

YOUNG FRENCH CINEMA

Discover a New Generation of Directors



2022 FILM SELECTION

*Young French Cinema is a program of Unifrance and Villa Albertine
in partnership with the French Embassy in the United States.*

Foreword

Over the past few years, Contemporary French directors have continually been singled out for praise by the international press: The “sensuality and intellectual engagement” and “thrilling vibrancy” of “a booming new generation” of young French filmmakers distilling “emotional and carefree story-telling” with “a blend of style & intensity”.

The **YOUNG FRENCH CINEMA** program is one of the most convenient entry points to their works. For the seventh year in a row, it offers a selection of today's best films and filmmakers. Most of the films selected in this program have premiered in top international festivals: 6 of them were selected at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival while others premiered in the 2022 editions of Locarno, TIFF... The program mainly focuses on rising talents, from high-profile independent works to quirky comedies, animated features tackling history, powerful documentaries about the world around us and exciting shorts. The current selection highlights two specificities of French cinema today, its focus on themes of gender diversity with a large majority (8 out of 10) of the films directed by female filmmakers, and its curiosity with the world outside of France, from Niger to Kosovo and Germany.

After seven successful editions with a yearly average of 100 bookings in more than 30 cities throughout the US, the 2022 selection demonstrates that this young generation—more than ever—shares a global vision and an amazing capacity to combine cultural influences and tackle an incredibly wide range of subject matters.

In the wake of the covid-related crisis for distribution and exhibition in the US, the 2022 YFC selection will be offered both physically and virtually, through Eventive and other virtual platforms. Unifrance has also put in place a limited number of grants to help independent cinemas booking the YFC 2022 features selection by supporting screening fees.

In this brochure, you will find information about the guidelines of the program as well as descriptions of the films selected for the 2022 program. Please note that the 2022 film selection is available until December 31, 2022 under the conditions mentioned in this brochure.

YOUNG FRENCH CINEMA has been set up by Unifrance and Villa Albertine in partnership with the French Embassy in the United States, as a way to bring French films with no US distribution to art house cinemas, film societies, the Alliance française network and American universities.

We hope that you will be inspired by these films and we look forward to working with you!

Daniela Elstner,
Executive Director, Unifrance

Adeline Monzier,
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Valérie Mouroux,
Audiovisuel Attaché, Villa Albertine

Sandrine Neveux,
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Villa Albertine is a new French institution for Arts and Ideas in the United States that builds on the bold and innovative programs that have been the hallmark of the French cultural network abroad for more than a century. Created by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, and supported by the French Ministry of Culture, Villa Albertine offers a novel artists' residency model in which residents choose the location best suited to their work within the host country. With a permanent presence in 10 major US cities, it aims to foster in-depth exploratory residencies for artists, thinkers, and culture professionals hailing from all creative disciplines. In its inaugural year, Villa Albertine will host 80 residents for one- to three-month customized residencies. Villa Albertine also offers 15 professional programs, including Young French Cinema, that cover key cultural fields and creative industries.

Founded in 1949, **Unifrance** is the organization responsible for promoting French cinema and TV content worldwide. Located in Paris, Unifrance employs around 50 staff members, as well as representatives based in the US, in China, and soon in Japan. The organization currently brings together more than 1,000 French cinema and TV content professionals (producers, talents, agents, sales companies, etc.) working together to promote French films and TV programs among foreign audiences, industry executives, and media. Unifrance is supported by the French government, the CNC, the PROCIREP and by many public and private partners.



YOUNG FRENCH CINEMA

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Guidelines

YOUNG FRENCH CINEMA is available to U.S. art house cinemas, film societies, the Alliance Française network and universities. Part of the selection is also available in Canada.

2022 PROGRAM: Due to the current context, we are offering the selection both physically and virtually, through Eventive and other virtual platforms.

FILM SELECTION: The program includes 10 feature films, including a documentary, and 6 short films from emerging French filmmakers.

