

# CUT CINEMA

ISSUE 9 | VOL. 1 | DECEMBER 2025

**GUILLERMO DEL TORO'S  
FRANKENSTEIN AS A  
RITUAL OF HUMANITY**

**FAREWELL TO HOMAYOUN  
ERSHADI THE SOUL OF  
TASTE OF CHERRY**

**DELUPI: A VILLAGE SAGA  
SATIRIZING BANGLADESH'S  
RECENT POLITICAL REALITY**



**Life is full of  
misery, loneliness,  
and suffering –  
and it's all over  
much too soon.**



**WOODY ALLEN**



# EDITORIAL

Cinema is never above politics. Whether it is a romantic story or a horror film, politics is always there in some form. But when a film directly deals with political themes, we call it a political film. By that definition, Delupi is a political film, and satire is a key part of it. Recently, the film has generated strong curiosity among audiences in Bangladesh. December is the month of victory for the country, and we are glad to publish a review of Delupi in this issue. Still, one question lingers in the back of the mind. In our hope for reform, have we unknowingly created a Frankenstein's monster? Though Guillermo del Toro's Frankenstein tries to stand as an antithesis to that idea, this film too invites such reflection. We also have a review of it here. We hope, like the previous issues, this one will also receive the love of our readers.

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Cover Photo: Frankenstein (2025), directed by Oscar-winning director Guillermo del Toro.

Photo: Netflix



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## COPPOLA SELLS BELIZE ISLAND AFTER MEGALOPOLIS LOSSES

*Francis Ford Coppola. Michael Loccisano/Getty Images*

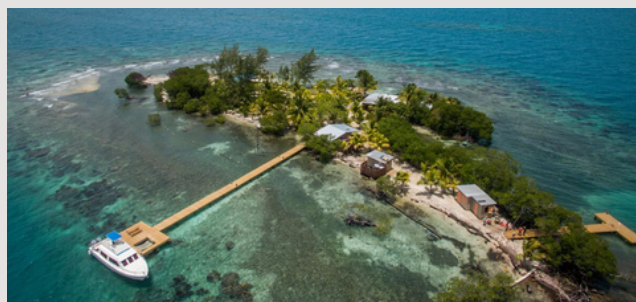
**F**rancis Ford Coppola has parted with another major asset after losing millions on his passion project, *Megalopolis*. The 85-year-old filmmaker recently saw his private island in Belize change hands for \$1.8 million. Known as Coral Caye, the 2.5-acre retreat sits eight miles from the mainland and runs on solar power and water tanks. Coppola had leased it for the last nine years and often vacationed there.

“Mr Coppola was very sad to see his lease come to an end,” Corcoran Group’s Peter McLean told Mansion Global, adding that the island meant a great deal to him.

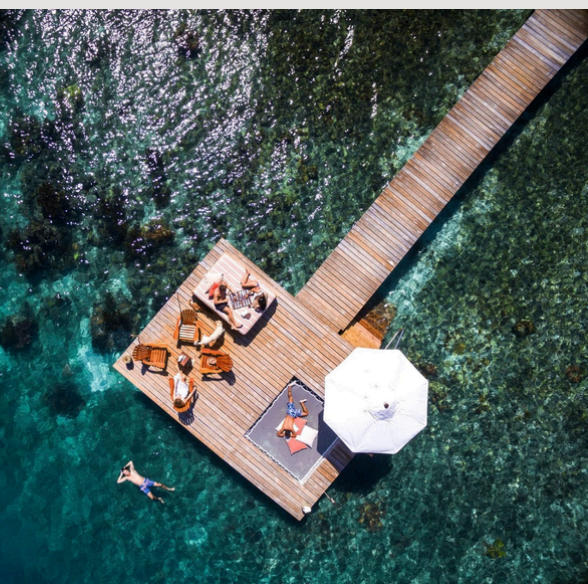
The sale follows the director’s massive financial hit from *Megalopolis*, a film he financed with \$120 million of his own money. The movie brought in only \$14.4 million globally, despite a star-studded cast including Adam Driver, Shia LaBeouf, Aubrey Plaza, Nathalie Emmanuel and Jon Voight.

At the Cannes premiere, Coppola said the high cost didn’t bother him, insisting that money fades but friendships matter more. But in a March appearance on the *Tetragrammaton* podcast, he admitted he is currently broke, saying the funds he borrowed and invested are “basically gone,” though he believes it will eventually pay off.

In addition to the island, the *Apocalypse Now* director has also sold his rare F.P. Journe watch, valued at more than \$1 million, to soften the financial blow. 🕒



*Coral Caye was Francis Ford Coppola’s stunning holiday place.*





# A LONG ROAD TO RECOGNITION TOM CRUISE'S HONORARY OSCAR



Tom Cruise at The Ray Dolby Ballroom. Photo by Kevin Winter/Getty Images

**T**om Cruise received an Honorary Academy Award at the 2025 Governors Awards, held on November 16, 2025, at the Ray Dolby Ballroom in Los Angeles. The recognition marks a milestone long awaited in a career defined by persistence, reinvention, and an unwavering devotion to cinema.

Cruise's beginnings were far more modest than his larger-than-life image. Born on July 3, 1962, in Syracuse, New York, he grew up in a family that struggled financially. His mother worked as a special-education teacher and his father was an electrical engineer. Constant relocations and instability shaped his childhood, but his imagination offered escape. In his acceptance speech, he recalled sitting in a dark theater as a child, mesmerized by the beam of projected light and the worlds unfolding on screen. That moment ignited a dream that never faded.

Before acting took over, Cruise briefly considered becoming a priest. Everything changed at fifteen when a teacher encouraged him to audition for *Guys and Dolls*. He landed the lead role and felt something he had never experienced in a classroom: confidence and belonging. Acting became more than a hobby. It became identity.

After high school, he moved to New York and worked odd jobs while auditioning. His first roles in *Endless Love* and *Taps* in 1981 opened doors.

Two years later, *Risky Business* made him a breakout star. With *Top Gun* in 1986, he cemented global superstardom.

Despite his fame as an action hero, Cruise pursued emotional depth in films like *Rain Man*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, *Jerry Maguire*, and *Magnolia* — performances that earned him four Oscar nominations. His commitment to authenticity shaped a new era of action cinema. In the *Mission: Impossible* series, he chose to perform dangerous stunts himself, from scaling buildings to hanging off aircraft. For Cruise, filmmaking wasn't just performance — it was total physical and artistic commitment.

Academy President Janet Yang praised him for inspiring new generations and defending cinema as a theatrical experience. Director Alejandro González Iñárritu presented the award, calling Cruise's work bold, passionate, and transformative.

