

FILM COMMENT

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TRUTH IN SCIENCE FICTION RYAN COOGLER'S BLACK PANTHER REPRESENTS

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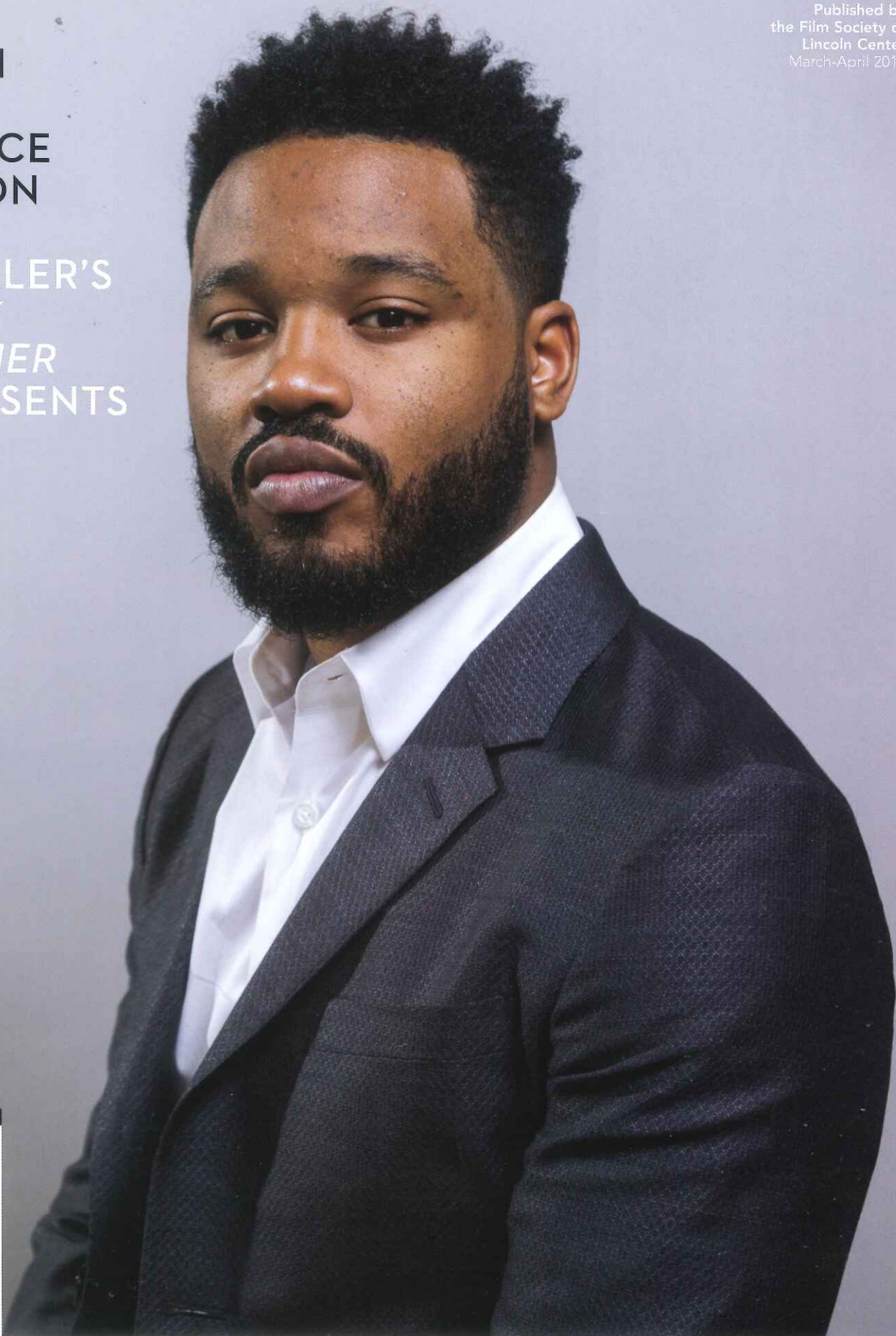
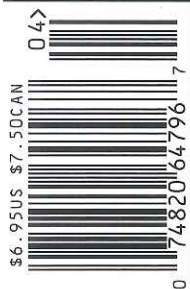
ARMANDO
IANNUCCI'S
*THE DEATH
OF STALIN*

