

THE GATEKEEPERS Telluride Breaks

THE GATEKEEPERS – THE DAILY BEAST – September 4, 2012 – “Telluride Film Festival Kicks Off Oscar Season: Bill Murray, Ben Affleck & More,” features mention of THE GATEKEEPERS, by Marlow Stern.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/09/04/telluride-film-festival-kicks-off-oscar-season-bill-murray-ben-affleck-more.html>

Telluride Film Festival Kicks Off Oscar Season: Bill Murray, Ben Affleck & More

Sep 4, 2012 6:22 AM EDT

From Bill Murray as FDR to a crippled Marion Cotillard, the 39th Telluride Film Festival introduced many Oscar-worthy films and performances. Marlow Stern recaps the fest and talks to stars like Ben Affleck, Greta Gerwig, Gael García Bernal, and Murray.

Each year, a coterie of film lovers gathers in the idyllic mountains of Telluride, Colo., over Labor Day weekend for the [Telluride Film Festival](#). The fest, held in a spot nestled comfortably between Cannes and Toronto, has garnered a well-deserved reputation for serving as a starter pistol of sorts for awards season. Last year, for example, Oscar winners *The Artist*, *The Descendants*, and *A Separation* all made their U.S. premieres in Telluride, while previous awards darlings to premiere up in the thin air of the San Juan Mountains include *The King's Speech*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, and *Brokeback Mountain*.

What really sets the festival apart, however, is the relaxed vibe.

Since the film program isn't published until the night before it all kicks off, the fest is devoid of prying paparazzi and celebrity gossipmongers. Stars blend in seamlessly with the regulars and usually have their families in tow. You'll see [Jennifer Garner](#) strolling down Main Street with a baby carrier attached to her chest, flanked by her husband, Ben Affleck; or [Greta Gerwig](#) and Noah Baumbach throwing back cocktails and shooting the breeze with fans at the New Sheridan Bar following a screening of their film, *Frances Ha*.

The program is a lean, mean 25 films, which isn't too overwhelming, and since private donors—many of whom have been contributing to the Telluride Film Festival for years—largely fund the fest, it has managed to avoid the gaudy corporate takeover that's plagued Sundance.

And the setting is sublime. A rustic-chic silver-mining town of about 2,500 people, Telluride is surrounded on all sides by red-faced mountains. A gondola takes you up and down these mountains to the Chuck Jones Cinema, honoring the late Looney Tunes cartoonist (and Telluride regular). The views are extraordinary.

“There are tons of film festivals around the world, all of them different, and I’ve been going to them since I was a kid in Mexico,” actor [Gael García Bernal](#) told The Daily Beast. “I like being an audience member more than presenting a movie, and this is that kind of festival. It’s just a great place to see movies.”

The 39th annual Telluride Film Festival, which ran Aug. 31 to Sept. 3, offered fans plenty of Oscar bait.



The films 'Argo' (left) and 'Hyde Park on Hudson' (right) were both screened at the 39th annual Telluride Film Festival. (Claire Folger, Warner Bros. / AP Photo ; Nicola Dove / Focus Features)

The festival has garnered a well-deserved reputation for serving as a starter pistol of sorts for awards season.

Nobody seemed to have a single bad thing to say about [Argo](#), an ambitious, “based on a declassified true story” CIA thriller from director-star Ben Affleck, which looks like an early lock for a Best Picture Oscar nod. The movie, about a CIA exfiltration expert (Affleck) who’s tasked with extracting six U.S. foreign-service officials/hostages from Iran during the 1979 hostage crisis by having the gang pose as a film crew, is a deft mix of thriller, Hollywood satire, and historical

drama. Alan Arkin also provides an award-worthy turn as Lester Siegel, a sardonic, over-the-hill movie mogul who helps in the mission.

“I thought, ‘This is so crazy. If it weren’t true, you just couldn’t make this movie because it would be too ridiculous,’” Affleck told *The Daily Beast*. “That it was rooted in hard facts made it compelling, and Chris Terrio wrote a really smart screenplay that gave me the chance to weave together three different themes and three different worlds: the CIA, the Hollywood satire, and the Iran tensions.”

If there’s any justice in the world, actress Marion Cotillard will receive her second Oscar nomination—both in the French language, a true rarity—for her poignant turn as a killer-whale trainer who loses her legs in a horrific accident, and then falls for a moody, emotionally detached pugilist, played by Matthias Schoenaerts, in the drama ***Rust and Bone***. The film is helmed by acclaimed French filmmaker Jacques Audiard, who was robbed of a Best Foreign Film Oscar for the 2009 crime saga *A Prophet*. Perhaps the Academy will redeem itself at this year’s ceremony and honor this masterpiece.

In the Best Actor category, [Bill Murray](#) looks like a lock for an Oscar nod for his charming performance as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the picturesque costume drama ***Hyde Park on Hudson***. The film, which splits time between FDR’s affair with his fifth cousin, played by Laura Linney, and a much-ballyhooed visit to the commander-in-chief’s country estate by Great Britain’s King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on the eve of World War II, probably is a bit too *Masterpiece Theatre* for other major awards consideration, but the costumes and sets are divine.

“[FDR] had incredible will power,” said Murray. “It’s very challenging to play someone who’s an American icon. He’s a big guy.” He paused. “He’s on the dime!”

In addition to the aforementioned *Rust and Bone*, another gripping French drama about an infirm woman is ***Amour***, by Oscar-nominated Austrian filmmaker Michael Haneke (*The White Ribbon*). Winner of the Palme d’Or at this year’s Cannes Film Festival, the film follows an elderly couple in their eighties. When Anne (Emmanuelle Riva) suffers a stroke, her loving husband, Georges (Jean-Louis Trintignant), cares for her during her final days. Few films have ever approached old age and mortality with such heartbreaking honesty, and *Amour* should get some Oscar attention—perhaps even in the Best Picture and Best Actress categories. It is brilliant and utterly devastating.

Many critics have drawn comparisons between Noah Baumbach’s coming-of-age dramedy ***Frances Ha***, co-written by and starring indie “it” girl Greta Gerwig, and the HBO series *Girls*, since both focus on a Brooklyn hipster chick (Gerwig in *Ha*) struggling in life and love (and both feature actor Adam Driver). But Baumbach’s film, shot in gorgeous black-and-white—borrowing a page from Woody

Allen's *Manhattan*—is a cut above, offering a complex character study about a young woman in flux and a career-defining performance by Gerwig, who, with the right distributor behind her (the film currently lacks a distributor), could find herself in the Best Actress discussion.

While the Best Foreign Film Oscar category is notoriously unpredictable (translation: awful), Pablo Larrain's gripping Chilean drama **No**, about an ad executive (Gael García Bernal) who is summoned to develop a campaign to defeat cruel dictator Augusto Pinochet in Chile's 1988 referendum, should earn an Oscar nod. It's a masterful work.

"Mark my words: it will be required viewing in Latin American studies classes," Alexander Payne, director of *Sideways* and *The Descendants*, told The Daily Beast.

Other notable festival entries included Ken Burns's captivating documentary **The Central Park Five**, which examines the 1989 case of five black and Latino teens who were wrongfully accused of raping a jogger in Central Park. The film should earn a Best Documentary Oscar nod. **The Iceman**, about the notorious Mafia hitman Richard Kuklinski, who killed over 100 people, boasts a fantastic cast, including Michael Shannon as the titular killer, along with Winona Ryder, Chris Evans, Ray Liotta, and James Franco in a silly cameo. Sadly, the film amounts to far less than the sum of its parts and, despite a typically awesome, unhinged performance by Shannon, is rife with mob-movie clichés. Another Best Documentary Oscar contender is **The Gatekeepers**, an Israeli-intelligence drama about the Israel-Palestinian conflict. One film I'm sorry to have missed is Sarah Polley's personal documentary, **Stories We Tell**, about her family's secrets. I heard nothing but great things about it.

Next year, the Telluride Film Festival will expand from four days to five in honor of its 40th anniversary. For this writer, it can't come soon enough. Like [The Daily Beast on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#) for updates all day long.

Marlow Stern is the assistant culture editor of *Newsweek* and The Daily Beast and holds a master's degree from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. He has served in the editorial department of *Blender* magazine, and as an editor at *Amplifier Magazine* and *Manhattan Movie Magazine*.

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THE GATEKEEPERS – HITFIX.COM – September 2, 2012 – “Provocative and revealing 'Gatekeepers' argues futility of an eye for an eye,” features POSITIVE review, by Kristopher Tapely.

<http://www.hitfix.com/in-contention/provocative-and-revealing-gatekeepers-argues-against-futility-of-an-eye-for-an-eye>

Provocative and revealing 'Gatekeepers' argues futility of an eye for an eye

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PREMIERES OF THE FESTIVAL

By Kristopher Tapley SUNDAY, SEP 2, 2012 2:54 AM



"The Gatekeepers"

Credit: Sony Pictures Classics

TELLURIDE - Fewer movies are going to be as important and provocative at this year's [Telluride Film Festival](#) than [Dror Moreh's](#) "[The Gatekeepers](#)." The documentary filmmaker was granted an extraordinary amount of access to six former heads of Shin Bet, the ultra-secretive Israeli intelligence agency, and turned out a striking, candid assessment of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from those with the very power to dictate what can and cannot be divulged.

Along the way there are plenty of defensive exchanges regarding the organization's handling of terrorism and notions of morality in a situation seemingly lacking any sense of it, but ultimately there is a sense of weariness from the former agency chiefs and a desire to negotiate peace with their enemies. "We can sit down and I can see that you don't eat glass and you can see that I don't drink petrol," one of them -- who even goes so far as to compare the "cruel" Israeli occupation to Nazi Germany -- puts it.

Most intriguing, though, is the sense from these men that much of their work has been for naught. The equivalent would be to get a number of former CIA heads to admit on camera that the Cold War was a waste of time. It's pretty staggering stuff.

The film gives a thorough retelling of the tensions that have boiled over time and again since the Six-Day War of 1967, which led to the Israeli occupation of territories in Israel and the Gaza Strip. It serves as a history lesson from those who lived it, and provides an invaluable perspective on evolving methods of anti-terrorism while treading the philosophical waters of playing God and having the power to extinguish another life with the push of a button.