The ceremony also honored Debbie Allen, Wynn Thomas, and Dolly Parton for their contributions to arts and culture.

In his speech, Cruise said filmmaking is not just what he does, but who he is. He thanked audiences for sharing in the power of storytelling, reminding the room that cinema is a collective experience. 🎬



# FAREWELL TO HOMAYOUN ERSHADI THE SOUL OF TASTE OF CHERRY

Md. Raabbi Islam

**T**

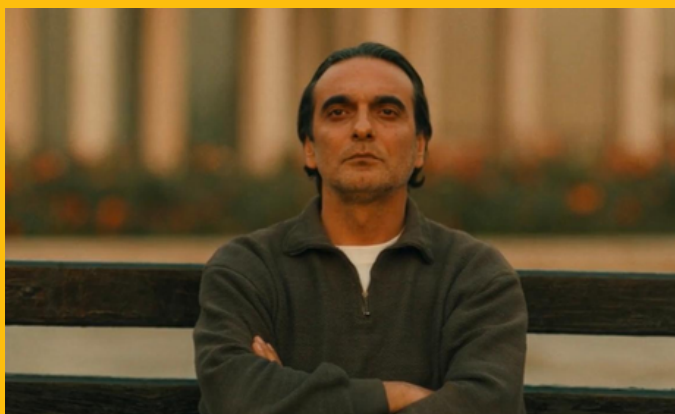
he world of cinema mourns the passing of Homayoun Ershadi, the Iranian actor whose calm and reflective presence left an indelible mark on audiences worldwide. He died on 11 November 2025 at the age of 78

after a battle with cancer. Ershadi was never a conventional star; he did not rely on glamour, spectacle, or flashy performances. Instead, his strength lay in authenticity, patience, and subtlety. His quiet demeanor and the weight of his presence conveyed emotions that often went unspoken but were deeply felt by viewers. This loss is profound not only because of his talent but because his approach represented a rare cinematic philosophy, one where minimalism and sincerity create powerful connections. In his death, the film world reflects on the delicate artistry he embodied, the spaces he filled with human emotion, and the lessons future actors and filmmakers can learn from his understated yet profound career.

Homayoun Ershadi's journey into acting is one of life's unexpected twists. Born in Isfahan, Iran, in 1947, he trained as an architect, studying in Italy and later practicing in Tehran. He built structures, observed human behavior, and cultivated a life grounded in patience and attention to detail. Acting was never a goal or ambition. Yet, in a moment that seems almost cinematic itself, Abbas Kiarostami spotted him sitting in traffic and invited him to play the lead in *Taste of Cherry* (1997). This encounter transformed Ershadi's life overnight. His lack of formal training became an asset; his years of observing life and understanding human presence allowed him to embody roles with remarkable authenticity. The transition from architect to actor illustrates that

great talent often emerges in unexpected places and that life experience can translate into profound artistry. Ershadi's story is a testament to chance, readiness, and the subtle power of lived experience, which shaped every performance he gave.

In *Taste of Cherry*, Ershadi's portrayal of Mr. Badii, a man searching for someone to bury him after his planned suicide, demonstrates his mastery of minimalist performance. The film won the Palme d'Or at Cannes, but it is Ershadi's stillness and presence that remain unforgettable. He did not rely on exaggerated gestures or dialogue; every glance, pause, and movement carried profound emotional weight. His performance allows the audience to inhabit the quiet, contemplative spaces of human experience, demonstrating the power of subtlety in storytelling. For students and cinephiles, his work is a lesson in how authenticity and observation can replace



*Homayoun Ershadi (1947–2025) in Taste of Cherry (1997). Image: IMDB*





*Homayoun Ershadi died at the age of 78. imago/Pacific Press Agency*

technical skill or dramatic expression. Ershadi's minimalist style invites reflection, offering viewers an emotional intimacy rarely achieved in cinema. His death is not only the loss of a remarkable actor but of an approach to performance that emphasizes humanity, patience, and introspection, reminding us how cinema can convey the depth of ordinary lives.

After *Taste of Cherry*, Ershadi continued acting both in Iranian and international cinema, consistently bringing his understated style to each role. In Iran, he appeared in *The Pear Tree* (1998), exploring memory, love, and human reflection. Internationally, he appeared in *The Kite Runner* (2007), *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), and *A Most Wanted Man* (2014).

In every film, Ershadi remained true to his minimalist approach, demonstrating that authenticity transcends culture and language. He never sought the limelight, yet he became a bridge between Iranian and global cinema. His calm and reflective presence provided a counterpoint to the frenetic pace of modern filmmaking. His passing underscores the rarity of performers who rely on subtlety rather than spectacle and leaves a gap in both Iranian and world cinema. Future actors and filmmakers can look to Ershadi's work as a guide for achieving emotional depth with restraint and sincerity.

Homayoun Ershadi's death marks the loss of more than an actor; it represents the passing of a cinematic philosophy. Beginning his acting career in his 50s, he showed that it is never too late to pursue new paths. His work demonstrates how lived experience, observation, and authenticity can create performances that remain timeless. Ershadi's minimalist approach teaches that silence and stillness can communicate more than words or gestures.

For students, scholars, and cinephiles, his career is a case study in subtlety, human depth, and the power of non-professional actors. His passing invites reflection on the fragility of life, the unexpected paths of opportunity, and the beauty of art grounded in reality. Homayoun Ershadi leaves a legacy that will continue to inspire filmmakers and audiences, reminding us that cinema is most powerful when it reflects human truth with honesty, patience, and presence. 🌍

*Writer: Student, Film and TV media, Jagannath University*



*Taste of Cherry (1977) by Abbas Kiarostami*

## BEYOND HORROR

GUILLERMO DEL TORO'S FRANKENSTEIN  
AS A RITUAL OF HUMANITY

AXEL TIMO PURR


**I**n his long-awaited adaptation of Mary Shelley's classic, Guillermo del Toro transforms a tale of horror into a meditation on creation, guilt, and the divine spark of compassion.

There are subjects that can be accessed like sediments of a collective consciousness. They cannot be reinvented – only revived. And who better to do so than Guillermo del Toro, the great restorer of monsters, the anthropologist of otherness? Even with his *Pinocchio* (2022) one wondered why another version of this dead-on fairy tale by Italian author Carlo Collodi was needed – until del Toro proved us wrong. Now comes *Frankenstein*, based on Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. A motif that seems to have been exhausted, over-staged, quoted and parodied like no other. And yet del Toro achieves something very surprising: he reanimates not only the monster, but the myth itself.

