

Natural Selections

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

BEST DRESSED



Tasos Gogakos

Graduating Class Superlatives

SARAH BAKER

Every group of students that graduates from The Rockefeller University is quite exceptional. Along the way to their PhDs the students who have worked here, struggled here, and accomplished here have become a family. Just like a family, each individual is unique—

there is the crazy uncle, the positive go-getter sister, or the cousin that is late to every family meal. This year there are 30 students graduating with PhDs and they voted on who was at the extremes of different personality traits. Here are the results.

BEST FACIAL EXPRESSION



Linda Molla

BEST HAIR



Remzi Karayol



Sandra Jones

FRIENDLIEST



Devon Collins

FUNNIEST



Lena Kutscher

BEST LAUGH



Malik Chaker-Margot



Yuehyi Gloria Wu

BIGGEST PROCRASTINATOR



Gregory Goldberg



Thomas Hsiao

MOST AMBITIOUS



Emily Dennis



Michael Mitchell

MOST ADVENTUROUS



Douglas Deutsch

Natural Selections

Editorial Board

Jim Keller

Editor-in-Chief, Managing Editor

**Chew-Li Soh
Stephanie Marcus**

Associate Editors

Dakota Blackman

Editorial Assistant

Sarah Baker

Copy Editor, Webmaster

Jenny Schneider

Copy Editor, Distribution

Johannes Buheitel

Owen Clark

Nicole Infarinato

Copy Editors

Guadalupe Astorga

Nan Pang

Designers

*selections.rockefeller.edu
nseditors@rockefeller.edu*

MOST CHANGED SINCE 1ST YEAR



Wendy Wang

MOST ATHLETIC



Laura Seeholzer

MOST ARTISTIC



Zhenrun Jerry Zhang

MOST LIKELY TO AFFECT POLICY



Avital Percher

MOST LIKELY TO BE FAMOUS



Jason Pinger

MOST LIKELY TO LIVE THE LONGEST



Kenneth Atkins



Jonathan Steinman

MOST LIKELY TO BE WORKING ALL NIGHT LONG



Sean McKenzie



Sze Sing Shaun Teo

MOST LIKELY TO BE PRESIDENT



Andrew Gregg

MOST LIKELY TO RETURN TO ROCKEFELLER AS A PI



Raphael Cohn

MOST LIKELY TO WIN A NOBEL PRIZE



Lillian Cohn

MOST MUSICAL



Christopher Jenness



Kimberly Siletti

MOST LIKELY TO WRITE A BEST-SELLING NOVEL



Andrew Milewski

Word of the Month

DAKOTA BLACKMAN

Pride (*noun*)

1. a feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements, the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired.
2. the quality of having an excessively high opinion of oneself or one's importance.

Briefly: LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer—terms that are meant to represent a diversity of sexualities and gender identities. Of course, there are only five letters in this acronym and many, many more than five identities within this group. For the purposes of this article, I refer to members of the LGBTQ+ community; some members (myself included) identify with one of these terms, some identify with all, and some do not identify with any. It is not my intention to leave out or invalidate those who do not align themselves with any of these five identifiers, but instead to describe a group that, in the month of June, is remembered, acknowledged, and celebrated through pride.

Given the complex and often fraught history of LGBTQ+ rights in the United States, it is appropriate that the movement is summed up by a word of equal complexity. According to Merriam-Webster, “pride” has a myriad of definitions, but I will focus on two here: the first, bearing a neutral (or perhaps even positive) connotation, is “a feeling of deep pleasure or sat-

isfaction derived from one's own achievements, the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired.” Conversely, the second holds a pointedly negative connotation: “the quality of having an excessively high opinion of oneself or one's importance.”

The word's etymological history, interestingly enough, mirrors the movement it describes: pride, which shares its roots with the adjective “proud,” is derived from Old English *prud* or *prut*, meaning “excellent and splendid” as well as “arrogant and haughty.” In Old English, in addition to other Indo-European languages (including Old French, Greek, and even Late Latin), there is only one word for pride, and it bears both a positive and negative connotation. In its negative form, pride is, by and large, discouraged. Perhaps most telling is the fact that pride is the deadliest of the seven deadly sins; too much pride and humans will assume they are God-like. In its positive form, some amount of pride is encouraged: it is a way to recognize one's own achievements, “qualities, or possessions that are widely admired.”