HELEN
MIRREN,
CHAPLIN
AWARD
HONOREE

BILL
GUNN'S
*PERSONAL
PROBLEMS*

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Global Entry

BY JONATHAN ROMNEY

Filmatique

NOT LONG AGO, CINEPHILES WHO DIDN'T have the opportunity to travel to festivals just had to grin and bear it when hearing about the riches of the international film scene, and pray that a handful of each year's choice titles would get some degree of theatrical or DVD exposure. Today, thanks to the expanding field of streaming services, a hungry viewer might almost panic at the amount of interesting material that's available to watch at home. Fandor, MUBI, et al. provide their own diverse and idiosyncratic menus, while services such as Sundance Now and Festival Scope offer a wide sweep of selections from the international circuit.

For over a year now, Filmatique has offered U.S. and Canadian subscribers an adventurous and intelligent new service featuring a curated program and releasing a single film per week in the context of month-long themed series. Filmatique is committed to a diverse vision of world cinema, of a sort that many festivals, let alone sites, struggle to maintain these days. Where MUBI will run several curated strands concurrently, introducing a new film every day punctuated by one-off mainstream and art-cinema selections, Filmatique goes for focus and a scholarly approach—as witnessed by the tone of the essays featured on their website alongside director interviews.

Recent series include selections from the Locarno and Tallinn Black Nights festivals; first films by new Italian directors; "New Asian

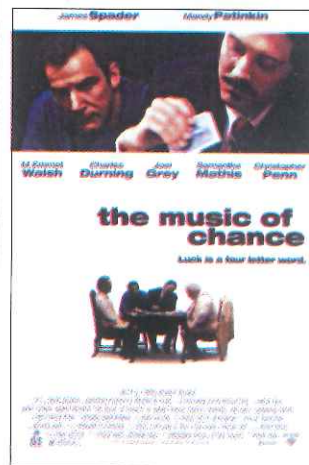
Voices" (films from South Korea, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Japan); "Post-Soviet Cinema" (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, etc.); "Teenage Wasteland" (adolescence European-style); and Brazilian, South American, and North African spotlights. The site displayed its political commitment with last year's "Banned Nations" series: films from Syria, Iran, Sudan, and elsewhere, in response to the Trump ban on travel from Muslim nations. Upcoming programs include "New Voices in Black Cinema"; overall, material tends to be on the newer side—the oldest title I spotted was from 2009.

The site's content and austere design suggest high seriousness. One of its three founders, filmmaker Ursula Grisham, has said that Filmatique's focus is on movies of "cultural, social, and political significance or substance." However, that doesn't exclude lighter tones—as in the eccentric Bolivian comedy *Sealed Cargo* (Julia Vargas-Weise, 2015), while February's hosting of "My French Festival" includes the breezily mainstream *In Bed with Victoria* (Justine Triet, 2016). Also in that package is Léa Mysius's superb and very offbeat coming-of-age drama *Ava*, and one of the best overlooked titles of 2017, Maryam Goormaghtigh's self-photographed *Before Summer Ends*—a documentary with a relaxed fiction feel, about three Iranian men hitting the road for a final summer in France before one of them returns to Tehran. A superb, generous film that straddles cultural, national, and genre boundaries, it's a good example of the globally minded perspective that Filmatique has to offer.

WISH LIST

THE MUSIC OF CHANCE

Though based on a riveting absurdist novel by Paul Auster and featuring a wonderfully game cast, *The Music of Chance's* bizarre subject matter perhaps indicated that it wasn't destined for box-office glory. But no one could have guessed that 25 years after receiving significant critical acclaim upon release, the film would be unavailable on DVD or Blu-ray in the U.S. The story involves two wandering souls—a recent divorcé (Mandy Patinkin) who's road-tripped his inheritance away and the down-on-his-luck gambler (James Spader) he



picks up hitchhiking—who lose their freedom in a poker game and are perplexingly put to work building the winners (Charles Durning and Joel Grey) a stone wall (metaphors abound!). Darkly comedic, fascinating, and wholly original, Philip Haas's first narrative feature—and his first in a string of intriguing literary adaptations co-scripted with his wife and sometime editor, Belinda Haas—is a movie that demands to be seen, then seen again (and, as amusing as it may be, not with sped-up chipmunk voices like the only current upload on YouTube).

—Laura Kern