Film history counts over a hundred cinematic adaptations, from the first, barely twelve-minute-long Edison version from 1910 to James Whale's canonical *Frankenstein* film adaptation from 1931 with Boris Karloff as the iconic creature, to Kenneth Branagh's baroque, hyperventilating 1994 adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Add to that the British Hammer era with Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee, Mel Brook's bizarre parody *Young Frankenstein* (1974) and the countless travesties, remakes and animations, right up to Tim Burton's melancholic *Frankenweenie*. Even Yorgos Lanthimos's *Poor Things*, with its grotesque parable of emancipation, has recently given the *Frankenstein* myth a feminist update. One might have thought that the final nail in the coffin had been hammered in.

But del Toro is patient. Since 2007, he has dreamed of adapting Shelley's novel for the screen. He waited for the 'right circumstances,' for the mature work, for the necessary emotional urgency. Now, almost two decades later, that dream has become reality. And just as *Pinocchio* is no longer a children's book adaptation for del Toro, del Toro's *Frankenstein* is no longer a horror film in the classic sense, but a Miltonian tragedy, as del Toro himself says – a religious, deeply personal work of confession about creation, guilt and shame.

Oscar Isaac plays Victor Frankenstein as a manic-sensitive demiurge who does not want to change the world, but to defeat death.



His laboratory is both a cathedral and a torture chamber, a place of transcendence where man plays God or challenges him. Christoph Waltz plays Heinrich Harlander, the wealthy patron who finances Frankenstein's experiments – a cold cynic with the unshakeable self-assurance of those who believe their money can buy immortality. Del Toro builds an astonishingly contemporary bridge here: Harlander is the prototype of Musk's Silicon Valley billionaire, who has his own future bred in the laboratory. Artificial intelligence thus becomes the moral continuation of Frankenstein's hubris – the old dream of eternal life in its digital form. But of course these are only moments, and del Toro returns just as quickly from the future to land back in his manic-depressive, almost dark-romance-like illuminated past of the mid-19th century, which of course is just as far removed from the original narratively as he already did in *Pinocchio*.



The monster, for example, embodied by Jacob Elordi with almost biblical grace, is not merely a monster, but a sensitive being who experiences his own creation as a metaphysical trauma. His birth is a crucifixion, his awakening a moment of resurrection: between Christ-like pose, flashbulbs and machine-gun thunder. Del Toro choreographs this moment as a sacred spectacle. While the storm rages outside, the body rises in a choreography of pain and light – a macabre yet tender dance of life.

A little later comes perhaps the most powerful part of the film: the monster's second awakening in front of the mirror, its incarnation. A quiet moment, a kind of mirror stage according to Lacan – the creature recognises itself for the first time as a unity, as a self, as a body. Here, del Toro references not only psychoanalysis, but the birth of consciousness itself. And in an instant, we realise that this monster is not only a victim, but also a subject – capable of love, thought and grief.

As Mary Shelley did in her novel, del Toro weaves religious and mythical layers with the dialectic of creator and creature. The dialogues echo lines from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the work that inspired Shelley herself: 'The horror of the truth – to be not of the same nature as men.' The creature is a fallen angel, Lucifer and Adam at the same time, a rebel and a son who longs for his father. Del Toro translates Milton's themes – rebellion, free will, knowledge and guilt – into a cinematic theology.

Visually, *Frankenstein* is overwhelming: foggy Europe streaked with storm lights; the blood and corpses of the battlefields where Frankenstein finds his raw materials – accompanied by the eerie, lulling elegance of a waltz dancing over the corpses. Here, one senses del Toro's obsession with bodies and materiality, with the weight of flesh and metal, with the intersections between Eros and Thanatos.

But despite all this dark beauty, in the last part of del Toro's adaptation, *Frankenstein* also becomes a love story – between creator and creature with homoerotic nuances, between father and son, victim and perpetrator. When Elordi and Isaac face each other in the ice (and later on the ship), surrounded by endless white, the metaphysical hunt suddenly becomes a poignant melodrama. Here, del Toro follows Melville's *Moby Dick* – Frankenstein's hunt for his creature mirrors Ahab's hunt for the whale: a duel with one's own shadow that can only be resolved in death. A literary motif that, incidentally, appeared at almost exactly the same time as del Toro set the time frame for his story.

Lars Mikkelsen as Captain Anderson frames the story with an expedition to the Arctic, that place of emptiness where man reaches his limits. Del Toro uses this frame narrative almost more convincingly than Shelley in her novel: the ship, frozen in the ice, becomes the stage for the end, but also for forgiveness. When the monster stands in the last light of the sun, tears running down his face, it is no longer Karloff's silent grief from the 1930s, but a reincarnation – a reminder that even the monster is human and therefore has a future. Self-destruction is no longer necessary.

Mia Goth as Elizabeth Lavenza – who also plays Claire Frankenstein – gives the film a dual feminine perspective. She is lover, mother, echo, ghost. In her, the themes of birth and death, love and sacrifice merge. Del Toro, who has always portrayed the female characters in his films as preservers and knowers, makes her the emotional centre – a quiet counterpoint to Victor's masculine hubris.

Del Toro's description of Shelley's text as 'religion' is no pose. In every shot, one senses his reverence for the origin, his love for the stories that made cinema possible in the first place. *Frankenstein* is therefore not a revival, but a sacrament: a ritual of revival – of the myth, the genre, the belief in the empathy of the monster that ultimately resides in each of us.

What fizzled out in Branagh's baroque overheating finds an almost liturgical calm in del Toro's film. He directs with pathos, but a pathos of sincerity, not kitsch. When sun and ice, death and tears collide at the end, it is perhaps del Toro's most honest moment: the monster cries – and with him, the viewer is finally allowed to cry too. For in this moment, the viewer also realises that *Frankenstein* is not a horror film, but a film about humanity itself. Guillermo del Toro snatches *Frankenstein* from the macabre, from horror, and instead creates a story of resurrection. One about creation and its loneliness, about guilt and redemption, about the power of compassion in the face of darkness. A film that brings back what was believed to be dead with electric force – including cinema, which many had declared dead. 🍷

*Writer: film critic and journalist, Germany*



*Poster of Frankenstein. Photo: IMDB*

# Cairo International Film Festival Concludes in Style



Photo: CIFF

**T**he 46th Cairo International Film Festival concluded on Friday evening, 21 November, with a glamorous closing ceremony in the heart of the Egyptian capital. The night brought together leading filmmakers, actors, and cultural figures from across the globe, along with well-known media personalities.