For a very long time in the United States, being a member of the LGBTQ+ community was not considered a positive quality. Even if one was proud of their identity within this group, one had the potential to face very real and very serious repercussions for openly and visibly defying the norms of gender and sexuality.

A particularly salient example of such repercussions was the 1969 police raid and subsequent riot at the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City. The raid was said to be due to a substandard liquor license, but police often targeted designated LGBTQ+ spaces at this time. The riot at Stonewall Inn is considered the start of the LGBTQ rights movement in this country because those in the community openly and actively defied mistreatment on the basis of their identities. For many today, the ability to be visible, and to have pride, largely stems from the actions of these activists who fought and continue to fight for LGBTQ+ equality.

Today, pride is not all rainbows and glitter. (It's a fair amount of rainbows and glitter, don't get me wrong, but there's certainly more to it than that.) Pride, as the definition suggests, is warranted for qualities that are “widely admired,” and being a member of the LGBTQ+ community is certainly not universally accepted, much less admired. Persecution for these identities, particularly among queer and trans people of color, is still rampant. We must not lose sight of the fact that, within the LGBTQ+ movement, having pride was, and still is, an act of resistance. However, we must also remember to acknowledge that the diversity in identity, self-expression, and school of thought within this community is certainly something to be uplifted, celebrated, and—to those in the community—to be proud of.

Cannes You Handle It?

A Diary of My Time at the 71st Annual Cannes Film Festival

JIM KELLER



The 71st Annual Cannes Film Official Poster.

Photo: Jim Keller

It has been a lifelong dream of mine to cross the famous Promenade de la Croisette of the Cannes Film Festival. So when my husband, Dom, and I were planning our trip to Europe last year, we made sure that the dates coincided with those of the festival to ensure we could at least be in the presence of festival—even if we wouldn't be able to attend any film screenings. What follows is an account of how we were able to attend it and what our experience was.

Step 1 – Accreditation

In February, we came across two helpful blogs: Best of Nice and Almost Ginger, which confirmed that we had a few options to actually attend some of the screenings. For one, we could apply for accreditation as a “Cannes Cinephile”. Second, we could purchase tickets to films that screen in the Director's Fortnight and International Critic's Week sections of the festival. Finally, if all else failed, we could simply park it

on the beach and take in a selection or two from the Cannes “Cinema on the Beach” program. It seemed clear that the right path was accreditation, so we applied right away because the window was already open, and a few short weeks later we both were granted accreditation! It's important to note that only 1,000 non-French citizens are granted this level of accreditation. As our trip drew nearer, the Official Selection was announced, followed by the schedule, and we set to work identifying the films that we wanted to see. In retrospect, we were naïve to think that we might be able to access some of the festival's bigger offerings, but I digress. All along we had managed our expectations—even with our accreditation, we were excited just to have the opportunity to be there in the thick of it all. After all, the festival is primarily an event for critics, the press, and other industry professionals involved in everything from pitching films to acquisition and distribution.

Step 2 – Transportation Musical Chairs

Spring in France is often fraught with transportation strikes affecting both regional trains and flights. Unfortunately, this year was no different but thanks to Twitter updates on the strikes, we could adjust our schedule accordingly. When all was said and done, we made several changes to the number of days we would stay in Nice once we received our accreditation, and our trip began in Berlin on May 4. But when we were gearing up to leave Berlin, we received notice that our Air France flight had been canceled and that we had been rebooked on a flight that was not scheduled to arrive in Nice until midnight. Not cool! We already had to be up at the crack of dawn to take the 40-minute train ride to Cannes; there was no way that we could lose nine hours in Nice. Luckily, I rebooked us on a flight that arrived in Nice at 6pm, whew!

CONTINUED TO P. 5 

Step 3 – The Mad Dash

Our hotel was conveniently located behind the famous Hotel Negresco that sits on the Promenade des Anglais, and so it was a quick (15 minutes or so) walk to the train station. Here are some notes from the train: “We’re up early to catch the train to Cannes from Nice. After a good night’s sleep, we are looking forward to all that Cannes has to offer. A quick walk up the street brought us to the Gare de Ville where we waited in line and purchased our roundtrip tickets for both days. The blue ticket machines were impossible to navigate—even with a little blog help. Some pictures of *la mer et le soleil* from the train along with a light breakfast of *oeufs et des riz* and we are more than ready for our day to begin! Next: Procure our badges!”