All the selected features premiered in major international film festivals in 2021, including Cannes, Locarno, TIFF... 80% of the selection is directed by women.

All films can be booked "à la carte": there is no minimum or maximum number of films that you must choose. In the event that you are showing more than three films from the program as a festival or series, that festival/series should be named YOUNG FRENCH CINEMA.

FEATURE FILMS FEES:

For physical screenings: Each feature film in the 2022 program is available for a \$300 booking fee for up to two screenings per film. Each short is available for a \$40 booking fee. Fees are paid either directly to the rightsholder (if only one film is booked) or to Unifrance (if more than 2 films are booked) who then reimburse the rights-holders. Please note that outgoing shipping costs are to be paid by each organization.

For virtual screenings: Our business model for virtual screenings include city/state geolocalization and a flat fee which depends on the number of views allowed during a limited time period.

Our 2022 fees are the following :

- \$100 for up to 100 views
- \$200 for up to 200 views
- \$300 for up to 300 views

FORMAT:

Physical screenings: All films are available in DCP, provided by Eclair on hard drive or via electronic/download delivery through EclairPlay (www.eclairplay.com).

Virtual screenings: All films are available through Eventive. For venues who use different platforms, we have the H264 files available for upload.

TIMELINE: All film inquiries must be sent at least four weeks before the screening date and addressed to adeline.monzier@unifrance.org and sandrine.neveux@villa-albertine.org. Unifrance will be the third party between you and the rights-holder in France.

PUBLICITY: All publicity materials must include the following credit line: This Young French Cinema program was made possible with the support of Unifrance and Villa Albertine in partnership with the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States.

YFC 2022 GRANTS: Unifrance has put in place a limited number of grants to help independent cinemas booking the YFC 2022 features selection. For venues booking a minimum of 3 YFC features, Unifrance will support 50% of the screening fees with a support amount cap of \$500 per venue.

TALENTS: Venues that would like to organize an in-person discussion/masterclass with the director/actor of one of the films shown can apply for a travel grant to fly the artist to the U.S. Please send us an email with your request and be as detailed as possible about your proposed event. Unifrance will consider your application and if positive, facilitate the contact with the artist.

Venues that would like to organize a live virtual Q&A or master class with the director/actor/actress of one of the films shown can contact Unifrance to facilitate the contact with the artist.

For all requests, including grants and screeners, please contact:

adeline.monzier@unifrance.org and sandrine.neveux@villa-albertine.org

Above Water

(MARCHER SUR L'EAU)



DIRECTOR

Aïssa Maïga

DETAILS

2021

France,
Belgium,
Niger,
89 min,
Environmental
Documentary

**Festival de
Cannes 2021**

With this intimate portrait of a village in the semi-arid plains of northern Niger, internationally acclaimed Senegalese-French actress and activist Aïssa Maïga reveals the devastating effects of global warming on remote populations. Tatiste is home to a small community of the cattle-herding Wodaabe-Fulani people. In recent years, the dry season has been lasting longer, turning the plains around Tatiste into a desert. The men roam far afield to find grazing land for their cattle and the women go to Nigeria in search of work, leaving the older children to look after the little ones for months on end. Fourteen-year-old Houlaye cares for her younger brothers and travels several miles every day to get to the closest well, hoping there will be water and scanning the horizon for her mother. By sticking closely to Houlaye and her neighbors, *Above Water* manages to avoid being both gloomy and didactic. A crucially important film about the injustices of climate change, it also raises essential questions about education and the rights of women. Every viewer will be haunted by Houlaye's words when she pleads with a neighbor to take her along for a trip to the nearest big town: "I'm 14, and I know nothing."