At this evening's annual Sony Pictures Classics dinner at La Marmotte, I found myself sitting next to Moreh and, with his film on my mind, had plenty to ask. He told me that, of course, the access was difficult and a glacial process, getting one former head to finally commit, then slowly reining in more. And even he was surprised at what he was able to capture.

"It was stunning," he said. "And I have met many Jews here at this festival who have come up to me and said, 'Thank you.' Many feel they can't speak up on this. They're afraid."

Indeed, it's such a liberal point of view that I don't think the film will face much opposition from this year's documentary feature committee. A journalist colleague wondered to me earlier in the fest whether the film's somewhat anti-Israel sheen could hurt it with a well-represented Jewish community within the Academy, but if there are more like those Moreh is meeting here in Telluride, perhaps that's not the case at all. Perhaps "The Gatekeepers" will be less a thorn than a breath of fresh air.

"The Gatekeepers" will move on to the Toronto and New York film festivals from here. Sony Pictures Classics will release it domestically later this year. Put it on your Best Documentary Feature shortlist. It's going to be a widely-discussed title.

THE GATEKEEPERS – HITFIX.COM – September 3, 2012 – “Wrapping up the 39th annual Telluride Film Festival,” features THE GATEKEEPERS mention, by Kristopher Tapley.

Wrapping up the 39th annual Telluride Film Festival
ANOTHER LOVELY SHOW TO START THE FALL FESTIVAL CIRCUIT
By Kristopher Tapley MONDAY, SEP 3, 2012 12:23 PM



Telluride Film Festival

Credit: Telluride Film Festival

TELLURIDE - Things are pretty much wrapping up at the 39th annual. Monday is generally a great time for catch-up, as the schedule is filled in with repeat showings. Unfortunately, I tend to leave on Monday afternoon each year, so I don't get to use the day productively. But nine-and-a-half movies over the three-day spread is good enough for me. (I won't knock the movie I walked out of. I'll come back to it at some point, as it's generated interesting split reactions.)

The festival this year was more in line with its former identity. A few years of Oscar bait titles -- "127 Hours," "Up in the Air," "The King's Speech," "Black Swan" -- caused an influx of press recently, but things have been more refined this year and last. But in particular, the whole thing was quite subdued this time around. It's the first Telluride I've attended where I didn't even do any interviews, which is also kind of in keeping with its former self. They've never really wanted a strong press presence here. But who knows what might happen next year as the fest celebrates its 40th anniversary with an extra day of programming?

The big media story was of course the sneak preview of Ben Affleck's "[Argo](#)." The film played extremely well and will likely do the same when it moves on to Toronto next week (especially given its Canada-as-hero elements). It's also [the first inarguable Oscar play of the season](#). Affleck's been around town all weekend but hasn't done any press, and won't do a lot at Toronto, either, apparently. There appears to be an effort to avoid over-saturation too far in advance of the release, and that's actually a relief.

Documentaries were a big hit at the festival this year. I didn't see Sarah Polley's "[Stories We Tell](#)," but more than a few have told me it's her best film yet. I did

catch ["The Central Park Five"](#) and ["The Gatekeepers,"](#) however, and both were sensational. Speaking of which, the Best Documentary Feature category rules have been a consistent topic of discussion with journalists and studio chiefs with docs in play. It's going to be an interesting year as the nomination process has been opened up as well as the fact that the entire Academy membership can vote on the winner. It really changes things from a strategy standpoint. And in the end, popularity will win the day.

I didn't find myself responding to Pablo Larraín's "No," which was surprising as it was a hit at Cannes and found a lot of champions here. I can't help but think that most are responding more to the story itself than the way it was told, however. Michael Winterbottom's ["Everyday"](#) also didn't click for me and seemed to be a wasted opportunity, given the time put into it. But those are really the only films that fell short on my list.

[Greta Gerwig could come out of the fest with a head of steam in "Frances Ha,"](#) but it's a tiny movie and an Oscar campaign could be tough. I was delighted to have enjoyed it as I had every expectation that I wouldn't. Meanwhile, the commercial prospects for ["The Iceman"](#) should get it a buyer that may want to try for a Michael Shannon Best Actor push, but [he really outshines his own film.](#) And finally, "Hyde Park on Hudson" seemed to garner a lot of forgiveness here, but for me, [it was dead on arrival.](#) The movie just doesn't work, has an awkward ick factor and is ultimately forgettable. And as one colleague put it, there are three presidents you just don't mess with: Washington, Lincoln and FDR. And this film doesn't paint the nicest portrait of FDR. I'm not saying anything is off limits, I'm just saying it's a hurdle if you're going to go there.

Other films that played include ["Ginger and Rosa,"](#) which some loved and some hated; ["The Act of Killing,"](#) a documentary that seemed to produce the strongest reactions of the fest (be them positive or negative); Ramin Bahrani's ["At Any Price,"](#) which was a head-scratcher for many who felt there had to be more there than is readily apparent; and ["Midnight's Children,"](#) the ambitious adaptation that most perceived as a noble failure. Again, I won't note which of those was my "half" movie.

And I think one of the hits of the fest, just anecdotally, was Palme d'Or winner ["Amour."](#) I'll talk about that film's awards trajectory a little more in today's Off the Carpet column.

Today will bring the annual Labor Day picnic with filmmakers on hand and, soon enough, the curtain will officially drop on the 39th annual [Telluride Film Festival.](#) The rain was a pest, particularly the cloud cover (seeing the Milky Way up here is just a sight to behold at night), but all in all, another delightful trip to this mountain hamlet.

Greg Ellwood will have a few things in the way of closure later, so watch for that. As for me, that's a wrap on the SHOW.

THE GATEKEEPERS – HOLLYWOOD ELSEWHERE – September 3, 2012 – “Jett’s Telluride,” features POSITIVE mention of THE GATEKEEPERS, by Jeffrey Wells.

http://hollywood-elsewhere.com/2012/09/jetts_telluride.php

Jett's Telluride

I wasn't initially enthusiastic about visiting the Telluride Film Festival. Concerns about work and other problems made it difficult to settle down about flying to a secluded canyon town, seven hours southwest of Denver, to watch movies for three days that only included one "sneak" (which turned out to be *Argo*). I couldn't understand why hundreds of people from around the world would put up with 45 minutes of air-pocket turbulence in a tiny plane for this festival. But then I arrived.



Telluride doesn't feel like Sundance or Toronto. There aren't any flashing cameras, red carpets or lavish parties; just flocks of rich white people in North Face clothing enjoying themselves. It's also beautiful and serene every time you walk out of a theater and gaze at the arching peaks a mile or so away. That said, I saw ten movies, and came out **really bananas** for only five.

I had a wonderful time with **Noah Baumbach's** *Frances Ha* and **Ziad Douieri's** *The Attack*, but for completely different reasons. I didn't know anything about Douieri, and a critic we spoke to confided that he sensed in *Frances Ha* a slightly possessive boyfriend element, as Baumbach and star **Greta Gerwig** are a couple. But that didn't materialize, and Gerwig's lead performance felt like the most genuine I was ever going to see from her -- it was perfect.

Frances Ha has a floating Brooklyn mumblecore pace and vibe, and is about a 27-year old dancer (Gerwig) who is lost when her best friend Sophie (**[Mickey Sumner](#)**, daughter of **Sting** and **Trudie Styler**), falls in with a rich boyfriend.

You can't help but compare to HBO *Girls*, but it's not that at all. It's not about gross, uncomfortable-to-watch-sex; Baumbach already accomplished that with *Greenberg*. The writing is sublime, really tight and filled with pockets of hilarious improvised dialogue. The whole house was giggling and adoring Gerwig despite dealing with a 20-minute delay when the film began without the center dialogue track.

The Attack, on the other hand, hits you in the gut and opens you up to perhaps the most heartbreaking story you could imagine, which is tied to the fundamental dynamic behind the Israeli-Palestinian struggle. Perhaps most affecting about the film was Douieri's pre-film speech about how he almost lost confidence in himself during fundraising and pre-production. Knowing this and following this story of an Arab-born Tel Aviv surgeon trying to find out why his wife became a suicide bomber made this film, for me, a real triumph.

Dror Moreh's *The Gatekeepers*: A riveting documentary about Israel's anti-terrorism organization, [Shin Bet](#), told by former directors of the program over the last 40-odd years. It's amazing the kind of access Moreh got with this documentary as it really sheds light on how even the biggest war hawks in Israel's government feel how assassinations are ultimately pointless and/or self-defeating

Pablo Larrain's *No*: A great true story about how an influential advertising campaign led to the ouster of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet in 1988. But Larrain's decision to use a 1983-era video camera (or a simulation of same) to convey the atmosphere of the times and to blend with 1988 ads and newscasts was, I think, risky. It got in the way. While *No* provides a compelling story, it would be seen by many as an even greater film if it had been shot with top equipment.

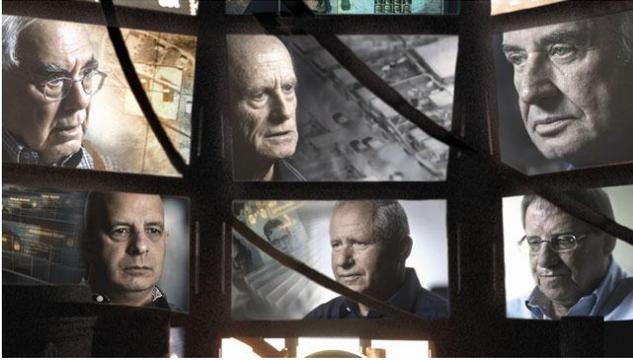
Ben Affleck's *Argo*: This was a really tight Hollywood thriller with a kick-ass cast that blended nicely with the Arab-esque theme of this year's festival. As everyone else points out, the film really takes you home during the final 20 minutes. Affleck is getting better as a director.

THE GATEKEEPERS – THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER – August 31, 2012 –
“The Gatekeepers: Telluride Review,” features POSITIVE review by Todd
McCarthy.