8:40 a.m. –

After running around like mad men, we found the Pontiero side and are safely waiting in line at the Cannes Cinephile tent to pick up our registration.

9:05 a.m. –

Success! We scored free tickets to two *Rendez-vous* with Ryan Coogler at Salle Buñuel (Palais) at 4:00 p.m. and *10 Years Thailand*, the latest from Thai director Aphichatpong Weerasethakul at 7:00 p.m. at the Salle Du Soixantième. Afterwards we scurried over to the Marriot to score tickets for *Les Confins De Monde* by Guillaume Nicloux at 11:45 a.m. and then to the Miramar to try for tickets for the 3:00 p.m. screening of Paul Dano’s premiere *Wildlife*, but were told we don’t need tickets with a badge. Curiously enough, the guards at Theatre Croisette (Marriott) told us it is better to have tickets (blue line) than Cinephile access (green line) so we are calling their bluff and waiting in green.

While Dom held our place in line, I grabbed a quick bite at a nearby café on the Croisette: a continental breakfast consisting of tea, orange juice, a baguette with butter and strawberry jam—delish.

11:12 a.m. –

Well, we’re inside the Theatre Croisette! When the crowd began to move, we realized quickly that the ticketed line was given priority (as the guard had said), and after a suggestion from a fellow Cinephile, we ducked under the cords that separated the line and into the ticketed line. In we went! SUCCESS!

First Film: *Les Confins De Monde* by Guillaume Nicloux – 11:45 a.m. Theatre



The Red Carpet (left) and tickets (right).

Photo: Jim Keller

Croisette

The film follows Robert Tassen (Gaspard Ulliel) from 1945-1946 as he seeks Vo Binh, who is responsible for killing his family. Along the way he meets and falls in love with a Vietnamese prostitute (Lang-Khê Tran) and develops a friendship with a writer (Gérard Depardieu). The film has several awkward transitions and skips along rather unevenly. It also has a very unresolved ending. What’s more, the gunshots in the battle scenes sounded very cheap and there is too much focus on the male sex organ—from talking about it to showing it.

I appreciate the gay character, but the idea of it was introduced too late in the film to hold any real weight. Tassen’s relationship with the writer is unestablished. After the film, several cast members, including Ulliel and Tran, came out for a Q&A.

1:45 p.m. –

I joined Dom in line to try to get into the 3pm screening of Paul Dano’s *Wildlife*, we’ll see!

After we failed to get into *Wildlife*, which I’ve since learned is amazing, with a particularly strong performance by Carey Mulligan in the leading role, we decided to take some photos on the opposite side of the Croisette while making our way slowly to Salle Buñuel for the *Rendez-Vous* with Ryan Coogler. When we finally found the theater, we were told by a woman that there were a ton of people queuing for the event upstairs. I wanted to at least have the experience of trying to get in the Buñuel, so

Dom and I forged ahead. But Dom became anxious about the bag checks because he had his food and didn’t want to throw it out so we agreed to meet at the gate where the Salle Du Soixantième was visible from. It wasn’t like I had a chance to get in anyway, right? WRONG!

Once through the security, I decided to take the elevator up as opposed to the escalator because I figured that people would be queuing in them. I stepped in the elevator, and after a stop or two, a young woman exclaimed “This elevator is so slow!” I turned to her, recognizing her as another English-speaking American, and we probably had but a minute or two to chat when the doors opened onto the 5th floor. We stepped out together and were trying to get our bearings on where we should be when people started running (presumably from the escalators). She grabbed my hand and said “Come on, we’re getting in. I’ll use my face if nothing else.” It was the Cannes Film Festival’s version of “Come with me if you want to live!”

Before I knew it, I was being pulled through the crowd, and though a woman behind me protested, straight into the Salle Buñuel with nary a security guard asking either of us for anything. Once the door was open with the frenzied crowd, it couldn’t be closed. We found some seats following a run-in with a young security guard who was trying to explain that the

reserved seat sign on one seat meant the entire row was reserved. I kept apologizing for my newfound friend, who was fearless and uninterested in jumping through anyone's hoops. Once seated, we became fast friends and learned that we would be in Paris at the same time (also in Le Marais) and that we both lived in New York City.

