

Film News: Michael Haneke's 'Amour' Wins Top Prize at Cannes Festival

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CHICAGO – After receiving eight previous prizes at the Cannes Film Festival, German filmmaker Michael Haneke became the first person in history to win the Palme d'Or twice within a mere three-year period. Haneke snagged the top prize at Cannes for "Amour," a widely praised drama about an elderly couple whose love is challenged by the physical frailties of age.

At the May 27th award ceremony for the 65th annual Cannes Film Festival, Haneke was joined onstage by his film's two stars, the legendary French actor Jean-Louis Trintignant (whose performance in "Amour" marks his first onscreen appearance in nine years) and Emmanuelle Riva (of "Hiroshima Mon Amour" fame). In his acceptance speech, the director credited his two actors for being "the essence" of his film, while noting that "Amour" was "in part an illustration of the promise" that he and his wife made to one another. Haneke won the 2009 Palme d'Or for his Oscar-nominated, black and white period piece, "The White Ribbon."



Jean-Louis Trintignant and Emmanuelle Riva star in Michael Haneke's *Amour*, the Palme d'Or winner at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival.

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

Many of this year's winners were return guests at the festival. Matteo Garrone won his second Grand Prix award for "Reality," a satire on Reality TV that strikingly contrasts his previous Grand Prix winner, the gritty crime drama "Gomorrah." Though Mexican provocateur Carlos Reygadas' experimental picture, "Post tenebras lux," drew vastly more divisive reactions than his beloved 2007 prizewinner, "Silent Light," it still earned him the Best Director award. Six years after winning the Palme d'Or for his breakthrough Romanian drama, "4 Months, 3 weeks and 2 Days," Cristian Mungiu took home the screenplay award for "Beyond the Hills," a monestary-set drama about religious hysteria. Mungiu's two leading ladies, Cristina Flutur and Cosmina Stratan tied for Best Actress, while Mads Mikkelsen (best known to American audiences as the villain in "Casino Royale") won Best Actor for his portrayal of a man wrongly accused of pedophilia in Thomas Vinterberg's "The Hunt." Perhaps the biggest winner at the 2012 festival was Ken Loach, whose Jury Prize for "The Angel's Share" marked his twelfth accolade at Cannes (he won the Palme d'Or in 2006 for "The Wind That Shakes the Barley").

Spreading the wealth were Un Certain Regard prizes for Aida Begic's "Children of Sarajevo," Michel Franco's "Después de Lucia," and Gustave Kervern and Benoit Delépine's "Le Grand Soir." Emilie Dequenne (in Joachim Lafosse's "A Perdre La Raison") and Suzanne Clément (in Xavier Dolan's "Laurence Anyways") both won the Un Certain Regard award for Best Actress. Cinéfondation awarded its first prize to Taisia Igumentseva's "The Road To," second prize to Matthew James Reilly's "Abigail," and third prize to Miguel Angel Moulet's "The Hosts." After winning the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival, Benh Zeitlin's apocalyptic fantasy "Beasts of the Southern Wild" won the Caméra d'Or. In the short film category, L. Rezan Yesilbas' "Silent" won the Palme d'Or.

Every selection from America in the main competition went home empty-handed, including Wes Anderson's well-received comedy, "Moonrise Kingdom," Jeff Nichols' acclaimed drama "Mud," Andrew Dominik's timely satire "Killing Them Softly," John Hillcoat's star-studded crime thriller, "Lawless" and Lee Daniels' widely reviled drama, "The Paperboy." The most buzz-worthy title at the festival was Leos Carax's enormously ambitious oddity, "Holy Motors," which upstaged the latest work from auteurs such as Alain Resnais ("You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet!"), Walter Salles ("On the Road"), Jacques Audiard ("Rust and Bone") and Abbas Kiarostami ("Like Someone in Love"). And though David Cronenberg's "Cosmopolis" was met with faint praise, it earned its star, Robert Pattinson, the best reviews of his career.