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/gatekeepers-telluride-review-367230>

The Gatekeepers: Telluride Review

5:00 PM PDT 8/31/2012 by Todd McCarthy



The Bottom Line

A revelatory documentary about Israel's Shin Bet security agency told from the inside.

Venue

Telluride Film Festival

Director

Dror Moreh

Director Dror Moreh's documentary tells the story of Israel's Shin Bet security agency with an inside perspective.

You can scarcely believe what you're hearing and seeing at first: Six former heads of the Shin Bet, Israel's historically secretive internal intelligence agency, telling stories out of school about secret operations, the cultivation of informers, interrogation techniques, targeted assassinations, successes and failures and the dangers posed by the Israeli far-right. The most senior of them, who believes that the future is “bleak,” ends by lamenting that the nation's army is now “a brutal occupation force that is similar to the Germans in World War II.” In other words, this is one hot, provocative, revelatory and astonishing documentary, one sure to provoke enthralled interest and controversy wherever it is shown worldwide. After initial festival exposure at Telluride, Toronto and New York, Sony Classics will release the film in the United States later in the year.

Given that the agency's motto is “The Unseen Shield” and that its only publicly known member at any given moment is its director, of whom there have 13 over the course of Israel's history, one immediate question is: How is it that all these men jointly decided to spill the beans about so much concerning the organization's operations and methods? A likely answer is that they are alarmed about where things are headed. It's probably no coincidence that four of them — **Ami Ayalon, Avraham Shalom, Yaakov Peri and Carmi Gillon** — jointly gave an interview in 2003 warning of “catastrophe” unless a two-state solution to the Palestinian issue was implemented, as the inevitable alternative would be a form of apartheid. They're no happier today.

Cinematographer-turned-director **Dror Moreh** leaves such sentiments for the very end, as he uses the frank and informed views of his seen-it-all participants to assemble a riveting history of a singular organization. Criticized for borderline torture techniques at times and blamed for not preventing the assassination of Prime Minister **Yitzhak Rabin** in 1995, the Shin Bet, ideological issues aside, seems overall to have done an impressive job, especially given that it serves a democracy, of obtaining information and thwarting what is estimated as 90 per cent of attempted terrorist attacks under circumstances as challenging as any in the world.

A key early passage puts the viewer in the position of spymaster. As overhead black-and-white surveillance coverage shows a vehicle allegedly containing terrorists making its way through urban streets, pertinent questions are posed before a decision to attack is made: Do we know who's on board and how many there are? How much time do we have? Will there be any collateral damage? Then a silent explosion is witnessed. A button has been pushed. People are dead. Someone played God.

The historical panorama begins in the aftermath of the Six Day War in 1967, when one million Palestinians came under Israeli control in the West Bank, Gaza and the old city of Jerusalem. Israel quickly took a census, which enabled it to determine who and where everyone was, laying the basis for an excellent list of potential informers. Shin Bet agents were sent in to live among the Palestinians, learned Arabic so well they could tell when code or other evasions were being used and developed a staggering network of agents and prisoners with information.

Mostly black-and-white newsreel footage provides vivid images of Palestinian towns and settlements at the time, of Israeli soldiers rounding up detainees and of the forbidding former Turkish prison in Jerusalem where allegedly "moderate" forms of physical duress kept the intelligence flowing. Even tough old bird Shalom, who headed the agency from 1980-86, adamantly favored a two-state solution from early on, although he was done in when, under his watch, two terrorists were killed by Israeli agents in the wake of a bus hijacking.

Such incidents occasion debates about the legality and morality of killing, both to prevent and punish terrorism and, in a political sense, whether the Shin Bet operated on its own or at the direction of the prime minister. Through it all, the former agency chiefs, who also include **Yuval Diskin** and **Avi Dichter**, evince a profound awareness of these issues but, more than that, an enlightened pragmatism that, in such a job, must no doubt be applied everyday.

The Shin Bet began showing its weaknesses with the First Intifada in the late 1980s, which caught it unawares, the beginnings of bus bombings and other atrocities, the emergence of the more extreme Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements, which were much tougher to infiltrate than Fatah, and most of all

with Rabin's murder, which revealed the threat posed by the Israeli far-right. One fascinating passage describes how the Shin Bet managed to catch right-wingers who were about to blow up 250 Arabs and Palestinians in buses in Jerusalem as well as to bomb the Dome of the Rock, an act which, one says, would have brought all of Islam down upon Israel.

The agency emerged from all this turmoil by shifting its priorities from field operations to hi-tech expertise, which has paid great dividends in fighting terrorism. An amazing interlude describes the 1996 assassination via cell phone of the Shin Bet's number one most wanted at the time, Palestinian bomb maker Yahya Ayyash, while another describes how in 2003 it missed, out of government timidity, nailing about a dozen top terrorists in a single action.

Still, for all the exploits and moments of success, the prevailing tone at the end is one of near-despair over the future of Israel on the part of knowledgeable patriots who have spent their lives manning the ramparts. The climactic comments of all six participants lament weak-willed leadership, an Israel that's become a "police state," and a point at which "We've become...cruel."

Ayalon, who also served as command-in-chief of the navy and member of the Knesset and comes off as the most intellectually exacting of all the participants, sums it up this way: "The tragedy of Israel's public security debate is that we don't realize that we face a frustrating situation, in which we win every battle, but we lose the war."

Venue: Telluride, Toronto, New York Film Festivals

Distribution: Sony Pictures Classics

Production: Dror Moreh Prods., Les Films du Poisson, Cinephil, Wild Heart Prods.

Director: Dror Moreh

With: Yuval Diskin, Avraham Shalom, Avi Dichter, Yaakov Peri, Carmi Gilon, Ami Ayalon

96 minutes

THE GATEKEEPERS – THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER – September 3, 2012 – "Telluride 2012: 'Argo,' 'The Gatekeepers' and 'Frances Ha' Among Todd McCarthy's Standouts," features THE GATEKEEPERS mention by Todd McCarthy.

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/telluride-2012-argo-gatekeepers-frances-ha-367628>

Telluride 2012: 'Argo,' 'The Gatekeepers' and 'Frances Ha' Among Todd McCarthy's Standouts

3:56 PM PDT 9/3/2012 by Todd McCarthy



THR's chief film critic looks back at this year's crop of films at this year's balanced fest.

Along with the overlapping Venice Film Festival, the Telluride Film Festival annually provides the first sample of what's in store for the big autumn film season. With its four-day duration over Labor Day weekend and small town setting, Telluride is far more selective than most festivals, which means that almost everything you see, from new films to old, American and foreign, will be worth seeing.

This year was no exception, as a couple of new heavy hitters mixed with some very fine American independents and strong foreign entries to create a festival of exceptional balance.

[TELLURIDE REVIEW: Argo](#)

On the high-profile side, **Ben Affleck's** *Argo* delivers all the goods: A first-rate political thriller, it's intelligent, commercial, surprisingly funny, visually rich and, unfortunately, timely.

An even more hot-button political film that fired up everyone who saw it is **Dror Moreh's** extraordinary documentary *The Gatekeepers*, in which six former heads of Israel's Shin Bet intelligence agency speak with extraordinary bluntness about the country's past and present. Sony Pictures Classics isn't planning to release the film until next year, but this is a work of exceptional urgency that inspired more excited and passionate talk than anything else at Telluride.

On the indie front, **Noah Baumbach's** *Frances Ha*, co-written by and starring **Greta Gerwig**, was an undisputed success, its serio-comic buoyancy and black-and white images of New York (and, briefly, Paris and Sacramento) providing a wonderful tonic.

[**STORY: Telluride 2012: Fun But Light 'Hyde Park on Hudson' Faces Uphill Climb With Academy**](#)

There was unconditional praise for **Elle Fanning's** remarkable performance in **Sally Potter's** very fine *Ginger & Rosa* as a teenager in 1962 London beset with concern over the A-bomb threat and disarray with her parents and best friend. Also widely and deeply admired was **Sarah Polley's** distinctive personal documentary *Stories We Tell*.

Roger Michell's *Hyde Park on Hudson* is a genial, middleweight divertissement highlighted by **Bill Murray's** enjoyable turn as FDR. Among the other English-language features, there was appreciation for **Ramin Bahrani's** *At Any Price* with **Dennis Quaid** and **Zac Efron** as well as for **Ariel Vromen's** violent hit man drama *The Iceman* starring **Michael Shannon**. **Michael Winterbottom's** *Everyday*, a drama about a Norfolk family shot in installments over a five-year period, has points of interest but is dramatically flat.

[**STORY: Telluride 2012: Greta Gerwig Sheds Tears of Joy at World Premiere of Noah Baumbach's 'Frances Ha'**](#)

Ziad Doueiri's *The Attack* is a potent and grim personal drama about Palestinian terrorism, **Deepa Mehta's** adaptation of **Salman Rushdie's** *Midnight Children* proved a mixed bag, and other new foreign films turning up in Telluride were **Tullio Giordana's** *Piazza Fontana*, female Saudi director **Haifaa Al Mansour's** *Wajda* and **Xavier Giannoli's** *Superstar*.

THE GATEKEEPERS – INDIEWIRE – September 2, 2012 – “Telluride Review: How Israeli Intelligence Doc 'Gatekeepers' Appeals to Both Israeli and Palestinian Concerns,” features POSITIVE review by Eric Kohn.

<http://www.indiewire.com/article/telluride-review-how-the-israeli-intelligence-doc-gatekeepers-appeals-to-both-israeli-and-palestinian-concerns>

Telluride Review: How Israeli Intelligence Doc 'Gatekeepers' Appeals to Both Israeli and Palestinian Concerns



"The Gatekeepers."SPC

"The Gatekeepers," a startling exposé of Israeli intelligence agency Shin Bet, delivers an unequivocal indictment. The handful of former Shin Bet heads who deliver candid accounts of their reasoning for various destructive assaults in the

constant horn-locking with their Palestinian neighbors initially come across as unsympathetic war-mongers. However, director Dror Moreh allows the movie to exclusively unfold through their voices, humanizing them to the point where their logic and humanity fall into distinct categories. For every shocking justification of murder, there's another moment where they confess frustration and regret, resulting in a refreshingly even-handed portrait.

