

7 Films to See at MoMI's First Look 2022

The Film Stage - March 10, 2022

Now in its 11th edition, the Museum of the Moving Image's **First Look festival** brings together a varied, eclectic lineup of cinema from all corners of the world—including a number of films still seeking distribution, making the series perhaps one of your only chances to see these works on the big screen.

With the five-day festival kicking off Wednesday, March 16, we've gathered seven essential films to check out. Beginning this Friday, March 11, MoMI will also present **Second Look**, which looks back at selections from the past decade of the festival.

Babi Yar. Context (Sergei Loznitsa)



One of two new archival documentaries from Ukrainian filmmaker Sergei Loznitsa screening at First Look, *Babi Yar. Context* revisits the horrific September 1941 massacre of 33,771 Jews that took place outside Kyiv. Casting an unflinching eye in its assembly of footage, the Cannes prizewinner examines factors leading up to the atrocity as Nazis took control of Soviet Ukraine and propaganda proliferated the streets, then examines the following years as a semblance of restitution was sought. Incorporating Vasily Grossman's powerful 1943 poem "Ukraine without Jews," Loznitsa's documentary adds less context than its title may suggest, but the faces of those both carrying out and enduring the dehumanizing brutality on display tell you everything you need to know. As Ukraine is in the midst of another unprovoked invasion, *Babi Yar. Context* marks a vital reminder of the necessity to keep history fresh in our minds. — Jordan R.

The Balcony Movie (Pawel Lozinski)



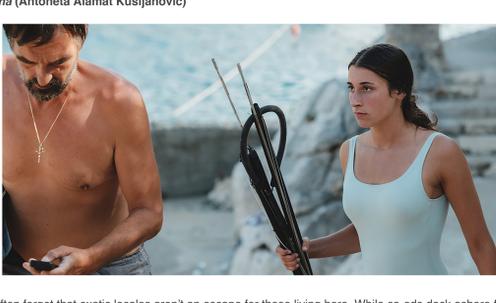
Taking a sight familiar to most during the pandemic—the view outside your window—and making it even more narrow, *The Balcony Movie* explores a universe of thoughts and emotions from passersby below. With this strict formal conceit, Pawel Lozinski's documentary proves both delightful and existential as we hear from his Warsaw neighbors about work, love, loss, the meaning of life, and everything in-between. Its simplicity is a virtue, demonstrating all we need for a little more human connection is the willingness to listen. — Jordan R.

FIRST TIME [The Time for All but Sunset – VIOLET] (Nicolaas Schmidt)



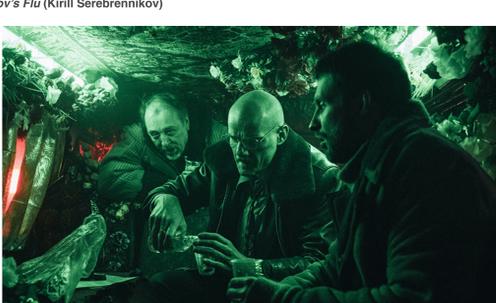
Romance is front and center in Nicolaas Schmidt's *FIRST TIME*, even if it's not obvious. The opening plays Robin Beck's *power ballad* over footage of '80s Coca Cola ads of people showing outward expressions of love and affection before it transitions to the main event: a 40-minute single take of two young men sitting across from each other on the subway, total strangers who sit in silence on their commute while throwing quick, stealthy glances at each other every now and then. Schmidt sets the scene but leaves plenty room for interpretation, given the setup of the shot itself. You can admire views of Hamburg during golden hour; you can hone in on the soundtrack of post-rock tunes combined with the hustle and bustle of passengers; you can see a tale of unspoken queer romance building before your eyes; or you can just get bored senseless by two guys sitting on a train. *FIRST TIME* is a film made up of possibilities, and by laying them all out so plainly it makes a strong case for acting upon one's own desire rather than letting the moment pass. — C.J. P.

Murina (Antoneta Alamat Kusijanovic)



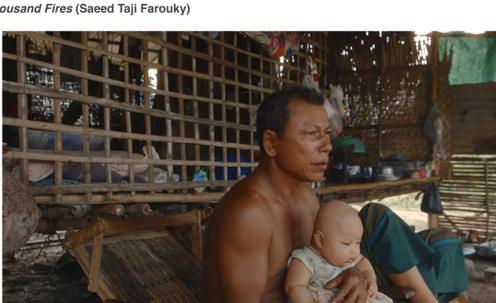
We often forget that exotic locales aren't an escape for those living here. While co-eds dock ashore for sun, sex, and fun, families merely wake up early to go spearfishing so they have dinner that night. The psychological toll of constantly looking out your window at happy faces while dealing with the futility of teenage living under a domineering father with few (if any) opportunities to leave must be daunting. So when Julija (Gracija Filipovic) exits the water to see her father's (Leon Lucev's Ante) rich friend from a past life (Cliff Curtis' Javi) has arrived, she wonders about the possibilities he brings. Ante and her mother (Danica Curcic's Nela) hope to sell him land. Julija hopes he'll save her. — Jared M. (full review)

Petrov's Flu (Kirill Serebrennikov)



Petrov's Flu opens on a stuffy commute—a Moscow bus in the early years of post-Soviet Russia. The eponymous protagonist is already bent over a handrail, stricken with his affliction. The mood is fevered, almost circus-like, the lighting like pea soup. In a moment of madness, Petrov (played by Semyon Serzin) is dragged from the bus by militiamen in Mexican wrestling masks. Hard rock plays. He takes a gun and joins their firing squad, mowing down some nameless humans. The mind briefly wanders to *Brazil*, and somehow *Songs from the Second Floor*. — Rory O. (full review)

A Thousand Fires (Saeed Taji Farouky)



The first time we hear music in Saeed Taji Farouky's mesmeric *A Thousand Fires* is also the first time we're offered a glimpse of the viscous substance around which the whole documentary orbits. Set in the Magway region of Myanmar, it concerns a family struggling to make ends meet by drilling oil in an unregulated field—a *Heart of Darkness*-like landscape dotted with derricks, huts, and countless fires. We open with a man cranking a manual well, but it takes a few moments for Farouky to show the fruits of his work; when it happens, the oil splashes through the frame in a kaleidoscope of colors, an impossibly gorgeous vision of shapeshifting hues, accompanied by a synths-heavy melody, a murmur of the Earth. It's a marriage of sounds and visuals that turns oil into a magic potion, an amniotic liquid, less a resource to be exploited than an ancestral lattice tying humans and land together. — Leonardo G. (full review)

Vengeance Is Mine, All Others Pay Cash (Edwin)



Back in the '80s, martial arts B-movies from Hong Kong made their way into Indonesian cinema. People were obsessed with them because they were fun and entertaining, and most of all reflected the hyper-machismo culture that bloomed in the country during the regime of Soeharto from the late '60s to the end of the '90s. Most Indonesian men, influenced by how the country was ruled, were all about virility. If they didn't know how to fight, they weren't manly enough. However, in Edwin's brilliant and offbeat sixth feature, the Golden Leopard-winning *Vengeance Is Mine, All Others Pay Cash*, this toxic trait of the country gets knocked down in a story about estate dysfunction. — Reyzando N. (full review)

First Look 2022 takes place March 16-20 at the Museum of the Moving Image.



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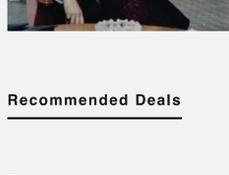
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