The Braves

(ENTRE LES VAGUES)



DIRECTOR

Anais Volpé

CAST

Souheila Yacoub,
Déborah
Lukumuena,
Matthieu
Longatte

DETAILS

2021,
France,
100 min,
Drama,
Coming of Age

**Festival de
Cannes 2021**

Sick of being passed over at casting calls, best friends Margot and Alma decide to make an impression by faking a fight during an audition. The stunt works: Alma gets the lead, and Margot is hired as her understudy. Life finally seems to be fulfilling the two young women's boundless appetite for art, friendship, and all-nighters spent crashing parties and pranking loser exes. But when Alma collapses in rehearsal, Margot discovers her awful secret: she has terminal cancer. With her extraordinary second feature, writer-director Anais Volpé successfully tackles the perilous trope of the dying young woman, never shying away from the tragedy of her subject, but emphasizing the way life goes on through a dizzying juxtaposition of great joy and tremendous sadness. Aided by the intimate camera work of cult American cinematographer Sean Price Williams (*Good Time*) and ebullient performances by two of French cinema's most engaging young actresses, Souheila Yacoub (*Climax*) and Déborah Lukumuena (*Divines*), Volpé gives us a story of death that is bursting with life, a fresh take on the restless nights of Paris, and an ode to the power of female friendship.

"Both lead performers bring a charismatic presence to The Braves. Yacoub is a match for the emotional demands of the role. A film that emerges as a fond remembrance of a cherished friendship."

—SCREEN

Good Mother

(BONNE MÈRE)



DIRECTOR

Hafsia Herzi

CAST

Halima Benhamed,
Sabrina Benhamed,
Jawed Hannachi
Herzi

DETAILS

2021,
France
99 min,
Social Drama

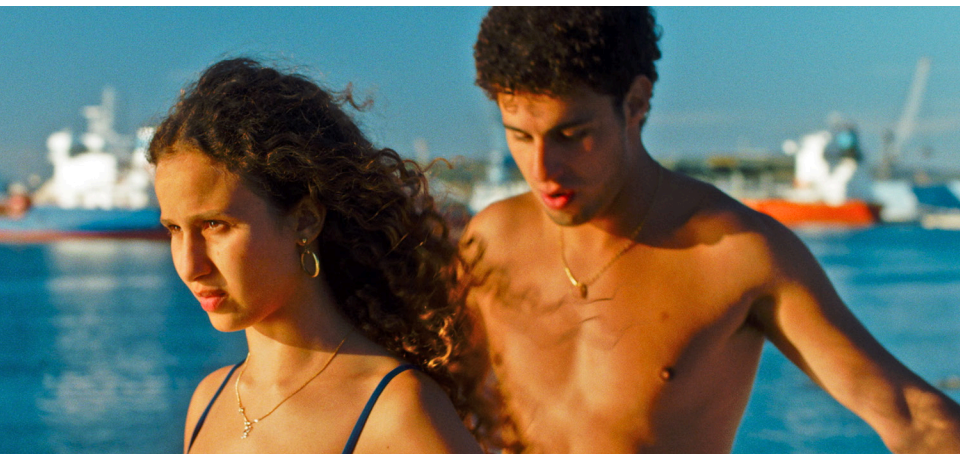
**Festival de
Cannes 2021**

Though Hafsia Herzi made an indelible impression with her acting debut in Abdellatif Kechiche's *The Secret of the Grain* and later appearances in films by auteurs Bertrand Bonello and Alain Guiraudie, it seems likely her work as a director will soon eclipse her acting career. After the raw but vibrant *You Deserve a Lover*, her first film as writer-director, Herzi reveals the breadth of her cinematic ambition with *Bonne Mère*, a tribute to hard-working single mothers and specifically to her own mother, who raised her alone in the housing estates of northern Marseille. Shot in Herzi's childhood neighborhood, *Bonne Mère* takes a documentary approach to the struggles of a woman supporting her children and grandchildren, capturing the tedium of the pre-dawn commute to work, the sadness of visits to a son in jail, and the nagging anger of being relegated to a neglected corner of society. Yet perhaps Herzi's greatest gift is in capturing the resilience and humor that drives the people she films, most of whom are local non-professionals whose Marseille accents sing to you whether or not you speak French. At the center of them all is first-time actress Halima Benhamed, a revelation as the tired, devoted, and endlessly patient Nora.