Notable attendees included the Minister of Culture, Dr. Ahmed Fouad Henno, CIFF President Hussein Fahmy, and Artistic Director Mohamed Tarek. The red carpet drew many prominent names from Egyptian and Arab cinema such as Nelly, Khaled El Nabawy, Mahmoud Hemed, Laila Eloui, Elham Shahin, Khaled El Sawy, Ashraf Zaki, Khaled Selim, Mohamed Reyad, Salwa Mohamed Ali, Sabry Fawaz, Hana Shiha, Dalia Mostafa, Mohamed Radwan, Lekaa El Khamissi, Manal Salama, Ahmed Magdy, Rania Youssef, Mohamed Tharwat, Hanady Mehanna, and Amr Abed. Acclaimed directors Magdy Ahmed Ali, Kamla Abou Zekry, Amjad Abu Alala, writer Abdel Rahim Kamal, and major producers including Mohamed El Adl, Safi El Din Mahmoud, and Hesham Suleiman were also in attendance, alongside many international guests.

The ceremony began with the Egyptian national anthem, followed by a moving homage to Palestinian child Hind Rajab. Her photograph and excerpts from her final phone call with medical responders were shown, underscoring the festival's expression of solidarity with Palestinian civilians.

Festival President Hussein Fahmy then addressed the audience with an emotional speech. He noted that while the recording might feel like a cinematic moment, it reflects a tragic reality. He reminded the audience that the voice belonged to six-year-old Hind Rajab from Gaza, who pleaded for help for hours after losing her family. Fahmy spoke about cinema's responsibility to bear witness and preserve stories, emphasizing that children like Hind are not statistics but human lives.

He announced that the festival's final screening would be *The Voice of Hind Rajab* and reflected on the festival's extensive programming, which included competition screenings, restored classics, workshops, masterclasses, and a vibrant film market. He expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Culture and other government bodies for their support, including the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Tourism and Antiquities, Youth and Sports, the Tourism Promotion Authority, Cairo Governorate, and the Cairo Opera House.

Fahmy also recognized the festival's partners and sponsors, among them Cred, Fresh, Banque Misr, Spiro Spathis, Lexus, Experience Egypt, WATCH IT, EgyptAir, Al Arabia United, the Saudi Film Commission, VOX Cinemas, DMC, FP7, France 24, Monte Carlo International, Mohamed El Sagheer, Sofitel, Tazkarty, Cairo Governorate, and Salah Diab of Al Masry Al Youm.



He went on to commend the festival team, including Artistic Director Mohamed Tarek, Cairo Industry Days Director Mohamed Said Abdel Rahim, ceremony director Mohamed Hamdy and his crew, writer Dr. Rehab Hany, Mostek CEO Mostafa Abu Deshish, Amer Wadie, Hany Nasef, Variety, Cinetic Egypt's Eng. Mohamed Essam, and musician Shasho, among many others.

Fahmy congratulated Qatar on the revival of the Doha Film Festival and confirmed a new partnership between CIFF and the Qatar Media City Film Commission.

After his speech, host Jasmin Taha Zaki stepped on stage to welcome the audience and noted that this year's edition screened 153 films from 55 countries before the ceremony moved into the award announcements. 🌍

## Awards

### Honorary Awards:

- Lifetime Achievement Golden Pyramid Award: Chinese director Guan Hu
- Lifetime Achievement Golden Pyramid Award: Hungarian director Ildikó Enyedi
- Cinematographer Mahmoud Abdel Samie received the Golden Pyramid for Lifetime Achievement, presented by Ahmed Mansour, CEO of Cred.

### Award Winners

Documentary Films Jury: Julie Bergeron, Bassam Mortada, Ola Salama

- Souraya Mon Amour by Nicolas Khoury

### International Critics' Week:

Jury: Salma Abu Deif, Ely Dagher, Claire Gadille

- Special Mention: The Botanist by Jing Yi
- Fathy Farag Special Jury Prize: In My Parents' House by Tim Elrich
- Shadi Abdel Salam Best Film Award: Habibi Hussein by Alex Bakri

### Short Film Competition:

Jury: Pom Bunsermvicha, Tara Emad, Anas Sareen

- Special Jury Prize (3000 USD - Watch It): A Very Straight Neck by Neo Sora
- Best Arab Short (2000 USD - Watch It): Two Tetras by Lynn Al Safah
- Youssef Chahine Best Short Film (5000 USD - Watch It): Cairo Streets by Abdullah Al Tayea

### FIPRESCI Award:

Jury: Ahmed Shawky, Laura Pertuy, Thierry Verhoeven

- The Things You Kill by Ali Reza Khatami

### Best Arab Feature Film (10,000 USD - Watch It):

- Once Upon a Time in Gaza by Tarzan & Arab Nasser
- Special Mention: Felana by Zahraa Ghandour

### NETPAC Award for Best Asian Feature:

- The Botanist by Jing Yi



Golden Pyramid winner film *Dragonfly* by Paul Andrew Williams. Photo: IMDB

### Arab Horizons Competition:

Jury: Abdelsalam Moussa, Nadia Dresti, Karim Aitoune

- Best Acting (2000 USD - Watch It): Afaf Ben Mahmoud (Round 13)
- Best Screenplay (5000 USD - Watch It): Yasser Shafie (Complaint No. 713317)
- Salah Abu Seif Special Jury Prize (8000 USD - Watch It): ANTI-CINEMA by Ali Saeed
- Saad Eddin Wahba Best Arab Film (10,000 USD - Watch It): Dead Dog by Sara Francis

Youssef Sherif Rizkallah Audience Award (15,000 USD - Cred):

- One More Show by Mai Saad & Ahmed El Denf

### International Competition Jury:

Nuri Bilge Ceylan (President), Basma, Bogdan Muresanu, Guan Hu, Nadine Khan, Simona Paggi, Leyla Bouzid

- Henry Barakat Best Artistic Contribution: Sand City
- Best Actress (Shared): Andrea Riseborough & Brenda Andrew Williams (*Dragonfly*)
- Best Actor: Majd Eid (*Once Upon a Time in Gaza*)
- Naguib Mahfouz Best Screenplay: The Things You Kill
- Bronze Pyramid (Special Jury Prize - 3000 USD): As We Breathe by Seamus Alton
- Silver Pyramid Best Director (5000 USD): Tarzan & Arab Nasser (*Once Upon a Time in Gaza*)
- Golden Pyramid Best Film (7000 USD): *Dragonfly* by Paul Andrew Williams

## About the Cairo International Film Festival

Founded in 1976, CIFF is one of the oldest and most prestigious film festivals in the Arab world and Africa, and one of the few accredited by FIAPF. Held annually under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture, the festival is committed to artistic excellence, industry development, and fostering cross-cultural dialogue while amplifying Arab cinema on the global stage.





