estevez's *Bobby*, which framed another Kennedy assassination with a similar-sounding premise.

*Screening on Sunday 1st September*

### **The Armstrong Lie (Alex Gibney)**

Alex Gibney, the Oscar-winning documentarian, has already trained his gimlet eye on the US Army's use of torture in Afghanistan, the murky doings of Julian Assange and Wikileaks and institutionalised sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. His latest project focuses on the downfall of the disgraced Tour de France champion Lance Armstrong. Gibney's film may well outshine the two documentaries in competition: Errol Morris's *The Unknown Known*, a portrait of the former US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and *Sacro GRA*, Gianfranco Rosi's offbeat look at Rome's apparently infamous 45-mile-long ring road.

*Screening on Monday 2nd September*

### **The Zero Theorem (Terry Gilliam)**

Terry Gilliam, the former Python and director of *Brazil* and *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, seldom has trouble attracting major acting talent to his crackpot fables. His new picture is no exception: Christoph Waltz, Matt Damon, Tilda Swinton and Ben Whishaw all take key roles in this drama about a computer hacker's search for the meaning of life. Gilliam's *The Fisher King* took second place in the Venice competition in 1991. He'll be hoping to replicate that film's success, rather than *The Brothers Grimm*, which went away empty-handed in 2005.

*Screening on Monday 2nd September*

### **Locke (Steven Knight)**

Not a great deal of information has been released so far about Tom Hardy's new film *Locke*, beyond its intriguing premise: the story unfolds in real time, as a successful family man's life comes apart at the seams over 85 minutes. Olivia Colman, Alice Lowe, Tom Holland and Bill Milner round out an impressive cast, and the writer and director is Steven Knight, whose work regularly delves into London's criminal subcultures.

*Screening on Monday 2nd September*

### **Under The Skin (Jonathan Glazer)**

Nine years is far too long to have to wait for a new film by Jonathan Glazer, the English director of *Sexy Beast* and the supremely creepy ghost story *Birth*, which premiered at Venice in 2004. He returns to the Lido with this science-fiction drama based on a novel by Michael Faber, in which an alien stalks hitchhikers in the Scottish Highlands like game. As if that plot summary wasn't tempting enough on its own, Scarlett Johansson plays the alien.

*Screening on Tuesday 3rd September*

### **Stray Dogs (Tsai Ming-liang)**

The Malaysian-born, Taipei-based director Tsai Ming-liang has been a champion of the Slow Cinema movement since his second film, *Vive L'Amour*, won the Golden Lion at Venice in 1994. Will his latest project, the story of a father and daughter who travel from Denmark to a mysterious desert, creep along at the same meditative pace? Apichatpong Weerasethakul, another Slow Cinema mainstay, has described it as a "film about home...surged with invisible phantoms": that cryptic endorsement, together with Tsai's proven track record at the festival, makes *Stray Dogs* an early favourite for this year's top prize.

*Screening on Wednesday 4th September*

***The 70th Venice Film Festival runs from 28th August – 7th September***