"Good Mother firmly establishes actor turned writer/director Hafsia Herzi as a significant French filmmaker." —SCREEN

Hard Shell, Soft Shell

(FRAGILE)



DIRECTOR

Emma Benestan

CAST

Yasin Houicha,
Oulaya Amamra,
Raphaël Quenard

DETAILS

2021,
France,
100 min,
Romance,
Comedy

Adding to her distinguished track record as an editor for Palme d'Or winner Abdellatif Kechiche, writer-director Emma Benestan makes an exhilarating feature debut with this wryly feminist update on the romantic comedy. Twentysomething oyster farmer Azzedine thinks he has the perfect way to propose to his girlfriend, rising TV actress Jess: a fresh oyster with an engagement ring on top. But Jess is starving after a long day at work and doesn't stop to look before she pops the oyster in her mouth. She manages not to choke, then tells Az she wants to pause their relationship. This deft mix of goofiness and heartache sets the tone for a sensitive comedy in which Az schemes to win his girlfriend back by dazzling her with a dance performance choreographed by his friend Lila. The point here isn't whether Az will wind up getting back together with Jess or falling in love with Lila, but whether he'll allow himself to be fragile—to be a man who listens to his emotions and the woman he loves. By cleverly toying with our expectations, Benestan upends gender and class stereotypes to take the pulse of romance in an era of role reversals.

"A film where the boys are not afraid to express their feelings and reveal their fragility." —SCREEN

The Heroics

(LES HÉROÏQUES)



DIRECTOR

Maxime Roy

CAST

François Créton,
Richard Bohringer,
Ariane Ascaride

DETAILS

2021,
France,
99 min,
Drama,

**Festival de
Cannes 2021**

After spending forty years drunk and high, 53-year-old Michel has been clean for nearly six months. Sobriety brings harsh realizations about a life wrecked by substance abuse: the mother of his infant son has left him, his eighteen-year-old son from a previous relationship is avoiding him, his dying father resents him, and his job search is getting nowhere. It seems this former junkie and forever punk will never live down the word “LOSER” stitched on the back of his leather jacket. Yet the beauty of filmmaker Maxime Roy’s stirring debut resides in the way it dispels this notion of losers and winners without pulling any punches about the difficulties of life on the fringes. The extraordinary performance by lead actor and co-screenwriter François Créton, whose own struggles with addiction inspired the character of Michel, doesn’t leave us any choice but to love him. Rather than build false suspense about a relapse, Roy takes a documentary approach to his lead character’s travails, creating an exquisite portrait of a vulnerable but luminous human being. Bonus: Michel’s delightfully inventive use of slang is the best example French film has given us in recent years of French as a living, evolving language.

“Maxime Roy beautifully captures the emotional turmoil of a man and the shadows of an urban world, delivering a very well made, surprising and personal feature debut.” —CINEUROPA

The Hill Where Lionesses Roar

(LA COLLINE OÙ RUGISSENT LES LIONNES)



DIRECTOR

Luàna Bajrami

CAST

Era Balaj,
Flaka Latifi,
Urate Shabani

DETAILS

2021
France, Kosovo,
83 min,
Drama,
Coming of Age,

**Festival de
Cannes 2021,
TIFF 2021**

Eta, Li, and Qe live in an isolated village in Kosovo, a place where ambition dies fast and young women are expected to keep their mouths shut. The three teenage girls find solace in their fierce loyalty to each other and the long afternoons they spend on the hill overlooking their tiny corner of the world. But when they are denied registration at university in a neighboring town, the injustice is too much to accept. The girls form the Lionesses on the Hill gang get to work claiming their future. With the loot from a series of robberies, they blast out of town on an unforgettable journey to freedom. While the theme of girl solidarity calls to mind earlier triumphs like *The Virgin Suicides* and *Mustang*, Kosovar-French writer-director Luàna Bajrami's feature debut breaks new ground in its way of capturing the girls' inner lives. Though only twenty years old, Bajrami displays a distinctly personal approach to filmmaking, perceptible both in the film's autobiographical aspects—she appears in the film as a Kosovar-French girl visiting from Paris for the summer—and in her impressionistic manner of accumulating apparently banal moments to catch the fleeting sensations of adolescent rage and hope.