We were both planning to take a few photos and take off within 20 mins. So, after a litany of famous people were announced and revealed themselves, including The Weeknd, and Ryan Coogler and his wife, we began plotting our exit. Ubha, as she was named, said that we had no choice but to duck down as we walked between the slightly elevated stage and the seats where The Weeknd was sitting. It was another "Come with me if you want to live!" moment, but this time I had my doubts. I was certain that if I followed her, I would be lambasted by security. So, we said a bit of a sad goodbye (but not before Ubha had taken my contact info), and I watched as Ubha made her way between the stage and disappeared through the far exit unscathed. I shrugged, took a deep breath and followed suit. Once outside, I looked feverishly for Ubha and found her going down the escalator. I shouted "Ubha!" She turned with a smile and we were reunited. Inside, Ubha decided to join me to meet up with Dom. We met him at the designated spot and began chatting. Ubha mentioned that she wanted to stop by the Scandinavian location and before we could join her, we saw a demonstration on Muay Thai kickboxing (from the Thai delegation at Cannes). One woman held a pad while another woman kicked it high over her head twenty times! Pretty cool stuff. Ubha had to jet but said she'd be in touch.

Next up, we headed to Salle Du Soixantième for *10 Years Thailand*, which ended up being four short films created by Weerasethakul along with three other Thai directors. Before the screening, I met Niger, a gay writer from the U.K. He told me that *Wildlife* was a masterpiece and that it was his favorite film so far of the festival. Because we had a lot of time, I ended up chatting with him and another woman who worked with distributors to bring films to Bermuda. For the first time at the festival, I really got a good grasp on just how much of an industry event it is.

Anyway, the three of us chatted about films, actors, actresses, the industry, and



The Red Carpet and the LED Display (left) and Cinema on the beach (right).

Photo: Jim Keller

even Trump and Brexit. It really was fascinating to get the foreigner's perspective on all these things, and especially on Trump. I was also able to impart my knowledge of films that premiered in New York (and Los Angeles) that Dom and I had already seen: *Annihilation* and *Disobedience*, and was able to give the woman the tip on *Hereditary* doing well because she mentioned her difficulty in securing several films for screening in Bermuda.

I said goodbye to my two new pals when the press line started to enter and returned to my ever-patient Bunny (my pet name for Dom) waiting in the Cinephile ticket line just around the corner.

Second Film: *10 Years Thailand* by Aditya Assarat, Wisit Sasanatieng, Chatayarna Sripol, and Aphichatpong Weerasethakul – 7:00 p.m. Salle Du Soixantième

As I mentioned, the film was a collection of shorts and all the directors were on hand to present the film. In fact, they filed past the four of us (we sat with Niger and the woman from Bermuda).

2a: The first is a film about how art is monitored by the authorities in Thailand and about the difficulty of putting oneself out there altogether. There were two arcs, one: the plight of an artist to display her work in a local, hip gallery, and two: the

difficulty faced by a local soldier in disclosing his true feelings about a female friend. I quite liked the film for its simplicity and restraint. It was very interesting to see a contemporary view of Thailand.

2b: The second film is set in a world where creatures with feline heads and mannerisms wear human clothing and walk on hind legs. These creatures have one objective that we know of: to track and kill their prey (humans). But in this world, one human has found a way to disguise himself among them, even participating in the rituals of howling and throwing stones at suspected humans. This human is unwittingly lured into a trap that leads to his own demise. The film touches on themes of kindness to strangers and the plight of the outsider. It's also a film that fits snugly next to the first.

I should say now that where the first two short films were easily palatable, the next two were increasingly less so. Therefore, they are more difficult to describe.

2c: The third film is set in a world where a regal looking woman controls everything around her, literally with the touch of a button. At least, that is what we are led to believe by the filmmaker. What follows is a world that works according to

the clockwork dictated (presumably) by the regal woman, where children carry other children around a track, the same children are indoctrinated into a society similar to the Boy Scouts of America, where once in, they are taught a chant: “Thumbs up!” In the chant, they slap their chests with one hand, draw it out in front of them, and make the “thumbs up” sign—perhaps a comment on social media “liking” culture? The world is disrupted when the woman presses the pause button on a smart phone device, which also stops the music of the film. Up to this point, the film is fairly easy to follow, but the film takes off in a very trippy direction and it impossible for me to describe everything that happens. But needless to say, it becomes trippier and trippier as it progresses.

