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Russian Director Andrey Zvyagintsev Returns to Cannes Film Festival After Near-Fatal Illness

By AFP

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Russian director Andrey Zvyagintsev. **Anne-Christine Poujoulat / AFP**

Two-time Oscar nominee Andrey Zvyagintsev will make his highly anticipated return to the Cannes Film Festival on Tuesday, premiering his first feature film in nine years after a near-death experience during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Zvyagintsev, director of the acclaimed films "Leviathan" and "Loveless," spent a year unable to walk and in a medically induced coma after developing severe complications following a Covid-19 infection in 2021.

After treatment in Europe, where he now lives in exile, the 62-year-old began work on "Minotaur," which is running in the main competition at Cannes.

"The pandemic really hit me hard. I was bedridden. I couldn't move my hands. I couldn't

move my legs," he told The Hollywood Reporter ahead of the premiere at Cannes.

Zvyagintsev said that the experience of a coma and living in a wheelchair had convinced him that he needed "to live in the fast lane."

All of the director's previous films, including "Elena," "Leviathan" and "Loveless," have won prizes at Cannes, with the portrait of corruption and state control under Russian President Vladimir Putin in "Leviathan" causing problems at home but cementing his reputation abroad.

His latest feature, "Minotaur," is an adaptation of French director Claude Chabrol's 1969 erotic thriller "The Unfaithful Wife" and will be a strong contender for the festival's top film prize.

The film is focused on the Russian elite after the 2022 invasion of Ukraine and is likely to be another trademark portrait of moral failure and vice in contemporary Russia.

A total of 22 films are competing for the prestigious Palme d'Or for best film, which will be handed out on Saturday.

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