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# Venice Film Festival Begins Today with Oscar Hopefuls and Controversial Directors

Curated By: [Gautaman Bhaskaran](#)[News18.com](#)

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Italy



David Fincher's *The Killer*, Sofia Coppola's *Priscilla*, Bradley Cooper's *Maestro* and Michael Mann's *Ferrari* are some that will be racing to clinch the statuette.

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Venice Film Festival kicks off today.

**T**he Venice Film Festival has in recent years become an important launch pad for Oscar runners. And as the 80th edition of the 11-day event – the oldest such in the world having begun in 1932 – is all set to kick start today (August 30), we can see a number of movies that may figure in next year's Academy Awards.

David Fincher's *The Killer*, Sofia Coppola's *Priscilla*, Bradley Cooper's *Maestro* and Michael Mann's *Ferrari* are some that will be racing to clinch the statuette.

This special place that Venice has gained as far as the Oscars go is largely because of Alberto Barbera's efforts. The Festival chief said in an interview to *The Guardian*: "The American studios had simply stopped coming, preferring to go to Toronto because it was easier and cheaper. The risk for Venice to become a second-rate film festival compared to Cannes, Toronto or Telluride was very strong."

Barbera started going to LA on outreach missions, and in 2013 the Festival opened with Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity*, which went on to win seven Oscars. "That was the beginning. The following year we had *Birdman*, which again won at the Oscars. Then *Spotlight*, *La La Land*, *Shape of Water*, *Joker*. We began gaining a reputation".

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Today, I find it very difficult to say which is better – Cannes or Venice. But where Cannes scores is its huge market that Venice is yet to come up with. However, selections wise, both Cannes and Venice have a neck-and-neck advantage.

Much like the Festival on the French Riviera, the Lido (the island off mainland Venice where the Festival takes place) event has its fair share of controversy. This year's Venice has sparked questions over the inclusion of three titles. Roman Polanski, Woody Allen and Luc Besson have their movies at Venice, and all three have been involved in sexual misconduct controversy.

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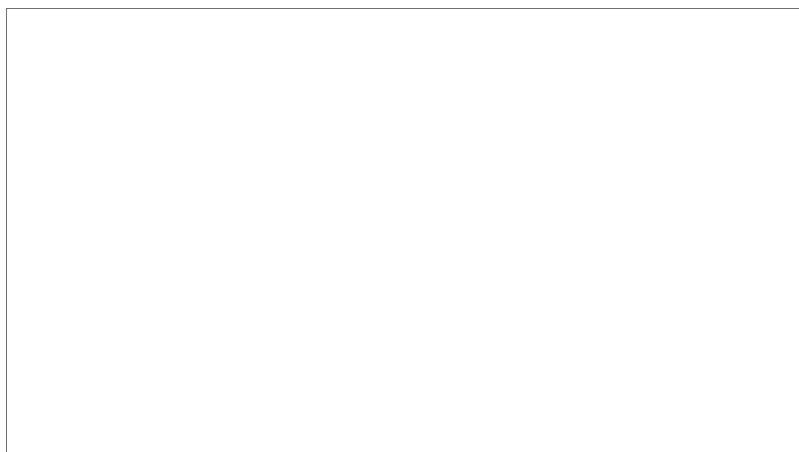


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Polanski ran away from the US many years ago in 1978 after pleading guilty to the statutory rape of a 13-year-old girl and has recently faced accusations of sexual assault from five other women which he denies.

Barbera has been defending his decision to include their films. "Polanski is one of the last great masters of European cinema. He made huge mistakes 50 years ago. But a distinction must be made between the man and the artist... The entire history of art is full of cases of artists who were problematic or even criminal. Yet we still admire their work. I'm pretty sure in some decades' time, everyone will have forgotten about the history of the rape from Polanski, but they will still admire his movies."

"However, Allen's position is completely different from Polanski's. The film-maker was accused of sexually assaulting his adoptive daughter, but he has never been charged, and he has always maintained his innocence. He was subject to two investigations by a child sexual abuse clinic as well as social services, which found no credible evidence of wrongdoing. After almost 25 years, why should we keep on banning his movies? It's impossible to release his films in the US now, which is absolutely unbelievable."

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"Similarly, the fact that a rape inquiry against Besson was dismissed by French prosecutors means there is little justification for blacklisting him."

The Festival runs from August 30 to September 9.



*About the Author*

**GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN** Gautaman Bhaskaran is a movie critic, commentator and an author, who penned the first ever biography of Adoor Gopalakrishnan, and has been covering ma... [Read More](#)

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