At this point, I’ll pause to say that the theatre this entire time had no A/C and people began to take notice as their attention waned.

2d: As I mentioned, the films became progressively difficult to follow but none more than the last film. Here, traditional Thai music mingles with the sounds of a marching band (offscreen) while the camera focuses on a statue. The marching band

remains off camera the entire film, and aside from the obvious focus on the leader and a few quips from locals hanging around the spot where the statue is, there is no real through line to the film. This, combined with the heat, caused many people to walk out, including the woman from Bermuda.

Afterwards, we reconvened with Niger for the rest of the evening, chatting and learning from his ten years covering the festival. We got to see the red carpet come alive during one of the premieres that evening from several feet away, tucked safely behind a barricade with everyone else. But thanks to the enormous LED display, it was easy to see who was walking down the stairs and making their debut on the Croisette. We also got to see the chairs being setup for “Cinema on the Beach”. At around 9pm we took the train back to Nice with Niger, where we discussed any number of things, least of all politics.

The next day, because we had experienced a full day at Cannes the day before, we decided to catch one film in the morning and then head back to Nice to walk the Promenade des Anglais and Old Nice. Not being enthused with the slate of Cannes Classics tickets available to us from the Cinephile office, we opted instead to buy tickets to the Director’s Fortnight screen-

ing of *Joueurs* by Marie Monge.

Third Film: *Joueurs* by Marie Monge – 11:45 a.m. Theatre Croisette:

The film follows Ella (Stacy Martin) who helps run her father’s restaurant. Here, she hires Abel (Tahar Rahim) as a server. Abel, a staple in the cosmopolitan Paris underground circle of gambling, including extreme sports and organized crime, turns Ella onto a life where adrenaline and money prevail. Soon Ella’s life is turned upside-down as she falls deeper (in love and trouble) with Abel; she even turns on her own family. The film chugs along at a clip until the third act, which sees at least three opportunities to end the film, but regrettably passes them by. With that said, it was one of the better films we caught at the Festival.

Thank you for sharing in my experience. There certainly is a lot more that I could say, such as how I more than likely saw Jessica Chastain and Fan Bing Bing in Nice being ushered into a van outside of the Negresco Hotel, or how we got denied entry into a screening of Christophe Honoré’s *Plaire, Aimer et Courir Vite*, but those stories will have to wait for another time.

Next month, For Your Consideration returns with a look at some of the performances to look out for this year as the Oscar race inches closer.



Culture Corner

Emotional Immediacy in Recent Movies

BERNIE LANGS

Warning: Spoilers ahead!

The powerful lessons of the arts, can be used by each of us as tools for enabling the expansion of our emotional dictionaries. As the woes of the world grow in seemingly new dimensions with undercurrents of danger and potential violence, we are experiencing them through media and social network platforms at any moment of our day. I have come to depend on artistic media as a way of allaying the underlying state of anger and frustration induced by the current pervasive toxic political and cultural environment. There are many recently produced movies available on cable channels, Netflix, and other services that remind us of the complexities of our inner states, and teach us lessons about life, love and more, giving us respite and pause from the daily grind of pervasive anxieties. After a typical day's deluge of negative news stories, I watch movies and shows to find solace in characters placed in extraordinary and unique situations, and in doing so, I become attuned to a broader depth of emotions.

As contemporary comedic dramas go, *The Edge of Seventeen* is a marvelous movie, starring the formidable Hailee Steinfeld as high school student Nadine Franklin caught in the whirlwind of being a strong-headed outcast at school, save for her bond with her childhood best friend. There have been many movies about the odd-person-out at school, but I venture to say that this is absolutely the best. *Edge* is startlingly funny, with Woody Harrelson playing one of her teachers who is placed in the uncomfortable position of having to hear out the details of Nadine's constant travails. Harrelson has proven to be a powerful actor over the years, recently starring in and receiving a Best Supporting Actor Oscar nomination for his role as the small-town sheriff in *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, and as a beastly drug lord running a bare knuckle fight ring in *Out of the Furnace*. Almost every line he speaks in *Edge* generates delightful laughter, a return to the masterful comic timing he displayed on television years ago in his first major role as the dim-witted, endearing character Woody on NBC's hit *Cheers*. *Edge* is much more than a study of teens going through growing pains. It's a beautiful snapshot of young people today with in-your-face, realistic dialogue about sex and drinking and the tricky