*Sand City. Photo: IMDB*

# SAND CITY EARNS MAJOR RECOGNITION IN CAIRO

**A**t the Cairo International Film Festival on November 21, 2025, the director Mahde Hasan's film *Sand City* was awarded the Henry Barakat Award for Best Artistic Contribution in the International Competition category.

The film, produced by Rubaiyat Hossain and Aadnan Imtiaz Ahmed under the banner of Khona Talkies in association with Cinema Cocoon, premiered in Africa and the Arab world at the Grand Hall of the Cairo Opera House as part of the festival's 2025 edition.

The story centres on two distinct characters whose lives are shaped by sand. Emma (played by Victoria Chakma) finds a severed finger while gathering cat-litter sand and becomes haunted by it; Hasan (portrayed by Mostafa Monwar) steals silica sand from his factory to craft glass at home, eventually losing himself in a dangerous glass-empire fantasy.

*Sand City* has already generated international acclaim, having earlier won the Proxima Grand Prix at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. 🌍



*Director Mahde Hasan has attended the CIFF 2025.  
Photo: Facebook*





# CINEMA SHOULD INSPIRE AND INCLUDE, **POPE** TELLS FILM INDUSTRY

*Pope Leo met with international filmmakers and actors in the Sala Clementina at the Vatican. Photo: Reuters*

**P**ope Leo XIV welcomed a group of Hollywood actors and filmmakers to the Vatican on 15 November, using the gathering to highlight the power of cinema to shape compassion and give space to overlooked voices. The Pope, who is 70 and originally from Chicago, reflected on how both cinema and theatre have historically offered a platform to communities pushed to the margins.

Speaking inside the historic Clementine Hall, Leo told the guests that cinema is far more than entertainment. He described it as a medium capable of putting hope into motion. A meaningful film, he said, can help people reflect on their own lives, rediscover curiosity, and look at the world with renewed openness. He called film one of the most democratic art forms, accessible to all regardless of background, and urged storytellers to continue amplifying those who rarely get representation.

A statement from the Vatican said the Pope hopes to deepen dialogue with actors, directors, and other film professionals, believing that artistic creativity can support the Church's mission to promote dignity, empathy, and shared human values.

During the meeting, filmmaker Spike Lee presented the Pope with a New York Knicks jersey marked "Pope Leo 14," while actor Cate Blanchett offered a bracelet as a gift. Lee said he was surprised to be invited, while Blanchett later commented that Leo's remarks showed an understanding of cinema's ability to cross borders and take on difficult themes.

Before the event, the Pope shared four of his favourite films: *It's a Wonderful Life*, *The Sound of Music*, *Ordinary People*, and *Life Is Beautiful*. The guest list also included Monica Bellucci, Greta Gerwig, Stefania Sandrelli, and Marco Bellocchio.

Leo encouraged the film community to address painful realities such as conflict, displacement, addiction, and loneliness. He said great cinema does not exploit suffering but seeks to understand it, and he thanked not only stars and directors but also camera crews, makeup artists, and technical teams.

"It comforts me to think that cinema is not just 'moving pictures'; it is putting hope in motion," Leo said.

The Pope also warned against allowing algorithms to narrow artistic risks, urging filmmakers to defend unpredictability, silence, and difference. He called on governments and cultural bodies to protect movie theatres, noting their decline worldwide and the cultural loss that follows.

After the audience, Leo spent nearly an hour greeting each guest individually. Many participants said the encounter felt meaningful and inspiring. 🌍



# SONY AND QATAR TEAM UP TO BACK ARABIC-LANGUAGE FILMS

Sony Pictures International Productions has signed a multi-year partnership with Qatar's Film Committee to co-finance Arabic-language films from the Middle East and North Africa. The deal was announced during the Doha Film Festival's Industry Days by committee chair Hassan Al Thawadi and follows similar agreements with Neon and Miramax. The committee also introduced a regional rebate offering up to 50 percent in cash to boost local production. Both sides said the collaboration includes global distribution, co-development and a writers' incubation lab to support new talent. Selected projects may include original work or adaptations from Sony's catalogue, with key decisions shared jointly. 🌍



DFF (20-28 Nov 2025) poster. Photo: official Instagram



## QCINEMA AWARDS \$310,000 TO SOUTHEAST ASIAN FILMMAKERS

The QCinema Project Market closed its third edition by granting more than PHP18 million (\$310,000) in funding and services to filmmakers across Southeast Asia. The event followed Quezon City's recent recognition as a UNESCO Creative City of Film. Philippine project "Daddy Cool" by Dominic Bekaert won the top Quezon City Best Project Award worth PHP1 million,

along with additional post-production support. Singapore's "Penumbra" and Vietnam's "The River Knows Our Names" won top regional prizes. Several Filipino projects, including Arjanmar Rebata's "There Is, There Isn't," also received major awards, alongside partner grants for finishing, editing and equipment support. 🌍

QCinema Project Market

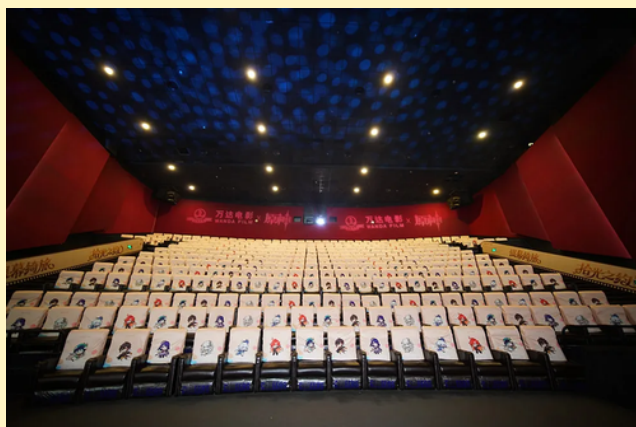


## WANDA CINEMAS TARGET YOUTH WITH NEW ENTERTAINMENT STRATEGY



An installation at Wanda theaters allows moviegoers to take selfies with their favorite film and video game characters.  
Courtesy of Wanda Cinema

China's Wanda Film is reshaping movie theaters into social hubs to attract young audiences who are increasingly turning to streaming. With U.S. box office revenue still struggling to reach pre-pandemic levels, China's market is showing momentum, crossing \$6 billion by early October. Wanda, which runs more than 700 cinemas, is expanding beyond film screenings by offering customized content, co-branded merchandise and immersive fan events. The strategy is paying off, with a 137 percent increase in animated film box office share and hundreds of thousands of new users joining through nationwide promotions. Wanda aims to make cinemas cultural gathering spaces, not just movie venues. 🍿



A Wanda Cinema decked out in Genshin Impact character seat covers. Courtesy of Wanda Cinema

## WICKED FOR GOOD BREAKS RECORDS WITH \$150M DEBUT



Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo in 'Wicked: For Good.'  
Giles Keyte/Universal Pictures

'Wicked: For Good' delivered a blockbuster start, opening with \$150 million in North America and \$226 million worldwide over the weekend. The film earned strong audience scores, including an A on Cinemascore and a 95 percent Rotten Tomatoes rating. Overseas markets added \$76 million, led by the U.K. with a record \$24.4 million. The Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo musical now holds the biggest domestic opening for a Broadway adaptation and the second-biggest November debut for a Universal release. With female viewers making up most of the audience, the film has given the slow U.S. box office a significant lift. 🍿





*A scene from the film 'Delupi'.  
Photo: production house.*

## Delupi

# A Village Saga Satirizing Bangladesh's Recent Political Reality

The newly released Bangladeshi film *Delupi* has sparked strong interest among young cinema goers, prompting discussions for its bold storytelling. This review is written by Md Rabbi Islam.

