

ISSUE 4 | VOL. 1 | JULY 2025

**CUT** **T** 

**CINEMA**

**FILM REVIEW**

**NO OTHER LAND**



**RAJ KAPOOR**  
**THE SHOWMAN OF**  
**INDIAN CINEMA**

**ECHOES OF WAR ON THE**  
**SILVER SCREEN**

**10 SPY FILMS THAT**  
**REDEFINED THE**  
**GENRE GLOBALLY**

**Great things  
never come  
from comfort  
zones.**



**VITTORIO DE SICA**



# EDITORIAL

We are living in a time of ongoing war, and we witness it through visuals—often resembling scenes from war films. Conflict is not new in human history, and though we all recognize the futility of killing one another, people still resist when faced with oppression and injustice. Whatever the cause, innocent people always suffer the most. In contrast, cinema upholds love and togetherness, empathy and kindness, truth and illusion.

This is the fourth issue of Cut to Cinema. Through this magazine, we aim to spread a message of peace and harmony. We believe C2C has already echoed that message through its content. To our readers—thank you for your continued support.

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## Michael Douglas to Present Newly Restored One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest at KVIFF

**T**

he Karlovy Vary International Film Festival is proud to screen a newly restored version of Miloš Forman's cinematic landmark *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* as part of this year's "Out of the Past" section.

The 1975 classic, which swept the Oscars and earned dozens of international awards, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

Michael Douglas, one of the film's producers and recipient of the Academy Award for Best Picture, will personally introduce the restored version at a special gala screening. He will be joined by fellow producer Paul Zaentz—nephew of the late Saul Zaentz, who co-produced the film, as well as members of Miloš Forman's family.

The screening also honors Karlovy Vary's long-standing ties to *Cuckoo's Nest*. Director Miloš Forman was a loyal supporter of the festival, and he, along with Douglas, Zaentz, and actor Danny DeVito who also starred in the film, are all recipients of the festival's Crystal Globe for Outstanding Artistic Contribution to World Cinema.

"We are truly honored to present *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* on its 50th anniversary," said KVIFF Executive Director Kryštof Mucha. "The presence of Michael Douglas, Paul Zaentz, and the Forman family will make this an unforgettable moment in the festival's history."



Michael Douglas.  
Photo: KVIFF

Adapted from Ken Kesey's novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* follows Randle McMurphy, a rebellious gambler whose defiance of authority challenges the rigid confines of a mental institution. A powerful parable of freedom versus control, the film marked a turning point in Forman's career and paved the way for his later international successes.

The film made Oscar history as only the second to win all five major Academy Award categories: Best Picture (Douglas and Zaentz), Best Director (Forman), Best Actor (Jack Nicholson), Best Actress (Louise Fletcher), and Best Adapted Screenplay (Lawrence Hauben and Bo Goldman).

Michael Douglas last visited Karlovy Vary in 1998, when he and Saul Zaentz were honored with the Crystal Globe. Paul Zaentz, who worked closely with Forman on *Amadeus* (1984) and *Goya's Ghosts* (2006), also produced acclaimed titles including *The English Patient* (1996) and *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999).

*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) was restored by the Academy Film Archive. Restoration funding provided by Teatro Della Pace Films with special thanks to Paul Zaentz. 🌍

Source: KVIFF



A scene from *Sand City*. Photo: KVIFF

## Balur Nagarite Earns Spot at Renowned Czech Film Festival

**T**

he debut feature film *Balur Nagarite* (Sand City) by Bangladeshi filmmaker Mahde Hasan has been officially selected for the esteemed Proxima Competition at the 59th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in

the Czech Republic. This selection marks a significant milestone for Bangladeshi cinema on the international stage.

In advance of its world premiere, the film has already drawn international industry interest, with Bangkok-based sales agency Diversion acquiring the global distribution rights for all territories except Bangladesh and Switzerland. *Balur Nagarite* is produced by Rubaiyat Hossain and Aadnan Ahmed under the Khona Talkies banner, with backing from Cinema Cocoon. 🌍





*Casablanca (1942). Photo: Screen Rant*

**W**ar has long cast its shadow over the world, not only on battlefields but also on the arts—none more powerfully than cinema. The collision of war and film is not just a question of representation; it is a dialogue between trauma and expression, propaganda and truth, destruction and creation. Cinema, born in the age of empires, has been both witness and weapon in times of conflict.

During the First World War, film matured from novelty to national instrument. Governments soon realized its power to stir emotion, unify nations, and demonize enemies. D.W. Griffith's *Hearts of the World* (1918), shot partly in war-torn France, blurred the lines between fiction and reality, using war itself as a backdrop for storytelling. By the time of the Second World War, cinema was deeply entrenched in global conflict—not just reflecting war, but helping to shape its perception. Hollywood mobilized, producing morale-boosters like *Casablanca* (1942) and documentaries for the U.S. government. In Europe, filmmakers like Roberto Rossellini in *Rome, Open City* (1945) used real ruins and non-actors to tell the truth of a broken world, planting the seeds of Italian Neorealism.

But war's influence was not confined to content alone. It changed the infrastructure of cinema. Studios were destroyed, film stock was rationed, and entire generations of actors, directors, and audiences were displaced or lost. Refugee filmmakers from Europe—Billy Wilder, Fritz Lang, Ernst Lubitsch—found asylum in Hollywood, reshaping American film with darker, sharper visions that hinted at exile, loss, and identity.

In post-colonial and war-torn nations, cinema became a mode of resistance. In Vietnam, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Latin America, filmmakers used the medium to document occupation, exile, and survival. In countries silenced by military regimes, war films were made in metaphors—censorship forcing artists into poetic, symbolic language.

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## War leaves scars—but cinema turns them into stories.

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The psychological aftermath of war also transformed cinema's inner world. Post-war films increasingly dealt with disillusionment, guilt, and the fractured male psyche—from *The Deer Hunter* (1978) to *Come and See* (1985). War was no longer just spectacle; it became trauma.

Today, as drones replace soldiers and war is waged through screens and satellites, cinema continues to grapple with conflict in new forms. From the gritty realism of *The Hurt Locker* (2008) to the hybrid realities of films like *Waltz with Bashir* (2008), war has become not only a setting, but a state of mind.

War leaves scars—but cinema turns them into stories. In its light, we see the cost of violence, the courage of survival, and the fragile hope of peace. 🌍

*From C2C desk*



# **Raj Kapoor** *The Showman of Indian Cinema*

**Rwita Dutta**

*Raj Kapoor in a still from the Bollywood film  
Shree 420. Photo: Britannika*



T

he Kapoors, one of the iconic families of India contributed immensely in creating cinema as the main vehicle of cultural instrument that in turn constituted the national identity of an emergent country.

