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Cannes is not the world's most famous film festival for nothing - although infamous may be more appropriate this year given the heelgate issue which rained down following an allegedly overzealous security guard rejecting some women for not wearing high heels. The discrimination on the red carpet though is shared out with men similarly rejected for not wearing the requisite shiny black shoes or a tie instead of a bow tie – such are the fashion perils of the famed *tenué du soir* competition evening screening.

That small spat to one side it is the films which take centre stage and the sense that at this moment in time film is of course not a matter of life and death they are in fact much much more important than that - to misquote football manager Bill Shankley. What follows then are some of my highlights which, with a fair wind and a distribution deal, should be coming to Watershed at some point in the future.

The first film I wanted to see when I heard the Cannes competition announced turned out to be the last of my 30 films watched at the Festival. I had been aware of Todd Haynes' **Carol** for maybe a year now primarily through the fact that it was being shot by cinematographer Ed Lachman. Lachman is one of the great cinematographers whose work embodies an indelible spirit of independence and references beyond film to photography and painting. He has worked with many directors but over the past decade formed strong creative relationship with Haynes and Austrian director Ulrich Seidl. *Carol*, set in America of the 50s, invokes the paintings of Edward Hopper but is less of an homage to the period than their previous collaboration *Far From Heaven*.

Taklub

Of the great Phillipine director Brillante Mendoza's previous films I have only seen – Kinatay and The Captive – these have both been intense and tough portraits of police corruption (Kinatay) and terrorism (The Captive). His cinematic style is energetic and engrossing. It was with some trepidation that I went to see his new film given the intensity of the previous two. Taklub was no less intense – following the remnants of the devastated community post Super Typhoon. Taklub is possibly the greatest film I have seen in a while. It is to the early 21st century what Rossellini's Rome Open City was to post world WWII – telling an urgent story of humanity in the ruins of a traumatised community

Rams

On arrival in Cannes faced with over 200 screenings happening each day it is disorientating to know where to get started. As I picked over some titles in the market familiar a colleague mentioned they were off to see the new Icelandic film in the Un Certain Regard strand. "Icelandic Film" was enough to go on and Rams delivered all that is sublime, warm and idiosyncratic about that country's cinema centering on two sheep farming brothers who haven't spoken for over 40 years unexpectedly having to confront their feud when a disease threatens their herds.

Son of Saul

In our current Impact of Conflict season running across the UK and online at conversationsaboutcinema.co.uk we screened the documentary Night Will Fall which featured terrifying and moving footage from the liberation of the concentration camps in 1945. The problem for all filmmakers is how do you fictionalise such horror? First time feature director László Nemes finds a visual language – somewhere between Kieslowski and the Dardennes Brothers - to suggest the horror and immerse the viewer in the terrifying environment of a recreated death camp as a Hungarian-Jewish prisoner seeks some kind of salvation. It is an astonishing powerful piece of

work. Testament to the memory of the past and testament to the power of cinema.

Cemetery of Splendour

Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul introduced a dreamy magical realism into world cinema with films like *Tropical Malady* and *Syndromes and a Century*. His new film *Cemetery of Splendour* continues that distinctive, absorbing and meditative style weaving a sublime, sometimes humorous, exploration of the spirit realm seeping into the real world of traumatised soldiers recuperating in hospital. Like all of Apichatpong's films. *Cemetery of Splendour* lingers long in the imagination and transforms the real world outside the cinema.

Five films then which for me re-impress the power of world cinema, the art of film and the status of Cannes as the leading film festival despite a wobble over heels.

Keep an eye out for these films coming to Watershed at some point in the future.