**B**ecause *Delupi* is based on actual people and real experiences, it feels alive. The movie, directed by Muhammad Touqir Islam, is set in Khulna's Deluti Union. Many local villagers, who make up the majority of the cast, are performing for the

first time. Their reactions, speech patterns, and body language all feel incredibly natural, adding raw authenticity to the narrative.

Three major threads are interwoven throughout the story. First, the tender love between Partho and Nupur is simple, sweet, and human. Their relationship brings warmth to the narrative and balances the film's sharper satire. Second, the conflict between Chairman Jakir and student Mihir represents the clash of generations and perspectives. Jakir, who practices traditional rural politics, demonstrates the strategies and maneuvers of local authority figures, while Mihir represents youth and critical questioning. I observed how effectively Jakir's performance conveyed both humor and political insight. Third, the village's Jatra artists struggle to perform after the old regime, especially the chairman, disappears.

The satire in *Delupi* is smart but respectful. Jakir's character is amusing and absurd at times, yet remains human and rooted in reality. The humor exposes the workings of rural politics without demeaning the villagers themselves. Early in the film, a brief flood scene shows water breaching embankments; this image becomes a metaphor for both environmental vulnerability and social instability. Although I felt the flood sequence might have benefited from more screen time, its presence is impactful.



*Filmmaker Mohammad Touqir Islam.UNB*

Born in Rajshahi in 1994, Mohammad Touqir Islam quickly emerged as a promising filmmaker after his acclaimed OTT works *Shaaticup* and *Sinpaat*.



Poetry becomes a potent motif. A number of characters write poetry about love, protest, and introspection in their diaries, on notes, and even on large sheets for public recitation. Jakir even brings poetry to his political meetings, which adds a surprising depth: the villagers are not passive subjects but reflective, expressive people. Music, particularly in Jatra-style folk performances, unites the three narrative threads; the songs are alive, emotionally vibrant, and essential to the story, not just background.

The acting is unpolished and organic. The performances are occasionally erratic because many of the actors are making their on-screen debuts. However, the film benefits from this rawness. The humor flows naturally, and the satire feels authentic due to the natural performances. One of the characters, Partho's father, gives an especially powerful performance. Even though the acting isn't flawless, it serves the storytelling well.

A remote village and its amateur cast serve as the backdrop for the highly political and satirical *Delupi*, which explores the nation. The love between Nupur and Partho, the political struggle between Jakir and Mihir, and the hardships of the village's Jatra artists are the three primary plotlines that are deftly combined. The movie emphasizes how village life is shaped by political dynamics, cultural customs, and human emotions.

To sum up, *Delupi* is both enjoyable and significant. It combines politics, romance, and comedy into a seamless, captivating narrative. Touqir Islam produces a genuine, compassionate, and socially conscious film by allowing the villagers to tell their own tale. The movie demonstrates how even a tiny village can reveal larger truths about human life, society, and culture. 🌍

*Writer: Student, Film and TV media, Jagannath University*



*Poster of 'Delupi'. Photo: IMDB*

## Do You Know ?

### What Is Political Satire in Film?



Political-satire in film refers to movies that use humour, irony and exaggeration to critique political figures, institutions or power structures. One early and celebrated example is *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964) by Stanley Kubrick, which parodies Cold War-era nuclear paranoia and the absurdities of military and political leadership. Through sharp satire, the film exposes systemic folly and invites reflection on real-world political dangers.

*Peter Sellers in Dr Strangelove.*

*Photo: PictureLux/The Hollywood Archive/Alamy*



# Superheroes Rule the Box Office, but Almost None Made the NYT's Top 100 Films List

**D**espite dominating mainstream cinema throughout the 21st century, Marvel and DC superhero movies are almost entirely absent from The New York Times list of the 100 Best Films of the 21st Century.

There's no denying how influential superhero films have become over the last 25 years. For many, the release of Iron Man in 2008 marked the true beginning of this cinematic era. The film launched a massive commercial movement that brought blockbuster franchises, sequels, interconnected spin-offs and an entire "cinematic universe" model.

Yet, surprisingly, almost none of these hugely successful superhero films were included in The New York Times' curated list. The absence of a film as culturally significant as Iron Man stands out. The list was compiled through votes from leading filmmakers, actors and other industry professionals.

Even so, not everyone is shocked by the omission.

Audiences will likely continue watching Marvel movies for their beloved characters, emotional nostalgia and visually spectacular effects. But many still hesitate to call them "great cinema."

Another factor is the growing fatigue around superhero content. Years of constant releases in both film and television have left even dedicated fans feeling exhausted. This phenomenon, widely known as "superhero fatigue," stems from repetitive storytelling, similar character arcs and predictable tone. Even the most praised entries in the genre haven't fully escaped this perception.

One challenge with evaluating these films is that many function as parts of larger corporate franchises instead of independent artistic works.

Only two superhero films made the New York Times list: Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* and Marvel's *Black Panther*. Both proved it's possible to bridge comic book storytelling with cinematic artistry. They showed that the superhero genre isn't limited to spandex costumes, heavy CGI or exaggerated theatrics.

*The Dark Knight*, in particular, stands out for its realistic tone and strong cast including Christian Bale and Gary Oldman. The film examines a world where legality and justice don't always align, exploring order and chaos through the lens of a hero becoming a symbol.

*Black Panther*, meanwhile, wasn't just the first major Black superhero film of the century. It was also a meaningful cultural and political statement. Beyond celebrating Black characters, culture and a fictional utopia, the story addressed themes of displacement, identity and the divide between Africans and the African diaspora.



*Black Panther. Photo: Independent*



These two films also share something emotionally powerful. Both feature extraordinary performances by actors who are no longer alive: Heath Ledger and Chadwick Boseman.

