



**CURTAIN-RAISER:** *Grace of Monaco* will unroll the red carpet at the Grand Theatre Lumiere on May 14, heralding a dozen days of scintillating cinema in a festival that has rightly been named Queen of All.

# Let's guess what Cannes will offer

By Gautaman Bhaskaran

**A**s director Thierry Fremaux and his team are watching film after film almost without a break in an attempt to select some 40-odd movies for the upcoming Cannes Film Festival, journalists and others are busy conjecturing their own lists. Call them wish lists, if you may.

All of us know that *Grace of Monaco* will unroll the red carpet at the Grand Theatre Lumiere on May 14, heralding a dozen days of scintillating cinema in a festival that has rightly been named Queen of All. The opening movie is a biopic of Grace Kelly, the alluring Hollywood star who stepped into the palace of Monaco after a brief courtship

with Prince Rainier III, whom she met in the mid-1950s and interestingly enough when the Cannes Festival was on.

So, for old-time residents of the French Riviera, the scenes from the film – especially as they watch Australian actress Nicole Kidman essaying Grace – will bring back memories, some sweet, some not so sweet.

And it is quite likely that a spot has been set aside for Lars Von Trier's *Nymphomaniac*. The enfant-terrible of European cinema, whose creations have been as controversial as his words, will most surely appear at Cannes, now that the Festival has forgiven him for his 2011 faux pas. He told a media meet that he was a Nazi sympathiser, albeit in jest. But it upset half the world, and he was told to leave Cannes.

Other than these two movies, there can be only guesses. Here are some.

Thomas Vinterberg (who along with Von Trier once formulated *Dogma 95* in an effort to take cinema back to its roots – no props, no make-up ...) may be at the festival with his *Far From the Madding Crowd*, an adaptation of that timeless Thomas Hardy classic. Set in the Wessex of 19th century, the film will have Carey Mulligan playing the rich farm woman who gets romantically entangled with as many as three men, three wild men.

I remember Julie Christie in that role in the 1967 movie, helmed by John Schlesinger. She was as remarkable as the film was magnificent. Mulligan sure has a challenge to face, but Vinterberg, who's *The Hunt* at Cannes 2013 mesmerised audiences, will, in all probability, come up with something as good as the 1967 version.

Can Cannes ignore that delightful

director we call Woody Allen? He ought to be at the Croisette (the city's attractive promenade) with his *Magic in the Moonlight*. What a title for that romantic place in the south of France! And as one writer quipped, the movie is almost a poem on Cannes. Except that it is not titled I Love the South of France.

With Colin Firth in the lead, *Magic in the Moonlight* is yet another work set in the French Riviera. It is a crime thriller, and despite all the accusations that Allen has been buried in of late, the festival loves him, maybe more so after his last work, *Blue Jasmine*, touched a new high at the Oscars.

Cannes also adores the Belgian brothers, Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne, who are ready with *Two Days, One Night*, a film about a woman on the verge of losing her job. Marion Cotillard is that lady in distress, and Luc and Jean-Pierre are some kind of heroes at the festival. They have won the Palm d'Or twice, and also the best screenplay award and the Grand Jury Prize.

Ryan Gosling tells us *How to Catch a Monster* in which a mother and her son make a nightmarish trip to Atlantis. Sounds like fantasy, but let us wait to check if Cannes will pick this movie, a directorial debut by Gosling – who came to Cannes as an actor with *Drive* and returned with *Only God Forgives* last year.

Mathieu Amalric's *The Blue Room* can be in Cannes Competition. In 2010, the Best Director's Award at Cannes went to his *On Tour* in what was viewed as a surprise. *The Blue Room*, based on a Georges Simenon novel, weaves a psychological thriller about the mysterious life of two small-town adulterers. Amalric stars along with Lea Drucker.

David Cronenberg is yet another Croisette favourite. His latest, *Maps to the Stars* is said to be about "the convoluted world of shallow, selfish celebrities and their minions, all of whom are about to be manipulated and destroyed by the young woman who literally represents the fruit of their twisted machinations."

Ken Loach is a bigger beloved of the festival. We have *Jimmy's Hall* from him. This is being termed as Loach's final feature before he steps into documentaries. Once Cannes gave him the Palm d'Or for *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*. Can the festival dare to give him a miss, especially when Jimmy's Hall is supposed to be as superb as *The Wind That...* Jimmy's Hall traces the story of an Irish Communist returning home after a long exile to try and reopen a dance hall.

Turkish auteur Nuri Ceylan is also a Cannes regular. He is hoping that his *Winter Sleep* (he does not want to divulge the plotline now) will also screen at Competition. May not be an impossible desire. For, every film he has created since the 2002 *Distant* has been in competition. So why not *Winter Sleep*.

Birdman now comes from Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, whose 2002 *Amores Perros* led to the discovery of Latin American cinema on the Croisette. I liked his *Babel* (2006) the best. It united four stories taking place in four countries (Japan, USA, Mexico and Morocco) into a single whole.

And how seamlessly that was done, and *Babel* led to many copies in India with *Traffic* in Malayalam being one. Now, Birdman has Michael Keaton as a middle-aged actor trying to mount a Broadway adaptation of a Raymond Carver short story.

What about India? In just one line, nobody knows. Or nobody will tell.

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