

"Dust" will settle on Venice

By David Rooney, Variety, April 16, 2001

ROME (Variety) - While programmers of the Cannes Film Festival are scrambling to flesh out the lineup prior to Wednesday's announcement, the head of the Venice festival is believed to have secured the world premiere of Milcho Manchevski's "Dust" to open the event's 58th edition, running Aug. 29-Sept. 8.

The selection of the \$12.5 million Balkan Western, a British-German-Italian-Macedonian co-production, marks the first time since 1994 -- when the curtain went up on Michael Radford's "Il Postino" -- that a major U.S. feature has not opened Venice. Recent openers have included "Saving Private Ryan," "Eyes Wide Shut" and "Space Cowboys".

However, high-profile studio fare will not be absent, with Steven Spielberg's eagerly awaited "A.I." from Warner Bros. locked in to make its European premiere at Venice in an out-of-competition slot.

Set between present-day New York and the early 20th century during the first Balkan war, "Dust" is described as a violent, poetic ballad inspired by the American Western. The English-language feature stars Joseph Fiennes, David Wenham, Adrian Lester, Anne Brochet, Rosemary Murphy and Nikolina Kujaca.

While no official announcements regarding the Venice lineup will be made before the customary press conference July 29, sources indicate that "Dust," which is completing post-production, was withdrawn from possible Cannes selection when Venice chief Alberto Barbera screened the film and immediately issued an invitation to Venice.

Manchevski is understood to have favored a return to Venice, where he won the festival's top prize, the Golden Lion, for his 1994 debut feature, "Before the Rain." The director reportedly has opted for "Dust" to screen out of competition. The film does not yet have U.S. distribution.

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