Trajectory of Indian Independence, prolong nation building process, emergence of a distinctive cultural production of a nation, all are somehow embedded in the prolong journey of the illustrated family of India. Vision of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru found its fruition in the cultural hegemony established by the Kapoor family over the years. The newly constructed nation with its profound vivaciousness created its distinctive cultural identity through its cinematic expression. And Raj Kapoor's films are an integral part of this unique subjective manifestation of the country. He, following his father's legacy added to the filmic journey of the iconic RK Studios as well as generously contributed to the newly emergent cultural landscape of a nation. Between the traditional values and demand of modernity, Raj Kapoor began his decade long journey both as a prolific filmmaker as well as an incredible artist. His genre is commercial-popular, that instilled the prescribed value system of a nascent nation among its populace.

His films are situated on the historical juncture when city came into forefront as the sole representative of the social dynamics of a modern nation. Mostly he as a protagonist of his films played that typical village urchin who is compelled to migrate to the diabolical city with his pure innocence. City startled him, puzzled him, yet city is the only inevitability in his life. Also the binary of corrupt elites and virtuous poor subalterns defined his concept of understanding the city.

Nehruvian socialism influenced his narrative, ensuring social justice seems to be the main agenda of the village bumpkin. In *Awara*, he plays the famous tramp a la Charlie Chaplin. In *Shree 420*, he is the trickster, in *Boot Polish*, and he played a poor man. But the profound sense of truthfulness dominated all his narratives, injecting a normative value system quintessential for a nation.

What Raj Kapoor did for Indian cinema, is, to put Indian popular cinema in the global map. Almost at the same time, Satyajit Ray with his *Pather Panchali* (Song of the Road) already won the best humanitarian award in the Cannes Film Festival, whereas Kapoor's *Awaara* (1951) and *Boot Polish* (1954) competed for the Palme d'Or prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1951 and 1955's editions respectively.

Decades ago, India used his cinema as a soft power to influence the global spectrum. Kapoor was extremely popular in Russia, in parts of Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and Africa. In all of his films, from black and

white era to the films like *Bobby* that captivated the entire new generation always carry some social messages. Be it the interfaith romance in *Bobby* (1973) or burning issues like widow remarriage in *Prem Rog* (1982) spiritual love in *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*, Kapoor and his films always adhered to progressive thoughts. Another cardinal point in his films are the melodious songs that elevated the aesthetics of the said narratives. The songs from *Aag* to *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*, were blockbusters in Indian subcontinent and also in abroad.

Merā jūtā hai Jāpānī, ye patlūn İnglistānī  
Sar pē lāl ṭōpī Rūsī, phir bhī dil hai Hindustānī

My shoes are Japanese, these trousers are English;  
The red cap on my head is Russian, but still my heart is Indian.



*Raj Kapoor and Nargis Dutt acted together in films such as Andaz (1949), Awara (1951), and Shree 420 (1950) | Photo Credit: By Special Arrangement*

This song, especially, was widely embraced in its time as a representation of the newly sovereign nation of India. As India was gaining its status as a sovereign democratic republic, this song depicted the casting off of the colonialist yoke and the recognition of the internationalist aim of uniting to make India and the world a better place.

Most of his earlier films were penned by one of the eminent IPTA cultural icons, Khwaja Ahmed Abbas. Tryst with Abbas further provoked his communitarian ideas that coax him pick up stories like *Jagte Raho*. (Stay Alert, 1956) another cult classic in his oeuvre is a 1956 Hindi/Bengali film, directed by Amit Maitra and Sombhu Mitra, written by Abbas. Music by Salil Chowdhury and produced and acted by Raj Kapoor. The film won the Crystal Globe Grand Prix at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in Czechoslovakia in 1957. *Jagte Raho*, a cinematic gem from 1956, is a profound social commentary wrapped in the guise of a gripping drama. The presence of the IPTA movement in the film was thoroughly palpable.

“We should note a strongly didactic element in Abbas’s writing, again quite common in traditional dramaturgy, and here yoked to progressive causes. His own efforts as director to use film to urge caste, religious, and regional amity, such as in *Chaar Dil Chaar Rahen* and *Saat Hindustani* were less successful than when these imperatives were combined with directors more attuned to the entertainment conventions of the popular Hindi cinema. This is especially apparent in Abbas’s work with Raj Kapoor.” (Ravi Vasudevan).

*Mera Naam Joker* (My Name is Joker, 1970), a failed masterpiece, directed by Raj Kapoor has been widely appreciated posthumously. With biographical contents within the narrative, it’s a story of a tramp and his pensive journey through life. “Jeena yahan marna yahan iske siva jana kaha”--lyrics of the theme song for the film, “Mera Naam Joker” is a hauntingly beautiful song that reverberates tirelessly through the years and beyond. This remains Raj Kapoor’s most memorable performance as the ‘The great Clown in a not so graceful world,’ shined through and through.

His portrayal of female figures in his films is often presented through a deeply sensual and symbolic lens, frequently invoking themes of what he calls “sacred nudity” (*muqaddas uriyan* in Urdu), a concept he linked to his oedipal complex by showcasing ethereal female imagery in his films, as he recounts:

“I was extremely precocious. And I was a worshipper of nudity. I think it all started because of my intimacy with my mother who was young, beautiful, and had the sharp features of a Pathan woman. We often bathed together, and seeing her in the nude must have left a deep erotic impression on my mind. There is an excellent Urdu phrase, *muqaddas uriyan* (sacred nudity), which describes this perfectly. In my films, bathing scenes recur often. Women in general occupy most of my early memories, and they appear in my films like ghosts that refuse to be buried.”<sup>1</sup>

He literally constituted the post-independence heroes and heroines who were conformists and rebels at the same time. Their presence instilled certain values in the society much needed at that hour. His exuberant youthfulness defined free India. The naïve love stories between his main protagonists seek to bring a kind of optimism and familial bondage that repaired the ruptured society that sprang up from colonial yoke. The melodious music in his films keep on enchanting film buffs across decades. His family still contributes hugely to the filmic fabric of the nation. He remains till date, as the greatest showman of Indian cinema. 🇮🇳

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*Writer: Indian film scholar and researcher*

