

Venice film festival opens with Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan*

The American director's psychological thriller, starring Natalie Portman and Mila Kunis, kicks off this year's event, competing against films by Sofia Coppola and Vincent Gallo

Ben Child and agencies
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Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez attend the 67th Venice film festival. Photograph: Andreas Rentz/Getty Images

The [Venice film festival](#) opens tonight with the latest from former Golden Lion winner Darren Aronofsky, the psychological thriller [Black Swan](#).

Black Swan

Production year:

2010

Country: USA

Runtime: 103 mins

Directors: Darren Aronofsky

Cast: Mila Kunis, Natalie Portman, Vincent Cassel, Winona Ryder

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Starring Natalie Portman and Mila Kunis as rival ballet dancers in a New York City production of *Swan Lake*, Aronofsky's film will compete with 23 other features for this year's top prize. Quentin Tarantino heads the jury, which also features directors Arnaud Desplechin of France, Guillermo Arriaga of Mexico and Gabriele Salvatores of Italy. As well as the Golden Lion for best film, they will pick winners for the Volpi Cups for best actor and actress and a special jury prize.

Other in-competition films from well-known names include Sofia Coppola's highly anticipated *Somewhere* and Vincent Gallo's *Promises*

Written in Water. Out of competition features include Ben Affleck's *The Town* and Robert Rodriguez's *Machete*. Meanwhile, Vincent Gallo looks set to be ubiquitous at the festival: he stars as a terror suspect plotting his escape in Jerzy Skolimowski's *Essential Killing*, and alongside *Promises Written in Water*, has brought another self-directed film, *The Agent*, to the Lido.

"Both films are entirely self-produced. He started with a short film, then he actually realised that using the same mode of production he could dare to look forward to a feature," festival director Marco Mueller told Associated Press. The longer film, *Promises Written in Water*, will compete for the Golden Lion.

Tarantino, Portman and Jessica Alba, who stars in Robert Rodriguez's B-movie pastiche *Machete*, have all arrived in Venice, but another prominent participant is conspicuous by his absence. Golden Lion-winning Iranian film-maker Jafar Panahi has been unable to travel for the screening of his short film, *The Accordion*, after the country's authorities refused to return his passport. He was jailed for three months following his arrest in March while shooting a film about the aftermath of Iran's disputed June 2009 election.

Rodriguez's *Machete* also screens tonight – at midnight. An early review from *Variety* suggests the film, heralded when it appeared as a fake trailer screened as part of Rodriguez and Tarantino's ill-fated *Grindhouse* double bill three years ago, may disappoint.

"This slam-bang B-movie pastiche is wildly uneven as it doggedly strives (sometimes with obvious strain) to sustain a freewheeling, anything-goes air of exuberant junkiness," writes Joe Leydon. However he adds: "In marked contrast to Grindhouse, which seemed a tad too slick and polished to truly evoke the flavour of seedy 1970s exploitation fare, Machete has the appropriate look and feel of a scrappy, penny-pinched indie aimed at drive-ins and inner-city theatres."

In total this year's festival will screen 79 full-length world premieres from 34 countries. The 67th Venice film festival runs from 1 to 11 September.