



(Third left) US actress Emma Stone poses with US director Damien Chazelle (second left) during the photocall of the movie 'La La Land' presented in competition at the 73rd Venice Film Festival, yesterday at Venice Lido. — AFP



The jury of the 73rd Venice Film Festival (from left) Italian writer Giancarlo De Cataldo, French actress Chiara Mastroianni, US artist Laurie Anderson, Venezuela's director Lorenzo Vigas, German actress Nina Hoss, director and president of the jury Sam Mendes, Chinese actress Zhao Wei, British actress Gemma Arterton and US director Joshua Oppenheimer, pose with Venezia International Film Festival director Alberto Barbera (right) during a photocall, yesterday at Venice Lido.

'La La Land' musical masterpiece dazzles Venice film fest

A bewitching musical starring Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone whipped up a frenzy on the opening day of the Venice film festival yesterday as it kicked off the race for the Golden Lion. Damien Chazelle's "La La Land", a tribute to the Golden Age of American musicals, reunites the stars, who appeared together in the 2011 romcom "Crazy, Stupid, Love" but with oodles of singing this time. The world's top film critics, gathered on the glamorous Lido di Venezia for the 10-day fest, cheered loudly as Chazelle and Stone met the press following the screening of the joyful, quirky film which won hearts from the opening shot.

This world premiere of the tale of a struggling jazz pianist and his actress girlfriend in Los Angeles is the first of 20 films in competition at the 73rd edition of the world's oldest film festival. "Now more than ever we need hope and romance on the big screen," said the American director, 31, a former jazz musician whose second feature film "Whiplash" (2014) received five Academy Award nominations. "There's something about musicals, they are movies as a dreamland, expressing a world in which you break into song, in which you can violate the rules of reality," he said.

'Brand new start'
The film pays homage to classic musicals, with nods to scenes from "Singing in the Rain" (1952) and "Grease" (1978) as well as old-timers "Bringing Up Baby" (1938) and "Top Hat" (1935). Stone plays Mia, a wide-eyed romantic who goes from audition to failed audition in her quest to make it big, while Gosling is Sebastian, a jazz pianist with a mission to save the medium, but who struggles to pay his bills. The pair meet in one of LA's famous traffic jams and then at a bawdy celebrity party-before wooing each other in tap- and ballroom-dancing sequences reminiscent of American icons Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. "We talked a lot about how to justify doing a musical today. We went back to the old traditions and tried to make it as simple as that.

No-one breaks into song unless it's emotionally justified," Chazelle said. In an auspicious start for the Golden Lion bid, the festival's artistic director Alberto Barbera described "La La Land" as a movie "that does not merely reinvent the musical genre, it gives it a brand new start". The picture bursts with enthusiasm and happiness from the opening scene: a big dance number on a freeway with men and women dressed in

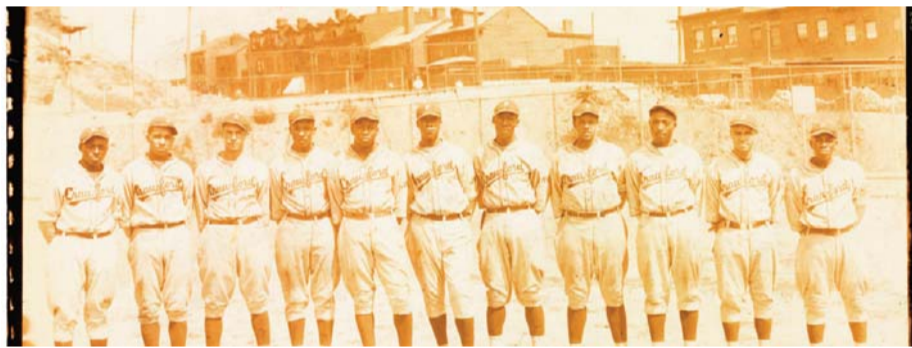
sun-kissed yellows and rich reds and blues dancing on their cars. Chazelle said he had brought the love story into the modern day by setting it in LA, a metropolis he has lived in for almost a decade and which called "a city of loneliness when you first live there, not a city that offers itself up".

