



Programmers' Screening Day

Monday February 26th
Light House Cinema



Baltimore

Ireland, United Kingdom 2023

98 mins DCP Colour

Directors: Christine Molloy, Joe Lawlor

Producers: David Collins, Joe Lawlor

Screenplay: Christine Molloy, Joe Lawlor

Cinematography: Tom Comerford

Editing: Joe Lawlor, Christine Molloy

Sound: Barnaby Templer, Christopher Swaine

Music: Stephen McKeon

Cast: Imogen Poots, Tom Vaughan-Lawlor, Lewis Brophy, Jack Meade

Christine Molloy (born Dublin, 1965) and **Joe Lawlor** (born Dublin, 1963), also known as the Desperate Optimists, both studied theatre in the UK in the late 80s. From 1992 to 1999 they devised, directed and performed in six internationally acclaimed touring theatre shows before shifting their attention towards moving image based work. Between 2003 and 2010 they produced, wrote and directed 10 acclaimed short films, all shot on 35mm, under the title *Civic Life*, which screened extensively around the world. Their debut feature film, *Helen*, premiered at the Edinburgh International Film Festival in June 2008. Since then their feature film work has included *Mister John* (13), *Further Beyond* (16), *Rose Plays Julie* (19) and *The Future Tense* (22).



The latest by powerhouse artist-filmmaker duo Christine Molloy and Joe Lawlor picks up a thread from their last film *The Future Tense*, a soulful investigation of Ireland's tumultuous history.

Here, using the form of a heist movie, they tell the true story of Rose Dugdale (played by Imogen Poots), a young heiress who rebelled against her English aristocratic upbringing to volunteer with the Irish Republican Army. In 1974, Dugdale and her collaborators swiped 19 paintings—including Rubens, Goya, and Vermeer— from a private home, using these treasures as leverage for the liberation of four IRA prisoners.

Lawlor and Molloy's highly atmospheric thriller plunges us into the Troubles with heart-stopping intensity, and Poots is riveting as the revolutionary. Beneath her radical facade, we see her fragility and inner turmoil, as she wrestles with appreciation for the beautiful artifacts of a world she has set out to destroy, and the fear of the chaos she has unleashed. – *Telluride Film Festival 2023*

"It's a chilling and expertly constructed work which goes on to suggest that our finicky anxieties will end up causing our own tragic downfall. Poots brings fire to her role without just splaying it all on the screen, and she ensures that there's a hair-trigger intensity to every one of her two-hander conversations throughout the film. It's also a film about the messiness of life and the inherent unpredictability of people, where the idea of crisp, clean action devoid of emotional connection is simply impossible to achieve."

- *Little White Lies*

Four Daughters

(*Les Filles d'Olfa*)

France, Tunisia, Germany, Saudi Arabia 2023

107 mins DCP Colour

Director: Kaouther Ben Hania

Producers: Nadim Cheikhrouha, Thanassis Karathanos, Martin Hampel, Habib Attia

Screenplay: Kaouther Ben Hania

Cinematography: Farouk Laaridh

Editing: Qutaiba Barhamji, Jean-Christophe Hym, Kaouther Ben Hania

Sound: Manuel Laval, Amal Attia, Henry Uhl, Maxim Romasevich

Music: Amine Bouhafa

Cast: Hend Sabri, Tayssir Chikhaoui, Olfa Hamrouni, Eya Chikhaoui, Nour Karoui, Ichraq Matar

Kaouther Ben Hania (born Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, 1977) studied film in her native Tunisia before continuing her studies at the prestigious La Fémis and the Sorbonne in Paris. After several short films, she directed her first feature film *The Challat of Tunis* (13). Her 2017 drama *Beauty and the Dogs* premiered in the Un Certain Regard section of the Cannes Film Festival, while her acclaimed film *The Man Who Sold His Skin* (20) was nominated for Best International Feature at the 2021 Academy Awards. She has received a second Oscar nomination for *Four Daughters*.



A clapperboard snaps shut in frame and the camera starts rolling. You can cut the tension with a knife as four young women and an older one perch on a sofa. The opening of this daringly experimental and deep-feeling docudrama gives us Tunisian matriarch Olfa and her four daughters as they prepare to dive into their painful past and tell a story filled with twists, joys and sorrows. 'I feel like Rose in the film *Titanic*,' she jokes, bracing herself for the torrent of painful memories ready to be exhumed.

