Beat: Arts

WHAT UN CERTAIN REGARD AND DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT ARE FOR AT CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

PALM TREES, SIDE BARS & DISCOVERIES

Paris, Washington DC, 05.05.2026, 17:50 Time

USPA NEWS - Alongside the main Competition and its Palme d'or, Cannes has long relied on parallel sections to showcase more daring, fragile or formally adventurous work. Un Certain Regard, part of the Official Selection, is curated by the festival itself and generally highlights auteur driven films that sit slightly off the centre line: first and second features, stylistic risks, politically charged stories or hybrid forms that might struggle to fit the expectations of the main competition. Prizes are awarded by a dedicated jury, and a strong reception here can launch a career almost as effectively as a slot in the Palme d'or race.
The Directors' Fortnight (Quinzaine des Cineastes), historically organised by French filmmakers rather than the festival institution, plays a complementary role. It is not a competitive section in the same way its spirit is looser, more discovery driven , but over the years it has premiered films and filmmakers that later became central to world cinema. The Fortnight's selections are often characterised by a willingness to take risks on tone, genre and format, embracing everything from radical formal experiments to audience friendly debuts.

PALESTINE & NORWAY : TWO VERY DIFFERENT 1ST FEATURES, TWO DIFFERENT CANNES SIDEBARS AND ONE SOME QUESTION: Palestine and Norway are this 79th edition of Un certain Regard Competition at Cannes Film Festival, coming up with two very different first features, two different Cannes sidebars and one same question: how new voices from Palestine and Norway are quietly reshaping the festival's "other" competitions.
In Un Certain Regard, Palestinian filmmaker Rakan Mayasi is presenting his first feature, Yesterday the Eye Didn't Sleep, produced by Atata's Jennifer Ritter together with the director himself and headlined by Yasser Al Mawla, Rim Al Mawla and Jawaher Al Mawla. Mayasi, an independent director, screenwriter and producer born in Germany and based in Brussels, has built a reputation through a series of short films that combine political urgency with a strong visual and metaphorical sensibility. After studying cinema and psychology in Lebanon, he trained with Abbas Kiarostami at the Asian Film Academy in South Korea and completed an MA in filmmaking at LUCA School of Arts in Belgium.

His earlier work has already travelled widely through the festival circuit. Roubama was selected at Locarno in 2012, while Bonbone about the phenomenon of Palestinian prisoners smuggling sperm out of Israeli jails to conceive children premiered at Toronto in 2017 and collected more than thirty five awards worldwide. Later shorts such as Trumpets in the Sky, an exercise in visual poetry and myth that received an honourable mention at TIFF 2021, and The Key, a political fantasy thriller centred on the Palestinian right of return that premiered at SXSW, have confirmed him as a filmmaker able to tackle charged subjects without sacrificing cinematic ambition. Yesterday the Eye Didn't Sleep now offers him a longer canvas within a section explicitly designed to spotlight formally distinctive, politically resonant work.

ABOUT RAKAN MAYASI Mayasi (Director)
Rakan Mayasi is an independent filmmaker (Director, Screenwriter & Producer) from Palestine, born in Germany and currently based in Bruxelles. He studied Cinema and Psychology in Lebanon and then received film training with Abbas Kiarostami in South Korea at the Asian Film Academy. He has an MA in Filmmaking from LUCA School of Arts in Belgium. He has made several short films. His previous film ROUBAMA was an official selection at the Locarno Film Festival in 2012. His short film BONBONÉ tackles the phenomenon of Palestinian sperm smuggling from Israeli jails and has world premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2017 - it is the recipient of 35 Best Short Awards. Rakan recently underwent film training with Béla Tarr in Budapest. TRUMPETS IN THE SKY is a short film exploring Cinema in visual poetry, metaphor and mythology. It won the honorable mention for Best International Short Film at TIFF 2021. His last short film is a political fantasy-thriller entitled THE KEY that is centred around the Palestinian right of return. It world premiered at SXSW. YESTERDAY THE EYE DIDN'T SLEEP is Rakan's first feature.

A NORWEGIAN DEBUT AT DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT LOW EXPECTATIONS, BY EIVIND LANDSVIK

Directors' Fortnight, for its part, is hosting Low Expectations, the debut feature from Norwegian writer director Eivind Landsvik. The film is produced by Maipo Film and Snowglobe and stars musician Marie Ulven better known as the indie pop artist girl in red alongside Anders Danielsen Lie, familiar to festival audiences from The Worst Person in the World and Sentimental Value. Landsvik began directing music videos, developing an intimate, mood driven visual language that later found its way into short fiction. Sofia, Last Summer (2021) won the Norwegian Film Critics Award, while Tits (2023) premiered in the main competition at the Festival de Cannes before travelling to more than a hundred festivals worldwide.

Low Expectations extends that trajectory into feature territory, and its presence at the Fortnight suggests a film that is both cinephile friendly and accessible to wider audiences in line with the section's tradition of championing directors who move freely between pop culture and arthouse codes. For Cannes, pairing Landsvik's work with a high profile cast drawn from both music and auteur cinema reinforces the idea that the festival's sidebars are increasingly where new cross overs are tested, away from the pressure of the main competition but under the gaze of international programmers, critics and distributors.

ABOUT EIVIND LANSVIK (Director)
Eivind Landsvik is a Norwegian writer and director. He began his filmmaking career by directing music videos, developing a sensitive visual style that later translated into fiction. His short film Sofia, Last Summer (2021) won the Norwegian Film Critics Award, and Tits (2023) premiered in the main competition at the Festival de Cannes, subsequently traveling to more than a hundred festivals worldwide. LOW EXPECTATIONS is his debut feature.

SOURCES AND COMMUNICATION
The information in this article is drawn from official Festival de Cannes and Directors' Fortnight materials, as well as production notes and press communication provided by the films' representatives (Takamasa "Taka" for international press outreach and the festivals' own communications teams). Rakan Mayasi and Eivind Landsvik, along with cast members Marie Ulven and Anders Danielsen Lie, are available for interviews through their respective press offices during the festival.Sources: Festival du Film de Cannes, TAKA-PR & Communications

This piece is prepared ahead of the 2026 Festival de Cannes and relies on official synopses, catalogues, press kits and specialised film press reporting, rather than on site impressions. It offers a primarily cinematic reading of Un Certain Regard and Directors' Fortnight selections, informed by long term experience of festival coverage and by an editorial line that keeps accessibility and disability representation in view, both on screen and behind the camera.../

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-26780/what-un-certain-regard-and-directors-fortnight-are-for-at-cannes-film-festival.html

Editorial office and responsibility:
V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Rahma Sophia RACHDI, Jedi Foster

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619