

FILM

Editor's Choice



The burden of talent

The protagonists of these three new releases are cursed with extraordinary gifts. *By Paul O'Callaghan*

DON'T MISS

Berlin Sci-Fi Filmfest rerun

On the second Tuesday of each month between now and August, head to Il Kino in Neukölln for a selection of highlights from last year's fest. April's picks include Ray Raghavan's twisty mind-control thriller *Violentia*. **Apr 9**

Fantasy Filmfest Nights

The latest edition of the city-hopping genre fest includes previews of controversial Ted Bundy biopic *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil, and Vile*, and Craig S. Zahler's outrageously provocative cop thriller *Dragged Across Concrete*. Cinestar Sony Center. **Apr 13-14**

Sehsüchte

Head to Filmuniversität Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF in Potsdam to see new films at the International Student Film Festival. **Apr 24-28**

If you're the kind of individual who experiences a jolt of irrational paranoia every time you pass through airport security, *Border* (photo) may prove triggering. This oddity from Iranian-Swedish filmmaker Ali Abbasi tells the story of Tina, a customs officer with the remarkable ability to smell fear and shame on unsuspecting passengers. Her downtrodden demeanour suggests a lack of self-esteem, and her facial abnormalities make her a target for bullies. But she finds a new sense of purpose when she becomes involved in a police operation to apprehend a paedophile ring. And she's offered a shot at happiness when she crosses paths with Vore, a creepy insect enthusiast who looks uncannily like her. To give away more would diminish the impact of what might be the most unpredictable film you'll see this year. Suffice to say that *Border* is less grounded in realism than it first appears. That it's co-written by horror novelist John Ajvide Lindqvist becomes very apparent as the film builds towards its jaw-dropping climax. The overall package should delight fans of dour social realism and midnight movie quirkiness alike.

2012's *Spring Breakers*, a lurid portrait of youthful debauchery in sun-drenched Florida, proved an unlikely hit for oddball auteur Harmony Korine. His follow-up, *The Beach*

Bum, retains the setting and hedonistic vibe, but shifts the satirical focus towards middle-aged dropouts. The beach bum of the title is Moondog (Matthew McConaughey), a once-great poet who now spends most of his time getting high and chasing younger women – a lifestyle funded by his independently wealthy wife Minnie (Isla Fisher). But when a change of circumstances disrupts his cash flow, Moondog is encouraged by loved ones to clean up his act and write the great American novel that surely lurks within him. While regular gratuitous shots of topless women suggest that Korine has no desire to become a spokesman for the Time's Up movement, *The Beach Bum* is nevertheless a timely portrait of a privileged white man given carte blanche to behave outrageously on account of his alleged artistic genius. Korine sceptics are unlikely to be converted – like much of his work, the film is narratively threadbare and childishy provocative. But it's also exhilaratingly immersive and occasionally laugh-out-loud funny, with support-

ing turns by Jonah Hill as a dandyish literary agent and Martin Lawrence as a dolphin-obsessed Vietnam vet.

Julian Schnabel is responsible for several distinctive screen portraits of trailblazing creative talents, including *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, his formally dazzling adaptation of the bestselling memoir by French writer Jean-Dominique Bauby. With *At Eternity's Gate*, he turns his attention to the archetypal tortured genius, Dutch Post-Impressionist painter Vincent Van Gogh. Willem Dafoe's expressive central performance ensures an emotionally engaging experience, but this is considerably more experimental than your average biopic, with lurching camerawork, a fragmentary structure and an earnestly philosophical tone. Alas, the unavoidable expository sequences are clunky, with on-the-nose dialogue and some highly questionable accents. And the decision to cast 63-year-old Dafoe as Van Gogh, who died aged 37, proves jarring, particularly in early scenes depicting the artist's formative years in Paris. ■

The Beach Bum ★★★☆☆ *Starts Mar 28* D: Harmony Korine (US 2019) with Matthew McConaughey, Snoop Dogg | **Border** ★★★★★ *Starts Apr 11* D: Ali Abbasi (Sweden 2018) with Eva Melander, Eero Milonoff | **At Eternity's Gate** ★★★☆☆ *Starts Apr 18* D: Julian Schnabel (France, UK, US 2018) with Willem Dafoe, Rupert Friend