Beat: Arts

PARK CHAN WOOK TO LEAD A TRULY GLOBAL JURY SOUTH KOREAN DIRECTOR CHAIRS

CANNES FILM FESTIVAL 12-23 MAY 2026

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USPA NEWS - PARK CHAN WOOK, SOUTH KOREAN DIRECTOR TO LEAD A TRULY GLOBAL JURY A SPANNING EUROPE, AFRICA, ASIA AND THE USA
The 79th Festival de Cannes, which runs from 12 to 23 May 2026, will be presided over by South Korean director, screenwriter and producer Park Chan wook, marking the first time that a filmmaker from South Korea chairs the Competition jury. He will be joined by American actress and producer Demi Moore, Irish Ethiopian actress and producer Ruth Negga, Belgian director and screenwriter Laura Wandel, Chinese director and screenwriter Chloe Zhao, Chilean director and screenwriter Diego Cespedes, Ivorian American actor Isaach De Bankolé, Scottish screenwriter Paul Laverty and Swedish actor Stellan Skarsgård. Taken together, this nine member panel maps a broad cross section of contemporary cinema, with roots in Scotland, Ireland, Ethiopia, the United States, China, Chile, Belgium, Ivory Coast and Sweden – meaning that every inhabited continent is represented in some form, except the Arab world and the broader Middle East, and the Pacific region.

Prepared as a background analysis rather than a day by day diary from Cannes, this piece relies on official communiqués, governmental briefings and specialised research to connect the festival's choices with current geopolitical shifts. It is also informed by a newsroom practice that treats accessibility and disability inclusion as essential lenses, giving space to perspectives often marginalised in mainstream coverage.

The 79th Cannes jury is unusually global this year, led for the first time by a South Korean filmmaker and bringing together voices from Europe, Africa, Asia and the United States. Against the backdrop of a war in Iran and a new energy shock, the line up also hints at how Hollywood may be quietly repositioning itself ahead of the festival's 80th anniversary in 2027.
At a time when Iran, Israel and the United States are locked in an open conflict whose consequences range from missile strikes to the partial closure of the Strait of Hormuz and a new energy shock, that absence is striking. Without implying a direct causal link, the composition of the jury inevitably reflects a festival navigating a highly charged geopolitical landscape, where inviting or not inviting voices from certain regions can be read as a signal in itself.

DIRECTOR PARK CHAN WOOK ' FILMOGRAPHY MARKED SOUTH KOREAN CINEMA
Park Chan wook's presence at the head of the jury feels like a culmination of a two decade dialogue between Cannes and South Korean cinema. His breakthrough Oldboy took the Grand Prix in 2004, followed by the Jury Prize for Thirst in 2009, The Handmaiden in Competition in 2016 and the Best Director award for Decision to Leave in 2022. His work, from the revenge trilogy to the more recent No Other Choice, is marked by a blend of baroque stylisation, moral ambiguity and audience friendly storytelling that has helped define the international profile of Korean cinema: unconstrained by conventions, politically sharp yet viscerally entertaining.

EIGHT JURORS, FIVE CONTINENTS, A PANEL STRETCHING FROM HOLLYWOOD TO ABIDJAN AND SANTIAGO
American actress and producer Demi Moore brings star power and decades of Hollywood experience, from Ghost and A Few Good Men to more recent work in Coralie Fargeat's The Substance, which won the Best Screenplay Award at Cannes in 2024 and earned her a new wave of awards and nominations. Irish Ethiopian actress Ruth Negga adds a bridge between independent American cinema and European theatre, with an Oscar nominated performance in Jeff Nichols' Loving, acclaimed stage work from Hamlet to Macbeth, and high profile television roles that have made her one of the most versatile performers of her generation.

Belgian director and screenwriter Laura Wandel represents the new European arthouse, having moved from Cannes shorts to the Un Certain Regard FIPRESCI winning feature Playground and the opening of La Semaine de la Critique with Adam's Sake. Chinese born

writer director Chloe Zhao brings the perspective of a filmmaker who has moved seamlessly between Sundance, Cannes and Marvel, with films such as Songs My Brothers Taught Me, The Rider, the Oscar sweeping Nomadland, Eternals and the multi awarded Hamnet, which confirmed her as one of the few women to receive multiple Oscar nominations for Best Director.

On the Latin American side, Chilean director Diego Cespedes, a former Cinefondation laureate, offers a younger, festival honed voice whose debut feature The Mysterious Gaze of the Flamingo won the Un Certain Regard Prize in 2025 and whose earlier shorts blended the fantastical and the political in ways that have resonated across major festivals. Ivorian American actor Isaach De Bankole, soon to be seen in Dune: Part Three, brings a trajectory that runs from a César for Black Mic Mac through his long collaboration with Claire Denis and Jim Jarmusch to roles in global franchises such as Casino Royale and Black Panther.

Scottish screenwriter Paul Laverty anchors the jury in the long history between Cannes and socially engaged European cinema: he has written fourteen films for Ken Loach, including The Wind That Shakes the Barley and I, Daniel Blake, both Palme d'or winners, and has been recognised for his screenplays from Cannes to Venice and San Sebastián. Finally, Swedish actor Stellan Skarsgård embodies the porous frontier between auteur cinema and blockbuster franchises: from Breaking the Waves, Melancholia and Joachim Trier's Sentimental Value to Thor, The Avengers, Chernobyl, Dune and Andor, his career illustrates how actors can move back and forth between intimate dramas and large scale entertainment without losing credibility in either.

Taken together, the jury's passports map a genuinely global body: South Korea, the United States, Ireland and Ethiopia, Belgium, China, Chile, Ivory Coast, Scotland and Sweden. Every inhabited continent is represented in some form except the Pacific, and the absence of Arab or Middle Eastern figures is striking in a year when the region is at the heart of geopolitical tensions that will inevitably echo along the Croisette.

This article is based on the official press release from the Festival de Cannes, publicly available biographies and industry reporting. Analytical sections reflect the author's own assessment of the regional context and its possible impact on the 2026 and 2027 editions of the festival.

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