dynamics and pressures of friendships in a text messaging world. The supporting cast of Nadine's schoolmates includes the nuanced and understated performance by Hayden Szeto as Erwin, her shy, smart, and talented admirer. The plotline mostly revolves around how Nadine's one true friendship with Krista (Haley Lu Richardson) is ruined as she angrily refuses to accept that Krista has become the girlfriend of her older brother, Darian Franklin (Blake Jenner). Darian is popular, and is a school star in academics and sports. He has also become the rock for their needy widowed mother (Kyra Sedgwick), who often depends on him while serving in her role as single parent and family breadwinner. By watching the maturity and awareness of many of the movie's high school students, I unexpectedly understand more of the world of my 20-year-old daughter. This is a joy of a film and I've watched it on cable at least five times.

Manchester by the Sea, written and directed by Kenneth Lonergan, is an overwhelming study in tragedy, with its actors and actresses displaying stunning skills and emotional range. I'd heard about the powerful sadness of *Manchester* before viewing it but the harsh sorrow of the movie still came down on me with an intense immediacy. Casey Affleck plays the lead role for which he won an Academy Award. I expected a "situational" tear-jerker, a film about men and



women facing a bad turn of life and learning to cope with the fallout. Instead, *Manchester* is the story of how a man sets off a series of events that leads to the accidental death of his children and how, years later, he has made no progress in moving on. Michelle Williams, a young actress of extraordinary brilliance, plays his ex-wife; their final confrontation, where she pleads with him to discover a way to forgive himself in an act of surprising reconciliation and healing, is an incredible cinematic moment. As the movie began to wrap up, I was suddenly devastated with the realization that *Manchester* would not have a typical Hollywood ending where lessons are learned, and everyone moves on to some degree. Oddly enough, I found myself hoping for that sense of cliché and relief. But Affleck's character, on the surface a simple man, but at times violent and unlikable, is so completely lost in guilt and grief, which he will carry in an internal prison for all his remaining days. It is a portrait of a young man unlike any I've ever witnessed on the screen, a hard lesson about actions and circumstances from which someone chooses not to return to any semblance of normal life after experiencing a terrible loss.

The Florida Project is a superlative "dramedy" co-written and directed by Sean Baker and for which Willem Dafoe earned