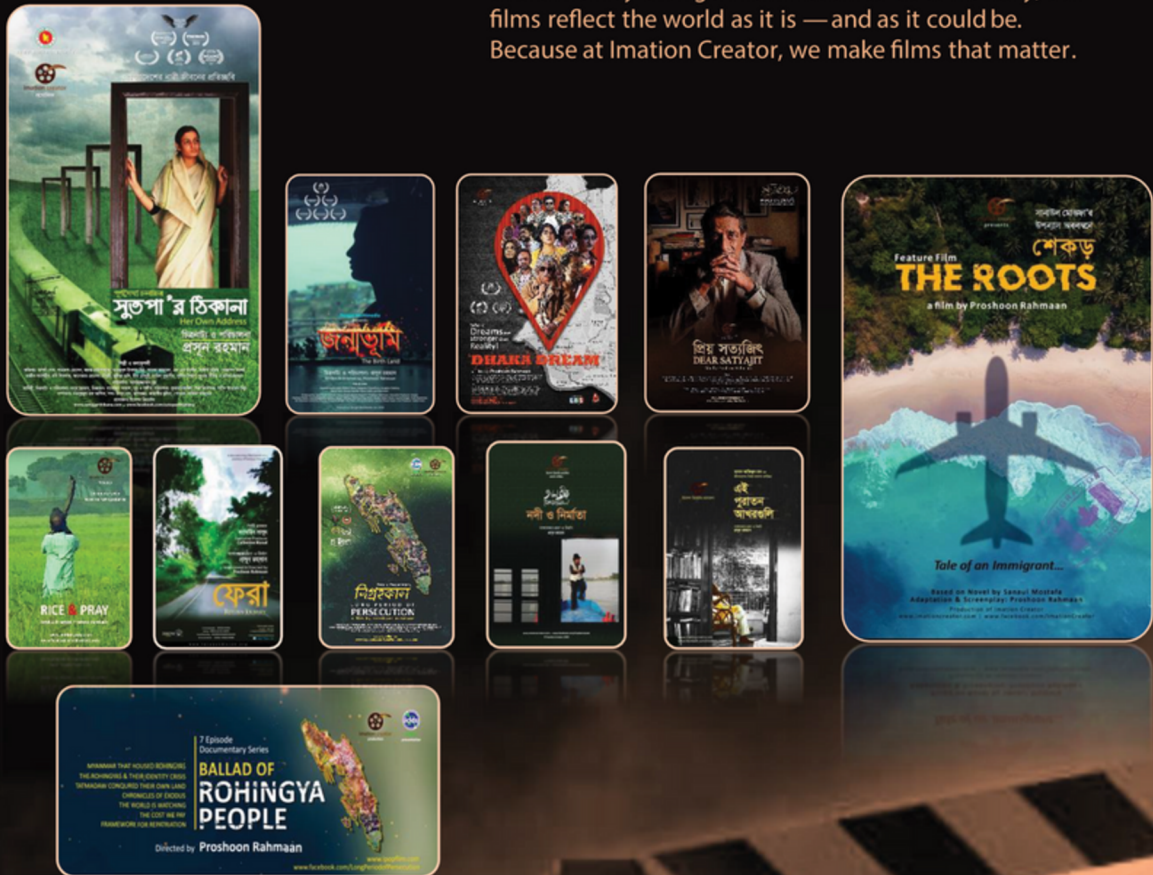
*Raj Kapoor (1924 - 1988). Photo: Hindustan Times*





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Photo: IMDB

# RISKY FREEDOMS

Axel Timo Purr

## Love

The Oslo Trilogy: Love | 2024 | NOR | 119 Min.

Just like life itself, so too is Dag Johan Haugerud's trilogy. Quite simple and yet quite complicated. Because Love, the first film in the trilogy to be released in cinemas internationally, actually had its premiere in Norway at the end of 2024,, as the final instalment of the three. However, it's not like Haugerud's compatriot, Karl Ove Knausgård, whose five novels under the umbrella title Min Kamp have very similar subtitles to Haugerud's films, including one also called Love. But while Knausgård's autofictional books tell very similar stories about the winding paths that love and life can take in our time, each book builds on the ones before it.

The same is not true of Haugerud's Oslo trilogy. Each film tells a separate story with different actors. Only one character -if it can be considered that - appears repeatedly; the city of Oslo. It is here that the protagonists' paths cross, all of them ending up at one point or other in front of one building in particular, Oslo City Hall, with its idiosyncratic sculptures that seem to promise fluid, unconventional relationships.

In Love, this building is central. It is where Marianne (Andrea Bræin Hovig) meets her friend Heidi (Marte Engebretsen), who is giving a guided tour of the town hall, explaining the fluid sexualities of the sculptures and thus also something like the Norwegian understanding of the human condition. This theoretical concept is, so to speak, put into practice by Marianne throughout the film.



Dag Johan Haugerud won the Golden Bear at the Berlinale 2025. Photo: Elena Ternovaja

With his Oslo trilogy 'Love', 'Dreams' and 'Sex', Dag Johan Haugerud has created a cinematic, literary and sociological marvel that is as intelligent as it is moving.



She works as a doctor on an oncology ward, treating men suffering from prostate cancer. Like the nurse Tor (Tayo Cittadella Jacobsen), who assists her in her consultations, she has no interest in static relationships but, like Tor, loves the fluid moments of life. She just lacks the tools to bring these moments into her own life. By chance, she meets Tor in a completely different context and learns from him what had previously been denied to her, while at the same time reflecting on every step she takes in long conversations not only with Tor, but also with the couples she meets.

In addition to Marianne's encounters, in which she makes it clear, among other things, that marriage as a unit of production is out of the question for her, Haugerud - until now best known for his fiction in Norway and outside the country his film *Barn* (2019), and who has also worked as a librarian - places just as much emphasis on Tor's romantic life, his homosexuality, which not only Marianne's patients understand better, but who also has and seeks other friends and ultimately comes from a different social class and from a region in Norway whose dialect is often mocked.

Haugerud intertwines these two lifelines, with all their fascinating ramifications, in great dialogues that, as in the two other films, last longer than ten minutes, but are so realistic that you don't want them to ever end. Haugerud's ensemble is delicately cast, right down to the smallest supporting role; all act as if their lives, or at least their love, depends on it.

Haugerud manages to capture moments of unexpected and profound tenderness, such as when Marianne pats the architect Ole (Thomas Gullestad), with whom she is to be set up by her friend Heidi, on his bottom as he enters through the window of his house, or when Tor overtakes Bjørn (Lars Jacob Holm) on his bike on the way from the hospital and tries to talk to him.

And then there are the words, the tenderness of language, the way in which knowledge is gained through talking, as in Heinrich von Kleist's essay *On the Gradual Formation of Thoughts in Talking* from 1805. In *Love*, this reflection descends into everyday depths, such as the mounting pressure of expectation from a distant letterbox or the conversation over a frugal supper in Ole's house on Nesodden. Every conversation leads to insights that are as easy as they are difficult. Because what counts is not always what is being talked about, but the very ability of each person to talk to one another at all. Only then does reality change for each of them, so it is only logical that the ending takes place in Oslo City Hall, where *Love* began. But of course, this is not an ending either, but rather the hint of a new beginning.



