

Film Festival Fifteen

Selections by Vince LePlavy



Full time equals festival time! My favorite season for film kicks off with a slew of amazing efforts that cruised the festival circuit and garnered major word of mouth along the way. Whether you're a casual viewer or a hardened cinephile, there's something on this list for everyone. From thrillers to biopics to genre-mashing visual feasts, here are 15 sure bets you'll want to keep an eye on as we head into the height of awards season.

Reptile

An exciting feature debut from newcomer Grant Singer boasts an all-star cast with Benicio Del Toro, Justin Timberlake and Alicia Silverstone. This one has white-knuckle suspense written all over it. Case in point: when a young real estate agent is brutally murdered, a morally questionable detective attempts to uncover the truth of the labyrinthine case while delving deep into the dark recesses of his own soul. Singer draws on visionary influences from David Fincher to Denis Villeneuve to Werner Herzog with electrifying results. A spooky good watch to fill your weekend time slot come October.

Festival Premiere: Toronto International Film Festival
Wide Release: October 6th - Netflix



Foe

Oscar nominees Saoirse Ronan (*Brooklyn*, *Little Women*) and Paul Mescal (*Afternoon*) make an immaculate pair in this latest effort from Aussie director Garth Davis. The film depicts a young couple whose commitment to one another is tested when the husband is recruited to work on a giant space station above Earth's orbit. In return the company that hired him offers the deserted wife a disturbing compensation package that hits all too close to home and heart. The magnified focus on the intimacy of a strained relationship only heightens the futuristic elements peppered throughout this somber sci-fi story.

Festival Premiere: New York Film Festival
Wide Release: October 6th - Theaters



Killers of the Flower Moon

DiCaprio. De Niro. Scorsese. Word out of Cannes proclaims this modern American western as another zenith within the master filmmaker's canon. Set in 1920's Oklahoma, it tells the real-life story of the Osage nation's discovery of oil and the ensuing swarm of resourceful outsiders vying to stake a claim on their prospective land. As countless Osage go missing and turn up dead, a young Texas Ranger and the newly-founded F.B.I. must work together to bring the stealthy perpetrators to justice. Based on the popular book by David Grann and equipped with a 3 1/2-hour runtime, *Killers of the Flower Moon* stands to be the crown jewel of the fall movie season and serves as proof that pure cinema is alive and well.

Festival Premiere: Cannes Film Festival
Limited Release: October 20th - Theaters
Wide Release: TBA - Apple TV



The Holdovers

Alexander Payne is back after a six-year hiatus with what critics are saying is a return to form for the lauded director. A scruffy Paul Giamatti plays Paul Hunham, an irritable academy teacher who takes on the responsibility of supervising students who are unable to return home for Christmas break. When a rebellious Angus (Dominic Sessa) pushes Hunham to his limit, the two are forced to face each other's flaws and come to terms with the true meaning of understanding. The bottom line is an earnest look at the relationship between mentor and pupil in a film that showcases an underrated actor/director collaboration worthy of your attention.

Festival Premiere: Telluride Film Festival
Limited Release: October 27th - Theaters
Wide Release: November 10th - Theaters



The Killer

After exploring the mind of the tormented screenwriter amidst the golden age of Hollywood with *Mank*, auteur David Fincher returns to a familiar narrative sandbox with the help of old screenwriting buddy Andrew Kevin Walker (*Seven*). Michael Fassbender plays an unnamed assassin caught up in a manhunt that stretches across international borders. On the run from his employers while battling his own tormented psyche every step of the way, this grim thriller will please fans of Fincher's earlier work and reinforce the trademark style of what the director's known for: dark, lurid entertainment.

Festival Premiere: Venice International Film Festival
Limited Release: October 27th - Theaters
Wide Release: November 10th - Netflix



Priscilla

While audiences were dazzled by Baz Luhrmann's rip-roaring depiction of Elvis, Sofia Coppola steers the ship towards calmer waters to tell the story of Priscilla Beaulieu and her personal relationship with the King of Rock 'n' Roll. Cailee Spaeny (Best Actress winner at Venice) brings welcome gravitas and humanity to a career-making role you'll be hearing more about as the year goes on. Coppola is no stranger to thinking outside the box and she does just that with this tender biopic that depicts the alternate side of superstardom.

