

Review: Cannes Film Festival offers look at 'The Rebellious Olivia de Havilland'



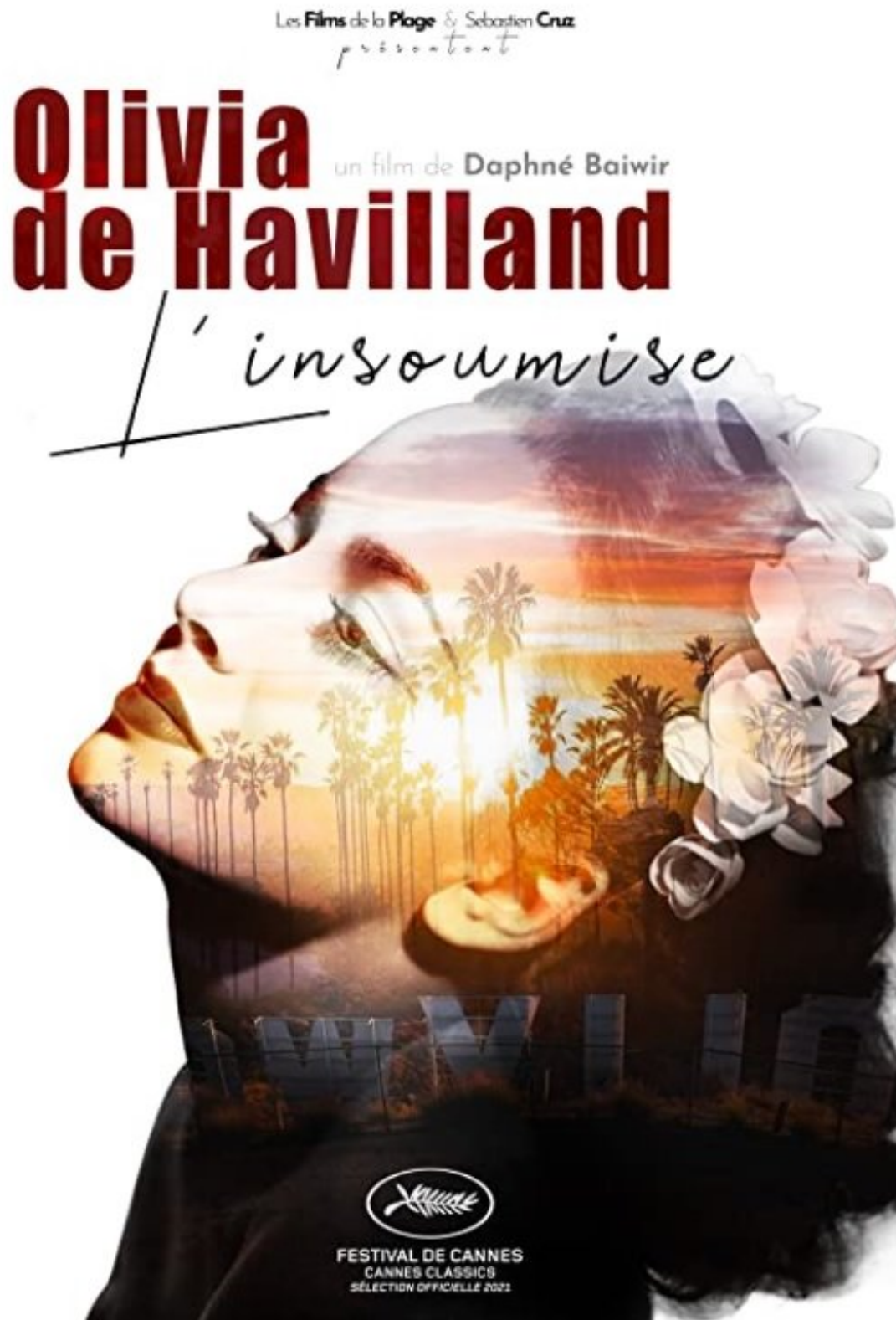
CHENNAI: Cinema-lovers are in for a treat this year as the 74th Cannes Film Festival looks to reinvent itself.



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And one of the ways the event – that kicked off on Tuesday – aims to do so is by making a biographical documentary on British-American actress Olivia de Havilland available to all on the streaming platform Cine+Dailymotion and the festival's website.

“The Rebellious Olivia de Havilland,” helmed by Daphne Baiwir, packs the actress’ amazing life story into 56 minutes.



“The Rebellious Olivia de Havilland” is helmed by Daphne Baiwir. (Supplied)

Born in Japan, the star carved out a magnificent career in Hollywood before settling in France. She was 104 years old when she died last year, after a life of hope and disappointment, joy and sorrow, and romance and rancor.

She had enormous grit that she displayed in her breakthrough role as Melanie Hamilton, fiancée and then wife of Leslie Howard's Ashley Wilkes character in the 1939 American Civil War epic, "Gone With the Wind," and was the epitome of grace and forgiveness in contrast to the fiery Vivien Leigh, who played Scarlett O'Hara.

The documentary follows the actress' battles during the golden era of Hollywood, as she fought studio heads and directors in a bid to create a niche for herself.



British and US actresses Jacqueline Bisset (R) and Olivia de Havilland (L) chat after they were awarded chevalier of the Legion of Honour by French President Nicolas Sarkozy on September 9, 2010. (AFP)

Most of the material in the documentary comes from De Havilland herself, and it is quite gripping. However, it fails to explore her personal life, such as the notorious spat with her younger sister, Joan Fontaine, that fed Hollywood's gossip mills at the time.

It was rumored that Fontaine may have been an important reason why De Havilland left America for Paris, and the three Oscars the sisters shared between them may not have been enough to broker peace.

Baiwar's work could have been that much more engrossing had she detailed the sibling rivalry (often called the greatest family feud in Hollywood) or De Havilland's personal highs and lows. Regardless, the work is still a great tribute to one of America's most alluring divas, and perhaps it was a conscious choice to focus on her body of work, rather than her private life.