But then director Kaouther Ben Hania unleashes her first surprise: two of the girls are not Olfa's daughters. Instead, they're actresses hired to stand in for Rahma and Ghofane, the two eldest girls whose absence is initially left unexplained. Slowly, like steam building in a pressure cooker, it becomes the urgent puzzle that the film must solve.

With shades of Kiarostami's *Close-Up*, Ben Hania never lets us forget we're navigating a facsimile of real events from which emotional truths will emerge – a deconstruction of acting and storytelling that's laid bare whenever a boom mic drifts into frame. She stitches together talking-head interviews, dramatic reconstructions, and even the filmed rehearsals of those reconstructions. They spiral wildly out of control as when the real Olfa takes her emotions out on the actor standing in for her ex-husband, pummeling the poor man as he cowers in the corner. Her daughters choke back the laughter.

But those feelings soon become overwhelming and actress Sabri is hired to stand in for the fiery matriarch. Occasionally, the pair bicker about their differing interpretations of scenes/incidents and Sabri gets thespy about motivation. The two sets of daughters – real and thespian – also bond, as the actresses glean information about their characters. Soon, they feel like part of the family too.

This is the best kind of meta doc: one where the artifice works to carry us along on the family's journey, rather than overwhelm us with trickery. *Four Daughters* contains multitudes, too: it's about young womanhood, protective mums, radicalisation, toxic patriarchies and the damaged wreaked by godawful men – all with a post-Arab Spring political edge. – *Time Out*

Winner - L'Oeil d'or for Best Documentary, Cannes Film Festival 2023

Monster

(*Kaibutsu*)

Japan 2023

127 mins DCP Colour

Director: Hirokazu Kore-eda

Producers: Genki Kawamura, Kenji Yamada

Screenplay: Yuji Sakamoto

Cinematography: Ryuto Kondo

Editing: Hirokazu Kore-eda

Sound: Kazuhiko Tomita

Music: Ryuichi Sakamoto

Cast: Sakura Ando, Eita Nagayama, Soya Kurokawa, Hinata Hiiragi, Yuko Tanaka

Hirokazu Kore-eda (born Tokyo, 1962) is one of Japan's most internationally renowned contemporary filmmakers. After an early career in documentary, his 1995 debut feature *Maborosi* won the rarely awarded Golden Osella for Best Director at the Venice Film Festival. He enjoyed further acclaim and global success with films such as *Nobody Knows* (04), *Still Walking* (08), *I Wish* (11), *Like Father, Like Son* (13) and *Our Little Sister* (15). His 2018 feature *Shoplifters* won the Palme d'Or at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival. *Monster* marks his return to the Japanese film industry following films made in France (*The Truth*, 19) and Korea (*Broker*, 22).



When a large building catches fire, everybody stops to look. It's such a dramatic sight that it pulls us, temporarily, out of the everyday, reminding us of a bigger reality. There's a sense of threat in the way that Hirokazu Kore-eda films it, even though we are observing from a distance, as if it signifies the encroachment of a larger catastrophe. The mother and son beside us are about to be overwhelmed by events that neither of them fully understand, and the later arrival of a dramatic weather event serves to remind us of the existential threat against which all our individual stories are now playing out – yet *Monster*, surprisingly, will emerge as a film full of hope.

The mother, Saori is a widow and has devoted herself to creating a good life for her 11-year-old son Minato. When his behaviour suddenly changes, becoming sullen and aggressive, she's concerned. Is this just the beginning of adolescence, or something else? After a particularly extreme incident, she confronts him, and learns that one of his teachers, Mr Hori, has told him that he is a bad person with the brain of a pig. It's the sort of remark that an adult might brush off but that has evidently disturbed this sensitive boy. Why would a teacher do a thing like that?

Inevitably attracting comparisons with *Rashomon*, *Monster* is a film in three parts, showing us fragments of the same series of events from the perspectives of Saori, Mr Hori, and Minato himself. The difference in how they understand what they see is initially shocking but gradually comes to make sense, encouraging viewers to extend empathy even towards those who seem unforgiveable.

Hirokazu's choice of locations reflects these differences, the adults' confrontations taking place in clean, daylit rooms whilst the events most important to Minato take place in darkness, in disordered spaces or in the natural world. There is a conflict here between systems of imposing order on the world and something much more chaotic and animal, the raw experience of a boy who is yet to find a way of reconciling his own nature with the society in which he has been trying to find a place. The superb score by Ryuichi Sakamoto – his final work in film – captures these different perspectives and teases out the complexities of the film's emotional landscape.

