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US actor Johnny Depp receives the Donostia Award for his career, in the 69th San Sebastian Film Festival in the northern Spanish Basque city of San Sebastian. — AFP

Johnny Depp says 'no one is safe' from cancel culture

Nobody is safe from the "instant rush to judgement" handed out by today's cancel culture, Hollywood star Johnny Depp said Wednesday at a Spanish film festival where he was accepting a lifetime achievement award. Depp, who last year lost a libel case against a British newspaper that labelled him a "wife-beater", was responding to questions from journalists at the San Sebastian film festival in northern Spain. In what appeared to be a reference to the #MeToo movement that has targeted the sexual harassment and assault of women by powerful men, he suggested that things had got out of hand.

"The various movements that came out, I'm sure with the best of intentions-however it's so far out of hand now that I can promise you that no one is safe," he said. He also lashed out at "this cancel culture or this instant rush to judgment based on essentially what amounts to polluted air that's exhaled." The three-time Oscar nominee sued the publisher of The Sun, a British tabloid, over claims he was violent to his ex-wife Amber Heard during their volatile two-year marriage. But the lurid details of his private life that emerged during the 16-day libel trial-and the fact that he eventually lost the case-damaged his reputation.

In the aftermath of the trial, Depp said he was asked to step down from his role in the "Fantastic Beasts" film franchise based on the book by Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling. Women's rights groups and some women in the film industry have criticized the festival's decision to hand Depp its Donostia award, which it gave out "in recognition of his career". Depp, who continues to deny he was violent towards Heard, told journalists: "No one safe, but I believe that if you are armed with the truth then that's what you need." The 58-year-old was critical too, of the current state of mainstream American cinema. "How much more condescension as an audience do we need? 'I've said this for a long time, Hollywood has grotesquely underestimated the audiences.'" —AFP

Billie Eilish, BTS, Elton John in concert for climate action, vaccines

Some of the biggest names in pop, from Billie Eilish to BTS and Elton John, will lend their star power to Global Citizen Live tomorrow for a round-the-world event to raise awareness on climate change, vaccine equality and famine. Concerts staged in New York, Paris, Lagos, Rio, Sydney, Mumbai and more will be broadcast globally for the event, scheduled to coincide with the UN General Assembly this week. The star-studded line-up will also push for action at the G20 next month and COP26 climate meeting in November.

Eilish and Coldplay will headline in New York's Central Park, joined by Jennifer Lopez, Camila Cabello, Shawn Mendes and Burna Boy, among others. Ed Sheeran will perform in Paris alongside Elton John, with Doja Cat, Black Eyed Peas and Stormzy supporting. And then there will be Femi Kuti in Nigeria, Alok in Rio, and Duran Duran and Kylie Minogue in London. "Across six continents, artists will help rally citizens in demanding that governments, major corporations and philanthropists work together to defend the planet and defeat poverty," NGO Global Citizen said in a statement.

It said it was focusing "on the most urgent, interrelated threats hitting those in poverty the hardest-climate change, vaccine equity, and famine". A slew of other artists-including Metallica and The Weeknd-are also involved, either through live or filmed performances. Global Citizen said it wants one billion trees planted, one billion vaccines delivered to the poorest countries and meals for 41 million people on the brink of famine. The organization has been behind other high-profile charity events, including "Vax Live: The Concert To Reunite The World" earlier this year in Los Angeles. —AFP

That brought together musicians, actors,



Billie Eilish performs onstage during the 2021 iHeartRadio Music Festival at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP



Britney Spears and Sam Asghari

Britney Spears asks to end father's guardianship in order to marry

Britney Spears has asked a judge to end her father's guardianship at a hearing next week so that she can get married with a prenuptial agreement, a petition filed by her lawyer said Wednesday. The US pop singer, who has described the controversial 13-year arrangement that gives Jamie Spears control of her affairs as "abuse," recently announced her engagement to boyfriend Sam Asghari. Jamie Spears filed a petition last month for Britney's conservatorship to be ended, saying he acknowledges the singer now "believes that she can handle her own life."

According to the filing Wednesday, Britney is "in the process of engaging a family law attorney to craft a prenuptial agreement," which would require the approval of any conservator still in place. "Given that Ms Spears's relationship with that Conservator (her father) is broken, Mr Spears's continued involvement would impede the ability to negotiate and consummate a contract that all can agree is in Ms Spears's best interests," it states. The petition

calls on the Los Angeles court judge to "suspend Mr Spears" at the next hearing, set for September 29. It proposes a short-term, temporary guardian who can take over from her father and potentially approve a prenuptial agreement before the entire conservatorship structure can be ended later this year.

Spears and Asghari met in 2016 when they co-starred in a music video for her single "Slumber Party." Spears, 39, has two children with former husband rapper Kevin Federline, and had a brief Las Vegas marriage to childhood friend Jason Alexander that was annulled after just 55 hours. The star rocketed to fame in her teens with hits like "...Baby One More Time," but suffered a highly public 2007 breakdown, attacking a paparazzo's car at a gas station. That led to her being placed under the court-ordered conservatorship largely governed by her father. —AFP

'Historic night' as Somalia screens first film in 30 years

Somalia hosted its first screening of a movie in three decades under heavy security on Wednesday, as the conflict-ravaged country hopes for a cultural renewal. Built by Chinese engineers as a gift from Mao Zedong in 1967, the National Theatre of Somalia has a history that reflects the tumultuous journey of the Horn of Africa nation. It has been targeted by suicide bombers and used as a base by warlords. And it has never screened a Somali film. Until now. "This is going to be a historic night for the Somali people, it shows how hopes have been revived... after so many years of challenges," theatre director Abdikadir Abdi Yusuf said before the screening.

"It's a platform that provides an opportunity to... Somali songwriters, storytellers, movie

directors and actors to present their talent openly." The evening's program was two short films by Somali director Ibrahim CM-"Hoos" and "Date from Hell"-with tickets sold for \$10 (8.50 euros) each, expensive for many. According to sources contacted by AFP, the evening passed off without any security incidents. Although Mogadishu was home to many cinema halls during its cultural heyday, with the national theatre also hosting live concerts and plays, the seaside capital fell silent after civil war erupted in 1991.

Warlords used the theatre as a military base and the building fell into disrepair. It reopened in 2012, but was blown up by Al-Shabaab jihadists two weeks later. The Al-Qaeda linked Islamist group launches regular attacks in Mogadishu and considers entertainment evil. After a painstaking restoration, the authorities announced plans to hold the theatre's first screening this week. For many Somalis, it was a trip down memory lane and a reminder of happier times. "I used to watch concerts, dramas, pop shows, folk dances and movies in the national theatre during the good old days," said Osman Yusuf Osman, a self-confessed film buff. —AFP