*A scene from Love (2024). Photo: Motlys*

## Dreams

The Oslo Trilogy: *Love* | 2024 | NOR | 119 Min.

At least in *Dreams*, the chronology makes sense. *Dreams* is actually the second part of Dag Johan Haugerud's Oslo trilogy. Whether *Love* or just *Sex* comes before or after doesn't seem to matter to distributors outside Norway, no matter how much Haugerud emphasised that *Love* was intended as the conclusion of his trilogy. For me, however, the trilogy also functions as a triptych with equal status, just as the individual paintings in Max Beckmann's work can also be interchanged and new conceptual intersections seem possible.

At the same time, the international confusion fits in well with Haugerud's approach in his three films, where he places the almost inextricable complexity of human relationships, the depths of sexuality and the negotiability of social norms at the centre of his decidedly dialogue-driven films. While in *Love* it was adults of more or less the same age, in *Dreams* - which not only won the main prize at this year's Berlinale, but also the FIPRESCI and Guild Prize - Haugerud explores the thoughts, feelings and speech of three generations.

This may sound a little theoretical, but it is not. Haugerud's dialogues are so intrinsic to everyday life and at the same time cathartic, watching and listening to them one cannot help but feel genuine joy.



Yet Dreams is perhaps the most complex film in the trilogy. The story unfolds slowly, almost imperceptibly. 16-year-old schoolgirl Johanne (Ella Øverbye) falls in love with her new French teacher Johanna (Selome Emnetu) and, in order to reaffirm and understand her feelings, she writes a text that she shows to her grandmother Karin (Anne Marit Jacobsen), who in turn shows it to her daughter Kristin (Ane Dahl Torp), Johanna's mother.

Although the film begins with a single theme - the crush or infatuation of a schoolgirl on her teacher - the manner in which it unfolds could not be less anticipated. This unfolding is best compared to tea leaves thrown loosely into a teapot and hot water being poured over them, a moment that we also witness in Haugerud's film, one in which one of the many conversations in this film takes place. The spoken word transforms not only the situation but also the knowledge of what this situation was and now is. These shifts in perception brought about by language are further reinforced by Johanne's text read from off-screen, which explores the past and combines the cinematic present, the flashback and the absolute present into a whole, catapulting us into an as yet undefined future.

We only see fragments of this future: a great scene with Johanne's therapist, in which not only the necessity of modern therapy and questionable suffering is discussed, but also where the present reconciles with the past, and Oslo City Hall, which plays a kind of anchor role in all three films, appears. Every word spoken here is finely calibrated. When Johanne's therapist addresses the banality of his client's suffering, Johanne manages to counter his plausible point of view with equal force, because she is right when she says: „If nobody wants you, you're nobody.“



A scene from Dreams (2024). Photo: Agnete Brun

But Haugerud tells us much more. He speaks of the risk of losing control of our dreams and stories when they are shared. He speaks of the transformation of love in a changing city, and in a moving conversation between Johanne's mother and grandmother, they not only discuss flashdancing, but also three generations of feminism and womanhood. Here too, change is essential, although all change is also a miracle, because it also incorporates what was and what will be. This unity of what was, what is and what will be and the equally present disunity of speaking, acting and feeling are the essence, the tea leaves that unfold at the end, giving colour and taste to water and life.

Despite all the seriousness, Haugerud manages not to forget the playfulness and humour. The sometimes unbearable lightness of being is made bearable, not only through grotesque 'bon mots' such as the one about God being a naked Swede, but above all through the lightness and the need of all those involved to rid themselves of the heaviness of life through the act of speaking, thus becoming someone new. After all, this is perhaps the greatest promise of our modern age, that ultimately anything is possible, a freedom unknown for millennia that can finally be realised. In Dreams, but also in Love and Sex, Dag Johan Haugerud shows how this is possible. Touching, enlightening, fascinating. Great cinema. Great literature.

## Sex

The Oslo Trilogy: Sex | 2024 | NOR | 118 Min.

If I were to make films myself and not just write about them, they would be films like the three Oslo films by Dag Johan Haugerud. They are not just "literary" films, because they are interspersed with long dialogue sequences that, even without the camera and its images, tell absorbing, exciting and touching stories about our present and our most everyday feelings, even without the camera and its images: the possibilities of new relationship models in Love, the variance of relationships within three generations in Dreams and the fluid meaning of sexuality in Sex (which, curiously, in Germany is called Longing). This shows once again that Haugerud's films are indeed films of the word, of language, which repeatedly gains the upper hand over cinematic aesthetics and their pictorial language. Though not always.

This is evident from the utterly stunning first scene of Sex, in which two chimney sweeps sit together in their office overlooking Oslo's rooftops after their work is done. One is the manager (Thorbjørn Harr), who recounts a recurring dream in which he is confronted by David Bowie, who looks at him as no man has ever looked at him: without any expectations, or rather with



an expanded expectation that he, the married man with a child, could also be a woman. His colleague friend (Jan Gunnar Røise), who also lives a hetero-normative life, then tells him about a similar experience. Not in a dream, but in real life; at his last customer's, he was looked at by a man for the first time in his life in a way that only women usually look at him, and what's more, was invited to have sex.

This conversation changes everything. Not only does it deepen the relationship between the two friends and colleagues, it also has a lasting effect on their partners, the chimney sweep's wife (Siri Forberg) and the managing director's wife (Brigitte Larsen). This core ensemble, including the couples' young children and friends, is increasingly drawn into this maelstrom of dreams and realities. This may be reminiscent of Arthur Schnitzler and his *Traumnovelle* and the Kubrick film adaptation *Eyes Wide Shut* or the German adaptation of *Traumnovelle* last year by Florian Frerichs, but Frerichs' film version is a particularly good example of how Schnitzler is hardly suitable for a truly contemporary adaptation. Anyone who disagrees should therefore watch *Longing*, as Haugerud shows both breathtakingly and tenderly what is possible in our (Western) present, and to what extent the act of speaking has acquired an almost self-therapeutic function for both sexes.

This includes not only the sexual relationships discussed here, but also the relationships between friends and between parents and their children. Although the language central here too, you could listen to this film spellbound even without its images.

But when you see the images and the great actors of these finely crafted characters, worked out down to the last detail, you almost feel compelled to step into the screen, just as Tom Baxter once stepped out of the screen in Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo*. Because Haugerud's reality not only surpasses in its authenticity any actual reality, but is also so much smarter, more beautiful and better.