Several other superhero films might have reasonably been expected on such a list. Titles like Logan, Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse, Guardians of the Galaxy and Deadpool remain widely acclaimed for emotional depth, innovative animation, memorable soundtracks and bold humor.

Yet, despite widespread popularity, many still view superhero films as entertainment, not masterpieces. They are often seen as “popcorn movies,” enjoyable but not groundbreaking.

Interestingly, the reader-selected list tells a different story. Fans voted Spider-Verse into the top rankings, and all three Lord of the Rings films were included. More stylistically ambitious works like Blade Runner 2049 and Dune also made the cut, as did beloved animated films such as Pixar’s The Incredibles and Studio Ghibli’s Howl’s Moving Castle.

Another Marvel film also found a place in the reader poll: Avengers: Endgame, which received more than 200,000 votes. This signals how deeply fans value the superhero genre.

Released in 2019, Endgame brought a decade-long story arc of more than twenty films to an emotional conclusion. For the first time since, the franchise faced uncertainty and a need to reinvent itself through the idea of the multiverse.

Six years later, even though Marvel’s cultural dominance has softened, films like The Dark Knight, Black Panther, Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse and Avengers: Endgame still remind audiences of a time when the love of cinema wasn’t just casual, it was a global phenomenon. Six years later, even though Marvel’s cultural dominance has softened, films like The Dark Knight, Black Panther, Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse and Avengers: Endgame still remind audiences of a time when the love of cinema wasn’t just casual, it was a global phenomenon. 🌍

From C2C desk.



## The New York Times **Best** Films of the 21st Century List

01. Parasite (Bong Joon Ho)
02. Mulholland Drive (David Lynch)
03. There Will Be Blood (Paul Thomas Anderson)
04. In the Mood For Love (Wong Kar Wai)
05. Moonlight (Barry Jenkins)
06. No Country For Old Men (Joel & Ethan Coen)
07. Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (Michel Gondry)
08. Get Out (Jordan Peele)
09. Spirited Away (Hayao Miyazaki)
10. The Social Network (David Fincher)



A scene from Parasite. Photo: CJ Entertainment

11. Mad Max: Fury Road (George Miller)
12. The Zone of Interest (Jonathan Glazer)
13. Children of Men (Alfonso Cuarón)
14. Inglourious Basterds (Quentin Tarantino)
15. City of God (Fernando Meirelles)
16. Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (Ang Lee)
17. Brokeback Mountain (Ang Lee)
18. Y Tu Mama Tambien (Alfonso Cuarón)
19. Zodiac (David Fincher)
20. The Wolf of Wall Street (Martin Scorsese)
21. The Royal Tenenbaums (Wes Anderson)
22. The Grand Budapest Hotel (Wes Anderson)
23. Boyhood (Richard Linklater)
24. Her (Spike Jonze)
25. Phantom Thread (Paul Thomas Anderson)
26. Anatomy of a Fall (Justine Triet)
27. Adaptation (Spike Jonze)
28. The Dark Knight (Christopher Nolan)
29. Arrival (Denis Villeneuve)
30. Lost in Translation (Sofia Coppola)

The Dark Knight. Photo: Variety

31. The Departed (Martin Scorsese)
32. Bridesmaids (Paul Feig)
33. A Separation (Asghar Farhadi)
34. WALL-E (Andrew Stanton)
35. A Prophet (Jacques Audiard)
36. A Serious Man (Joel & Ethan Coen)
37. Call Me By Your Name (Luca Guadagnino)
38. Portrait of A Lady on Fire (Celine Sciamma)
39. Lady Bird (Greta Gerwig)
40. Yi Yi (Edward Yang)
41. Amelie (Jean-Pierre Jeunet)
42. The Master (Paul Thomas Anderson)
43. Oldboy (Park Chan-wook)
44. Once Upon A Time in Hollywood (Quentin Tarantino)
45. Moneyball (Bennett Miller)
46. ROMA (Alfonso Cuaron)
47. Almost Famous (Cameron Crowe)
48. The Lives of Others (Florian Henckel Von Donnersmarck)
49. Before Sunset (Richard Linklater)
50. Up! (Pete Docter)



*Roma. Photo: Netflix*

81. Black Swan (Darren Aronofsky)
82. The Act of Killing (Joshua Oppenheimer)
83. Inside Llewyn Davis (Joel & Ethan Coen)
84. Melancholia (Lars Von Trier)
85. Anchorman (Adam McKay)
86. Past Lives (Celine Song)
87. The Fellowship of the Ring (Peter Jackson)
88. The Gleaners and I (Agnes Varda)
89. Interstellar (Christopher Nolan)
90. Frances Ha (Noah Baumbach)
91. Fish Tank (Andrea Arnold)
92. Gladiator (Ridley Scott)
93. Michael Clayton (Tony Gilroy)
94. Minority Report (Steven Spielberg)
95. The Worst Person in the World (Joachim Trier)
96. Black Panther (Ryan Coogler)
97. Gravity (Alfonso Cuaron)
98. Grizzly Man (Werner Herzog)
99. Memories of A Murder (Bong Joon-ho)
100. Superbad (Greg Motolla)