'Absolutely loved it'
"The idea was to build from all the cliches we make fun of; the traffic, the terrible parties, the celebrity culture, the shallowness. But then see what was beautiful beneath the surface, and reconcile the two," he said. "It had to feel like a dream, but one that took place in a real place," he added, explaining that to get the light right, filming only took place between 6pm and 7pm each day, "much to the frustration of the producers". Stone said she "absolutely loved" the experience. "I went to see Les Miserables when I was eight. Bursting into song has always been a dream of mine," she said. Although the actress from "The Amazing Spider-Man" and "Birdman" recognized her own early experiences in some of Mia's disastrous auditions, she said "I don't feel like I was ever quite as brave as she is". Despite the rave reception, it is early days to cry victory: the

musical will be competing with an array of dystopian love stories, period dramas, adventure epics, revised Westerns and sci-fi thrillers at the festival.

The beachside extravaganza has restored its reputation as an awards-season platform by premiering the last two Best Picture Oscars: "Spotlight" (2015) and "Birdman" (2014), in a challenge to the mammoth Toronto film festival. All eyes will be on the jury, led by British film director Sam Mendes, for hints about the next Academy Awards. Mendes told journalists Wednesday he had no pre-conceived ideas but would "know excellence when I see it".

"One of the most difficult things is to cut yourself off from the white noise on social media, commentaries, and meet a movie with as little knowledge as possible." The man behind "American Beauty" (1999) and "Road to Perdition" (2002) said directing was a lonely experience. "You're at the top of the pyramid, but you don't speak with many others about what you love. I'm looking forward to talking to them, I'm here to learn, I'm relishing the opportunity to be a student again." — AFP



This 1928 photo provided by Christie's from their upcoming baseball memorabilia auction shows legendary Negro Leagues slugger Josh Gibson, fifth from the left, when he was a 16-year-old player with the Pittsburgh Crawfords semi-pro baseball team. — AP photos



This undated photo shows legendary Negro Leagues slugger Josh Gibson.



This undated photo shows a Hillerich & Bradsby bat with the signature name upon the barrel of Jackie Robinson, who played for the Brooklyn Dodgers from 1947-1956, coinciding with the labeling period of the offered bat.



This undated photo shows 'Shoelless' Joe Jackson's game bat.

Trove of baseball memorabilia, photographs to be auctioned

Nearly 500 baseball artifacts including a "Shoelless" Joe Jackson game bat and material from the Negro Leagues will be auctioned off by Christie's this fall in New York. The items come from the National Pastime Museum, an online museum based on a private collection of baseball artifacts, photographs and memorabilia. Shoelless Joe's "Black Betsy" bat is one of only two known to survive from his career, and the only one with his full signature in script, according to Christie's. It is signed on the barrel and has the scars of game use, including ball and cleat marks and a handle crack. Christie's experts think it might sell for \$500,000 to \$700,000.

Jackson was accused with other Chicago White Sox teammates of accepting payments for throwing the 1919 World Series. The Major League great was acquitted but

banned from the sport. "He's a legendary figure and to have an actual object that he touched and used in a game, it's a very special piece," said Simeon Lipman, Christie's pop culture specialist. The auction record for a game-used baseball bat is a 1923 Babe Ruth bat that sold for \$1.2 million in 2004.

The sale also has a game bat used by Negro Leagues slugger Josh Gibson when he played for the Pittsburgh Crawfords from 1932 to 1936 and a Jackie Robinson bat that could sell for \$300,000 to \$400,000. Robinson, who played for the Brooklyn Dodgers from 1947 to 1956, gave the bat to a collector and signed it for him at a 1955 game at Philadelphia's Connie Mack Stadium. Steve Costello, a baseball historian and former executive vice president of Steiner Sports collectibles, said "collecting of vintage items

is at an all-time high," because there's a scarcity of items and an increase in the number of collectors.

