

Six of the best: London film...

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Screening Room

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Six of the best: London film festivals

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Buzzing with film talent, London has almost a dozen festivals
- They are often a good starting point for movies to get wider recognition
- Charles Duke's "Caution, Wet Paint" premiered at Canary Wharf and then Cannes
- "The Screening Room" picks six of the best film festivals making creative waves

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By Anouk Lorie
For CNN

TEXT SIZE

LONDON, England (CNN) — As Hollywood stars such as Gwyneth Paltrow and Penelope Cruz grace the red carpet at the 52nd London Film Festival, the UK's capital city shows it has become a thriving, creative hub for filmmaking.



COURTESY OF BFI
American actor, singer and drag-performer Rue Paul at the 22nd Lesbian and Gay Film festival.

There are no fewer than 12 film festivals in London, ranging from the London Korean Film Festival to a films showcase from lesbian and gay directors.

"The Screening Room" takes a look at some of the festivals making waves in and around London.

Canary Wharf Film Festival (CWFF)

Since his film appeared at this little known London festival, director Charles Duke has gained prominence and his film was accepted at the Cannes Film Festival.

Duke shot his comedic short "Caution, Wet Paint" in just two days.

He had never been to film school and had never been taught to use a camera.

"It wasn't meant to be for a festival," Duke told CNN. But his sister convinced him to submit his short to CWFF. The film's quirky silent scenes portraying, amongst others, two Londoners fighting over a pint of milk, amused festival goers and critics, and later the judges at the prestigious Cannes festival.

"When Cannes accepted my film, I suddenly got full access to the film festival, including the benefit of services such as free lawyers," says Duke.

From there he obtained sponsorship for his next project — a follow-up to "Caution, Wet Paint," in which the same two Londoners get kidnapped by alien bottles of milk.

"London is a hub for film, especially in the short film category," says Duke.

"And I could not have done it without the CWFF who were willing to accept something completely different."

Canary Wharf Film Festival director Olivia Bellas says she was motivated to start the festival as she wanted to show the creative side of Canary Wharf, an area that is famed for being London's banking hub.

The annual festival, which takes place in the summer, has just celebrated its second anniversary and attracted films from as far afield as Australia and United States.

Raindance Film Festival

The ultimate indie cinematographic happening, Raindance Film Festival started in 1993 and just hosted its 16th edition this October.

Together with the British Independent Film Awards, the festival is brought to life each year by Raindance, an organization that offers support to independent filmmakers.

Raindance Film Festival describes itself as "too contemporary for most established stars," and cultivates a reputation for discovering new talent.

Leonardo DiCaprio had his first screening at the festival, at the age of 14, with the iconic movie "What's Eating Gilbert Grape."

Raindance say part of the magic of their festival is: "You can end up buying a stranger in the bar a drink only to realize they are the filmmaker of the film playing at the moment."

Rushes Soho Shorts Festival

Rushes Soho, a festival that takes place every summer for a week, is in its tenth consecutive festival year. A non-profit organization, Soho Rushes focuses on short films.

The festival was created in 1999 when a group of friends, inspired by Tropfest in Australia, conceived the idea "in a pub in Soho over a few pints of beer."

Famous names such as Dita von Teese and Michael Sheen, to name a few, have acted in movies shown at Rushes — often for free.

Past presenters have included actors Joseph Fiennes and Damian Lewis.

Awards at the festival include best documentary, animation, music video, broadcast design and newcomer.

Lesbian and Gay Film Festival

The Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, organized every year in March by the British Film Institute, has been in existence since 1977.

It is the third largest film festival in the UK, touring in almost 40 different UK locations after London, showing to an audience of approximately 250,000 people each year.

The festival was created to cater to the homosexual and transgender community, with most films addressing some of the issues faced by them.

"You won't get to see films like that anywhere else," says Claire O'Brien, BFI's spokeswoman, "It is precisely for that reason that our festival focuses on films impacting the lesbian and gay community as they are otherwise not catered for."

Portobello Film Festival

The Portobello Film Festival was created in 1996 as a "reaction to the moribund state of the British film industry, to provide a forum for new filmmakers and give exposure to movies on different formats."

Dubbed "London's biggest filmic free-for-all," by the capital's listings bible, Time Out magazine, the event takes each August.

Because the festival does not own its own cinema, it screens films in diverse venues like parks, theaters, clubs and bars. The festival's master classes give young filmmakers a chance to speak to movie insiders.

In 2000, the festival expanded abroad, screening films at Cannes, Macau and Venice.

Portobello festival is popular with celebrities such as Kelly Osborne and Courtney Love, who have attended the festival's screenings and premieres.

Korean Film Festival

The Korean Film Festival will start its third edition on November 6 at London's arts hub, the Barbican. The opening night movie will be Kimchi Western, "The Good, the Bad and the Weird," by director Kim Jee Woon, who will introduce the film.

The festival runs over nine days and will then move on the Liverpool for three extra days of screenings.

In addition to the new Korean films, the festival will also feature some Korean classics, such as "The Aimless Bullet" (1960). [E-mail to a friend](#) [Mix it](#) | [Share](#)

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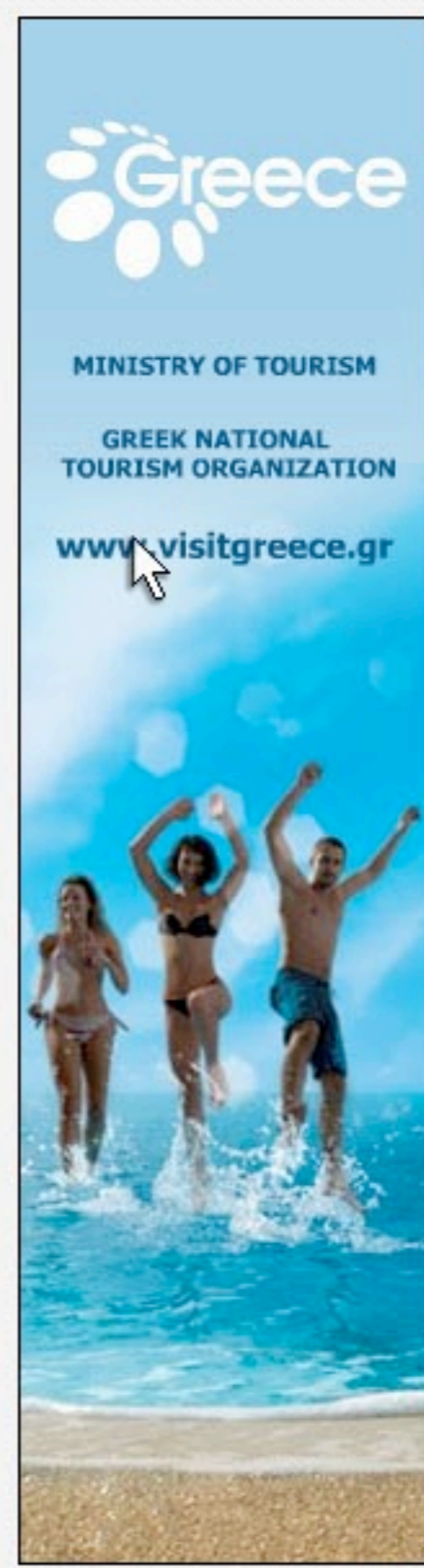
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