As an introductory title card positions the Shin Bet interviews as an exceedingly rare opportunity to hear about the inner workings of Israeli military action, "The Gatekeepers" settles into a grim account of the country's history in the wake of the 1967 war. Early on, it's clear that the organization's function was derailed by its drive to engage the Palestinians in an antagonistic struggle. "Luckily for us, terrorism increased," admits one former Shin Bet head with the eerie semblance of a chuckle. Another puts it bluntly: "We wanted security and got more terrorism."

Among the interview subjects, Yuval Diskin, the head of the organization until 2011, brings the freshest memories of the experience and thus the most unsettling clarity to the discussion. "Politicians prefer binary options," he says, explaining the rash of bombings intended for terrorist subjects that often leave countless innocents dead. Those with greater distance from the job come across as unsettlingly pragmatic about the task at hand. "With terrorism, there are no morals," says Carmi Gillon, a Shin Bet leader in the mid-nineties. But even he assails the organization for acts of war that use terrorism as an excuse to assert power over a weaker minority.

A feature-length argument, "The Gatekeepers" reaches a turning point by spending an extensive period recounting the national ire over the Oslo Accords and eventual assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. Following the dissolution of a dialogue with Yasser Arafat, Shin Bet was given no precise mandate to shift its knee-jerk impulses. Moreh finds the organization trapped in a mortifying quagmire: Retaliate or face retaliation. While keeping the country safe, they also further the notion that wartime engagement is the only continuing solution to conflict in the Middle East.

As "The Gatekeepers" steadily works its way into modern times, Moreh cuts between shocking POV shots of spyplanes taking out unsuspecting vehicles and homes; by the time the images of suicide bombings appear onscreen, the scale of death on both sides comes across as equally grotesque permanence. The Shin Bet leaders are capable of justifying their job while decrying the ethical conundrums it constantly raises. Avraham Shalom, the Shin Bet head in the 1980s, puts it best: "When you retire, you become a bit of leftist."

Since none of the subjects currently hold office (Yoram Cohen, not in the film, currently runs Shin Bet) allows them the capacity to assail the institution without falling back on political rhetoric. Each of them has the capacity to recall a precise

moment in Israel's history by way of its belligerent stances, striking a tone that will have some viewers nodding their heads even as others are outraged.

Because it never stretches beyond its small group of interviewees, "The Gatekeepers" retains a closeness with its subjects that's more conversational than purely journalistic. Moreh uses his subjects to express a contradiction at the root of all military processes. Even if they're trapped by their testimonies, they never deliver an alternative. "The Gatekeepers" is thus both a critical investigation into misguided battlefield tactics and a reluctant acknowledgement of occupational hazards at their ugliest.

Criticwire grade: A-

HOW WILL IT PLAY? Sony Pictures Classics has picked up "The Gatekeepers" and will likely campaign for it to receive an Oscar nomination. The controversial subject matter is bound to generate a dialogue that will help the film in limited release; meanwhile, it has premiered at Telluride and next stops in Toronto and New York, where its profile is bound to expand.

THE GATEKEEPERS – LA TIMES – August 31, 2012 -- At Telluride fest, two films cast grim eye on Mideast," features THE GATEKEEPERS mention, by John Horn.

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/moviesnow/la-et-mn-telluride-film-festival-gatekeepers-israel-movie,0,6829963.story>

At Telluride fest, two films cast grim eye on Mideast



An image from "The Gatekeepers." (Courtesy Telluride Film Festival)

By John Horn

August 31, 2012, 8:15 p.m.

TELLURIDE, Colo. -- This mountain resort is literally half a world away from the Middle East, but Israeli-Arab relations were at the top of the agenda at the town's film festival Friday. Two of the first features — one a documentary, the other a drama — painted a very bleak picture of the prospects for a lasting peace in the region.

While Ben Affleck's "Argo," in which the CIA rescues six Americans in hiding during the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis, was playing to festival patrons in a theater up the mountain from the ski resort town, audiences down in the city were watching the documentary "The Gatekeepers" and the drama "The Attack." And if "Argo" made audiences feel that sometimes-perilous situations can yield hopeful outcomes, the latter two films were far less upbeat.

"The Attack," directed by Ziad Doueiri ("West Beirut") and making its world premiere in Telluride, is a Lebanese-French film about successful Arab surgeon Amin Jaafari (Ali Suliman) working in a Tel Aviv hospital. When his emergency room is filled with the victims of a suicide bomber, Jaafari discovers that one of

the casualties is his wife, Siham (Reymond Amsalem). But she might not have been an innocent bystander: The authorities believe that Siham was actually the bomber, forcing Amin to reexamine his marriage and privileged status.

Desperate to understand how and why his wife came to lead a double life, Amin travels to Nablus, a Palestinian city in the West Bank where Siham has become an instant martyr. “No child is completely safe if he has no country,” Amin is told of his wife’s motives. As he meets with clerics who may have shaped his wife’s militancy, the doctor’s own consideration of the conflict is left in tatters. How did a woman who couldn’t hurt a fly turn into a “fundamentalist monster,” he asks at one point. The answers are all around, the movie suggests, but only to those who want to look deeply enough to see them.

“The Gatekeepers” isn’t nearly as subtle. The documentary, which made its North American premiere at Telluride and is directed by Dror Moreh, is based on interviews with six former leaders of Shin Bet, Israel’s security organization. Using reenactments, videos from drones and other cinematic tricks, the movie chronicles Shin Bet’s tactics, which range from computer-based intelligence gathering to interrogation techniques bordering on torture.

But the techniques aren’t the film’s focus; it’s their ethical price, and the question of whether peace can be created through violence. “In the war against terror,” one of the Shin Bet heads says, “forget about morality.” But the former intelligence chiefs haven’t actually done that at all. In their interviews, they all either renounce or deeply question not only their own deeds but Israel’s larger actions, including the occupations and settlements. “When you retire,” one of them says, “you become a bit of a leftist.”

At the end of the movie, one of the former leaders of the organization even compares the country’s conduct toward Palestinians with the Germans’ treatment of Poles, Belgians, Czechs and the Dutch during World War II. “We’ve become cruel,” former Shin Bet leader Avraham Sharon says. “The future is bleak.”

THE GATEKEEPERS – LA TIMES – September 3, 2012 – “Telluride festival: 'Argo,' 'The Gatekeepers' start Oscars talk,” features THE GATEKEEPERS mention, by John Horn.
<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/moviesnow/la-et-mn-telluride-film-festival-20120904,0,5472541.story?track=rss>

Telluride festival: 'Argo,' 'The Gatekeepers' start Oscars talk

Ben Affleck's 'Argo' and Dror Moreh's Shin Bet documentary 'The Gatekeepers' get early awards attention. Telluride also features foreign-language contenders.



John Goodman, Alan Arkin and Ben Affleck star in "Argo." (Claire Folger / Warner Bros.)

By John Horn, Los Angeles Times
September 3, 2012, 7:22 p.m.

TELLURIDE, Colo. — Two years ago, a prominent Oscar voter left the Telluride Film Festival's world premiere screening of "The King's Speech" and said with certainty that the film would be shortlisted for best picture. At the festival this past weekend, that same voter issued a new prediction: Ben Affleck's "Argo" will be among the finalists for the top Academy Award.

The Telluride festival, which concluded its 39th annual installment on Monday, prides itself on eccentric programming (among the offerings was the nearly three-hour Russian film "Stalker" from 1979) and against-the-grain tributes (the 2012 actor award went to Denmark's Mads Mikkelsen). But in recent years the Labor Day weekend gathering has become something of a herald of awards season success.

In addition to booking the best picture winner "King's Speech," Telluride programmers over the last few festivals have scheduled the world or North American premieres of "Slumdog Millionaire," "The Artist," "The Descendants," "Black Swan" and "A Separation," all of which either won or were nominated for prominent Academy Awards.

It's a record the festival feels conflicted about, as Telluride officials would rather their lineup be more focused on surprises than trophies. "I worry about the time when we don't have 25 Oscar nominations for films playing at the festival," said Gary Meyer, who with Tom Luddy and Julie Huntsinger directs the festival. "It's not our purpose in life."

In this year's schedule, the programmers partially may have achieved their desire. Though "Argo," a story about the 1980 rescue of State Department employees hiding in Iran during the hostage crisis, will leave the mountain resort town with tremendous momentum heading into its Oct. 12 release, the festival did not clarify a clouded awards picture.

In large measure, that's a reflection of the movies Telluride couldn't play, mostly because they weren't finished. Meyer said the festival would have loved to consider Ang Lee's "Life of Pi" and Steven Spielberg's "Lincoln," but neither film was completed, the same as with Sacha Gervasi's "Hitchcock," which hasn't yet been added to the 2012 release calendar.

Concerned that the makers of Paul Thomas Anderson's "The Master" had held too many sneak previews around the country, Telluride programmers declined to invite that film, and they also refused to book the sex surrogate story "The Sessions," which had played in January's Sundance Film Festival.

A number of potentially contending films will be shown at the Toronto International Film Festival, which opens Thursday and has screened six of the last seven best picture winners. The upcoming Toronto titles include, in addition to "Argo," "The Master" and "The Sessions," David O. Russell's "Silver Linings Playbook" and "Cloud Atlas," from directors Lana and Andy Wachowski and Tom Tykwer.

The Telluride slate elevated a number of distinct individual performances, primarily Bill Murray as Franklin Delano Roosevelt in "Hyde Park on Hudson," a Telluride world premiere, and Greta Gerwig as a 27-year-old New Yorker trying to make sense of her life in "Frances Ha," which also had never been shown before Telluride.

Murray said playing FDR was scary but that he rarely has felt so satisfied by a performance. "It's like a carpenter who's building a chair — you know when you nailed it," Murray said in an interview. "And this one is going to last."

Gerwig co-wrote the script for "Frances Ha" with her boyfriend Noah Baumbach ("The Squid and the Whale"), who directed the black-and-white film. Frances calls herself "undateable" but she's one of the most appealing characters of any film in Telluride.

