



Programmers' Screening Day

Saturday May 11th
Dunamais Arts
Centre & ODEON,
Portlaoise



About Dry Grasses (Kuru Otlar Üstüne)

Turkey, France, Germany, Sweden
2023

197 mins DCP Colour

Director: Nuri Bilge Ceylan
Producer: Nuri Bilge Ceylan
Screenplay: Akin Aksu, Ebru Ceylan,
Nuri Bilge Ceylan
Cinematography: Cevahir Sahin,
Kürsat Üresin
Editing: Oguz Atabas, Nuri Bilge
Ceylan
Sound: Clément Laforce, Jean-Pierre
Laforce
Music: Philip Timofeyev, Giuseppe
Verdi

Cast: Merve Dizdar, Deniz Celiloglu,
Musab Ekici

Nuri Bilge Ceylan (born Istanbul, 1959) graduated in electrical engineering from Bosphorus University, before studying filmmaking at Istanbul's Mimar Sinan University. In 1995 he directed the short film *Koza*, which was in competition at the Festival de Cannes. His feature film debut, *Kasaba*, premiered at the 1998 Berlin Film Festival. His subsequent features, *Uzak* (02), *Three Monkeys* (08) and *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (11), all competed at the Festival de Cannes, winning various prizes. In 2014 he won Cannes' Palme d'Or with his film *Winter Sleep*. He is noted for his use of static shots and long takes, often in natural settings without staged sets.



Anyone familiar with the Turkish filmmaker Nuri Bilge Ceylan (*Winter Sleep*, *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*) won't be surprised to find that *About Dry Grasses* is a long-haul, knotty, talky examination of one man's alienated relationship with the world around him. Equally unsurprising is how he's self-regarding and brittle – the latest in a line of such Ceylan characters, Samet is an art teacher in the fourth year of a posting to a remote school on the snowy East Anatolian steppes. It's far from anywhere, and especially from Istanbul, as Samet will tell anyone who listens, whether his housemate and fellow teacher, Kenan, whose village background invites condescension from Samet, or Nuray, a teacher at another school. She wears a prosthetic leg after a terrorist attack, and her faith in community, as opposed to Samet's weary individualism, inspires an arresting encounter between the two.

The catalyst to much of what unfolds over the endlessly snowy months of this story is Semet's relationship with a young pupil, 14-year-old Sevim, who's he fond of, even giving her a gift when he returns from the school holidays. She likes him, too, in a childish way – a schoolgirl's affection towards a friendly authority figure. It's not a shock, then, when Semet is accused by the school of unprofessional conduct after an anonymous tip-off. He denies it, and the accusation is soon squashed by the local authorities, causing Semet to turn on Sevim, who swaps affection for aggression.

The question of inappropriate behaviour is not the point of the film; it's left as unresolved and complicated, and more a trigger for creating a fuller portrait of this man – in no way a monster but self-destructive and frustrated. Semet's behaviour leaves much to be desired – but also to chew on, with Ceylan's drama building layers of interest, one interaction, conversation, event at a time.

About Dry Grasses is as serious as you'd expect from Ceylan, but there's also a self-reflective, playful angle to this one, and a seam of black humour that's been missing from his recent films. The drama is occasionally punctuated by a series of startling still images of local people – presumably shot by Semet and suggesting he's not solely inward-looking – and there's one crashing-of-the-fourth-wall moment that's alarming and daring. It's a rich, challenging film, a blizzard of experience and ideas. – *Time Out*

Winner - Best Actress, Cannes Film Festival 2023

EAT / SLEEP / CHEER / REPEAT



Ireland 2023

87 mins DCP Colour

Director: Tanya Doyle

Producers: Daniel Hegarty, Sinéad Ní Bhroin

Cinematography: Eleanor Bowman

Editing: Mirjam Strugalla, John Murphy

Sound: Colm O'Meara

Music: Stephen Rennicks, Hugh Drumm

Featuring: Hilton Holian, Jessica Treacher, Rickie Kavanagh, Jayleesa Cunningham, Taylor Flynn

Tanya Doyle (born Dublin) is the Head of Faculty for the Creative Arts and Screen Media Faculty in Griffith College, Dublin. She holds an MA in Film and Television Studies from Dublin City University and an MA in Screen Documentary from Goldsmith, University of London. She is also the Creative Director of independent production company Marmalade Films. Her documentaries, which have screened at major festivals worldwide, include *The House* (08) and the short *Waterlilies* (14). *EAT / SLEEP / CHEER / REPEAT* (24) is her latest documentary.

