

Cannes Diary 2015: The First Few Days



I am sitting here in a rather lavish computer suite surrounded by rattling keyboards and foreign journalists behind them. There is, regardless of it being night or day, always something going on here. Outside, I can hear the chatter of growing crowds on the Croisette (Cannes' beach front), coming out in their droves to catch a glimpse of Emma Stone, Joaquin Phoenix and Cannes veteran Woody Allen as they attend the premiere of his latest film, Irrational Man.

The bright blue skies have turned overcast and rather grey. I gather that is a sign of the rain that Cannes in Spring is known for. It's nearly thirty degrees and, to be honest, the idea of a light shower could not be more appealing.

I am one of thousands of journalists that descend upon the French Riviera city for the prestigious event known as the Festival de Cannes. Now in its 68th year, it has spent the last 67 years becoming the go-to place to promote or premiere your film (as well as becoming a proud celeb hangout).

As always, there is only so much space for these thousands in the festival's many film theatres. The vast majority are contained in the Palais des Festivals – a gargantuan structure that sits on the sea side; film fans and connoisseurs within. As a result, queues are formed in order of your badge colour. White badges walk in first, with yellow press closer to the bottom. For everyone below the prestigious white colour, entry to screenings can be a gamble!

My first day at the fest was nearly 21 hours long and was spent on an empty stomach – two fatal mistakes combined. After spending a few hours trying to get myself from Nice (the

nearest airport) to Cannes, and then to Le Cannet (the nearby town where I am staying), I managed to grab my badge and bag and head to the Palais. My first film was Saul Fia – the directorial debut of a Hungarian director that follows a prisoner employed to operate the mass executions in Auschwitz. The film is one of very few debuts to play in the Official Competition. For filmmakers, it is a difficult place to get to. The director himself, László Nemes, is up against the likes of Gus Van Sant to win the top prize; and the odds show that he has a strong chance.

After realising my mistake of not eating, I wandered the city in search of food. The new film starring Blue is the Warmest Colour actress, Adele Exarchopoulos, had a screening down the Croisette; but my shaky legs and empty stomach told me to prioritise food first.

A 6am start on my second day meant I had time to grab a coffee and some fruit before my first film. This time, it was The Lobster – a distorted love story in which singletons in the near future are forced to find a mate in a place called ‘The Hotel’. If they fail to do so, they are converted into animals and sent out into the wilderness. This was my first film the Grand Theatre Lumiere – a huge 2,000+ cinema screen in which all the major films have their premiere. It was a bizarre experience, having seen it before in numerous press photos, but once the film starts you can easily forget you’re in Cannes and not the Filmhouse!

For now, the hotels are still adorned with huge promotional posters and security are still bustling people about as efficiently as possible. It doesn’t look like that will change anytime soon, but if it does – I will be sure to let you all know!

Keep checking up throughout this week and next for reviews of films playing at the 68th Festival de Cannes