"I'm gonna start crying again if I talk about it," Gerwig said after the film's first screening. "I've never had a happier experience making anything."

And as it has in the past, Telluride showcased some of the year's most promising foreign-language films, including France's "Rust & Bone," Austria's "Amour," Germany's "Barbara," Denmark's "A Royal Affair," Chile's "No," Lebanon's "The Attack" and the first movie directed in Saudi Arabia by a woman, "Wadjda."

But perhaps the most interesting Oscar discussion surrounds "The Gatekeepers," a feature documentary that raises disturbing questions about the tactics and morality of Shin Bet, Israel's internal security apparatus.

Members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the organization that awards the Oscars, have often looked kindly on films chronicling the plight of Israel and Jews, but "The Gatekeepers" is an indictment of the country's policies.

"This is a tough, tough film," director Dror Moreh said before the film's North American premiere in Telluride. "But I believe films can make a change."

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THE GATEKEEPERS – THE NEW YORK TIMES – “Film Festival With Truths to Tell,” features mention of THE GATEKEEPERS, by AO Scott.

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/04/movies/four-days-of-films-at-telluride.html?_r=1

Film Festival With Truths to Tell

By [A. O. SCOTT](#)

TELLURIDE, Colo. — A film festival held almost 9,000 feet above sea level on a holiday weekend may not be the likeliest setting for philosophical speculation, but for the past four days the [Telluride Film Festival](#) has offered something like a seminar on the nature of truth. In an age of reality television, journalistic fakery and political mendacity everyone knows that words and images can distort and mislead. And film is a particularly unstable medium, alluring us with a promise of honesty while it feeds us ever more elaborate fantasies.

So we could start our local inquiry with movies that, while clearly fictional, have that elusive, bracing feeling of realness. A movie like [Jacques Audiard](#)'s tough

and tender melodrama [“Rust and Bone,”](#) with its workaday French setting and its restless hand-held camera. Or [Noah Baumbach’s “Frances Ha,”](#) a fleet-footed, black-and-white New York story about a young woman in crisis (Greta Gerwig, Mr. Baumbach’s companion and co-writer) that turns self-consciousness into an exalted form of authenticity. Or [Michael Haneke’s “Amour,”](#) a work of impeccable formal control that captures, remorselessly but also tenderly, the agony of a long-married couple facing death.

Or else we might start with movies that are obviously about real people and events and just as obviously works of entertaining make-believe. In Roger Michell’s [“Hyde Park on Hudson,”](#) for example, the role of Franklin D. Roosevelt is played by [Bill Murray](#), who noted at a post-screening Q. and A. session Saturday that he had previously been asked only to portray presidents in comedy sketches, and that Roosevelt was a very big historical deal. “He’s on the dime,” Mr. Murray reminded the audience. “You know what a dime is, right?” he asked Mr. Michell, who is British but who nonetheless seemed to have some notion.

Speaking of dimes, “Hyde Park on Hudson” is perhaps a bit shiny and thin, emphasizing Roosevelt’s playful charm and his sexual appetites rather than his political achievements. Taking place in and around his mother’s rural New York estate, the film explores his relationship with Daisy Suckley (Laura Linney), a distant cousin of Roosevelt’s who was also his lover, during a visit in 1939 from the king and queen of England (Samuel West and Olivia Colman). Those two — the characters, not the actors — are the same stuttering Bertie and supportive Elizabeth who popped up on Telluride screens two years ago in “The King’s Speech” and went on to win a bunch of Academy Awards. But we are philosophizing here, not buzzing about prizes. So we will refrain from handicapping the Oscar chances of [Ben Affleck’s “Argo,”](#) which arrived in Telluride as a semi-surprise sneak preview and provided a jolt of swift and slick entertainment. We will note, though, that Mr. Affleck’s film, in which he plays a C.I.A. operative trying to rescue Americans trapped in revolutionary Iran, is very much rooted in actual events. Like “Hyde Park on Hudson” it looks at a well-known story (in this case the seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran in 1979) from a new angle.

Both movies take advantage of information that was made public years after the fact, and they use the standard tools of period filmmaking to reopen and refresh the past. The German film “Barbara” (winner of the top prize in Berlin this year) and “No,” from Chile, are more modest with respect to production design but in other ways more ambitious than their American counterparts, revisiting painful moments from recent history and trying to drag suppressed or dissembled truths into the light. [“Barbara,”](#) directed by Christian Petzold, is a quiet, tense drama set in East Germany in 1980 and stars the remarkable Nina Hoss as a doctor struggling to preserve a sense of autonomy and dignity in a society predicated on lies, treachery and paranoia. Pablo Larraín’s “No” takes place later in that same decade, as Chile begins its transition from dictatorship to democracy.

“The Central Park Five,” directed by Ken Burns, his daughter Sarah and her husband, David McMahon, looks at the perversion of justice and the suppression of truth closer to home. It is a concise, informative and upsetting chronicle of a crime — the [rape and beating of a jogger in Central Park](#) in 1989 — that shocked New York and led to the erroneous conviction of five teenagers, all of whom are interviewed extensively in the film. What happened to them is infuriating, but the fact that they are now free and willing to tell their stories offers at least a small measure of comfort to the viewer. No such reassurance can be found in Joshua Oppenheimer’s [“Act of Killing.”](#) even though the atrocities it contemplates — the slaughter of a million Indonesians following the military coup in that country in 1965 — happened relatively long ago. Mr. Oppenheimer visits some of the perpetrators of those killings, and finds them not only unrepentant but positively giddy about what they had done. They set about reconstructing their murders for the camera, sometimes using elaborate sets and costumes and cinematic effects, with an openness and relish that sometimes inspires queasy, horrified laughter.

Liz Garbus’s “Love, Marilyn” uses recently discovered letters and notebooks to show sides of Marilyn Monroe’s personality obscured behind the tragic dazzle of her public persona. Ms. Garbus boldly puts Monroe’s words into the mouths of well-known actresses (including Uma Thurman, Viola Davis, Lindsay Lohan and Glenn Close) who appear on screen, blending their own glamour with hers. Friends and acquaintances of Monroe’s are also “played” by familiar movie faces — Adrien Brody is Truman Capote; David Strathairn is Arthur Miller — so that the film becomes a heady cocktail of journalistic rigor and show business flair, a blend that seems, in the end, just right for its blazingly famous, endlessly enigmatic subject.

“Stories We Tell,” a remarkable movie by the Canadian actress and filmmaker Sarah Polley, blends factual inquiry and something else — not quite fiction, but also not really documentary — to astonishing effect. I hesitate to say too much, since the movie is built around a series of formal and substantive revelations that must be seen to be believed. The story Ms. Polley has to tell is intensely personal, and in trying to verify some elusive facts about her mother (an actress who died in 1987) she comes close to unraveling her own sense of identity. She may not be who she thought she was, and “Stories We Tell” is decidedly not what it seems, at first, to be.

But it is also decidedly not a movie that gives up on or relativizes away the idea of truth, however complex and strange the truth turns out to be. And the best documentary in Telluride this year is also the most bluntly honest. It is [“The Gatekeepers.”](#) which consists mostly of the director Dror Moreh’s interviews with six former heads of Shin Bet, Israel’s domestic security service. These men matter-of-factly talk about their work over the past decades, work that encompasses torture, spying and assassination and that includes some

devastating failures of intelligence. They also speak frankly about the strategic and political consequences of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in ways that are unlikely to please or reassure anyone with settled opinions about the Middle East. "The Gatekeepers" is a reminder that sometimes the truth hurts.

THE GATEKEEPERS – THOMPSON ON HOLLYWOOD – September 2, 2012 – "Telluride Brody Diary 2: A Rocky Mountain Brunch, A Wedding and Affleck's 'Argo'," features THE GATEKEEPERS Mention by Meredith Brody.
http://blogs.indiewire.com/thompsononhollywood/telluride-brody-diary-2-a-rocky-mountain-brunch-a-wedding-and-afflecks-argo?utm_source=iContact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Thompson%20on%20Hollywood&utm_content=&page=1#blogPostHeaderPanel

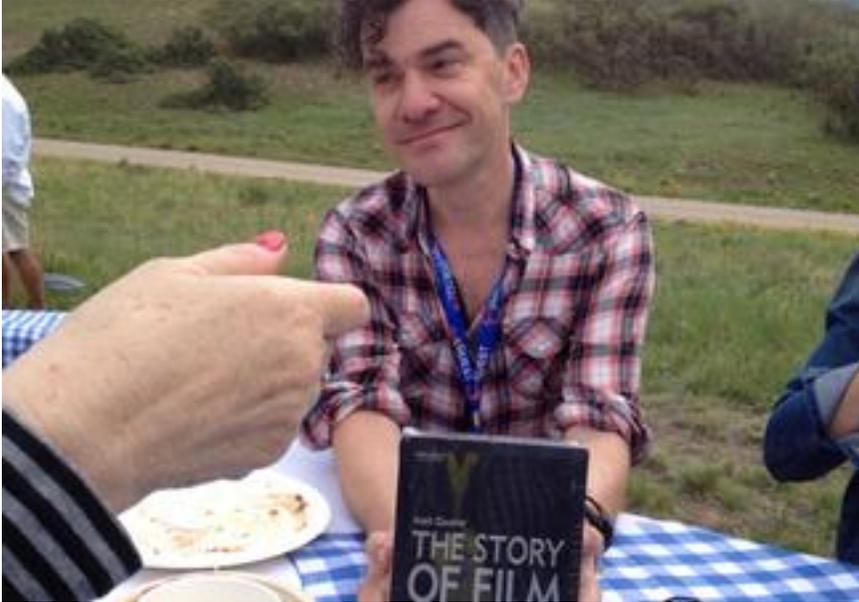
Telluride Brody Diary 2: A Rocky Mountain Brunch, A Wedding and Affleck's 'Argo'

BY MEREDITH BRODY

SEPTEMBER 2, 2012 4:28 PM



Ton Luddy, Colleen Camp, Julie Huntsinger at Patron's Brunch



Mark Cousins

In retrospect, my first full film festival day at Telluride, though utterly delightful, sounds more like I'm attending a food festival than a film one.