The Cheer cottage industry gets a charming new chant from Ireland in Tanya Doyle's documentary *Eat / Sleep / Cheer / Repeat*. A decidedly green flavour distinguishes this admittedly formulaic story of twisting and twirling triumph, but just because it travels a well-worn path - of a rag-tag team of underdogs to the 'worlds', or World Championships of Cheer, in Orlando - doesn't mean it's any less entertaining along the way.

Namely, it's the personalities at play which break *Eat / Sleep* out of the west coast city of Galway where the Irish Cheer team assembles. A little sleeper than its athletes at times, the film eventually draws its energy from the force of the characters involved and the very specific hurdles in their way. The team is under-funded, but it's also not recognised - Cheer is new to Ireland.. The cheerleaders appear to come from mostly lower socio-economic groups, and the dedication required to compete involves a huge sacrifice — which all comes to nothing when one family's anti-vaccine stance heartbreakingly comes between Jayleesa and the Worlds.

Eat / Sleep, which is Tanya Doyle's second documentary after *The House*, is not always precise. Reference is made to long journeys to training which aren't visually pinpointed, a problem when one of the film's more lovable characters, the tattooed Rickie, skips a session and is canned from the team. We're never really sure where he's coming from during the time of Covid-19 and lockdowns when the athletes suddenly have to wear masks and the Worlds are thrown into confusion.

Another gift to the production is the character of team coach Hilton, so anxiety-ridden you wonder if he's in the right profession (he is). With his partner's patient support, and perennially dancing a line between coach and friend, he's constantly declaring this Worlds to be his last. Proud gay athlete Dean, meanwhile, is quick to spot failure to apply bronzer. Blathnaid, another appealing character, struggles with dyslexia at school but is a natural on the mat.

Tanya Doyle has a sympathy and understanding for her subjects and their young lives, and her camera is placed right at the crossroads of their future. In that way, it's about more than Cheer, and the classical structure of an underdog sports doc, but a generation facing into the future, and it takes its motion from them. The film may fall off in its last frames, but *Eat / Sleep / Cheer / Repeat* is still an appealing testament of youth. - *Screen International, Dublin International Film Festival 2024*

I Like Movies

Canada 2022

99 mins DCP Colour

Director: Chandler Levack

Producers: Lindsay Blair Goeldner,
Evan Dubinsky, Chandler Levack

Screenplay: Chandler Levack

Cinematography: Rico Moran

Editing: Simone Smith

Sound: Jonah Blaser

Music: Murray A. Lightburn

Cast: Isaiah Lehtinen, Romina D'Ugo,
Krista Bridges, Percy Hynes White,
Alex Ateah, Andy McQueen

Chandler Levack (born Toronto) is a Canadian writer and filmmaker. She studied film at the University of Toronto and is a graduate of the Canadian Film Centre. Her music videos for the band PUP have played at the British Film Institute and the Museum of Modern Art. Her debut as a narrative filmmaker, the short film *We Forgot to Break Up*, premiered at the 2017 Toronto International Film Festival. *I Love Movies* (22) is her debut feature film.



Chandler Levack's comic drama is set in the early 2000s and initially seems determined to stay there.

Seventeen-year-old Canadian high schooler Lawrence (the excellent Isaiah Lehtinen) is obsessed to the point of mania with movies, and watches old ones constantly with his best friend Matt (Percy Hynes White).

Every Saturday night, they meet up to eat junk food, watch *Saturday Night Live* and re-enact their favourite scenes afterwards with annoying precision.

But when Matt gets a life, and a girlfriend, Lawrence is left to his own devices — he doesn't fare well.

He is opinionated and self-centred, as his mother (Krista Bridges) can attest, but things look up when Lawrence gets a job at the local DVD store.

He also develops a crush on his manager, Alana (Romina D'Ugo), but he's far from stable and about to come unstuck.

I Like Movies starts out as a goofy teen movie and would have been perfectly watchable if it had stuck with that tone.