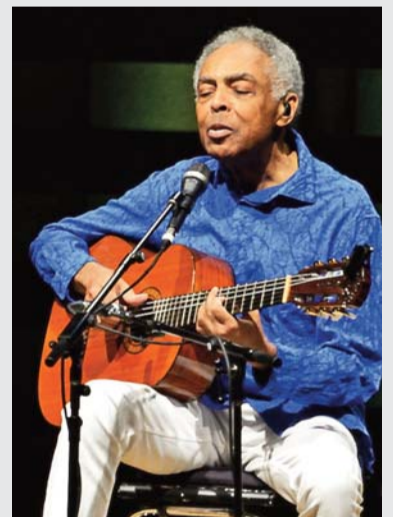
The Christie's sale also includes other items and photography related to the Negro Leagues, including a 1907 book that chronicles the history of black baseball from 1885 through 1907. The "History of Colored Base Ball" was written by Sol White, captain of the Philadelphia Giants and future Hall of Famer. The auction house thinks it might sell for between \$15,000 and \$20,000. Christie's says the total value of the auction items could top \$5 million. The sale is scheduled for Oct 19 and 20. The museum selling the items did not return an email request for comment. — AP

Brazilian musician

Gil hospitalized again

Brazilian music star Gilberto Gil was hospitalized Tuesday in Sao Paulo to be treated for a kidney problem, a medical source said. It was the latest in a series of hospital visits this year for the 74-year-old singer and former culture minister. A source at the Syrian Lebanese Hospital told AFP that Gil was admitted there on Tuesday.

Brazilian media citing sources close to Gil said he was in hospital for tests and ongoing treatment. Three days ago, he cancelled a concert in Rio de Janeiro due to his illness. His representatives said then that he would "soon be back on stage." Gil was discharged from hospital in July in time to perform at the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Rio on August 5. Gil is one of the seminal figures of Brazilian music. He fused traditional samba with jazz and rock to help create the unique tropicália sound during the 1960s. He served as Brazil's culture minister from 2003 to 2008. — AFP



Gilberto Gil



The picture shows a general view of Tsukiji market in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP photos

Tokyo puts Tsukiji fish market move on ice

Plans to move Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market—the world's largest—were put on ice yesterday over fears about toxic contamination at the new facility, as the cost of the move soars. The megacity's new governor, Yuriko Koike, said she would postpone the move set for November until at least early next year, as she awaits final groundwater testing results at the new site, a former gas plant. Plans to uproot the more than 80-year-old market, a popular tourist attraction, have been in the works for years, with advocates citing the need for upgraded technology.

But Koike, a former TV anchorwoman elected last month as the Japanese capital's first female governor, had pledged to reconsider the plan. "Needless to say, it is a market that handles fresh food," Koike told a press conference as she announced the delay. "The Tokyo metropolitan

government, which chiefly runs the market, is responsible for telling the world: 'It's safe.'" Critics of the move cite contaminated soil found at the former gas production site. The local government paid a whopping 86 billion yen (\$833 million) in cleanup

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Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike answers questions during a press conference in Tokyo yesterday.

costs but Koike said she wants to wait for the results of water testing in January.

Koike would not say if she would consider scrapping the relocation altogether if the test results are bad. "I want to wait for the examinations being done by the project team," she said. Koike also questioned the 588 billion yen in relocation costs, 36 percent higher than earlier estimates. These costs include relocating the market to a less-central location several kilometers away and building a modern facility about 40 percent larger with state-of-the-art refrigeration.

Japanese media have reported that postponing Tsukiji's move would cost about seven million yen a day, and could delay construction of a highway connecting the current site with an athletes' village being built for the city's 2020 Olympics. — AFP