I'm in line by 9:30 a.m. to get on a bus that hauls us up high in the Rockies to attend the Patron's Brunch, whose glorious mountain-meadow setting and bountiful buffet I look forward to all year. Alice Waters, co-director Tom Luddy's old friend and colleague – they drew the name for the famed Chez Panisse from the Marcel Pagnol films that Tom was projecting in 16mm at their dinner parties – is responsible for the “everything fresh and local” philosophy. I staggered to a table, laden down with one plate bearing silky smoked Colorado salmon on a properly schmearred bagel, topped with tomato, red onion, and the surprise of spicy cress, and another laden with tender greens, sliced ripe tomatoes, exemplary fruit salad, cheesy frittata, pork and herbed chicken sausages, and grilled toast topped with hand-churned butter and two spreads made from local peaches and berries. Oh. My. God. (I was too lazy to stand in line at the egg-cooked-to-order station. I regret that decision in retrospect, but I was getting plenty to eat.)



Geoff Dyer

Mark Cousins, here with his personal essay film “What is this Film Called Love?” after last year’s triumphal international festival tour with the 15-hour documentary “The Story of Film,” that began in Telluride, followed Anne Thompson and me to a somewhat slanted but blue-checked-clothed table on the lower meadow, and the random-seating gods smiled at us, because we were joined by Bay Area litterateurs Dave Eggers and Vendela Vida, and Guest Director Geoff Dyer and his wife, gallerist Rebecca Wilson. Eggers, more famed now as an author (“A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius”), publisher (McSweeney’s), and screenwriter (“Away We Go,” with wife Vendela Vida, and “Where the Wild Things Are”), began his career as a graphic artist, and he designed this year’s poster for Telluride, with a silhouetted bear filming a moose. (Little did he know it, but this year has been heavy on bear sightings, and we are warned after late-night screenings to walk home down the well-lit main street rather than take shortcuts through back alleys.)



Dave Eggers

If you wonder about the conversation of these highflown litterateurs, it tended towards exclamations of pleasure and occasional confusion as they examined the contents of their heavily-stuffed swag bags (yet another reason to purchase a Patron's pass, along with priority entrance to screenings, obviating not only long waits in line but also any fear of being turned away, especially at the smaller venues). Vendela generously gifted me with her one-pound box of See's chocolates, which I knew would delight my See's-loving housemate Hilary Hart, who returns to the SHOW every year to help manage the Galaxy.

I was having so much fun bumping into old friends like Serge Bromberg, in Telluride to present his program of film rarities, "Retour du Flamme,"; Eugene Hernandez and Scott Foundas of the Film Society of Lincoln Center, both glowing with pride about the unusually dense and exciting programming for this year's New York Film Festival in honor of its fiftieth anniversary; and screenwriter Larry Gross, with wife Rose Kuo, Executive Director of the Film Society of Lincoln Center, and their son Julian -- not to mention lamping celebrities such as Laura Linney, there for "Hyde Park on Hudson," Sally Potter, with one of the stars of "Ginger and Rosa," Alessandro Nivola, and Ben Affleck (thereby giving away the Sneak Preview of "Argo") -- that I only tore myself away moments before the wedding of Paolo Cherchi Usai, longtime friend of Telluride, Senior Curator of Motion Pictures and Director of the L. Jeffrey School of Film Preservation of George Eastman House, as well as co-founder of the Pordenone Silent Film Festival.



Ben Affleck's 'Argo'

I'd shared the trek across the Southwest with Paolo, his bride-to-be Renate, an Italian publisher of cinema books (as well, as her old friend and co-publisher told me, of the Italian version of "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" and its wildly successful sequel) and his merry band of assorted Italians and Australians, including best man, director Rolf de Heer (who was awarded the Telluride Silver Medallion in 2010). Tears flowed at the beautiful ceremony, tucked away around the corner from the main part of the feast, whose guests included film historian Leonard Maltin and his wife Alice, professor and author Annette Insdorf and her husband Mark Ethan, who also got married at Telluride, and pianist Donald Sosin and his

wife singer Joanna Seaton.

Afterwards the line for the busses carting people down the hill were so long that I despaired of ever getting down in time for the annual press conference, but I caught a break and a ride with Jason Silverman, editor of all the SHOW's publications, tucked in the back of his car between Berkeley professor and author Mark Danner and director Peter Sellars, who talked so vividly about "The Attack," "The Gatekeepers," and "The Act of Killing" that I immediately added them to my way-too-long want-to-see list.

The Press Conference, led by co-directors Tom Luddy, Julie Huntsinger, and Gary Meyer, was typically enthusiastic but uncharacteristically brief, as they wanted us to get up the mountain (via a dazzling 12-minute gondola ride) in time to get to the first sneak screening of "Argo." I was tempted to go see "Stalker," introduced by Geoff Dyer, again – it's been many, many years – but even though my usual pledge is not to see any big American movie that's opening within minutes, I couldn't resist.

I was rewarded with not only Affleck's charming introduction but the company of my pal Hannah Eaves, and an early look at a beautifully-directed, fast-paced, incredibly tense and authentic-feeling action adventure movie, based on fact, about the (spoiler alert!) successful extraction of 6 American employees of the Embassy in Iran who hid out in the house of the Canadian ambassador while their colleagues were held hostage (eventually for 444 days, as the movie reminds us) in the American Embassy, under horrible conditions. The audience loved it, and after "Gone Baby Gone," "The Town," and now "Argo," the word around town was that Clint Eastwood has a worthy successor as Hollywood's most-respected actor/director. (And just in time, as Clint starts to talk to chairs in public.)

I myself hoped that a sequel would be forthcoming, starring the jovial comic duo of John Goodman and Alan Arkin, who played the Laurel-and-Hardyesque pair helping to mastermind the escape's cover from Hollywood.

As I exit, I see Janet Peoples, co-screenwriter of "Twelve Monkeys" (whose inspiration, Chris Marker, died on his 91st birthday, July 29, and is one of the dedicatees of this year's festival, along with also-recently-deceased Bingham Ray and Jan Sharp), in line for Michael Winterbottom's "Everyday," and I'm tempted to join her, but I'm even more tempted to see Hannah's 18-month-old, Zazie, awaiting us at the bottom of the mountain with Hannah's husband Jonathan Marlow, one of the founders of the cinephilic streaming service Fandor. We are also just in time to stroll through the Opening Night Feed, a party to which all passholders were invited.



Annette Insdorf

The lines at the multiple food-laden tables were unusually short, as there was multiple competition from no less than six screenings at the same time. The theme this year was Indian, and I couldn't resist loading up a plate with fruited rice pilaf, stewed lentils, curried vegetables, spiced lamb kebabs, raita, and multiple fresh chutneys, and sampling everything, even though I was due to dine with Paolo at his wedding dinner just a couple of hours later. What can I say? The flesh is weak. It was the best food I'd ever had at the feed.

On the way out to see the Roger Corman tribute at the Sheridan Opera House (built in 1913, and the original site of the festival), I grabbed probably too many tiny pistachio doughnuts from their stands topped with colorful elephants rendered in cake and pastry.

The Corman tribute featured an hilarious documentary, "Corman's World: Exploits of a Hollywood Rebel," but I had to duck out while it was still going on and before they awarded the 86-year-old producer-director-distributor-actor-talent scout-ageless wonder (to quote the program book) his Silver Medallion to attend the wedding dinner at the 221 South Oak Restaurant, where we had a private room, an amazing parade of courses, and views into the bar room where dinners were being held for Gael Garcia Bernal and director Charles Ferguson. A surprise treat was a trio of lady musicians who played for Paolo and Renate's first dance. Renate's daughter Matilda made the rounds of the guests, hating out sugared Jerusalem almonds. The whole evening was like an Italian movie, which took something of the sting out of the knowledge that I was missing the only screening of a rare 1965 Italian movie, "I Knew Her Well," introduced by Telluride lifer Alexander Payne, across town at the Pierre (not to mention nearly twenty, count 'em, twenty other screenings over the course of the more-than-three-hour dinner.)

An atypical day at Telluride: three feasts, a big Hollywood movie opening on October 12, and only part of a tribute.

The next day was much more typical: I saw “The Attack,” a Lebanese-French film about a suicide bombing in Israel; “Final Cut: Ladies and Gentleman,” a witty, amazing compilation of film clips assembled into a universal romance, and probably unreleasable outside of film festivals due to rights issues; “Pordenone Presents: Hands Up” (a rare silent film by forgotten comic Raymond Griffith, with accompaniment by Donald Sosin and Joanna Seaton; a tribute to Marion Cotillard complete with clip show, interview by Hollywood Reporter critic Todd McCarthy, and a surprise appearance by director James Gray, who flew in to Telluride just to be part of the evening, bringing a clip from his and Cotillard’s next movie, once called “Low Life,” but now known as Untitled James Gray Project, in which Cotillard plays a Polish immigrant to America, forced into life as a prostitute, as well as a screening of Jacques Audiard’s audacious “Rust and Bone,”; and a midnight screening, pushing the limits of caffeine, of Sally Potter’s beautiful, 60s-set “Ginger and Rosa,” starring Elle Fanning, Christina Hendricks, Alessandro Nivola, Annette Bening, Oliver Platt, and Timothy Spall. No bears were seen on the brightly moonlit walk home at 2 a.m.

THE GATEKEEPERS – THOMPSON ON HOLLYWOOD – September 3, 2012 – “Telluride Brody Diary 3: Polley's Stunning 'Stories We Tell,' 'Joan of Arc,' 'Frances Ha' & More,” features THE GATEKEEPERS mention, by Meredith Brody.

http://blogs.indiewire.com/thompsononhollywood/telluride-brody-diary-3?utm_source=iContact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Thompson%20on%20Hollywood&utm_content=&page=1#blogPostHeaderPanel

Telluride Brody Diary 3: Polley's Stunning 'Stories We Tell,' 'Joan of Arc,' 'Frances Ha' & More

BY MEREDITH BRODY

SEPTEMBER 3, 2012 12:43 PM



Sarah Polley's "Stories We Tell"

Almost too rich a Telluride day – it's after 2 a.m., I'm back in my room, slightly tipsy from a couple of iced glasses of one of Alice Waters' favorite wines, the Bandol Tempier rosé, mind vibrating like a temple gong from the five programs I managed to fit in today.

