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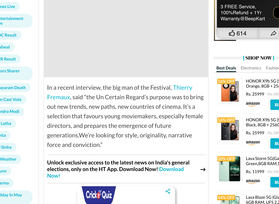
Cannes Film Fest Un Certain Regard is gem that is treated as a poor Cinderella

By Gautaman Bhaskaran

Mar 13, 2024 06:45 PM IST

Here are five Un Certain Regard works that one could not miss at the Cannes Film Festival even if that means skipping a Competition title.



Stills from the films When The Light Breaks and The Shameless.

The Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival is like the poor cousin who is often ignored, pushed and discarded. We know the Cinderella story, do we not? But like the proverbial pawn in chess, the Un Certain Regard, a section, which has often been placing special fields to Competition, has this unique ability to spring from the sidelines and sparkle. (Also Read: At Cannes Film Festival, drama unfolds even outside the cinemas)

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In a recent interview, by the end of the festival, Thierry Fremaux, said "the Un Certain Regard's purpose was to bring out fresh, and perhaps, new countries of cinema. It's a section where directors, sometimes, experiment with new directions, and prepares the emergence of future generations.We're looking for style, originality, narrative form and discovery."

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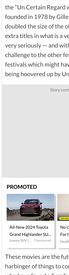

Peter Bradshaw, the Chief Film Critic of The Guardian, said the Un Certain Regard was a game changer when it was founded in 1978 by Gilles Jacob, Frémaux's predecessor. It doubled the size of the official festival, "and gave it a new, more relaxed, more youthful identity, as a section with an edge, and with that sidebar it created a huge challenge to the other festivals because they had to respond, and they've responded by a favorite and much sought after Competition — offers a brilliant chance for reflection and fresh thinking.

Ten years before South Korean auteur Bong Joon-ho won the top prize, Palme d'Or, he stunned jurors as president with his Mother, a tender tale of mother-son ties, which borders on possessiveness.

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Sweden's Ruben Ostlund, who won Palmes for The Square (2017) and the recent Triangle of Sadness (2022), walked away with the Un Certain Regard Jury Prize for Force Majeure in 2014.

Another classic example is Xavier Dolan, the 35-year-old French Canadian auteur who is the Un Certain Regard jury president this year. Two of his works, Heartbeats (2010) — made when Dolan was 21 — and Laurence Anyways (2012), were in this section in Cannes Regard. His next two features Mommy (2014) and It's Only the End of the World (2016) won top Competition prizes.

"I believe that what young moviemakers are putting forward this year is very exciting, as well two," Frémaux added —suddenly a more positive tone.

Thierry Frémaux is in control of the programming. Other than the Light Breaks by Runar Runarsson from Iceland; Norah from Saudi director Tawfik Alzaidi; September Says by Ariane Labed from France; and Kidnapped by Marco Bellocchio; Kontantin Bojanov's The Shameless, a poignant Indian drama; and Indian police investigation story Santosh with Shahana Goswami headlining the title character.

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