

Lifestyle | Movies & Music

Cancer, chaos, tragedy... French film legend Trintignant reaches for poetry

He is 88, has cancer and has had to endure the rock star who killed his daughter attempt a very public comeback earlier this year. Now Jean-Louis Trintignant, the French acting legend who at 83 had critics fighting back the tears at his performance in the Oscar-winning "Amour", is quietly staring down the odds yet again. With theatres and museums in Paris shuttered last weekend by the "yellow vest" protest movement that has shaken France, Trintignant has taken to the stage again with something you might think would calm the spirals—a poetry show.

"There are a lot of anarchist poems in it actually, which worries me a bit," Trintignant told AFP. Rousing rebel verse that a few weeks ago he "took great pleasure in reciting now feel a bit like demagoguery," he admitted in the febrile atmosphere of the street revolt

against President Emmanuel Macron. Trintignant—who first made international headlines when Brigitte Bardot left her husband Roger Vadim for him on the set of "And God Created Woman" in 1956, a film Vadim was directing—learned early to fear the madness of the mob. The day his hometown was liberated from the Nazis in 1944, he was paraded through the streets alongside his mother who had her head shaved for "sleeping with the Germans".

Lost daughters

In a bitter irony, later the same day his father, a Resistance fighter, returned home in triumph with the American army. As a young conscript, Trintignant was later sent to "pacify Algeria" as the former French colony fought for independence. He was sickened by the "violent hypocrisy" of the war. "It is hardly surprising

that the young men sent there are still incapable of talking about it," he said.

Still greater trauma was to follow when his daughter Marie, an actor herself and a mother of four young sons, was beaten to death in 2003 by her boyfriend Bertrand Cantat, the lead singer of the French band Noir Desir, in a hotel room in Lithuania. After serving four years in prison for her murder, Cantat pulled out of a comeback tour this summer following a string of protests by women's groups outside venues. But Trintignant refuses to give in to bitterness. "He doesn't interest me. I wish I had never met him, that my daughter hadn't met him. But she was deeply in love, and he was too, I think. "But I don't want to see him, to become his friend," he added. —AFP

Forgiveness 'indispensable'



In this file photo French actor Jean-Louis Trintignant attends a press conference for the film 'Happy End' at the 70th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. —AFP

Anti-junta film 'Ten Years Thailand' aims to fire political debate

With cat-like humans, soldiers infiltrating an art gallery and brainwashed cadets, dystopian "Ten Years Thailand" is the latest in a pan-Asian film series aiming to stir political debate that debuted in the kingdom Thursday. The original in the "Ten Years" series came out in Hong Kong in 2015 on the back of the "Occupy" pro-democracy protests, with versions from Japan and Taiwan exploring nuclear fallout and socioeconomic problems. The premise asks film-makers to wrestle with the subject of what their country will be like 10 years from now, resulting in unsettling visions of bleak futures.

Big guns from Thailand's new wave cinema, including Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Wisit Sasanatieng, worked on the four short, dark satires on army rule, censorship, mob mentality and cramped free expression, that premiered at Cannes in May. The creators of the omnibus movie, which made it past Thailand's unpredictable film censorship board, see it as a clarion call to encourage critical thinking in a nation run by generals since a 2014 coup.

The target audience are "people worried about the direction the country is going and unhappy with the military being so powerful for the next 20 years", director Aditya Assarat told AFP. Aditya's episode, "Sunset", shows soldiers scouring an art gallery for politically incendiary works, inspired by a real-life confrontation last year in which security forces showed up at a show and ordered exhibits to be removed.

Thailand's junta has kept a tight lid on any form of dissent since seizing power, bringing with them a culture of censorship and banning gatherings of more than five people, an order it only lifted this week. Censorship "harms the artists and... it harms the military as well", Aditya told an audience at an early screening this week in Bangkok.