CONTINUED TO P. 9

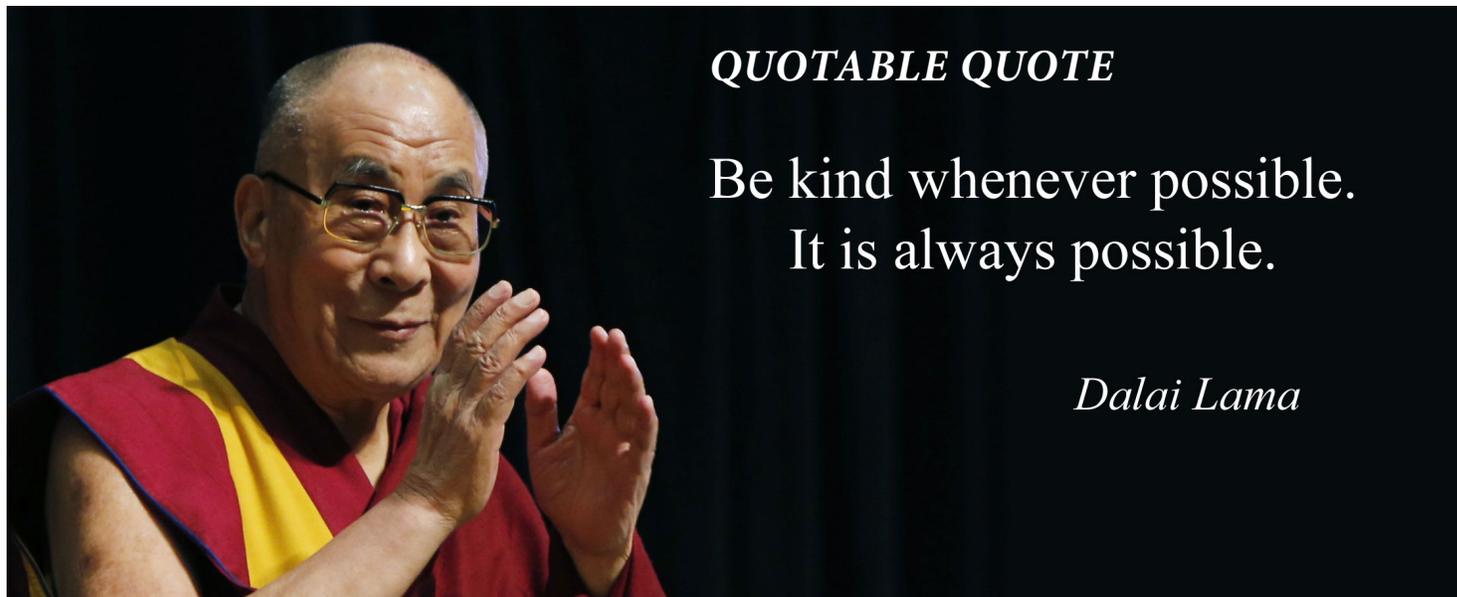
Best Supporting Actor nominations at the Academy Awards and Golden Globes. He shines as Bobby Hicks, the manager of the Magic Castle, a motel in Kissimmee, Florida near Walt Disney World. Bobby handles tricky situations again and again, struggling with the problems of the motel's residents, many of whom are engulfed in near destitute situations. The story centers on a single mother, Halley (Bria Vinaite), and her six year old daughter, Moonee (Brooklynn Prince), as Halley falls deeper and deeper into desperation and trouble. As Moonee and the other children literally run around the area without supervision and with surprising independence, the viewer can't help but fall into their strange yet innocent world. These children, all under ten years old, are crude, wild, and unexpectedly sharp and funny. I couldn't tell if these young actors and actresses had been allowed to purely improvise many of their well-delivered and hysterical observations or if the script called for them. The various motels, abandoned fields, and apartment complexes, along with kitsch fast food and souvenir joints, are presented through a cinematography with a rich palette of muted colors. I am a frequent visitor to Orlando, and *The Florida Project* exposed me to a disturbing societal underbelly of which I was not aware. Looming large in the background throughout the movie, for both the film's characters and audience, is the shadow and unseen majesty of Disney World, a contrasting paradise to what these children experience daily as they hustle tourists for ice cream money and create other dangerous mischief. The final sequences left me completely stunned and overwhelmed,



especially the final closing minutes which were as uniquely memorable and moving as it can get..

Another notable film available for streaming is *Get Out*, which has been widely praised, earning first time director Jordan Peele an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay, resulting in the category's first African American winner. The movie is billed as a horror flick but it is much more than that, especially with its tension-relieving humor. Outside of one difficult sequence, the violence in *Get Out* is in line with what has been readily shown on television. There has been a lot of press about how *Get Out* is an original take on race relations in the United States. I found that the movie's lessons are unusually subtle and it takes a lot of thinking on the part of the audience to

appreciate the depth of what Peele is trying to convey. The film sets up clichéd characterizations of white and black tensions that veer off unexpectedly and don't quite resolve the way the viewer might think they would. Peele is smart, quick, and extremely funny. I recently caught much of his hysterical 2016 film acting debut alongside Keegan-Michael Key, his partner for many projects, in *Keanu*; an absurdly laugh-out-loud adventure of two middle class friends forced to pose as tough street assassins as they work to infiltrate a violent gang who has kidnapped Peele's kitten and made it a coveted gangster mascot. Peele is a force to be reckoned with, a young director and writer who knows how to make his audience laugh and recoil in shock, while also giving them much to think about. I can't wait to see what he does next.





Life on a Roll

ELODIE PAUWELS

Taormina in Sicily is a corner of paradise, especially when you discover it before the busy tourist season starts.

It is perched 200 meters above the Ionian Sea and surrounded by small mountains. Mount Etna keeps an eye on the ancient city. The 360-degree view from the Greek Theatre (“Teatro Greco”) is probably the most beautiful panorama I saw. For further adventure nearby, nothing was better than discovering Isola Bella by foot via its isthmus

Visit Elodie’s photoblog:
<https://elodiephoto.wordpress.com/>



Natural Selections is not an official publication of The Rockefeller University. University administration does not produce this newsletter. The views expressed by the contributors to this publication may not necessarily reflect views or policies of the University.