But midway through, Levack's movie abandons the playful Canadian whimsy to plunge into darker territory as it locates the source of Lawrence's anger, and is all the better for it. A very likeable film. — *The Irish Independent*

... *I Like Movies* is not one of those films that attracts attention by aggressively breaking the rules, however. Levack understands the limits of what she has to work with for her debut feature — this was an ultra-low budget project, with Levack citing a figure of \$125,000 in one recent interview out of TIFF — and wisely decides to work within them. Backed by strong writing and even stronger performances, the result is a film that is small but not slight, sweet but not cloying, and the kind of thing that can make even a cynical critic like movies again. — *IndieWire*

Nature of Love, The

(*Simple Comme Sylvain*)

Canada, France 2023

111 mins DCP Colour

Director: Monia Chokri

Producers: Nancy Grant, Sylvain Corbeil, Nathanaël Karmitz, Elisha Karmiotz

Screenplay: Monia Chokri

Cinematography: André Turpin

Editing: Pauline Gaillard

Sound: François Grenon, Julien Roig, Olivier Guillaume

Music: Emile Sornin

Cast: Magalie Lépine Blondeau, Pierre-Yves Cardinal, Francis-William Rhéaume



The Nature of Love, which debuted at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival's Un Certain Regard section, is the third feature from Quebecois actor, writer, and director Monia Chokri (*A Brother's Love*) — a biting romantic comedy that tackles class differences and infidelity.

Star Magalie Lépine Blondeau disappears into the role of Sophia, a fortysomething, posh, French-Canadian professor who's involved in a congenial, familiar relationship with her partner Xavier (Francis-William Rhéaume). The lived-in feel of their 10 years together is on full display at dinner parties — and in their separate bedrooms.

Sophia's curiosity about infidelity — which she first projects on her husband when the couple learn about a friend's recent divorce — grows into much more when she meets Sylvain (Pierre-Yves Cardinal), the strapping, plaid-adorned contractor tasked with fixing up the couple's country home. Opposites attract here — she's the brains and he's the brawn — and they quickly begin a tumultuous affair. But Sophia has a hard time reconciling the reality of their differences, especially when they introduce their family and friends to one another, and their disparate political leanings and varying viewpoints become comically apparent. As their affair continues, the tension between their different worlds comes to a very uncomfortable head.

With its deft dashes of conflict, *The Nature of Love* is part social commentary, part love story — and a solid entry into the romantic dramedy canon. - *Toronto International Film Festival 2023*

Winner - Best Foreign Film, César Awards 2024

Monia Chokri (born Québec City, 1975) is an actor, writer, and director. Her credits as director include the short film *Quelqu'un d'extraordinaire* (17), and the features *A Brother's Love* (19) and *Babysitter* (22). *The Nature of Love* (23) is her latest film.

Omen

(Augure)

Belgium, Netherlands,
Democratic Republic of Congo
2023

91 mins DCP Colour

Director: Thsiani Baloji

Producer: Benoit Roland

Screenplay: Thsiani Baloji

Cinematography: Joaquim Philippe

Editing: Bruno Tracq, Bertrand
Conard

Sound: Jan Deca, Erik Griekspoor,
Danny Van Spreuwel

Music: Liesa Van der Aa

Cast: Marc Zinga, Lucie Debay, Eliane
Umuhire, Yves-Marina Gnahoua,
Marcel Otete Kabeya

Thsiani Baloji (born Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo, 1979) is an award-winning musician and filmmaker who was raised in and is based in Belgium. As a musician he has released two critically acclaimed albums and two EPs. He has directed six shorts including *Zombies* (19), which screened at the BFI London Film Festival. His feature film debut *Omen* (23) was selected as Belgium's submission in the Best International Feature category at the 2024 Academy Awards.



Bursting with Congolese culture and traditions, this multi-layered drama is a fascinating collection of big ideas and resonant themes. Writer-director Baloji takes the viewer on an odyssey into identity, exploring the push and pull between families, societies, traditions, desires and experiences. It's warmly involving and also darkly complex as scenes flow out of sequence. So while it can be tricky to clearly understand the nuances, the film reverberates deeply.

After 18 years in Belgium, Koffi is worried about returning to rural Congo with his Belgian girlfriend Alice, who is pregnant with twins. Indeed, his mother Mujila and sisters are distant, regarding him as a curse, so Koffi and Alice find refuge with another outcast sister Tshala. Meanwhile in Kinshasa, teen Paco lives in a school bus with his performing gender-queer family. They are tormented by street gangs, challenged to prove themselves in organised fights. Months later, Koffi and Alice return with their babies for a very different family ritual.