Be it the scene in which one of the chimney sweeps visits a speech therapist with his son because the David Bowie dream triggered a speech blockage, or the long conversations between the couples, or the visit to a choral concert. Just as in Sarah Polley's documentary search for her biological father in *Stories We Tell*, you feel an urge to meet the characters in Haugerud's film, to talk to them or, ideally, spend an entire evening or a lifetime with them.

Haugerud shows that the world is the way you talk to it, the way you talk to your neighbour. However, the price for this is high - it is a freedom that is always associated with risk, with possible failure. And it also hurts because conversations, this struggle with language and our relationships, is always a struggle with the truth. With the external truth and with our very personal inner truths, which must always be reconciled. However, the possible prize is then to experience the most beautiful thing of all, namely to be seen by the others around us without expectations and to be able to be who we want to be. To be someone completely different, even if only for an afternoon with a customer in their home, in front of a freshly swept chimney (whereby the fundamental and very humorous symbolism of "chimney sweeping" should not be ignored). Just as Haugerud subtly breaks with expectations in his films. After all, who expects such reflective conversations from chimney sweeps, such profundity from a schoolgirl in *Dreams* and such an unconventional search for a love relationship from a doctor as in *Love*?

At the end and in the middle of *Sex*, we find ourselves back at Oslo City Hall and perhaps think we see the other wonderful people from *Love* and *Dreams* in the crowd filing past. Are they there or not? But even if they are not, the possibility is enough. Just as Haugerud's films are also the entirely real possibility of literature turned into film. 🍷

*Writer: film critic & journalist, Germany*



*A scene from Sex (2024). Photo: Motlys*



# NO OTHER LAND

Sheila O'Malley



*Photo: rottentomatoes*

**A**s the bulldozer hovers behind the house, demolition imminent, a woman screams, “My daughters are still in there!” at the soldier pushing her out the door.

The soldier says, with no feeling or hesitation, “Doesn’t matter.”

“Doesn’t matter.” The coldness of it, the dehumanization, is so complete it’s shocking, even after everything else we’ve seen, all the horrors in this world. Maintaining the ability to be shocked by heartless cruelty is what makes us human, and the only thing, at times,

that keeps the flame of hope alive. If “doesn’t matter” is your response to a woman’s plea for her daughters’ lives, regardless of her politics/culture/religion/race, etc., then you have left the human circle entirely.

This is just one of the many heartless moments on display in “No Other Land,” a documentary about the ongoing destruction of Masafer Yatta, a cluster of villages located in the southern West Bank of Palestine. One inhabitant says his ancestors moved there in the 1830s. People have been living there for generations.



But Masafer Yatta has been turned into a training ground for the Israeli military, meaning the population's presence is now considered illegal. Rebuilding their destroyed homes is also considered illegal since they need building permits (which, of course, they can't get). The ongoing fight of Masafer Yatta to keep their land occasionally makes headlines, particularly when there are deaths (as there often are), but still, the demolitions continue. "No Other Land," co-directed by a group of Israeli and Palestinian filmmakers and journalists (Basel Adra, Yuval Abraham, Hamdan Balla and Rachel Szor) was finished, chillingly, just before October 2023.

Basel Adra grew up in a small village in Masafer Yatta, the child of activist parents. His first memory was his father being arrested at a protest (not his first or last arrest). Basel also remembers former British Prime Minister Tony Blair visiting Masafer Yatta for a whopping seven minutes. Basel is a young man, a former law student, who now devotes his time to documenting the village demolitions, the tanks circling the area, and bulldozers heading down the hill. Basel is constantly on his phone, posting pictures and videos to his Instagram feed capturing the soldiers bristling with military gear, the assaults, the destruction of buildings. Basel is brave. He runs towards the soldiers, shouting, phone up. He is his father's son, although he expresses doubts about having the "energy" of his father to keep up the fight. He says, bleakly, "I started filming when we started to end."

The bulldozers destroy homes as children weep and women scream, and the soldiers are rough with everyone, grabbing the children roughly, shoving past old women. People shout, "Aren't you ashamed?" The people try to appeal to the soldiers' human side: "If this was your home, how would you feel?" A man named Ilan oversees the demolitions, and he is particularly monstrous with his mirrored sunglasses and contemptuous, flat-affect attitude. The tanks roll out of town, leaving a pile of rubble behind. "No Other Land" is a portrait of relentless cruelty, but it is also a portrait of the resilience of this besieged community. Every night, under the cover of darkness, the community rebuilds. These new structures will be destroyed as well. Then, they will rebuild again.

Basel has teamed up with Israeli journalist Yuval Abraham to document what is happening. Yuval considers what his home country is doing is a crime, but there are constant reminders of the differences between his situation and Basel's. Yuval is disappointed in the low number of clicks some article he wrote received. Basel basically shrugs. To him, this is typical and also a little frivolous. The occupation won't end next week because of some article Yuval wrote. However, Yuval's support is authentic, and he remains at Basel's side. Their dynamic is not bitter, even with the gap of experience. They share the same goal.

Because this is the 21st century, Basel's entire life has been captured on film. We see footage of Basel as a child; we see his energetic father organizing and participating in protests. The footage in the documentary is, at times, chaotic and hand-held, understandably. Still, there are other more meditative shots, mournful and poetic, children swinging on the swings (before the playground was destroyed), and Basel's father's "gas station," a lonely single pump, a fragile oasis of light in the darkness. The gas station is a gathering place, a hub of communication, and a place to unwind.

One of the villagers is shot for trying to hold on to his generator, an extremely important item. He ends up paralyzed from the neck down, totally helpless and cared for by his mother in a dark cave dwelling. Doctors can't get to them. She can't get to doctors. Journalists visit and interview her, take pictures of her son, nod sympathetically as she sobs. Then they get in their cars and drive away. The persecution is nonstop, an immovable force. One day, the soldiers pour cement into the only well in the area. There's a word for all of this: Indefensible.

"No Other Land" was created under dire circumstances (even more dire now) and brings on heartbreaking questions. What has happened to the people in the documentary since October of last year? What about the children who run in the streets, who beg to go to school, who de-compress by playing games on their phones ... what has happened to all of them? To everyone? Agnieszka Holland's "Green Border," showing the years-long refugee crisis in the forest borderland between Belarus and Poland, was one of the most upsetting and important films this year. "No Other Land" stands beside it in equal urgency, hopelessness and anger.