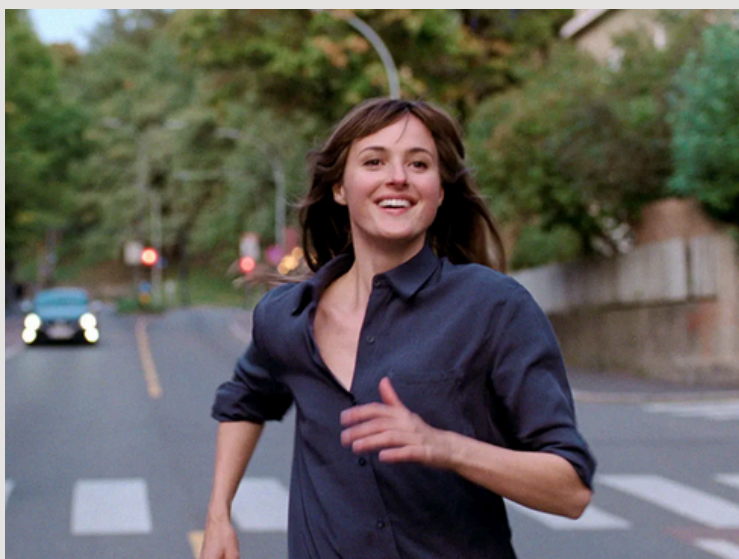


*UP. Photo: Collected*

51. 12 Years A Slave (Steve McQueen)
52. The Favourite (Yorgos Lanthimos)
53. Borat (Larry Charles)
54. Pan's Labyrinth (Guillermo Del Toro)
55. Inception (Christopher Nolan)
56. Punch-Drunk Love (Paul Thomas Anderson)
57. Best in Show (Christopher Guest)
58. Uncut Gems (Josh and Benny Safdie)
59. Toni Erdmann (Maren Ade)
60. Whiplash (Damien Chazelle)
61. Kill Bill Vol. 1 (Quentin Tarantino)
62. Memento (Christopher Nolan)
63. Little Miss Sunshine (Dayton & Faris)
64. Gone Girl (David Fincher)
65. Oppenheimer (Christopher Nolan)
66. Spotlight (Tom McCarthy)
67. TAR (Todd Field)
68. The Hurt Locker (Kathryn Bigelow)
69. Under The Skin (Jonathan Glazer)
70. Let The Right One In (Tomas Alfredson)
71. Ocean's Eleven (Steven Soderbergh)
72. Carol (Todd Haynes)
73. Ratatouille (Brad Bird)
74. The Florida Project (Sean Baker)
75. Amour (Michael Haneke)
76. O Brother, Where Art Thou (Joel & Ethan Coen)
77. Everything Everywhere All At Once (The Daniels)
78. Aftersun (Charlotte Wells)
79. Tree of Life (Terrence Malick)
80. Volver (Pedro Almodovar)



*Ocean's Eleven.  
Photo: Collected*



*The Worst Person In The World. Photo: TIFF*



# TELL THE NAME OF THE

# GUESSING GAME

# FILM



# TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Which 1972 film directed by Subhash Dutta—starring Bobita and Uzzal—portrays women victimised during the 1971 war? (1 Point)
2. The film Megher Onek Rong (Many Shades of the Cloud) won the Bangladesh National Film Award for Best Film and Best Director, among others. Who directed it? (2 Point)
3. In the film Joyjatra (2004) by Tauquir Ahmed, a group of refugees tries to flee to India during the war. What is the mode of transport they are stuck on for days? (3 Point)
4. The documentary-drama film Muktir Kotha (1999) is about projectionists touring Bangladesh to show a film on the Liberation War and engaging local audiences. Who co-directed it along with Tareque Masud? (4 Point)
5. In the film 1971 Shei Shob Din (2023) the story revolves around a family during the war. Name one of the lead actors. (5 Point)



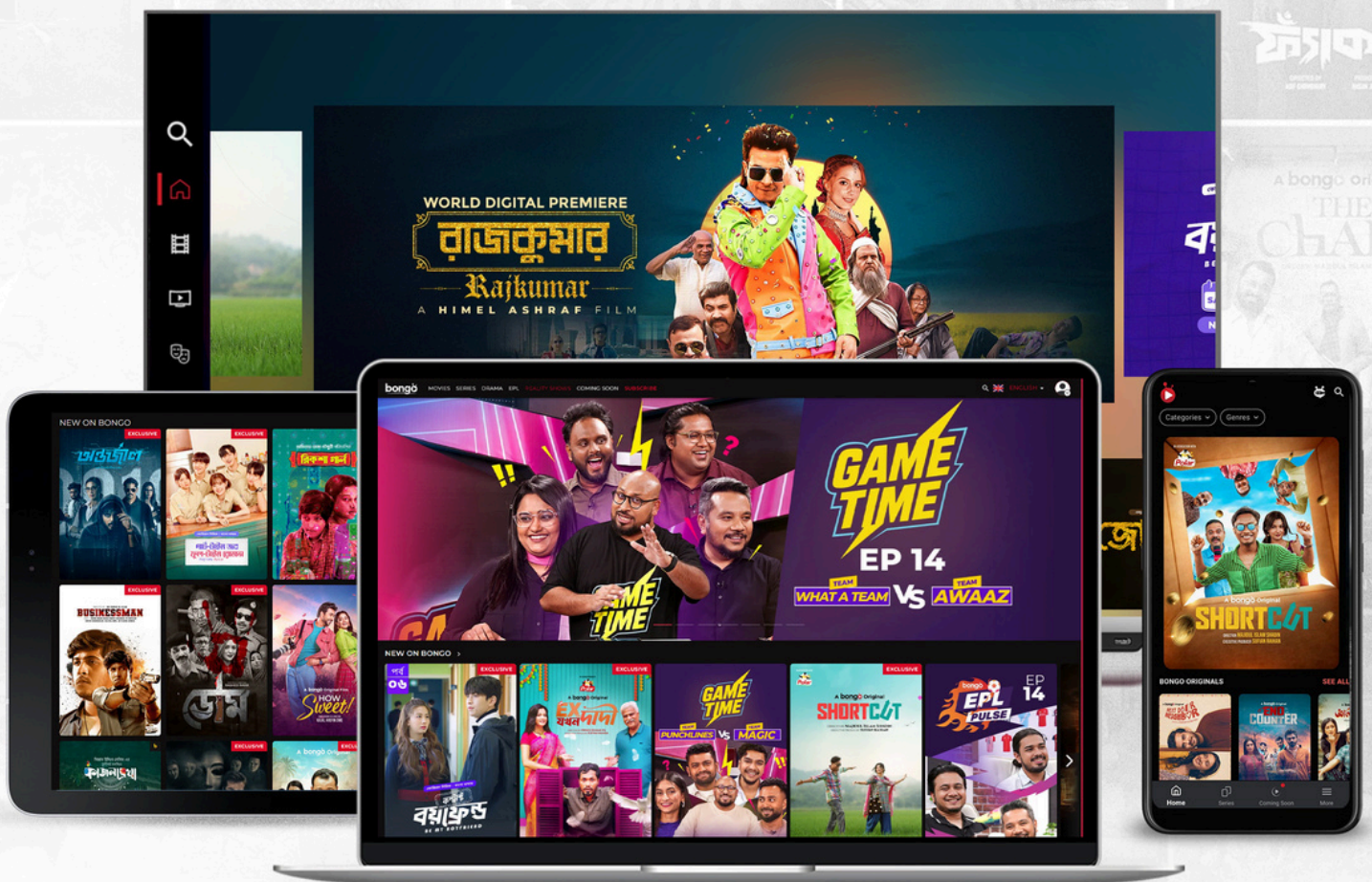
Test Your Knowledge Answers  
 1. Arunodoyer Agnishakkhi directed by Subhash Dutta. 2. It was directed by Harunur Rashid. 3. They are stuck on a boat. 4. The co-director was Catherine Masud. 5. One of the lead actors is Ferdous Ahmed.

Muktir Gaan (1995), directed by Tareque Masud and Catherine Masud

Guessing Game Answer

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