Beat: Arts

THE 10 TO WATCH: NEW FRENCH TALENTS UNDER THE CANNES FESTIVAL SPOTLIGHT 2026

UNDER UNIFRANCE'S UMBRELLA

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USPA NEWS - This year's Cannes unfolds under a more fragile geopolitical sky than usual, with the war involving Iran, Israel and the United States casting a distant but perceptible shadow over the festival. Even when politics does not enter the frame directly, the mood of the 79th edition suggests a festival aware of a more unstable world order. Launched by Unifrance in 2014, the "10 to Watch" initiative aims to support the emergence of new French film talent on the international stage by raising their profile beyond France among journalists, festival programmers, distributors and audiences abroad. Each year, ten actors and directors are selected as faces to watch for the coming season, with the explicit goal of renewing the country's cinematic icons and giving a structured boost to careers that are already attracting attention in major festivals. The 2026 selection was unveiled in January during the Rendez-vous with Unifrance in Paris and will now be showcased during a dedicated day at the Cannes Film Festival.

This article is written as a piece of analytical reporting, drawing on official statements, diplomatic sources and industry data rather than on site impressions from the Croisette. It aims to place this year's Cannes within a wider geopolitical and economic landscape, while applying an inclusive editorial approach that pays particular attention to how disabled professionals including our own neurodivergent and physically disabled reporters experience and cover the festival.

THE 10 TO WATCH ARE THE NEW FRENCH TALENTS PICKED BY UNIFRANCE

The artists chosen as "10 to Watch" are not picked by Unifrance alone but by a committee of international film journalists, including contributors to Screen International, Cineuropa, The Hollywood Reporter, France Inter and German media outlets. This external selection is designed to ensure that the list reflects how French talent is perceived abroad, not only at home, and to anchor the initiative in the wider ecosystem of international criticism and programming. In 2026, the ten selected talents are directors Ugo Bienvenu, Valentine Cadic, Anna Cazenave Cambet, Alice Douard and Thomas Ngijol, and actors Salif Cisse, Guillaume Marbeck, Ji Min Park, Theodore Pellerin and Ella Rumpf.

A DEDICATED CANNES SHOWCASE

Cannes offers Unifrance a high visibility stage to bring these ten names to the attention of decision makers who matter most for their international careers. On Wednesday 20 May, Unifrance will organise a dedicated day centred on a lunch with French and international press, followed by a red carpet appearance and a dinner on the Unifrance Terrace. Throughout the day, interview slots with the talents will be arranged, subject to availability, via Unifrance press officer Betty Bousquet. The operation benefits from the collaborative participation of the Cannes Film Festival itself and from the support of partners such as L'Oréal Paris and Davines, underlining the blend of artistic, industrial and brand interests that now structure the Croisette.

Several of the selected artists are already present in this year's programme in different capacities. Ugo Bienvenu is a producer on Goodbye Cruel World by Félix de Givry, the closing film of the 65th Critics' Week. Ji Min Park, one of the actors highlighted by "10 to Watch", serves on the Short Films and La Cinef jury at the 79th Cannes Film Festival and appears in Orange-Flavoured Wedding by Christophe Honoré, selected in Cannes Première. Théodore Pellerin sits on the jury of the 65th Critics' Week, while Ella Rumpf appears in Too Many Beasts by Sarah Harnold in the 58th Directors' Fortnight. By tying the promotion of its ten talents to concrete roles within the festival, Unifrance seeks to transform a label into real visibility and professional traction.

WHAT UNIFRANCE IS, AND WHY IT MATTERS

Founded in 1949, Unifrance is the organisation responsible for promoting French cinema and audiovisual content internationally. Based in Paris, with representatives in the United States, China and Japan, it brings together more than 1,000 professionals from the French film and audiovisual industries, including producers, directors, actors, talent agents and international sales companies. Its

mission is to enhance the global reach of French films and audiovisual programmes among foreign audiences, industry players and media outlets, by coordinating releases, supporting festival campaigns and running promotional operations such as “10 to Watch”. Unifrance is supported by the French government and institutions such as the CNC and PROCIREP, as well as a network of institutional and private partners.

In that sense, “10 to Watch” is not just a list but part of a broader strategy: to ensure that, at a time when the global film ecosystem is being reshaped by streaming, changing audience habits and geopolitical uncertainty, the next generation of French talent is visible enough to secure funding, distribution and international recognition. For Cannes, aligning itself with this initiative also means reaffirming its traditional role as a launchpad for careers, at a moment when the festival is preparing its 80th anniversary in 2027 and will be looking to prove that it can still reveal new faces, not just welcome familiar ones back to the Croisette.

This article is based on official Unifrance communications, Festival de Cannes information and publicly available industry reporting on the “10 to Watch” initiative. It offers a professional, industry focused reading of the programme, in line with an editorial approach that combines cinema analysis with attention to the structural forces and institutions that shape the careers of emerging talent.

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