To say much more would be to risk spoiling a film which is as much about the journey as its points of discovery. – *Eye For Film*

Winner - Best Screenplay, Cannes Film Festival 2023

Origin of Evil, The

(L'Origine Du Mal)

France, Canada 2022

123 mins DCP Colour

Director: Sébastien Marnier
Producers: Caroline Bonmarchand, Kim McCraw, Luc Déry
Screenplay: Sébastien Marnier
Cinematography: Romain Carcanade
Editing: Valentin Féron, Jean-Baptiste Beaudoin
Sound: Stephen de Oliveira, Sylvain Bellemare, Hans Laitres, Bernard Gariépy Strobl
Music: Pierre Lapointe, Philippe Brault

Cast: Laure Calamy, Doria Tillier, Dominique Blanc, Jacques Weber, Suzanne Clément, Céleste Brunnquell, Véronique Ruggia Saura

Sébastien Marnier (born Paris, 1979) studied Applied Arts and Film, before publishing three novels – *Mimi* (11), *Quatre* (13) and *Une Vie de Petits Fours* (13). He has directed the short films *The Main Game* (02) and *Handsome Jack* (03), as well as the features *Faultless* (16) and *School's Out* (18). *The Origin of Evil* (22) is his latest film.



Writer-director Sébastien Marnier (*Faultless*, *School's Out*) brings his now-signature brand of storytelling — offering a dark parable about modern life and (a)morality in the guise of a stylish thriller — to the deceptively sexy and searing *The Origin of Evil*.

The story follows Stéphane (Laure Calamy, Cesar winner for *My Donkey, My Lover & I*), a woman in her forties who lives in financial precarity working in a local fish canning factory. When her living situation takes a turn for the worse, she decides to get back in touch with her estranged father, Serge (Jacques Weber). Stéphane finds that, years after he abandoned her mother following an affair, Serge is an incredibly wealthy man with a massive estate, and is surrounded by women in his life who hate him and try to undermine her.

Stéphane reinvents herself as an entrepreneur in order to impress her new family, and attempts to ingratiate herself with Serge's wife (Dominique Blanc) and stern oldest daughter (Doria Tillier), who remains deeply suspicious of Stéphane's motives. As her visits to the estate are extended, Stéphane slowly realizes that Serge may not be the genial patriarch she thought he was, and her own past, one that she thought was locked away, is slowly catching up to her as well.

Aided by tour-de-force performances from the ensemble cast, including Suzanne Clément in a pivotal role, Marnier expertly combines the dread of psychological horror with the breakneck plot twists and reversals of fortune of high melodrama. *The Origin of Evil* is an exhilarating skewering of the decadent excesses of the aristocratic class and those who aspire to be among them.

– *Toronto International Film Festival 2022*

"Marnier's film manages to be cruelly funny, while evoking the spirit of that master of the French thriller Claude Chabrol, with hints of Patricia Highsmith and Ruth Rendell." – *The Observer*

Teachers' Lounge, The

(*Das Lehrerzimmer*)

Germany 2023

98 mins DCP Colour

Director: Ilker Çatak

Producer: Ingo Fliess

Screenplay: Johannes Dunker

Cinematography: Judith Kaufmann

Editing: Gesa Jäger

Sound: Kirsten Kunhardt

Music: Marvin Miller

Cast: Leonie Benesch, Eva Löbau,
Leonard Stettinisch, Anne-Kathrin
Gummich

Ilker Çatak (born Berlin, 1984) studied Film Directing in Berlin and Hamburg, graduating in 2014 at Hamburg Media School. His graduation film *Sadakat* received many international awards before winning the Student Academy Award in Gold in 2015. His first feature film, *Once Upon A Time Indianerland* debuted in 2017. İlker's second feature film *I Was, I Am, I Will Be* (19) received the Bronze Lola at the German Film Awards in 2020. His feature film *Stambul Garden* (20) was released in Germany in autumn 2021. *The Teachers' Lounge* is nominated for Best International Feature at the 2024 Academy Awards.



When school officials jump to the conclusion that German-Turkish 12-year-old Ali (Rodenbostel) is behind a series of thefts, his brightly optimistic teacher Carla (Benesch) is deeply troubled by their seemingly unconscious racism. And her own stealthy investigation reveals administrator Friederike (Lobau) as the culprit. But this unleashes a range of problems with her boss Dr Bohm (Gummich) and fellow teachers. And this extends to the entire student body, which is annoyed no one is telling the truth. Meanwhile, Friederike's son Oskar (Stettinisch), who is Carla's star student, is caught in the middle of it all.

