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Cannes 2022: Armageddon Time Director James Gray Says 'A Bunch of Authoritarians Taking Over Planet'



James Gray's competition title at the ongoing Cannes Film Festival, Armageddon Time, is a strong social commentary on the 1980s America.

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'Armageddon Time' director James Gary poses at the 2022 Cannes Film Festival.

James Gray's competition title at the ongoing Cannes Film Festival, Armageddon Time, is a deeply personal work tracing the director's boyhood days in Queens in New York. Woven dexterously into this is a strong critique of racism, white privilege, and the perils of capitalism. About a troubled lad, who finds out that he is luckier than many others, including his Black classmate, who becomes his closest buddy, the work is a strong social commentary on the 1980s America.

Armageddon Time is Gray's first movie in the Cannes competition since 2013 when he screened *The Immigrant*. His latest with an impressive cast of Anthony Hopkins, Anne Hathaway, and Jeremy Strong, unfolds in the autumn of 1980. And in a tongue-in-cheek way, the film features Trump's family members as characters!

At a Press conference after the screening, Gray conveyed a grim warning. "The world is in serious trouble today... like two people who own everything and a bunch of authoritarians that are trying to take over the planet."

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Sitting next to Hathaway and Strong (Hopkins was not to be seen, wonder why), he said he wrote the script "before a series of events including the killing of George Floyd, and his initial idea for the movie was to show layers of white privilege in the 1980s, which (sadly) still exist today."

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"It's impossible to look at the world as currently constructed, at least the Western world, at least my own country, which is what I have referenced, and not see white privilege as one of the guiding mechanisms that are in existence".

Continuing in the same vein, Gray averred "People who go to the private school depicted in the film have to been seen as having superpower privilege. It's a system where the same group gets to the top, stays at the top, and they keep everybody else out. And that's the system we're running. How do you break that cycle? So to me, it's the guiding question."

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He pointed out that there was a "lack of discourse over this systemic issue of racial and social inequalities, and said his movie was meant to show the layers of that system which require a level of oppression so that some people can get all that money."

He continued: "I actually have no idea how to solve issues of inequality, of class. You have to just put it out in front of the audience and hope that they can make connections for themselves. Joseph Goebbels thought he had an answer; I don't feel that's what our job is as creative people."

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Gray claims are all stand-alone dramas. He is not into franchises, and he criticised society's over-reliance on repetition". "We used to think of franchises like McDonald's and Burger King; now we talk about it as cinema," the director quipped evoking laughter in the audience.

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