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Venice Film Festival to be a star-studded affair

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This year, it seems that the upcoming Venice Film Festival will be a very grand affair. Lots of stars are set to sail to the Festival venue, Island of Lido, a 20-minute boat ride from mainland Venice. Lady Gaga (performing in *Joker: Folie a Deux*), George Clooney and Brad Pitt (*Wolfs*), Nicole Kidman (*Babygirl*), Angelina Jolie (*Maria*), Julianne Moore (*The Room Next Door*) and Cate Blanchett (*Disclaimer*) will arrive throughout the 11-day cinematic event. And walk the red carpet.

According to a report, it is the Festival's artistic director, Alberto Barbera, who is responsible for making the event the most desired launching pad for the Academy Awards. He has been heading the Festival since 2012

(also, he held the same position from 1998 to 2001).

Before 2012, Venice had been tottering, and was far from enjoying the prestige and importance it has today. "But in just a few short years, he's helped build the fest into the glamorous getaway it's become, where dozens of films have begun their journeys to the Oscars over the past few years", a media publication wrote.

Barbera told the journal that "it was worse years before. In 2012, most of the American movies preferred to go to Toronto instead of coming to Venice, because Venice, of course, is more expensive. Toronto, it's a lot cheaper and easier for them. In most cases, that was the option for the big studios. So it was not easy to convince all of them to come back to Venice. There were no studios' films in Venice in 2012.

"The following year, we opened the Festival with *Gravity*. That won the Oscar, and that was the beginning of a change in the relationship with the studios. After that, every year we had one or more than one movie that went to the Oscars, then won the Oscars—like *Birdman*, *Spotlight*, *La La Land*, *Shape of Water*, *Joker*. So of course now it's easy to get a film, because the studios and the Americans understood that they can use the platform of Venice to launch the movie internationally, and to start a campaign for the Oscars, with all the press that we have in Venice. There is almost no press in Toronto, apart from the trades. We have something like 3,000 media representatives from all over the world, so they can really make a proper promotion with the film, the marketing of the movie, starting from Venice".



Speaking about celebrities, Barbera said: "I think that Lady Gaga is a perfect example of a very special moment. Do you remember the red carpet of *A Star Is Born*? It was magic, because she was on the red carpet with this beautiful white dress with feathers and so on, and then it started to rain, but she didn't want to leave the red carpet. She stayed on the red carpet taking photos, signing autographs and so on. And then she was completely wet. So she came to my office, trying to dry herself and her gown. And Bradley Cooper

was outside with me, discussing the film and the expectation around it."

Referring to this year's *Joker: Folie A Deux*, Barbera contended: "If you expect just a second part of the previous one (*Joker*), exactly the same kind of narrative and situation and so on, you are wrong, because the theme is much darker. It is much more inventive from every point of view. It's completely unexpected. I think it is very bold, and brave, and creative, and an incredibly original work"

The Festival runs from 28 August to 7 September.

The writer is a senior movie critic and author who has covered the Venice Film Festival for over two decades.