In October 2023, Palestinian poet Mosab Abu Toha fled his home in Beit Lahiya with his family and was detained by the IDF, trying to leave the Gaza Strip. Toha had already published a book of poetry and is a well-known public figure, having established an English-language library in Beit Lahia named after Edward Said (the library has since been destroyed). Toha was released, perhaps because of his high profile, and made it first to Egypt and then the United States. Forest of Noise, his second book of poetry, was published in mid-October of this year, and the poems are filled with vivid imagery and stark mourning. Toha's work is essential reading (as is his "Letter from Gaza" column in The New Yorker). "No Other Land" called to mind his poem "Obit," which ends:

To my shadow that's been crushed by cars and vans,/ its chest pierced with shrapnel and bullets/ flying with no wings,/ my shadow that no one's attending to,/ bleeding black blood/ through its memory/ now, and forever.

"No Other Land" is an act of bearing witness to the "shadows no one's attending to." Just watching is not enough, but it's the start of "attending to" those in pain. At least it's not turning away or thinking it "doesn't matter." 🕯

*Writer: Film Critic, USA*



Basel Adra, Rachel Szor, Hamdan Ballal, and Yuval Abraham pictured at the Academy Awards in Los Angeles after their film "No Other Land" won the Oscar for best documentary, March 2, 2025.

*Photo: Jordan Strauss/AP*

**H**is step is calm, almost secretive. His tinted glasses are his discreet mask. He advances, a silhouette both austere and radiant, greeted by gazes filled with gratitude. Warm hands are extended to him, sincere smiles offered. He responds with an almost monastic restraint, without forcing the moment.

Jafar Panahi, Palme d'Or winner at the 78th Cannes Film Festival for *It Was Just an Accident*, is a filmmaker who, in the darkness, has never ceased to summon light. A man whose cinema, forged in adversity, radiates humanity and resistance.

His smile, behind his tinted glasses, seemed to say that, despite all trials, art always triumphs.

# Jafar Panahi

## A Filmmaker of Freedom

**Natali Chifle**



*Photo: Scott A Garfitt/ In vision/ AP*

Banned from leaving Iran for fourteen years, imprisoned twice, the director has defied censorship and repression to keep filming. His return to Cannes this year, after a twenty-two-year absence, is a miracle. “I am alive because I make films,” he declared during the festival—a phrase that resonates like a manifesto. Upon receiving the Palme from Juliette Binoche and Cate Blanchett, he issued a vibrant call: “Let us set our differences aside; the most important thing is the freedom of our country.” These words, spoken with quiet conviction, affirm this: art is never separate from courage.

*It Was Just an Accident*, shot clandestinely, opens with a trivial event: a car collision. But this banality conceals a vertigo. Vahid, a former prisoner scarred by torture, recognizes one of the men involved as his former torturer—betrayed by the spectral clink of a prosthesis. Chained in a van, the tormentor becomes the heart of a dilemma: to seek revenge or to forgive. Panahi, with a rigorously pure *mise-en-scène*, crafts a drama with Beckettian undertones, where the grotesque flirts with the abyssal. The film is a meditation on humanity in the face of barbarity.



This moral questioning finds an echo in *Ghost Trail* by Jonathan Millet, presented at the 2024 Critics' Week at Cannes. Though the settings differ—Panahi's claustrophobic Iran versus Millet's gray, contemporary Europe—the question remains the same: how to confront one's persecutor without becoming a monster oneself? In *Ghost Trail*, a wounded man pursues the shadow of the person he believes destroyed his life in Syria. Here too, a sensory detail—a voice, a silhouette—revives a buried past. In these two taut films, it is never about blind vengeance but about justice, balance, humanity.

Memory, for these two filmmakers, is not merely a recollection; it is a burden and, at the same time, a sacred flame. Panahi, through Vahid, probes the possibility of freeing oneself from the past without being consumed by it. Millet, meanwhile, shows how invisible wounds can dictate the most violent actions. In this confrontation with ghosts, it is less about punishing than understanding. For Panahi, this quest resonates all the more deeply as it draws from his own life. He could have succumbed to silence, sunk into resignation. Instead, he chose to transform pain into beauty, chains into images. "I transform darkness into hope," he says. *It Was Just an Accident* thus becomes a universal work, inviting every viewer to probe their own moral limits.

This Palme d'Or consecrates not only a film but the story of a man and a country. Twenty-eight years after Abbas Kiarostami's Palme d'Or for *Taste of Cherry*, where Panahi was a student and assistant, Iranian cinema once again basks in the spotlight. But where Kiarostami opted for delicate metaphor, Panahi chooses the fire of reality. From *The White Balloon* (Caméra d'Or 1995) to *Taxi* (Golden Bear 2015), he has carved a path for a cinema at human height, exposing the absurdities of a Kafkaesque regime.

His presence at Cannes embodied a collective triumph for all silenced Iranian artists. Descending the staircase toward the Majestic beach after his Palme d'Or on Saturday, May 24, Jafar Panahi, warmly applauded, appeared not merely as a celebrated filmmaker but as an artist of resistance. His smile, behind his tinted glasses, seemed to say that, despite all trials, art always triumphs.

His Palme d'Or, awarded amid geopolitical tensions, is a beacon in the darkness. It reminds us that cinema, as Panahi says, is a society where no one should dictate what to say or do—a republic without censorship, where every voice has the right to exist. Nearing sixty-five, the Iranian filmmaker teaches us once again that freedom is never granted but conquered—shot by shot. Filming in secret, hiding rushes in a cake, as he has done, is to make cinema an act of survival. 🇮🇷

