



Yung Kha Publicity

TALLINN BLACK NIGHTS

Press Report

“18 HOLES TO PARADISE”

Premiere - 13 November 2025

Round-up

24 October - [VARIETY](#) - exclusive acquisition announcement

10 November - [DEADLINE](#) - exclusive trailer release

14 November - [SCREEN](#) positive review

"elegant"

"fierce"

"arresting"

14 November - [Projected Figures](#) positive review

“a microcosm of the crumbling, beleaguered world”

“a story of the quiet apocalypse”

19 November - [Film Fest Report](#) - Interview with João Nuno Pinto

19 November - [GAZETTELY](#) positive review

“fierce and elegant”

21 November - [CINEUROPA](#) overall positive review

"Stark moments that punctuate the film's more quotidian pacing become the work's highlights, as does the final scene that becomes the pinnacle of what the filmmaker seems to be examining."

21 November - [JOURNEY INTO CINEMA](#) positive review

"The film is full of smart and subtle surprises, not just in terms of plot, but also in its structure and who the story is really about."

"18 Holes to Paradise echoes other films — an early pool scene that brings Lucrecia Martel's *La Ciénaga* (2001) to mind, or the recent Balearic (*Ion De Sosa*, 2025), another movie about privileged people swimming while the hills burn. Yet Pinto's film is sharper, more contained, angrier in a quieter way."

24 October - [VARIETY](#) - exclusive acquisition announcement

Home > Film > Global Oct 24, 2025 3:08am PT

Alpha Violet Boards Tallinn Competition Pics '18 Holes to Paradise' by João Nuno Pinto and French-Nepalese Doc 'Goodbye Sisters' (EXCLUSIVE)

By Annika Pham

🗨️ 🌐 ✂️ 📷 ✉️ ⋮



Most Popular

-  CMA Awards 2025: Lainey Wilson Reclaims Entertainer of the Year Prize; Cody Johnson and Red Clay Strays Score Upsets — The Complete List of...
-  'Friends' Spinoff 'Joey' Finally Releases Its Final Eight Unaired Episodes Nearly 20 Years Later
-  New 'Stargate' TV Series Ordered at Amazon From 'Blindspot' Creator Martin Gero
-  **SPONSORED**
Bowen Yang Shuts Down Potential 'Wicked 3' at 'For Good' Premiere: 'I Think We Leave It Here'
-  Five People Have Died at Disney World Over the Past Month

ADVERTISEMENT

Paris-based auteur-driven sales boutique Alpha Violet has acquired world distribution rights to two titles set to world premiere in competition at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival (PÖFF), running over Nov. 7-23.

One candidate for Tallinn's main Grand Prix, "18 Holes to Paradise" is helmed by Portuguese filmmaker and New York Film Academy graduate João Nuno Pinto, known for his acclaimed debut "America" (2010), "Mosquito," which was a Rotterdam Fest opener in 2020, and crime series "Natural Law."

Penned by "Mosquito"'s Fernanda Polacow, the drama is set at a drought-stricken Portuguese country home. It tells of "landowners and staff who recount the same events from irreconcilable perspectives, revealing a fractured world on the brink of collapse," reads the logline. In the title roles are Margarida Marinho ("The Drought," "A Shot in the Dark") Beatriz Batarda ("Night Train to Lisbon," "Finisterra"), Rita Cabaço ("Great Yarmouth-Provisional Figures") and Jorge Andrade.

"18 Holes to Paradise" is a film that was born out of our experience of watching our country dry out and be sold cheap. So we went about creating a beautiful and decadent country side property and its three siblings who can't agree on its future: to sell or not to sell," Pinto told Variety. "When a big forest fire surrounds them, internal social crises erupt, bringing the land workers in the conversation.

As the rich owners of the property try not to go insane, cows simply observe as the clock ticks fast."

Following its world debut in Tallinn Nov. 13, the feature, backed by pubcaster RTP, will roll

out in national cinemas via NOS. Trent Film will handle Italian distribution.

Reposted on [IMDB](#)



Alpha Violet Boards Tallinn Competition Pics '18 Holes to Paradise' by João Nuno Pinto and French-Nepalese Doc 'Goodbye Sisters' (Exclusive) [↗](#)



Paris-based auteur-driven sales boutique [Alpha Violet](#) has acquired world distribution rights to two titles set to world premiere in competition at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival (PÖFF), running over Nov. 7-23.

10 November - [DEADLINE](#) - exclusive trailer release



DEADLINE

Breaking Hollywood News Since 2006

FOLLOW US: [f](#) [X](#) [v](#) [i](#) [t](#)

TV | FILM | AWARDS | BOX OFFICE | BIZ | INTERNATIONAL | POLITICS | THEATER | REVIEWS | OBITS | VIDEO | EVENTS | FESTIVALS | INSIDER | NEWS ALERTS

HOME / INTERNATIONAL / NEWS

'18 Holes To Paradise:' Portuguese Filmmaker João Nuno Pinto Returns With Tallinn Competition Title — First Trailer



By [Zac Ntim](#)
November 10, 2025 3:12am



EXCLUSIVE: João Nuno Pinto returns to feature filmmaking this year with *18 Holes To Paradise*, which debuts at the upcoming Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival. Check out the first trailer for the film above.

