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CINEMATIC FEVER

Canadian philanthropist and cinephile Suzanne Rogers muses on what TIFF means to her.

There are so many reasons I adore autumn.

Principal among them is the annual return of the Toronto International Film Festival. Fall is the season of new beginnings—a fresh school year, a global array of Fashion Weeks anticipating next spring and summer, the exhilarating shift from hot summer nights to early hints of September's chill. How better to celebrate the season than with dozens of new films from around the globe, spanning every genre.

It's always a special thrill when, in late July, TIFF's superb programmers offer a first peek at the upcoming lineup. TIFF never disappoints, both in terms of the quality

and diversity of its schedule, and of the megawatt star power it attracts. What, as TIFF celebrates its 43rd birthday, am I most excited about? I'm very interested to see what Bradley Cooper, in his directorial debut, will do with the fourth big-screen treatment of *A Star is Born*, and how his co-star, the endlessly versatile Lady Gaga, will fare in a role so strongly associated with icons Judy Garland and Barbra Streisand. I can't wait to see the dynamic husband-and-wife team of Javier Bardem and Penélope Cruz in Iranian director Asghar Farhadi's tension-filled *Everybody Knows (Todos la saben)*. I'll be rooting for Canada's own Ryan Gosling as he reunites with his *La La Land* director, Damien Chazelle, for the Neil Armstrong biopic *First Man*. Remember last year's Oscar night mix-up when *Moonlight* was ultimately revealed as the actual Best Picture victor? *Moonlight* director Barry Jenkins could be gearing up for a second win with *If Beale Street Could Talk*, based on James Baldwin's classic novel. *Hotel Mumbai*, about the 2008 terrorist attacks in India, brings together the intriguing trio of Dev Patel, Armie Hammer, and *The Big Sick*'s Anupam Kher. And who could resist Melissa McCarthy in a change-of-pace role as Lee Israel, the bestselling author turned forger, in *Can You Ever Forgive Me?*

Though the festival is truly global in scope, I greatly admire how intensely the spotlight is focused on Canadian films and filmmakers. The 2018 schedule includes no fewer than 11 Canadian premieres, including hotly anticipated new works from Patricia Rozema (the family drama *Mouthpiece*) and Denys Arcand, who unveils *The Fall of the American Empire*, a thematic sequel to his *The Decline of the American Empire* and *The Barbarian Invasions*.

Though the films are what matter most, there are so many other aspects that amplify TIFF's magic. I love the red-carpet galas with their old-Hollywood opulence, including banks of flashbulb-popping paparazzi and hundreds of screaming fans. And, given my passion for fashion, I'm always impressed by how elegant the audiences are for these tent-pole screenings and after-parties (where, this year, I might find myself rubbing elbows with anyone from Liam Neeson to Robert Pattinson). Throughout the city, day and night—particularly in the celebrity and filmgoer hubs of Yorkville and surrounding King Street's TIFF Lightbox—the air is electric with excitement. Star-spotting is inevitable along Bloor Street's "Mink Mile" and in the best restaurants and lounges. Among my favourites: outdoors, if the weather co-operates, at the DEQ Terrace & Lounge at the Ritz-Carlton and the candlelit patio at Hazelton Hotel's ONE Restaurant; Soho House, so handy to the Lightbox and perfect for a light late-evening nosh; and for a post-gala nightcap, Amber.

For 10 days, Toronto is transformed into the most glamorous place on earth, the whole world watching us as we enjoy the finest in world cinema.