Even marginal characters have huge personalities, while Christianity and tribal beliefs are blurred together in everyday life, even in medical practice. Following a freaky exorcism ceremony in the village, the film dives into a wildly colourful street parade in the city. There are also feverish dreams, cutaways and flashbacks that fill in details, often surreally. Intriguingly, Koffi and Paco are connected by the seizures they suffer in times of stress, so there's also a strong sense that Paco is part of Koffi's long-suppressed past.

Characters are intensely played with open emotionality. All of them are oppressed by the requirements and restrictions of their cultures in one way or another. The charismatic Zinga and Debay have textured chemistry as Koffi and Alice, continually making telling observations. As Koffi's stubborn mother, Gnahoua has a steely presence that's almost frightening since her resolve is underscored by a flicker of doubt. Umuhire and young Kabeya also ignite the screen with expressive performances.

With imagery and situations that are both joyous and harrowing, this is a powerful fable of people who struggle to reconcile their birthrights with who they actually are. – *Shadows On The Wall*

Winner - New Voice Prize, Un Certain Regard, Cannes Film Festival 2023

Rose

Denmark 2022

106 mins DCP Colour

Director: Niels Arden Oplev

Producer: Thomas Heinesen

Screenplay: Niels Arden Oplev

Cinematography: Rasmus Videbæk

Editing: Anne Østerud, Lars Therkelsen

Sound: Bent Holm, Espen Rønning

Music: Henrik Skram

Cast: Sofie Gråbøl, Lene Maria Christensen, Anders W. Berthelsen, Søren Malling, Luca Reichard, Ben Coker, Peter Gantzler

Niels Arden Oplev (born Denmark, 1961) graduated from the National Film School of Denmark in 1989 and went on to direct two International Emmy Award winning television series - *Ørnen* and *Rejseholdet*. His feature debut, *Portland* (96), marked the start of a controversial 'new wave' of Danish films throughout the mid-nineties and was nominated for the Golden Bear at the 1996 Berlin Film Festival. In 2006, he directed the hugely popular *We Shall Overcome*, which was Denmark's best-selling film of the year. It won a host of international awards, including the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival. He followed up in 2009 with an adaptation of Steig Larsson's cult novel, *Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*, which became a global hit. *Rose* (22) is his latest and most personal work.



There are some illnesses which are tremendously popular in cinema, and some which are avoided. Unless it's being used as a tawdry excuse for random violence in a horror film, schizophrenia belongs to the latter group. People affected by it often behave in socially uncomfortable ways, they complicate an escapist belief in fairness and they have a narratively inconvenient habit of neither getting better nor politely dying. It is thoroughly refreshing, therefore, to encounter a film with a schizophrenic heroine who was created from an informed perspective, has real agency and even gets a romantic subplot of sorts.

This is all the more satisfying because Inger (Sofie Gråbøl) is not one of the many people who are mildly affected by this illness and manage to live fairly normal lives without most people noticing the symptoms. Most of the time, she lives in a care home, getting around in a wheelchair not just due to physical weakness but because the idea of having to walk too far and adding yet more strain to her already difficult life is unnerving to her. Her mother deals with her every expression of stress by recommending that she take more valium. Her sister, Ellen has had just about enough of this, so despite her mother's objections, she and new husband Vagn decide to leave the wheelchair and the drugs behind and take Inger on a coach trip, all the way from Denmark to Paris.

This film is a deeply personal project for director Niels Arden Oplev, as it's based on the experience of his sister's illness. As such, he has an insight not just into how schizophrenia can manifest, but how living with it is complicated by others' prejudices.

Set shortly after the death of Princess Diana, the location of whose death Vagn is morbidly keen to visit, the film is also located in time by little details of the Parisian landscape itself, such as the cluster of padlocks weighing down the Pont des Arts. Though it's largely filtered through tourist eyes, this portrayal of Paris very effectively captures the reality of the city with its peculiar mixture of elitism and working class warmth. As Inger gradually wakes up from her valium-induced torpor, becoming more and more alive and less afraid that she won't be able to cope, the city opens up to her.