The day started with a 9 a.m. screening of "The Gatekeepers," interviews with six former directors of the Shin Bet ("If the Mossad is the equivalent of the C.I.A., the Shin Bet is the F.B.I.," we hear, but an F.B.I. with unbelievable powers), responsible for internal Israeli security. A tenet of their position was that they were not to talk about the operations they carried out, but director Dior Moreh

told us, in the too-short Q-and-A afterwards, simply that the time had come. I also felt that these men wanted to get their feelings on the record (as Robert McNamara did in "The Fog of War," TFF 2003), that their tenure had turned them both pessimistic and leftist. It's a masterful interview film on the level of the best from Errol Morris, Charles Ferguson, and Alex Gibney. Having just spent ten days at the SF Jewish Film Festival, "The Gatekeepers" fit right in to my rather hopeless mindset.

Afterwards, en route to Paolo Cherchi Usai's screening of "The Marvelous Life of Joan of Arc," I ran into Xavier Giannoli, the director of "Superstar," starring Kad Merad as an ordinary man who wakes up to discover he's famous for no reason. I'd seen it at a pre-Telluride screening in order to write about it for the program book and interview him for the "Telluride Watch." Giannoli was chatting with fellow Frenchman Serge Bromberg of Lobster Films. I would very much like to see Giannoli's previous films, especially his 2006 "Quand j'étais chanteur," starring Gerard Depardieu, Cecile de France, and Mathieu Almaric. I just checked it on amazon.fr; it's going for 8.44 euros, but the shipping will probably double that. I'm not quite tipsy enough to click through, although my motto is "I've never drunk-dialed, but I have drunk-ordered!"

I couldn't quite get into "The Marvelous Life of Joan of Arc," whose 1929 release date doomed it to relative obscurity despite its initial success in France, its country of origin, and Europe, because it bumped up against Carl Theodore Dreyer's tortured, stylized "La passion de Jeanne d'Arc," starring the extraordinary Falconetti, made in 1928. Marco de Gastyne's version is naturalistic and, as Paolo pointed out, boasts a cast of thousands, Cecil B. DeMille-style. I blame myself, a bit: I did become groggy towards the end of the first hour, a first so far this year. But before I started the nodding-head syndrome, I did find de Gastyne's cornfed Joan a bit of a drip: she chastised one of her soldiers for taking the Lord's name in vain, and I restrained myself from whispering to my seatmate, Jonathan Marlow, that "She could always have a swear box, like Loretta Young," when Joan said that the next time he swore he'd have to pay here the equivalent of what it cost for her priest to say three masses. We'd earlier amused ourselves by trying to think of all the various Joans we'd seen over the years: in addition to Falconetti, I thought of Jean Seberg, Ingrid Bergman, Sandrine Bonnaire, and whoever had played her in Robert Bresson's film. IMDb tells me that was Florence Delay, and adds Milla Jovovich and Leelee Sobieski, neither of whose version I've seen, to the list.

I left at intermission, because I was groggy and in order to get a good place in line for Sarah Polley's "Stories We Tell," playing at one of the smaller venues (less than 200 seats), and already boasting a long line. My place in the line happened to be next to the great Shirley Henderson, in Telluride with Michael Winterbottom's latest, "Everybody," which I knew had been shot over five years, I thought in solid two-week increments, but she told me no, sometimes he just fit in two days here or there. I had begun the conversation by saying, honestly, that

her name in the credits was enough to make me go see a movie, and then covered myself with glory by introducing her to the Criterion Collection's Kim Henderson as Emily Henderson.

Polley's film, I thought, was simply stunning, both in content and execution. It's the biggest happy surprise I've had so far in Telluride. I was disappointed that there was no Q-and-A afterwards; Polley had given the briefest of introductions, mostly praising Telluride, saying she'd never had such an extraordinary experience at a festival before, especially meeting interesting people with interesting stories, whether from the world of film or not. I heard a rumour that she was contractually prevented from talking about the film until it opened, which seemed curious. UPDATE: Here's Polley's **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** of why she wants the film to unfold and reveal its secrets the way it does.

Afterwards I stood around with a number of powerfully moved people, including The Hollywood Reporter's Tim Appelo and Lisa Kennedy of the Denver Post, relating family secrets to each other.

With the kind permission of Steve Ujlaki, dean of the Loyola Marymount University School of Film and Television, I was able to join his table for dinner at Rustico at 6, down a lovely plate of veal with mushrooms, and still make Serge Bromberg's 7:15 "Retour du Flamme," an eclectic program of film rarities which Bromberg accompanies with snappy French-accented patter and piano-playing, supplemented by Donald Sosin while Bromberg narrated Melies' hand-tinted "Kingdom of Fairies," which is the film you see him shooting in Scorsese's "Hugo Cabret."

Afterwards I stuck around for the 10 p.m. showing of "Frances Ha," briefly introduced by Noah Baumbach, co-screenwriter Greta Gerwig, and Mickey Sumner, according to the catalogue, although she looked nothing like the character she played in the movie – prettier and blonder. IMDB tells me she's the daughter of Sting and Trudy Styler. I'm a fan of most of Baumbach's previous work, it's dependably literary and has a nice New York sensibility, but this one, alas, felt determinedly quirky and a trifle twee to me. Frances' leap from self-destructiveness to self-actualization seemed to have skipped several beats somewhere inbetween. I couldn't help but think of Lena Dunham's "Girls," because of the similar locations, ages, fecklessness, relentlessly casual hooking-up, perplexing quick marriage, and the coincidental casting of Adam Driver, playing an artist in both instances. (I will point out that I saw "Frances Ha" in the company of three women of wildly varying ages, and they all liked it quite a bit more than I did – one of them loved it.

It took me a while to find Alice Waters' rented house, tucked away at the top of a steep street, but inside I find great wine, charcuterie, cheese, bread, chocolate, and refugees from the festival's starriest party, to which I hadn't been invited. Mark Cousins, who had changed his original plan for the day when I told him I

was going to see “The Marvelous Life of Joan of Arc,” said he liked it more than the Dreyer, which shocked me to the core. He said that a woman had stopped him in the street and asked him what was under his kilt, and when he told her “Nothing,” shocked him by asking if she could see. I said “You ought to have told her to buy a ticket to your film.” I told Alexander Payne I was sad that they hadn’t scheduled an additional screening of the 1965 Italia film “I Knew Her Well” that he’d introduced night before last, which already seems so long ago, and he told me that Criterion had picked it up (but I don’t want to wait! And I want to see it on the big screen!). And maybe he was pulling my leg, but he said something about it being scheduled at some cinematheque in his home state of Nebraska, where he lives part-time.

Tom Luddy arrived in a dazzling Russian constructivist cashmere sweater, which his wife, stylist Monique Montgomery, had found at the Alameda Flea Market. He was thrilled that Dave Eggers and Vendela Vida had so enjoyed their first visit to Telluride that they’d become lifers, already looking forward to subsequent visits, as, it seemed, was guest director Geoff Dyer. His only disappointment in a jam-packed weekend, he told me as we walked down the hill together, was that he didn’t understand why his two screenings of Tarkovsky’s “Stalker” weren’t SRO. I said that both were up against over a dozen other alluring possibilities, and that many people wanted to see big hot new movies, as opposed to an over-thirty-year old 2-hour-and-40-minute epic by a director dead for over a quarter of a century.

I left Dyer at the door of his hotel. I’d be seeing him in less than eight hours, anyway, at a screening he’d programmed of an obscure British film (I’d never heard of it, anyway) called “Unrelated,” a first feature by Joanna Hogg. Time to get some sleep so I wouldn’t fall prey again to the dreaded nodding-head-syndrome.

THE GATEKEEPERS – VARIETY – August 31, 2012 – “The Gatekeepers,” features POSITIVE review, by Justin Chang.

<http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117948142/>

The Gatekeepers

Shomerei ha'saf

(Documentary -- Israel-France-Germany-Belgium)

By [JUSTIN CHANG](#)

A Sony Pictures Classics (in North America) release of a Dror Moreh Prod., Les Films du Poisson, Cinephil production, in co-production with Mac Guff, Wild Heart Prods., Arte France, IBA, NDR, RTBF, with the support of CNC, Media, Region Ile-de-France, Procirep, Angoa, the Ravinovich Foundation for the Arts -- Cinema Project. (International sales: Cinephil, Tel Aviv.) Produced by Dror

Moreh, Estelle Fialon, Philippa Kowarsky. Co-producer, Anna Van der Wee.
Directed by Dror Moreh.

With: Avraham Shalom, Yaakov Peri, Carmi Gillon, Ami Ayalon, Avi Dichter,
Yuval Diskin. (Hebrew dialogue)

The brutal recent history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is rivetingly recounted by some of its most prominent players in "The Gatekeepers." Granted an extraordinary level of access to six former heads of Israel's Shin Bet counterterrorism agency, first-time documaker Dror Moreh achieves a powerful and remarkably clear-eyed assessment of how state-sanctioned violence, whether pre-emptive or retaliatory, has exacted a crippling moral toll on the region and its pursuit of peace. Critical attention and high-profile festival berths should conspire to make the Sony Classics pickup a provocative must-see for the discerning and topically inclined.

Moreh's coup lies in not only lining up the six men who oversaw Israel's internal intelligence-gathering operations at various intervals from 1980 to the present, but in getting them to speak with such unprecedented and seemingly unguarded candor about their activities. While some of their responses can be dodgy and defensive, overall there's a raw, confessional ruthlessness to the testimony here, a sense that these retired officials have few qualms about acknowledging their miscalculations in a war whose human costs have been incalculable. The potentially controversial consequences of their speaking out, particularly their frank acknowledgment of Shin Bet participation in selective assassinations, remain to be seen.