'Catopia'

The Hong Kong version made a splash, picking up the top prize at the Hong Kong Film Awards in the aftermath of the massive pro-democracy protests in 2014. The film, which painted a picture of a city under Chinese control, drew condemnation from mainland Chinese au-



In this handout picture a scene from the "Ten Years Thailand" an actor (left) portraying a soldier raiding a photo exhibition in an art gallery to censor the picture showing a laughing woman in front of Bangkok's landmark Democracy Monument.

thorities. The Thai directors hope to reach an audience beyond the arthouse crowd and strike a wider chord at a time when the country is at a turning point. The military has set elections for February 24 but has used its four years in power to dilute the checks and balances of the country's democratic institutions.

The country also remains bitterly divided between pro-junta elites and supporters of the Shinawatra clan—whose political parties have won every election since 2001 but have been hit by military coups and court cases. Director Wisit explores that rift in the ghoulish "Catopia", which imagines a world in which a man has to try and blend in among a society of human-like cats. Dressed in suits with cat heads they represent the groupthink that takes hold among fractured political classes.

"Thailand is divided between pro-democracy and pro-dictatorship people," he said. "Some people think that if you fight for democracy you are a dirty guy." Apichatpong's "Song of the City" focuses on groups milling around a statue of former dictator Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat while using a soporific device that dulls their senses. The most fiercely anti-junta vignette is "Planetarium" by Chulayarnnon Siriphol. —AFP

'Mary Poppins' return brings world some magic, cast say

The return of Mary Poppins to the big screen brings some much needed magic to the world in uncertain times, the cast of the new film about the beloved nanny said on Wednesday as they premiered the highly anticipated movie in London. More than 50 years since Julie Andrews won over children - and adults - around the world with her portrayal of the strict but kind nanny, Disney's "Mary Poppins Returns" sees her doing just that, visiting the now-grown up Michael and Jane Banks in their time of need. Despite cold December weather, the film's picturesque Cherry Tree Lane blossomed outside the Royal Albert Hall venue, with plenty of the blooming plants sprouting up the stairs to a replica of the Banks' house.

British actress Emily Blunt led the cast down a blue carpet, just hours after receiving another award nomination for the role based on the books written by P.L. Travers. "She has a lot of relevance for people around the world when things feel rather fragile," Blunt told Reuters of the character. "She's a great unifier." Blunt said she had not spoken recently to Andrews, who won an Oscar for her performance in the 1964 "Mary Poppins" film, but had heard she had seen the sequel. "I hear she's just seen the film and loved it so that means a lot to us," said Blunt, who like Andrews, sings in the movie. "I hope that generations to come will sing these songs... They're catchy and wonderful." The new film is set some 20 years after the first film, with audiences now introduced to Michael Banks' own three children.

Lin-Manuel Miranda, the creator of the award-winning "Hamilton" musical, plays lamp lighter Jack - a similar role to Dick Van Dyke's chimney sweep in the original movie. "Mary Poppins doesn't come along when everything's OK. Mary Poppins comes along when there's trouble," he said. "I feel like the world is in a scary time and so it feels like a movie the world needs right now." As guests arrived for the premiere, a few miles away British Prime Minister Theresa May was facing a confidence vote triggered by lawmakers in her Conservative party - a ballot she later won. "It's incredibly ... ironic somehow that we're having the premiere tonight just as this vote ... is happening," actress Emily Mortimer, who plays Jane Banks, said. "I think we all



(From left) US actor Lin-Manuel Miranda, British actor Emily Mortimer, British-US actor Emily Blunt and British actor Colin Firth pose upon arrival to attend the European premiere of the film 'Mary Poppins Returns' at The Royal Albert Hall in London. —AFP photos



(From left) Child actors Joel Dawson, Pixie Davies and Nathanael Saleh

need a dose of Mary Poppins ... She helps people see things from a new perspective." Last to arrive was Oscar winner Meryl Streep, who also stars in the film. "It could be seen as being a little bit of a joyless moment in time and it's good to remember what's lovely in life," she said. —Reuters