Festival Premiere: Venice International Film Festival
Limited Release: November 3rd - Theaters



Next Goal Wins

Taking a break from his run of uber-successful Thor movies, Taika Waititi revisits the delightful tone akin to his earlier offerings (*What We Do in the Shadows*, *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*) with this light-hearted sports comedy. Michael Fassbender shows his range as a drunken Dutch-American soccer coach who takes on the challenge of turning the losing American-Samoan national team into a winning force. A wide release right before Thanksgiving will ensure that this one becomes a hit for adults and children alike.

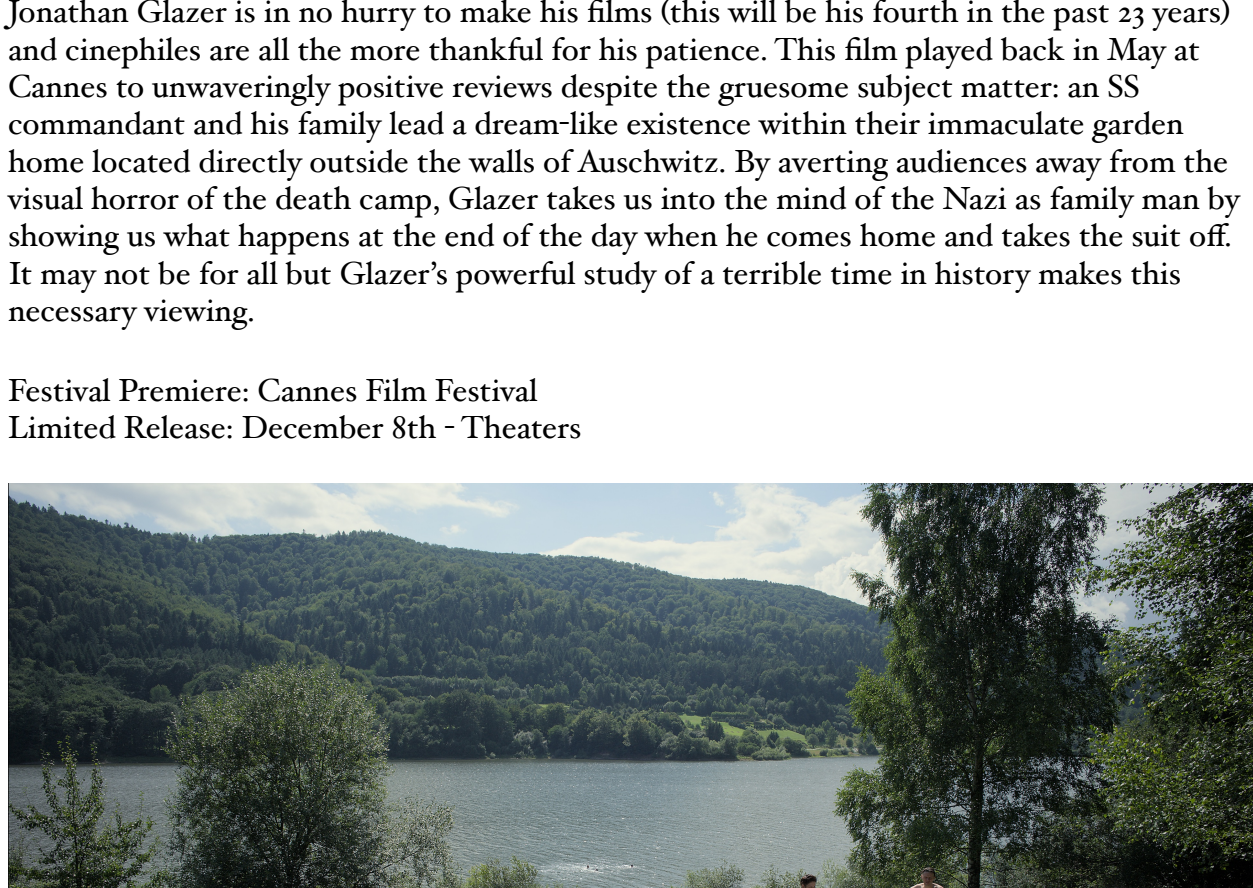
Festival Premiere: Toronto International Film Festival
Wide Release: November 17th - Theaters



May December

Todd Haynes throws his hat into the awards season ring with an examination of the state of relationships and the social ethics cast upon love. Julianne Moore and Charles Melton portray a couple with a seismic age gap who are still recovering from a tabloid takedown that occurred years before. When a documentary (Natalie Portman) arrives to do research about a potential film she plans to make about the couple, things get complicated and the trio's fates become intertwined. One can be sure Haynes will treat these touchy topics with unflinching grace and tact as he has with past works (*Far From Heaven*, *Carol*). This highly-anticipated film kicks off the New York Film Festival at the end of September and is guaranteed to make waves as it opens wider heading into the fall/winter months. Keep this one on your radar.

