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'Borg McEnroe,' Starring Shia LaBeouf, Triumphs at Rome Film Festival

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Di Nick Vivarelli

ROME — Danish director Janus Metz Pedersen's "Borg McEnroe," the story of one of the great tennis rivalries of all time, is the winner of the BNL People's Choice at the Rome Film Festival which wrapped its twelfth edition on a positive note with ticket sales up 13%.

The sports history dramatisation toplining Sweden's Sverrir Gudnasson and Shia LaBeouf in the title roles — which was the Toronto Film Festival opener in September — is among many crowdpleasers and upcoming awards-season hopefuls that screened during the non-competitive Eternal City event. Pic will open in Italy on Nov. 9 via distributor Lucky Red.

Austrian director Adrian Goiginger's first feature "The Best of All Worlds," about a heroin addict contending with motherhood, won the top prize in the fest's independently-run **Alice in the City** section for younger audiences.

On Saturday David Lynch held one of many high-caliber onstage conversations that have become a trademark of the big city fest under artistic director Antonio Monda, a New York based Italian journalist, arts events organiser, and film professor at NYU. Lynch was also feted with a lifetime achievement award.

Other high-caliber guests who chatted with Monda on stage as part of his Close Encounters section included Xavier Dolan, Jake Gyllenhaal, Ian McKellen, Nanni Moretti, Vanessa Redgrave, Christoph Waltz, composer Michael Nyman, and writer Chuck Palahniuk.

Monda, who was recently re-upped through 2020 after taking the the reins in 2015, has reshaped the Rome fest into an audience friendly showcase. More than 100 films screened this year, including Kathryn Bigelow's "Detroit," Craig Gillespie's "I, Tonya," Richard Linklater's "Last Flag Flying," Steven Soderbergh's "Logan Lucky," and the world premieres of Japanese director Junji Shimizu's manga pic "Mazinger Z Infinity," produced by Toei Animation and of the Taviani Brothers' "A Private Affair."

This year for the first time the fest ran separately from Rome's Mia market dedicated to feature films, TV series, documentaries and video games, which took place October 19-23. But the fest and Rome's new concept mart are expected to become concurrent again next year.