



NEW RELEASES

# Official Competition

After securing financial backing from an ailing business mogul, independent cinema darling and Cannes Palme d'Or-winning filmmaker Lola Cuevas (Penélope Cruz) sets out to make an experimental adaptation of a much-loved literary work. In the lead roles she casts two actors with radically different approaches: the acclaimed but stiflingly snobbish thespian Ivan Torres (Oscar Martínez) against the handsome but superficial screen icon Felix (Antonio Banderas). A hysterically funny, well-written satire of the film industry, directors and film stars, powered by a trilogy of fun, high-energy campy performances from Cruz, Banderas, Martínez.

## Directors' Notes

**Mariano Cohn:** For some time now we've been meaning to get a movie made together with Penelope Cruz and Antonio Banderas. They like our movies and both actors were interested in working together. Finally, we met in London to exchange ideas and we shared with them the seed of what would end up becoming the central axis of *Official Competition*. We needed a third leading man, so we called on Oscar Martínez, who had already starred in a movie with us, *The Distinguished Citizen*, and whose work Penelope and Antonio really liked. The Mediapro Studio co-produced our last two films *My Masterpiece* and *4x4*, and we have a great artistic and professional affinity with them. Their commitment to *Official Competition* was absolute from the very outset and we began working on the script for *Official Competition* together with Andrés Duprat with the purpose of showing, through fiction, how actors build emotion. Audiences will see the mechanisms, techniques, tactics and procedures involved.

**Gastón Duprat:** There are many films that show how a film is made, the production problems, the difficulties and issues of carrying out a project. But there's nothing exactly like the kind of stuff actors get up to, to make us cry, to make us laugh, to generate emotion. This film investigates this complex and extraordinary relationship, generally hidden from view of the general public. Undoubtedly, Penelope, Antonio and Oscar were seduced by the possibility of making a film where they could talk about the trade and truly reflect on issues affecting the profession from an informed perspective. *Official Competition* is structured around the rehearsals prior to the shooting of a film. Each rehearsal works in an almost autonomous and self-conclusive way and is a fascinating masterclass on how these three acting talents build emotion with the audience. Addressing issues such as the process of artistic creation, professional competence, egos, the need for prestige and recognition, the different schools of acting and the tensions between artists from different backgrounds and with different objectives is one of the challenges we're most passionate about in *Official Competition*.

## Production notes

A film titled *Official Competition* obviously calls for a major festival slot – which indeed this stylish farce enjoyed in Venice last year, providing light relief in a

heavyweight line-up that might well have featured the earnest likes of *Rivalry*, the apocryphal film seen rehearsed here. But the title also invokes competition as rivalrous warfare, and Argentinian directors Gastón Duprat and Mariano Cohn, with co-writer Andrés Duprat, cheerfully riff on all the myths about cinematic creation as extended process of ruthless combat.

The joke is on the kind of cinema that takes itself seriously for the wrong reasons. A millionaire, yearning for a new prestige monument to himself, and insisting on only the very best, options an acclaimed novel and hires a Palme d'Or-winning female director (the rarest of breeds). She casts two differently pompous male leads to play warring brothers. One is international star Félix, played by Antonio Banderas, who spoofs himself with relish as a lunkish ageing playboy. Banderas is the butt of one of the film's slyest jokes, when Félix's co-star, stage eminence Iván, snorts at the idea of any actor becoming a token Latino for Hollywood (a nice jab at the star of *The Mask of Zorro*, 1998, and *Spy Kids*, 2001). The solemnly high-minded Iván – played by Oscar Martínez, who won Venice's Best Actor award in 2016 for the same directors' *The Distinguished Citizen* – sneers at the idea of award ceremonies, but secretly rehearses a magnificently self-aggrandising Oscars speech.

An electrically coiffed Penélope Cruz, meanwhile, plays Lola Cuevas, an unpredictable director with bizarre methods for psyching up her actors. (One ploy involves a cruel use of their various award trophies.) Sexual tensions also come into play, the two men resenting the instructions of a confident younger woman; Lola, a lesbian, puts them in their place by showing them the right way to kiss their female co-star, an extended gag involving a panoply of microphones resembling an art installation.

*Official Competition* is a cannily paced, visually gorgeous pleasure: staged in a glossily cavernous arts foundation, it's designed by Alain Babin (elegantly repurposing locations including the San Lorenzo de El Escorial auditorium near Madrid) and shot by Arnau Valls Colomer with an eye for highly composed tableaux. It's up to the viewer, of course, to guess which director Lola might be modelled on – her butterfly glasses suggest Isabel Coixet or Lucrecia Martel, but then both Cruz and Banderas could no doubt tell a story or two about the working methods of Pedro Almodóvar.