*Writer: French film critic and journalist*



*A scene from It Was Just An Accident. Photo: IMDB*

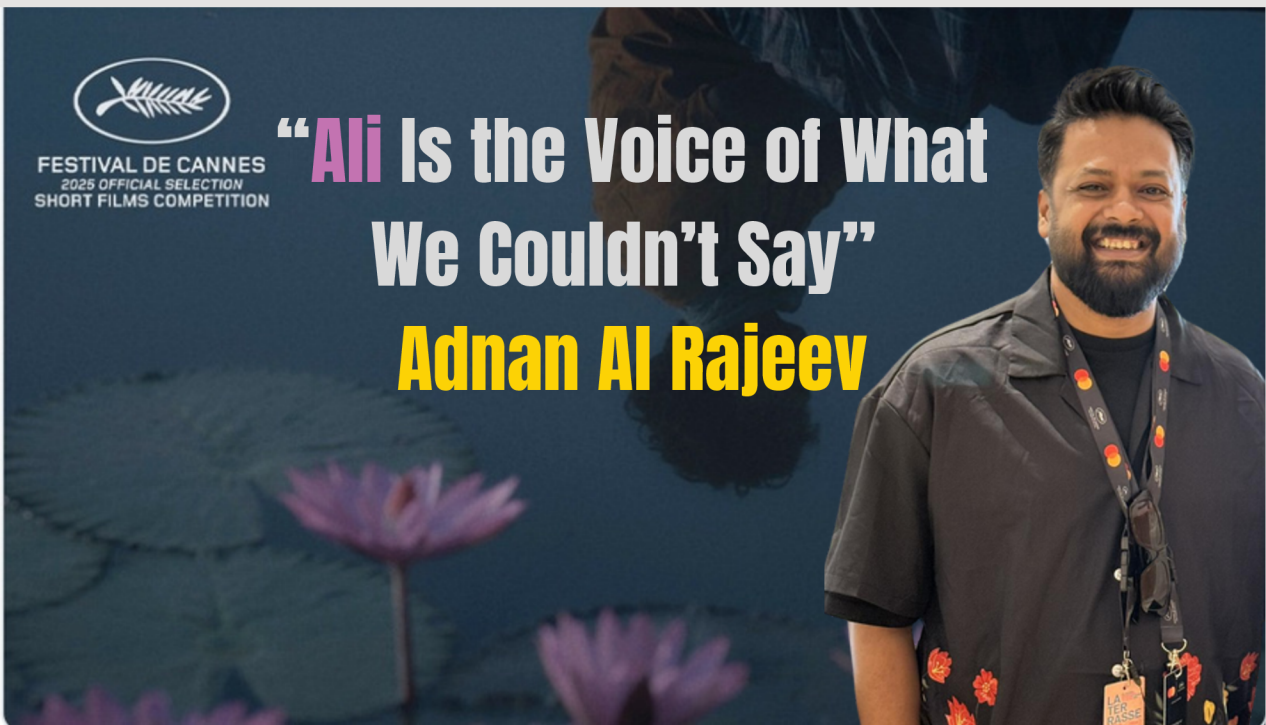


Photo: Social Media.

**A**dnan Al Rajeev made history at the 78th Cannes Film Festival in 2025 as the first Bangladeshi filmmaker to have a short film officially selected for the Palme d'Or Short Film Competition. His film *Ali* received a prestigious Special Mention from the jury, marking a breakthrough moment for Bangladeshi cinema on the global stage.

Born on 11 May 1987 in Tangail, Rajeev began his career at 17 as an assistant director at Chabial, founded by renowned filmmaker Mostofa Sarwar Farooki. After five years of hands-on experience, he made his directorial debut with the television film *Ucchotora Podartha Biggan* in 2008. Over the years, he has become a prominent voice in the Bangladeshi media landscape, directing acclaimed TV dramas like *All Time Dourer Upor* (2013), *Middle Class Sentiment* (2014), and *Bikal Belar Pakhi* (2017), as well as over 500 television commercials.

Rajeev is the founder of Runout Films, one of the country's leading production houses, and has produced more than 13 web films and series for platforms such as Chorki and Hoichoi Bangladesh. His credits include *Mohanagar 2*, *Khachar Vetur Ochin Pakhi*, and *Nikhoj*. In 2024, he co-directed the latest season of *Coke Studio Bangla* and co-produced *Radikals*, selected for the 63rd *Semaine de la Critique* at Cannes 2024. He also produced *Dear Maloti*, which screened at the Cairo International Film Festival.

This exclusive interview was taken during the 78th Cannes Film Festival by Bidhan Rebeiro, editor of *Cut to Cinema*. Adnan Al Rajeev spoke candidly about *Ali* and its journey — a powerful voice from Bangladesh now resonating on the world stage.



Bangladeshi films have participated in the Cannes Film Festival before, but your short film is the first to compete. How do you view this achievement in the context of Bangladeshi cinema?

I believe this is a tremendous source of inspiration for us and for the next generation of filmmakers. It proves that Cannes is not some distant, unreachable dream. With proper study and focused dedication, it's possible to get there — and even win.

How did the Cannes audience respond to your film *Ali*?

The response was incredible. People from different countries came up to me, and some were even moved to tears because the story resonated deeply with their own lives. What touched me most was that even the jury members were visibly impressed. They approached me to say how beautifully the film was made and how significant its political message was.



## ARTICLE

Apart from the challenges of making *Ali*, were there any difficulties in submitting it and getting selected for the competition at Cannes?

Not really. I can't recall facing any major challenges in that process. We made the film in our own way, submitted it, and it got selected.

Do you make films as structured projects, or are they expressions of your soul?

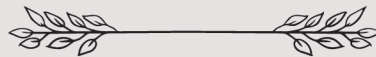
I think it's both. Since I work across different media, I usually begin by thinking of a film as a project — what I want to create. But once the process begins, it gradually transforms into something that comes from deep within — an expression of the soul.

As a filmmaker, how personally connected are you to *Ali*?

This film reflects our experience of growing up under social pressure to remain silent. Many of us want to speak out, but we hold back because doing so invites consequences. So we stay quiet. *Ali* represents that silenced voice.

When will audiences in Bangladesh be able to watch *Ali*?

I can't say for sure just yet. But I hope that after the film completes its festival run, we'll find a way to share it with the audience. 🌍



## DO YOU know?

## WHAT IS MACGUFFIN

In film theory, a MacGuffin refers to an object, event, or goal that drives the plot forward, even though its actual nature may be unimportant to the audience. Coined by screenwriter Angus MacPhail and popularized by Alfred Hitchcock, the MacGuffin serves primarily to motivate characters and set the story in motion. It could be anything—a suitcase, a secret formula, or a hidden treasure.



Hitchcock famously used MacGuffins in thrillers like *North by Northwest* (1959), where the mysterious microfilm is crucial to the characters but largely irrelevant to viewers. The object's value lies not in its content, but in how it triggers suspense, conflict, and character decisions.



Today, the MacGuffin appears across genres—from the briefcase in *Pulp Fiction* to the Infinity Stones in the Marvel universe. While sometimes criticized as a mere plot device, a well-used MacGuffin subtly enhances narrative momentum without distracting from the core emotional journey.







**F**

ilm didn't enter the world of formal education overnight — it crept in quietly, evolving over time. While the seeds of film education were planted before the First

World War, it wasn't until the 1920s that schools began to fully embrace it. Russia was at the forefront during this period, as it established its first-ever film school — the Moscow Film School. Prior to this, aspiring filmmakers in earlier days were not constrained by conventional schooling; rather, they were fearless trailblazers, frequently self-taught photographers or engineers experimenting with emerging technologies. What began as a spirited exploration has now erupted into a global phenomenon, fueled by the internet in today's digital age, which has catapulted this artistic revolution into new and exciting dimensions!