"It's incredibly relatable, and makes for a unique backdrop for an age-old story." —**INDIEWIRE**

The Horizon

(L'HORIZON)



DIRECTOR

Emilie Carpentier

CAST

Tracy Gotoas,
Sylvain Le Gall,
Niia

DETAILS

2021,
France,
84 minutes,
Coming of Age

Like most of her friends in the housing projects outside Paris, eighteen-year-old Adja's focus is on having fun and getting through the days at her internship. But a fight over the farmland at the foot of her housing estate keeps encroaching on her carefree life: the government plans to evict the farmers from their land to build the biggest leisure complex in Europe. A group of activists have occupied the farmland and turned it into a ZAD, a zone to defend from environmentally reckless expansion. Adja and her influencer friend Sabira joke that the activists are tree-hugging hippies, but Adja can't deny how she feels about Arthur, a farmer's son on the front lines of the fight. While writer-director Emilie Carpentier captures our attention—and emotions—with a charming tale of first love between two young people from different backgrounds, her real subject here is the dawning of political and social awareness at the cusp of maturity. In capturing Adja's gradual decision to step up and fight for her future, she pays tribute to the courage of a generation for whom the fight for environmental justice is an urgent matter of survival.

Magnetic Beats

(LES MAGNÉTIQUES)



DIRECTOR

Vincent Maël
Cardona

CAST

Thimotée Robert,
Marie Colomb,
Joseph Olivennes

DETAILS

2021,
France,
98 min,
Drama

**Festival de
Cannes 2021**

1981, the dawn of a new era in France: the Socialist candidate François Mitterrand has just been elected president. But while his tiny hometown in Brittany erupts with joy, twenty-year-old Philippe has other things on his mind. He's obsessed with sound, manipulating tape recordings to make weird effects on his older brother Jérôme's radio show. And next week he'll be assessed for compulsory military service. If the army takes him, he might never see Marianne again. Marianne is his brother's girlfriend, and he's totally in love with her. It's hopeless, of course. Or is it? When Philippe leaves to serve with the French forces in Berlin, it's with a mix tape from Marianne in his pocket. With this feature debut, director Vincent Maël Cardona crafts an evocative time capsule of an era close to us in years but in many ways now remote, when Europe was divided by an iron curtain and a sequence of songs on magnetic tape could serve as a declaration of love. Deploying a stellar soundtrack of European post-punk classics, Cardona juxtaposes the eternal thrills of first love and the frustrations of provincial life with a lovingly specific depiction of a bygone period, lending tremendous emotional immediacy to the lives of those who came of age at the dawn of the 1980s.

"A vividly drawn love letter."

—SCREEN

Robust

(ROBUSTE)



DIRECTOR

Constance Meyer

CAST

Gérard Depardieu,
Déborah
Lukumuena

DETAILS

2021,
France,
95 min,
Drama

**Festival de
Cannes 2021**

With this closely observed double portrait of an aging French film star and the young Black woman he hires as his new bodyguard, first-time feature writer-director Constance Meyer breathes new life into the odd couple theme, bearing witness to a passing of the torch from the legendary Gérard Depardieu to the formidable young actress Déborah Lukumuena. Film fans will rejoice to see Depardieu return to the kind of shockingly vulnerable performance that made his reputation many decades ago. The real thrill, however, is to see Lukumuéna go head to head with him. Those who watch both *Robust* and *The Braves*, this year's other YFC selection starring Lukumuéna, will be stunned by the range of her talent. Depardieu has too often been reduced to tabloid fodder in recent years, but he is here at his most generous, sensitive best, lending his legendary charisma to a warts and all picture of Georges, a capricious superstar who realizes how disconnected he has become through his unexpected bond with Lukumuéna's no-nonsense private security agent Aïssa. Shaping both performances, Meyer's assured direction shows a sharp eye for detail and a subtle empathy that gives this film about urban loneliness an unexpected warmth.

