

Cannes Film Festival Shocks and Rattles Us with Titles from David Cronenberg and Ruben Ostlund



Cannes 2022 has thrown up two shockers – David Cronenberg's *Crimes of the Future* and Ruben Ostlund's *Triangle of Sadness* – both so explicit in their depiction that many walked out of these screenings.

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GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN

David Cronenberg's *Crimes of the Future* has rattled audiences at the Cannes Film Festival.

One, it seems, are the days of movies that gave us a feeling of sheer joy and excitement. Works like *The Sound of Music*, *Roman Holiday* and *My Fair Lady* among a host of others pulled us back into theatres again and again. But today, cinema goes out of its way to shock and scare us. There is little that is pleasant. And the ongoing 75th edition of the Cannes Film Festival has thrown up two shockers – David Cronenberg's *Crimes of the Future* and Ruben Ostlund's *Triangle of Sadness*. Both were so explicit in whatever they wanted to depict that many walked out of these screenings, commenting that this was not movies were supposed to be. They must be strong but subtle; what is the use of showing people puking or easing themselves? Must these be featured so graphically?

Crimes of the Future is a horror drama, but it, nonetheless, earned a seven-minute standing ovation! Tipped to be the most polarising title this year on the Croisette (Cannes' beachfront where the Festival venue stands), Cronenberg's creation (and what a creation) reunites him with Viggo Mortensen (we saw him in *A History of Violence* and *Eastern Promises*) as well as "Cannes darlings" Kristen Stewart and Lea Seydoux.

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Touted as really weird, *Crimes of the Future* has Mortensen essaying a performance artist who gets his organs operated in his dystopian world. Stewart, who works for his transplant centre, whispers in a scene, "Surgery is the new sex." The film includes a distasteful child autopsy, shots of bloody intestines and characters who lick each other's wounds to work themselves into a state of orgasmic high.

The official Crimes of the Future synopsis from Neon reads, "As the human species adapts to a synthetic environment, the body undergoes new transformations and mutations. With his partner Caprice (Léa Seydoux), Saul Tenser (Viggo Mortensen), celebrity performance artist, publicly showcases the metamorphosis of his organs in avant-garde performances. Timlin (Kristen Stewart), an investigator from the National Organ Registry, obsessively tracks their movements, which is when a mysterious group is revealed... Their mission – to use Saul's notoriety to shed light on the next phase of human evolution."

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Cronenberg is known for presenting scandalous stuff. In 1996, his *Crash* had characters who turned automobile crashes into a means to get sexually aroused. It was booed, and most viewers stormed out of the theatre. I stayed put, as a critic, had no choice! Even that year's jury president Francis Ford Coppola said that some of jurors abstained from voting when it was being debated whether the movie should be given a Special Jury Prize.

Swedish helmer Ostlund too came with a shocker. A couple of years ago, he got audiences squirming with his *The Square*, but it still clinched the top Palm d'Or. His latest, *Triangle of Sadness*, is also extremely provocative and a no-holds-barred social satire. Woody Harrelson is a rabid Marxist, who is the captain of a cruise ship that is ferrying the super rich and the snooty.

The BBC called it the most disgusting film of 2022, "...a frontal assault on the super-rich, and on the capitalist system in general, which has enough rage and riotous abandon to compensate for its lack of subtlety."

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Variety writes, "Then comes the captain's dinner, which plays like a Monty Python sketch, as the guests try to slurp oysters while a storm rocks the boat. A woman in a wheelchair screams the same German phrase, like Peter Sellers unable to contain a Nazi salute in *Dr. Strangelove*. A guest elderly couple reveal that their millions of ours?"). A trophy wife nearly drowns when her toilet belches its contents back in her face. It's all so excessive that the tone of subtle schadenfreude now turns to concern. These elites may be insufferable at times, but no one deserves this."

Ugh! But, let us not be surprised or shocked when Cronenberg and Ostlund are feted on the big night of the awards. Such is Cannes, such has been its ways over and over the years.

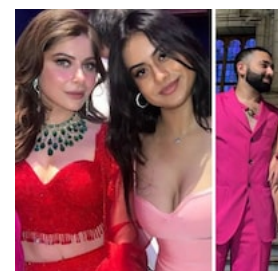
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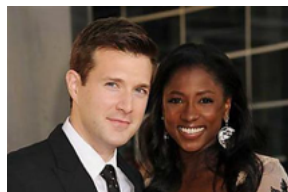
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