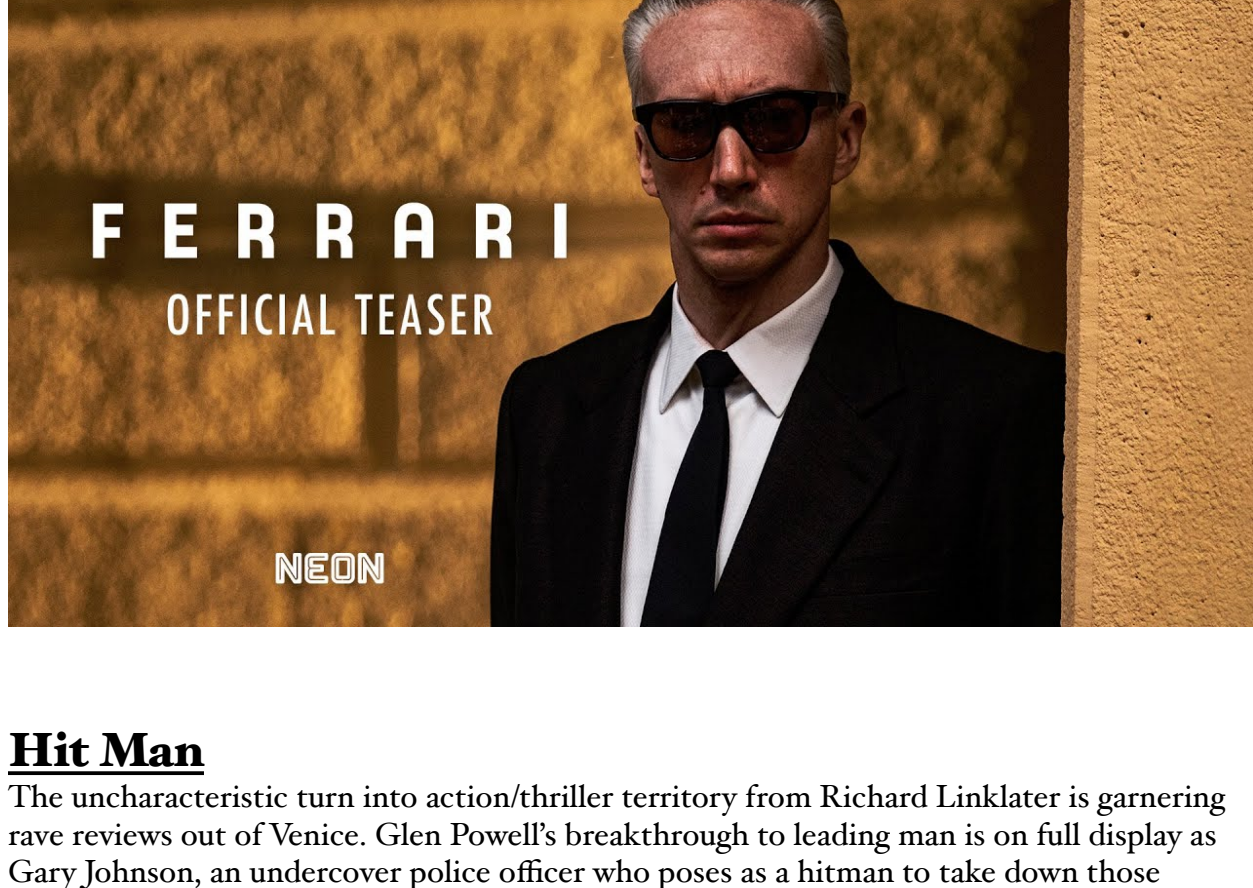
Festival Premiere: Cannes Film Festival
Limited Release: November 17th - Theaters
Wide Release: December 1st - Theaters



Maestro

Whether you love or hate Bradley Cooper's take on the often-remade *A Star is Born*, it's undeniable the man is as talented behind the camera as he is in front of it. This profound dive into the life of famed film composer Leonard Bernstein (Cooper himself) and his wife Felicia Montalegre (Carey Mulligan) looks to be no sophomore slump with its sweeping soundscapes, non-linear narrative and dynamic acting. Any fan of Bernstein's vast body of work or Cooper's unabashed admiration for film history will find more than enough to chew on here.