There are almost 700,000 people with schizophrenia in the UK alone – but it's badly misunderstood, and films like this are sorely needed to change that. *Rose* succeeds, however, because it's not just focused on doing that. It has real specificity, with fully fleshed out characters all of whom have their own journeys to undertake. – *Eye For Film*

Slow

Lithuania 2023

108 mins DCP Colour

Director: Marija Kavtaradze

Producer: Marija Razgute

Screenplay: Marija Kavtaradze

Cinematography: Laurynas Bareiša

Editing: Silvija Vilkaite

Sound: Diego Staub

Music: Irya Gmeyner

Cast: Greta Grinevičiūtė, Kęstutis Cicėnas



Contemporary dancer Elena meets Dovydas when he is assigned to interpret via sign language in a class she is teaching to deaf youth. Their connection is immediate, kinetic, and frictionless. As they gravitate toward each other, resisting the forces and interventions of their separate daily lives, their bond deepens from platonic to romantic. When Dovydas discloses his asexuality, the couple commit themselves to honoring their individual needs in tandem. As they continue to weave more tightly together, they struggle to negotiate sacrifice and compromise and are forced to discover the edges of their generosity toward the other.

Marija Kavtaradze's sophomore feature shows off her muscular intimacy skills. Through dance, tense quietude, and a stunningly singular exploration of asexuality, she forefronts physicality and its limitations in the expression of emotional expectation. The two leads, Greta Grinevičiūtė (Elena) and Kęstutis Cicėnas (Dovydas), conjure undeniable chemistry and heartbreakingly complicated, stubborn, and private humanity. The result is an instantly recognizable dance between self and other; this one choreographed with elegance, grace, and love. – *Sundance Film Festival 2023*

... *Slow* reveals itself to be quite a tender portrait of love and companionship, of what our bodies yearn and want in others, and how we could do well to upend the stories we tell each other about living and loving another. - *Variety*

Winner - Directing Award: World Cinema Dramatic, Sundance Film Festival 2023

Marija Kavtaradze (born Vilnius, 1991) is a Lithuanian film director and screenwriter. In 2014, she graduated from the Academy of Music and Theatre, Vilnius with a BA in Film Directing. Her short film *I'm Twenty Something* (14) won Best Student Film at the 2015 Lithuanian Film Academy Awards. Her first feature film, *Summer Survivors* (18), won three national film awards. *Slow* (23) premiered at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival, where it won the Best Director Award.

New Audience Initiative - Next Title



In 2022 access>CINEMA introduced the New Audience Initiative (NAI) aimed at providing additional audience development support for network sites around selected cinema releases.

NAI supports one film title per quarter, which would not normally be selected widely by members for screening, but that we would like to encourage sites to strongly consider as part of their programmes. By including these films in their schedule, sites will enhance and diversify their cinema offering.

Chosen titles may be a challenging film that's outside of the mainstream but deserving of an audience; a film that tackles distinctively Irish stories or prominently features the Irish language; a film from a country that is rarely represented on Irish screens; or a small, independent film that could benefit from screenings targeting a particular audience.

Under NAI, in addition to the standard distributors' materials, access>CINEMA provides a tailored marketing pack for each NAI title, which includes templates for social media posts, customised promotional images and videos, insights for targeting potential audiences, and other extra resources that could be beneficial to any network cinemas screening the film.

Sites that screen these films are also eligible to apply for additional marketing funding from access>CINEMA, which may be used on promotion of their screening via their channels. Where possible, network-exclusive bonus materials will also be provided, such as recorded Q&As or a relevant short, that may accompany the film.

The 2024 Q3 film being supported under NAI is **ABOUT DRY GRASSES**, which is available to preview at the Screening Day.

Previous access>CINEMA NAI releases:

Q2 2022: **LEAVE NO TRACES**

Q3 2022: **RÓISE AND FRANK**

Q4 2022: **RETURN TO DUST**

Q1 2023: **ALL THE BEAUTY AND THE BLOODSHED**

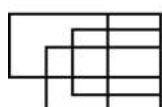
Q2 2023: **LOVE ACCORDING TO DALVA**

Q3 2023: **SMALL SLOW BUT STEADY**

Q4 2023: **HOW TO HAVE SEX**

Q1 2024: **FOUR DAUGHTERS**

Q2 2024: **ELAHA**



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