**Jonathan Romney, *Sight and Sound*, October 2022**

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## OFFICIAL COMPETITION (COMPETENCIA OFICIAL)

*Directed by:* Gastón Duprat, Mariano Cohn  
*©:* Mediaproducción S.L.U., Prom TV S.A.U.  
*Produced by:* The Mediapro Studio  
*With the participation of:* RTVE, Orange, 3 - Televisió de Catalunya  
*In association with:* Protagonist Pictures  
*With financing from:* ICAA - Ministerio de cultura y deporte (Gobierno de España)  
*Logos:* Cine Argentino, INCAA - Instituto nacional de cine y artes audiovisuales  
*International Sales:* Protagonist Pictures  
*Protagonist Pictures (Executive Director):* Dave Bishop  
*Protagonist Pictures (Director of Operations):* James Pugh  
*Protagonist Pictures (Commercial Director):* George Hamilton  
*Protagonist Pictures (Chief of Operations):* Anne-Lise Fernandez  
*Executive Producers:* Javier Méndez, Laura Fernández Espeso, Javier Pons, Antonio Banderas, Penélope Cruz, Oscar Martínez  
*Co-executive Producers:* Carles Montiel, Eva Garrido, Marisa Fernández Armenteros  
*Produced by:* Jaume Roures  
*Production Manager:* Josep Amorós  
*Production Supervisor:* Alex Miyata  
*Production Coordinator for TMS [The Mediapro Studio]:* Andrés Bueno  
*Production Coordinators:* Paula G. Matienzo, Paloma Pérez Sánchez  
*Production Controller:* Irene Camposo  
*Location Manager:* Marga Roca  
*Post-production and Visual Effects Supervisor:* Isidro Jiménez  
*1st Assistant Director:* Martín Bustos  
*2nd Assistant Directors:* Nuria Herrera, Angie Paul Risque, Laura Díez  
*Script Supervisor:* Sandra Serna  
*Casting Director:* Luis San Narciso  
*Casting:* Tonucha Vidal, Andrés Cuenca, Diego Martín, Raquel Casado  
*Screenplay by:* Andrés Duprat  
*Screenplay Co-written by:* Gastón Duprat, Mariano Cohn  
*Script Advisers:* Axel Kuschevatzky, Francisco Abelenda, Mario Chierico, Sergio Strejilevich, Javier Bardem, Mariana Urtueta, Leonardo D'Espósito, Juan Pablo Ferrer, Martín Bustos, Sofía Condisciani, Diego Bliffeld, Margarita García Robayo, Jorge Gaggero, Carolina Krasňansky, Mariana Pérez, Verónica Murta, Luis Caporossi, Nicolás Diodovich, Gerardo Rozín, Marcelo Panozzo  
*Director of Photography:* Arnau Valls Colomer  
*2nd Unit Directors of Photography:* Sergi Vilanova, Pau Castejón  
*Gaffers:* Kiko Boyero, Fernando Beltrán  
*Visual Effects:* Telson (España)

*Special Effects Supervisor:* Gregory Brossard  
*Special Effects:* Nyumad  
*Editing:* Alberto del Campo  
*Additional Editing:* Manu Huelva  
*Production Designer:* Alain Bainée  
*Art Director:* Sara Natividad  
*Costume Designer:* Wanda Morales  
*Costume Supervisor:* Eudald Magri  
*Make-up and Hair:* Eli Adánez, Sergio Pérez, Pablo Iglesias, Mariló Osuna, Mamen Peña  
*Pianist:* Judith Jáuregui  
*Song Sung by:* Edu Cruz  
*Sound Supervisor:* Pelayo Gutiérrez, Eduardo Castro  
*Sound Recording:* Aitor Berenguer, Mar González  
*2nd Unit Sound Recordist:* Pedro R. Soto  
*Sound Mixing:* Alberto Ovejero  
*Stunt Co-ordinator:* Gregory Brossard

## Cast

Penélope Cruz (*Lola Cuevas*)  
Antonio Banderas (*Félix Rivero*)  
Oscar Martínez (*Iván Torres*)  
José Luis Gómez (*Humberto Suárez*)  
Irene Escolar (*Diana Suárez*)  
Manolo Solo (*Matías*)  
Nagore Aramburu (*Julia*)  
Pilar Castro (*Violeta*)  
Koldo Olabari (*Darío*)  
Juan Grandinetti (*Ariel*)  
Jean Dominikowski (*Félix's self-defence coach*)  
Amanda Goldsmith, Mary Ruiz, María Guinea (*Félix's girlfriends*)  
Isabel García Lorca (*art director*)  
Xana del Mar (*art assistant*)  
Melina Mathews (*director of photography*)  
Sue Flack (*costume supervisor*)  
Lucía Arestegui (*costumes assistant*)  
Pilar Bergés, Myriam Diego (*foundation cleaners*)

Spain-Argentina-UK 2021©  
115 mins

A Curzon release

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## NEW RELEASES

### Hit the Road (Jaddeh Khaki)

Continues from Fri 29 Jul

### The Feast

From Fri 19 Aug

### My Old School

From Fri 19 Aug

### Where Is Anne Frank

From Fri 19 Aug

### Queen of Glory

From Fri 26 Aug

## RE-RELEASES

### The Big City (Mahanagar)

Continues from Fri 22 Jul

### Paris, Texas

Continues from Fri 29 Jul

### The Harder They Come

From Fri 5 Aug

### Burning an Illusion

From Fri 19 Aug

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Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email [prognotes@bfi.org.uk](mailto:prognotes@bfi.org.uk)

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