Former agency heads Avraham Shalom (in charge from 1980-86) and Avi Dichter (2000-06) describe how, in the aftermath of the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel's efforts to establish military authority over some 1 million Palestinians went almost immediately awry. Mutual mistrust, hostility and language barriers set off a vicious cycle of attacks and counterattacks, corroborated here by fascinating black-and-white archival footage of Israeli soldiers moving through Arab refugee camps. As noted by Yaakov Peri (agency head from 1988-94), the escalation of violence hindered the possibility of peaceful negotiations and resulted in numerous arrests and interrogations by Shin Bet.

While the agency eventually became a well-oiled intelligence machine, it became clear to all involved that gaining a measure of control over the frequency and intensity of terrorist activity didn't solve the essential problem of the occupation. One former head blasts various Israeli prime ministers, from Golda Meir to Menachem Begin, claiming none of them bothered to truly consider the Palestinian half of the equation. Another notes the ineffectual nature of the agency's attempted crackdown, as the onset of the first Intifada in 1987 and arrival of Hamas and Islamic Jihad merely supplanted one form of terrorism with another.

Various interviewees here stress the importance of listening to and cooperating with Palestinian intelligence. To that end, the film's most heart-rending passage addresses the 1995 assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, which effectively undermined the peace process despite the signing of the Oslo Accords three years earlier. (A bitterly funny moment features TV footage of Palestinian Authority chairman Yasser Arafat and Israel prime minister Ehud Barak going through showily deferential "after you" motions at the 2000 Camp David summit.)

While no film from the narrow perspective of Israeli intelligence could purport to offer a thorough view of the conflict, what makes "The Gatekeepers" ultimately so compelling is its pervasive sense of moral ambiguity. Its subjects don't shy away from the troubling implications of counterterrorism, and they're frank in acknowledging the sense of power that accompanies the decision to take enemy lives. The film reinforces this notion with muscular, computer-generated simulations of Shin Bet bombing operations, offering a bird's-eye view of a moving target, which at times lend it the thrust and excitement of a geopolitical thriller.

The audience's moral revulsion is complicated at every turn by the satisfaction these superior tacticians take in a job well done, even the aggressive and widely criticized interrogation techniques employed by former head Carmi Gillon (holding the briefest tenure here, from 1994-96). One of the film's more cold-blooded sequences recalls Shin Bet's 1996 assassination of Hamas engineer Yahya Ayyash, using a cell phone rigged with explosives. Less laudable, logistically if not ethically, was a failed 2003 airstrike on Gaza that could have wiped out Hamas' top leadership, an episode that occasions considerable discussion of collateral damage.

Although the men were interviewed separately, their voices ultimately coalesce into a sustained chorus of despair, decrying the futility of violence as a political imperative and the cruelty and corruption of Israel since the late '60s. At one point, the docu invokes the title of Philip C. Winslow's 2007 book on the conflict, "Victory for Us Is to See You Suffer" -- a chilling reminder that, for all the Israeli forces' superior military resources, the fact that the conflict persists demonstrates the Pyrrhic nature of any victories.

The high-quality archival footage and operation simulations help the talking-head assembly play well on the bigscreen, and a brooding score rounds out the solid tech package.

Camera (color/B&W, HD), Avner Shahaf; editor, Oron Adar; music, Ab Ovo, Jerome Chassagnard, Regis Baillet; production designer, Doron Koren; sound, Amos Zipori; sound designer, Alex Claude; associate producers, Yael Fogiel, Laetitia Gonzalez. Reviewed at Jerusalem Film Festival (competing), July 10,

2012. (Also in Telluride Film Festival; Toronto Film Festival -- TIFF Docs; New York Film Festival.) Running time: 96 MIN.

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THE GATEKEEPERS – THE WRAP – September 4, 2012 – “Telluride's Big Winners: Ben Affleck, Bill Murray, and ... Sarah Polley,” features POSITIVE mention of THE GATEKEEPERS, by Chris Willman.
<http://www.thewrap.com/movies/column-post/tellurides-big-winners-ben-affleck-bill-murray-and-sarah-polley-54526?page=0,0>

Telluride's Big Winners: Ben Affleck, Bill Murray, and ... Sarah Polley

By Chris Willman

Actress-turned-filmmaker Sarah Polley may have been toting a baby around Telluride this weekend, but the shine coming off her wasn't strictly “new mother glow.”

At least some of the radiance may have had to do with her status as the 39th Telluride Film Festival's newly anointed favorite daughter, thanks to the rapturous reception for her first documentary, “Stories We Tell.”



At the beginning of the festival, Polley's doc was hardly considered one of the must-sees. Even if she'd gotten acclaim for moving from acting to directing features, how likely was it that a true-life family memoir wouldn't be self-indulgent?

But by the time things wrapped up Monday night, the biggest grumbling from passholders -- other than how impossibly long the lines were this year -- was that they hadn't heard the good buzz about "Stories We Tell" in time to catch the sleeper hit of the festival.

"Brilliant" and "superb" were words popping up to describe Polley's film on Twitter... terms that weren't being necessarily used even to describe Telluride's other popular successes, like "Argo" and "The Sapphires."

"It is not only Sarah Polley's best film, and one of the best films I've ever seen, but it kind of walked away with the festival," said Awards Daily blogger Sasha Stone.

You could add Polley's name to Telluride's unofficial list of big winners, which included Ben Affleck (an It Boy again as "Argo's" director and star), Bill Murray (a

widely heralded FDR in “Hyde Park on Hudson”), Marion Cotillard (luminescent in the French “Rust & Bone”) and Greta Gerwig (acclaimed for an “Annie Hall”-style breakout turn in “Frances Ha”).



Telluride is short -- just three and a half days -- as well as noncompetitive and highly curated, so outright bombs at the mountain fest are rarer than days without thunderclouds. As a result of that selectivity, it's always easier to catalog the disappointments than the favorites.

So why not get those out of the way? The combination of whimsical politics and serious presidential philandering in “Hyde Park on Hudson” left a lukewarm impression on many, even though Murray’s presidential impression won universal praise and profligate Oscar-nom predictions.

Sally Potter’s “Ginger and Rosa,” though beautifully made in parts, exited with considerably less buzz than it had upon entry, but there was no shortage of major fans for Elle Fanning’s major-league adolescent angst. A third entry that inspired best-actor but not best-picture talk was “The Iceman,” with rising star Michael Shannon putting the big chill on impressed viewers as a very prolific mob killer,

Among other underwhelmers that had their supporters, but not nearly enough: “At Any Price,” with festival guest Dennis Quaid (and absent Zac Efron); “Love, Marilyn,” a documentary that has big-name actresses reading from Monroe’s

diaries; and “Midnight’s Children,” which screenwriter and frequent Telluride guest Salman Rushdie adapted from his book.

The list of films with positive buzz stretched far longer than any passholder could see in one weekend ... even though the film was lacking for obvious Oscar frontrunners like previous Telluride-premiering “Slumdog Millionaire” and “The King’s Speech.”

The festival’s directors seemed almost to relish in remarking about how it was a good thing that Telluride was getting back to under-the-radar fare instead of obvious Oscar bellwether stuff.



But if you were looking toward the best foreign film race, you could certainly look here. Cannes winner “Amour” lived up to its impressively bleak rep. Tribute recipient Mads Mikkelsen brought two Danish films, “The Hunt” and “A Royal Affair,” and in a perfect world, these wouldn’t cancel each other out in any awards race.

“Barbara,” which was just a few days ago deemed Germany’s entry into the best foreign film race, turned out to be almost universally beloved after a few early declarations that it was “The Lives of Others Lite.” “No,” about Pinochet-era Chile, got a big yes.

If oppression in 1980s East Germany and Chile didn’t seem relevant enough, there were two films implicitly taking modern-day Israel to task: the documentary “The Gatekeepers” and fictional “The Attack,” both of which went over well in Telluride but are bound to stir up some dust later on.

It would be easy to pick a best documentary lineup just from Telluride’s selections. Besides the Polley film and “The Gatekeepers,” passholders were keen on Ken and Sarah Burns’ “The Central Park Five,” even if it got a few knocks for its talking-heads PBS/“Dateline” approach.

Way on the other end of the scale of documentary conventionality, the Errol Morris-produced “The Act of Killing” let anti-communist Indonesian terror squads brag about and reenact their mass killings for two hours, and those who had the stomach for this polarizing pic were prone to calling it one of the boldest, most must-see docs in years.



But the festival’s two biggest popular successes were its two unabashed feel-good films, “Argo” (world-premiering in Telluride) and “The Sapphires” (already buzzed about at Cannes). Noah Baumbach’s hilarious and moving “Frances Ha,” which is both his best and most mainstream film to date, might also count in that happy-go-lucky category.

It’s the festival’s not-so-dirty little secret that although it attracts some of the world’s most hardcore cineastes, it has probably at least as big a contingent of

well-heeled Midwesterners and retirees who come every year not because of the typically dark fare but possibly in spite of it.

These annual attendees are sophisticated enough to at least put up with Michael Heneke devoting two hours to the deterioration of an elderly stroke victim in “Amour,” if not embrace it. But something that hits their need for some sweet relief—and can also hit the sweet spot of critics—will leave Telluride with massive buzz.

Ben Affleck is certain benefitting from that with his tense yet hugely upbeat suspense about Americans escaping from Tehran in 1979. And it doesn’t get any happier than the Weinstein Company’s aboriginal musical “The Sapphires,” which was being described in line as “this year’s ‘Slumdog Millionaire,’” even if some industry types were being quick to qualify it as “really more of a Globes picture than an Academy picture.”

One thing that didn’t have attendees dancing in the aisles this year: longer lines that had passholders feeling they needed to show up two hours in advance for a movie instead of just one, reducing the number of films that anyone could squeeze into one weekend. Telluride veterans were biding their time in line by drafting protest emails they planned to circulate and forward to festival directors.

But next year could be a little easier on that front anyway, as the lineup is being expanded to five days instead of four, in honor of the fest’s 40th year. Even so, it wouldn’t hurt to start lining up at the Sheridan Opera House in July.