Cut to the digital age: the film schools of today can be tucked inside your pocket — on your phone, on YouTube, one click away. What used to require expensive, prestigious schools or training abroad can now be learned with just an internet connection and a little curiosity. Sites like YouTube have developed into one-stop film schools, offering everything from instruction on how to use DaVinci Resolve for editing to lessons on using natural lighting or framing a shot. Websites and channels such as No Film School, StudioBinder, and Indy Mogul offer a range of practical lessons that mirror professional-level training —

all provided at no cost. This engaging, visual method of learning is not only hands-on but also self-directed.

However, what truly sets this digital wave apart is who's doing the teaching — not just academics in ivory towers, but real filmmakers in the field, sharing the raw, unfiltered truth of the craft. From behind-the-scenes vlogs to on-set breakdowns and brutally honest career advice, these creators offer a front-row seat to the realities of filmmaking. Aspiring directors can watch how a commercial is lit on a tight budget, how actors are directed in emotionally charged scenes, or how sound design can make or break a moment — all taught by people who are actively doing the work. "YouTube is the world's biggest film school — you just have to know how to use it," once stated the well-known YouTuber and filmmaker Darius Britt. For students, this signifies a remarkable shift: they are no longer confined to a single teaching style or syllabus. Instead, they can confidently forge their own learning path, guided by professionals. This is not just education; it's a powerful form of mentorship that is accessible anytime, anywhere.

Whether you're holding a university ID or a mobile phone, the only tuition the silver screen demands is curiosity to learn.

While filmmaking has become worldwide, not everyone starts from the same place — especially in countries like Bangladesh, where traditional programs are scarce and often overwhelmed with theory. This lack of practical training eliminates many creators from the game. And yet, that hasn't stopped a new generation of young filmmakers in this country from emerging. They are learning, shooting, and telling stories on their own terms, using only a smartphone, a few free editing apps like Kinemaster or CapCut, and an endless library of YouTube tutorials. Facebook groups and local YouTube collectives have become spaces for collaboration, critique, and growth. I've seen it firsthand: friends creating short films on rooftops, editing in cramped bedrooms, uploading their work late at night — fueled by dreams and data packs. It's a quiet revolution — one that proves passion and access to knowledge can outshine even the fanciest film degree.

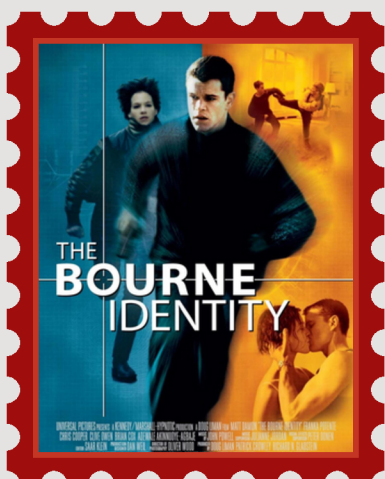
Still, while the digital world has carved out thrilling new avenues, the legacy of traditional film schools remains deeply respected. These institutions not only offer structure and mentorship, but also the essence of sitting in a vast lecture hall, listening to professors and peers directly — without headphones — simply being present in the moment. These are real-time experiences, something that can never be fully replicated online. They provide not just education, but networks — spaces where vision is sharpened through critique, collaboration, and cinematic history. And perhaps the beauty of this moment in time is that we no longer have to choose one path over the other. The future of film education lies in that blend — where old-school discipline meets the raw innovation of the internet — making a filmmaking career more attainable than ever, especially for Bangladeshi creators. 🎬

*Writer: Student of Film and Media Studies*



*Moscow Film School is the first and oldest film school in the world. Photo: TASS*





# UNDERCOVER CLASSICS

## 10 SPY FILMS THAT REDEFINED THE GENRE GLOBALLY



### The Spy Who Came in from the Cold (1965), Martin Ritt

Based on John le Carré's novel, this gritty Cold War thriller strips espionage of glamour. Richard Burton gives a powerful performance as a disillusioned British agent caught in a bleak web of double-crosses.

### Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (2011), Tomas Alfredson

A slow-burning, cerebral adaptation of le Carré's novel, set within the shadowy corridors of British intelligence. Gary Oldman's restrained portrayal of George Smiley is haunting and masterful.

### The Lives of Others (2006), Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck

Set in 1980s East Berlin, this German masterpiece follows a Stasi officer surveilling a playwright—only to become emotionally entangled. A profound reflection on surveillance, morality, and redemption.

### North by Northwest (1959), Alfred Hitchcock

Cary Grant stars as an advertising executive mistaken for a spy, chased across America. A dazzling blend of suspense, romance, and style from the master of thrillers.

### Army of Shadows (1969), Jean-Pierre Melville

This French resistance drama is one of the most somber and poetic espionage films ever made. Melville's depiction of underground fighters during Nazi occupation is both brutally realistic and emotionally devastating.

### The Bourne Identity (2002), Doug Liman

Matt Damon reinvents the modern action spy with speed, grit, and vulnerability. The film's kinetic style and stripped-down storytelling redefined the espionage genre for the 21st century.

### No Way Out (1987), Roger Donaldson

A tense American political thriller about a naval officer caught in a deadly web of deceit and cover-ups. Kevin Costner delivers one of his best early performances in this underrated gem.

### The Spy Gone North (2018), Yoon Jong-bin

Based on true events, this South Korean thriller follows a former military officer who infiltrates North Korea's leadership. It's a gripping, intelligent drama that blurs the lines between duty and deception in the shadow of geopolitical conflict.

### The Man Who Knew Too Much (1956), Alfred Hitchcock

In this suspenseful remake of his own 1934 film, Hitchcock casts James Stewart and Doris Day as an American couple whose vacation in Morocco turns into a nightmare after they stumble upon an assassination plot. Tautly crafted and emotionally charged, it features the iconic song "Que Sera, Sera" woven into the plot with chilling brilliance.

### Our Man in Havana (1959), Carol Reed

A dark comedy based on Graham Greene's novel, where a British vacuum cleaner salesman becomes an accidental MI6 agent in Cuba. Satirical, witty, and quietly subversive.





*No Time to Die. Photo: Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer/Universal Pictures*

# Test your knowledge



1. Which country is considered the birthplace of cinema? (1 point)
2. Who directed the Japanese classic film Seven Samurai? (2 point)
3. Which Italian film won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 1999? (3 point)
4. Which Iranian director won the Palme d'Or at Cannes for Taste of Cherry? (4 point)
5. What is the name of the Swedish filmmaker known for films like The Seventh Seal and Wild Strawberries? (5 point)



Answers  
1. France 2. Akira Kurosawa 3. Life is Beautiful 4. Abbas Kiarostami 5. Ingmar Bergman



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