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Barred Russian Director Rolls Out Cannes Red Carpet at Home

By Fiachra Gibbons for AFP

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Andreas Rentz / EPA / TASS

Dissident director Kirill Serebrennikov – who is banned from leaving Russia – said Tuesday that he laid a red carpet in Moscow to recreate the Cannes film festival's premiere he was not allowed to attend.

Serebrennikov – who was under house arrest when his last movie "Leto" picked up a prize at the festival three years ago – is in the running again for Cannes' top prize, the Palme d'Or.

But the 53-year-old, who ran afoul of the Kremlin for his support of LGBTQ issues, said he tried to create some of the Cannes magic by unrolling a red carpet on the set of his latest project in Moscow.

"We had a double celebration in the studio," he told reporters by video link.

The director was given a long-standing ovation at his Cannes premiere when he appeared by

FaceTime, with a seat bearing his name left empty.

Serebrennikov made "Petrov's Flu" – a dream-like romp through a mid-winter Moscow in the stagnant years before the collapse of the Soviet Union – while he was being tried in a controversial fraud case the Hollywood Reporter described as "a nightmare straight out of a Franz Kafka novel".

He shot the movie at night after spending most of the day in court facing charges his supporters say were a punishment for his daring as director of the city's Gogol Centre theatre.

But Serebrennikov refused to criticize the Russian authorities during a video news conference, saying "the real difficulties (in making the film) are within yourself, but when you have a great team that helps."

Critics in Cannes loved "Petrov's Flu", which is adapted from Alexei Salnikov's free-wheeling novel of a city afflicted by a strange virus.

Variety called the movie, which stars Ukrainian singer Ivan Dorn "a rowdy, exhilarating return to top form for Serebrennikov."

The Hollywood Reporter said it was "a hoot, and a sometimes moving exercise in nostalgia."

Serebrennikov, who had been close to President Vladimir Putin's circle, ran into trouble after his ballet based on the energetic gay life of legendary dancer Rudolf Nureyev outraged Russian conservatives.

Nikita Mikhalkov, an Oscar-winning film director with Kremlin links, said Serebrennikov should not be allowed to parade "Nureyev's cock" at the Bolshoi Theatre.

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