As the intensity grows around Carla, the film develops a riveting pace that's cleverly disorienting and upsetting, effectively putting us in her shoes. The camera stays very closely with Carla right through the film, strongly establishing her perspective and motivation before forcing her to question both of them herself. It's a remarkably assured way to tell a story that pushes the audience to take a side, even as things become increasingly slippery. So Carla's sense of helplessness is powerful.

Benesch is terrific in a very difficult role, as Carla's sunny positivity is challenged and then crushed by a series of attacks, mainly verbal but also a physical one that leaves her with a literal and metaphorical black eye. In Benesch's expressive face, the toll this series of events takes on this young woman becomes clear, as does her determination to be a positive influence in her students' lives. The adults and children around her are played with sharp authenticity, with Stettinisch particularly impressive as the pressurised Oskar.

This is much more than an exploration of cancel culture; it's a look at the very nature of truth, how facts can be twisted and that perhaps in some cases the facts alone can't tell the story accurately. As this fraught situation evolves to encompass the entire school and the students' parents, there are hints that something more important is driving everything. But Çatak cleverly resists giving us an omniscient viewpoint, requiring us to think things through on our own. – *Shadows On The Wall*

Winner – Europa Cinemas Label, Berlin International Film Festival 2023

That They May Face The Rising Sun

Ireland, United Kingdom

2023

107 mins DCP Colour

Director: Pat Collins

Producers: Tina O'Reilly, Brendan J. Byrne

Screenplay: Eamon Little, Pat Collins

Cinematography: Richard Kendrick

Editing: Keith Walsh

Music: Irene Buckley, Linda Buckley

Cast: Barry Ward, Anna Bederke, Lal Roddy, Sean McGinley, Ruth McCabe

Pat Collins (born Drimologue, Co. Cork) has been making films since 1998 and now has more than thirty features, documentaries and short experimental films to his name. His filmography includes documentary works about writers Michael Hartnett and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and he won an IFTA in 2005 for his documentary *John McGahern: A Private World*. His other documentaries include *Gabriel Byrne: Stories from Home* (08), *Tim Robinson: Connemara* (11), *Henry Glassie: Field Work* (19) and *The Dance* (21). He has also directed the fiction features *Silence* (12) and *Song of Granite* (17). *That They May Face The Rising Sun* is his latest feature.



That They May Face The Rising Sun is a lyrical, loving celebration of the everyday. Pat Collins' sympathetic handling of John McGahern's final novel, published in 2002, revels in the simple things that give life meaning. The story of a couple finding their best life in the rural Ireland of the 1980s is beautifully realised and quietly beguiling.

Joe and Kate have found the good life in a corner of Ireland where Joe grew up. Five years after their return from London, they have a contentment that feels very much like happiness. He writes, she is a photographer and artist who retains a half ownership in a London gallery. Creative days mingle with tending to the bee hives, growing food in their raised beds and keeping open house for any neighbour who feels inclined to drop by for a gossip, a mug of tea or a word of advice.

The couple have found the time to stop and stare. They can feel the sun on their face, breathe the scented air and appreciate everything around them. Collins and cinematographer Richard Kendrick provide a clear sense of what is so special about the landscape. Hedgerows stretch along the side of roads, a house seems under the thumb of nature as it cowers beneath hanging trees and spreading shrubs. Birdsong fills the soundtrack and the delicate piano score from Irene and Linda Buckley adds a mournful note. The sense of tranquility is palpable, and the film almost seems designed to lower your blood pressure.

Director and co-writer Pat Collins has made a number of specialist documentaries expressing an appreciation of craft, creativity and folklore, including *John McGahern: A Private World* (2005) and *Henry Glassie: Field Work* (2019). He is perfectly in tune with McGahern's world, offering a portrait of a community that survives by the sweat of its own labour. We witness the annual harvest, the slow, never-ending construction of a new building; the circle of life is marked in a joyous autumnal marriage, hopes and fears for an unknown future and the sting of inevitable deaths.

The expert cast do justice to their characters. Ward's Joe is an affable, understanding figure conveying the sense of a good man generously sharing his time and emotions. His observations of neighbours and perfect days feed into his writing, providing a voice-over narration that closely links the film to the text of the John McGahern novel and the autobiographical elements it contains. – *Screen International*