Festival Premiere: Venice International Film Festival
Limited Release: November 22nd - Theaters
Wide Release: December 20th - Netflix



The Bikeriders

It's been seven years since underrated filmmaker Jeff Nichols (*Take Shelter*, *Mud*, *Midnight Special*) put forth his last directorial effort. With his newest creation on the rise, boy has the wait been worth it. Austin Butler (hot off his portrayal of Elvis Presley) plays Benny, a member of the notorious 1960's biker gang The Vandals. His allegiance between his wife Kathy (an unrecognizable Jodie Comer) and the Vandal's leader (Tom Hardy) begins to blur as the gang's purpose and what they stand for starts to shift with the turning of the tumultuous decade. You'll be hearing loads about this one come awards season.

Festival Premiere: Telluride Film Festival
Wide Release: December 1st - Theaters



Poor Things

Greek filmmaker Yorgos Lanthimos continues to carve out his own unique niche in the cinematic world with yet another engrossing entry that further pushes the visceral aesthetic seen in his previous crowd-pleasers (*The Lobster*, *The Favourite*). Early Oscar buzz has been permeating this film straight out of the gates with praise for Stone's monumental performance as well as a strong bevy of supporting players from Willem Dafoe to Mark Ruffalo (both born Wisconsinites). Nabbing the coveted Golden Lion at Venice, this oddly beautiful take on the Frankenstein story only accentuates the director's singular vision for provocative storytelling.

Festival Premiere: Venice International Film Festival
Limited Release: December 8th - Theaters

The Zone of Interest

Jonathan Glazer is in no hurry to make his films (this will be his fourth in the past 23 years) and cinephiles are all the more thankful for his patience. This film played back in May at Cannes to unwaveringly positive reviews despite the gruesome subject matter: an SS commandant and his family lead a dream-like existence within their immaculate garden home located directly outside the walls of Auschwitz. By averting audiences away from the visual horror of the death camp, Glazer takes us into the mind of the Nazi as family man by showing us what happens at the end of the day when he comes home and takes the suit off. It may not be for all but Glazer's powerful study of a terrible time in history makes this necessary viewing.

Festival Premiere: Cannes Film Festival
Limited Release: December 8th - Theaters

Ferrari

Michael Mann's first film in 8 years zeroes in on a particularly troubled time in the life of Enzo Ferrari. Adam Driver disappears into the role of the legendary entrepreneur who grapples with his failing auto empire along with the untimely death of his son. Mann is known for his whip-lash dialogue and frenetic action sequences (*Heat*, *Public Enemies*) and this heart-stopping retelling looks to be no different. With the revered Mille Miglia (a 1,000-mile race across Italy) as the culminating climax and the deciding factor of Ferrari's continued legacy, this run-and-gun biopic aims to take your breath away on Christmas Day.

Festival Premiere: Venice International Film Festival
Wide Release: December 25th - Theaters

Hit Man

The uncharacteristic turn into action/thriller territory from Richard Linklater is garnering rave reviews out of Venice. Glen Powell's breakthrough to leading man is on full display as Gary Johnson, an undercover police officer who poses as a hitman to take down those attempting to hire him. When a mysterious woman (Adria Arjona) with a dangerous proposition crosses his path, Gary's career and moral compass are irrevocably upended. With distribution yet to be acquired, one can't help but wonder which outfit will be bold enough to take the reins of this sleeper spy caper and give it a well-deserved platform.

Festival Premiere: Venice International Film Festival
Release: TBA

Lee

Kate Winslet embodies the spirit of famed photojournalist Lee Miller. The film spans a lifetime, revealing her start as a young model to her career as a renowned war photographer for Vogue magazine during WWII. Accompanied by Marion Cotillard and Alexander Skarsgard with seasoned cinematographer Ellen Kuras behind the camera for her first feature, this is sure to be a powerhouse acting exhibition and an influential story of a bold, uncompromising woman that resonates today as much as it did 80 years ago.

Festival Premiere: Toronto International Film Festival
Release: TBA