"Charming, refreshingly un-sappy odd-couple dramedy."
—VARIETY

Secret Name

(LA PLACE D'UNE AUTRE)



DIRECTOR

Aurélia Georges

CAST

Lyna Khoudri,
Sabine Azéma,
Laurent
Poitrenaux,
Maud Wyler

DETAILS

2021,
France,
112 min,
Period Drama

Locarno IFF 2021

1914. To escape a life of destitution, Nélie Laborde joins the Red Cross and becomes a nurse on the front lines of the First World War. During a German attack, Nélie meets Rose Juillet, a young Swiss aristocrat who has lost her father and fortune and is traveling to northern France to seek shelter with Madame de Langwil, a wealthy family friend whom she has never met. Later that night, Rose is apparently killed by a shell blast. Believing Rose dead, Nélie makes an impulsive decision to take her identity and travel to Nancy to introduce herself to Madame de Langwil in her place. She is offered a position as a reader to the childless widow and begins to enjoy a life of comfort she has never known. Until the night the real Rose Juillet returns to claim her rightful place... Aurélia Georges's adaptation of Wilkie Collins' novel, *The New Magdalen* focuses on the impact of rigid class hierarchy on the lives of three women, offering a nuanced feminist reading that resonates with the iniquities of our era. It also establishes Aurélia Georges as a leading talent in contemporary French cinema, a filmmaker with a masterful command of suspense and moral complexity.

"Secret Name imposes a modern understanding of feminist solidarity."
—VARIETY

New French Shorts

The World Within (LE MONDE EN SOI)

DIRECTOR Jean-Charles Finck, Sandrine Stoianov

DETAILS Animation, 2020, 18:49

While preparing her first exhibition, a young painter commits so passionately to her creations that she loses touch with reality and descends into hallucinatory chaos. Confined in a clinic, she progressively rebuilds herself through painting and the daily observation of a squirrel under her window.

The Departure (LE DÉPART)

DIRECTOR Saïd Hamich Benlarbi

DETAILS 2018, France, 21 min, fiction

Morocco, 2004. Adil, aged 11, spends the summer playing with his friends and waiting for his idol, Olympic runner Hicham El Guerrouj, to compete in his last Games. The arrival of his father and older brother from France for a few days will mark him forever.

Sër Bi (LES TISSUS BLANCS)

DIRECTOR Moly Kane

DETAILS Fiction, 2020, 20:15

Tomorrow, Zuzana is getting married. From now on, every minute counts to erase her past and for her to become the woman she is expected to be.



New French Shorts

Locked Out (CONFINÉS DEHORS)

DIRECTOR Julien Goudichaud

DETAILS Documentary, 2020, 24:05

March 2020, a global pandemic hits humanity. In an empty and silent Paris, there remain urban ghosts, Sarah, Nelson and Katia, who have no other choice but to be locked out. These people forgotten by the health crisis ask us: how to continue to survive in a world at a standstill?

The Right Words (HAUT LES CŒURS)

DIRECTOR Adrian Moyse Dullin

DETAILS Fiction, 2021, 15:00

Fifteen-year-old Kenza and her thirteen-year-old brother Mahdi regularly act out an escalation of petty cruelties and humiliations inspired by social networks. Today, during a bus ride, Kenza puts her naive and romantic little brother to the test: he must make a declaration of love now to Jada; a girl Mahdi loves but who doesn't know him. Pressured by his sister, Mahdi finally sets out about it.

The Bath (LE BAIN)

DIRECTOR Anissa Daoud

DETAILS Fiction, 2020, 15:30

Due to his wife's business trip, Imed, a young father, finds himself alone for a few days for the first time with his five-year-old son and must confront his deepest fears.



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adeline.monzier@unifrance.org and sandrine.neveux@villa-albertine.org