The film's synopsis reads: Set on a drought-stricken Portuguese estate, the film tells the story of landowners and staff who recount the same events from irreconcilable perspectives, revealing a fractured world on the brink of collapse.

18 Holes to Paradise is a Wonder Maria Filmes (Portugal) production, directed by João Nuno Pinto from a screenplay by Fernanda Polacow. The film stars Margarida Marinho, Beatriz Batarda, Rita Cabaço, and Jorge Andrade. Alpha Violet is repping sales. In the film's press notes, Pinto said *18 Holes to Paradise* was "born out of a long-standing desire to reflect on the environmental catastrophe we are witnessing; not as an abstract threat, but as a daily reality."

"Since moving to the arid Alentejo region of Portugal in 2020, I have lived side by side with a community facing drought, desertification, and the pressures of tourism and real estate speculation," Pinto added. "I have witnessed a landscape where streams no longer fill, grass no longer grows, and the anxiety of the absence of water. This local reality echoes a global crisis."

The film cast features Francisca Margarida Marinho, Catarina Beatriz Batarda, Susana Rita Cabaço, and Lourenço Jorge Andrade.

13 November - [DIRTY MOVIES](#) - Mixed review

The action takes place in the scorching summer of rural Alentejo, in southern Portugal. Two generations of a large Portuguese family get together in their sumptuous Lagariça villa. The patriarch and the matriarch have both passed away, leaving their three short-sighted and selfish adult children to look after the large property. Pragmatic Catarina (Beatriz Batarda) and Lourenço are hellbent on selling the property. In fact, they have already put it up for sale. Alcoholic drama queen Francisca (Margarida Marinho) is far less convinced: she thinks that their children – now children and adolescent – should have the opportunity to enjoy the countryside. Fuelled by local brandy, "Kiki" (that's Francisca's nickname) is always prepared to throw a tantrum in the name of family tradition. She shudders to think that the place that her father cherished could eventually become a golf club (hence the "18 holes" in the movie title).

The entire family get together in order to spend some time in the property. It's never entirely clear who came up with the reunion idea, yet there is little doubt there it wasn't a very bright decision. The feuding relatives are under the care of their old maid Alma – who now suffers from early-stage dementia – and her daughter Susana (Rita Cabaço), the most grounded character of the story. The young woman is adamant that her mother is entitled to part of the inventory because she worked almost five decades for the family. "Kiki" and Catarina are more interested in catching the sun on their loungers than discussing financial affairs with their maid's daughter. They repeatedly ignore her, hiding behind their humongous shades. Next, Susana tries to persuade Lourenço. He immediately crafts some very creative maths in order to challenge her argument, as the movie offers some interesting socio-economy commentary, and peculiar depiction of the class struggle. Susana argues that Portugal's statutory pension isn't enough for her mother to survive, and instead insists that she should receive a slice of the pie. The inheritance split is guaranteed to set the place on fire (in the figurative sense).

Meanwhile, literal wildfires castigate the region. They are perhaps a harbinger of the house's and the family's imminent fate. Water is mysteriously gone. Lourenco blames the immigrants for stealing their supply. Caterina uses the shortage as yet another pretext to sell the property to which she's not particularly attached, in addition to consistently finding faults at the house (issues nobody else is able to see). Given this plot outline, most people would expect a comedy. Yet helmer João Nuno Pinto and scribe Fernanda Polacow opt for a poetic and sensory drama. It's an unfortunate choice.

The tone of 18 Holes of Paradise is awkward from the very beginning. A very loud and intrusive suspense score is inserted out of nowhere desperately trying to inject tension into the story. The attempts are in vain. This is a movie that never enraptures, or keeps viewers on the edge of their seats. The characters and the performances are too flat and unidimensional (with the exception perhaps of Susana, and the respective thespian) for a more compelling psychological drama, or even to evoke any sort of audience allegiance. Polish cinematographer Kamil Plocki struggles to find any remarkable beauty and innovative framing. Hot yellow and dust often take over, suggesting that the nearby fires will eventually consume the villa. It looks neither realistic nor inspiring – watch Olivier Laxe's *Fire Will Come* (2019) instead for a compelling and devastating depiction of Iberian wildfires. The slow-motion, operatic ending feels clumsy and pretentious.

14 November - [SCREEN](#) positive review

quotes:

"elegant"

"fierce"

"arresting"



REVIEWS

'18 Holes To Paradise' review: Savage Portuguese satire sees a home threatened by fire and feud

BY WENDY IDE, SENIOR INTERNATIONAL CRITIC | 14 NOVEMBER 2025

João Nuno Pinto's elegant third feature about a bickering family in southern Portugal premieres in Tallinn



SOURCE: TALLINN BLACK NIGHTS

This fierce satire is set in the drought-stricken region of Alentejo in southern Portugal, where an extended family gathers in the sprawling quinta that was owned by their late parents. There's talk of selling the property; tourism is booming and developers are circling. As the three adult children bicker about their future plans, a raging wildfire draws ever closer.

Director João Nuno Pinto tells the story from the perspectives of three characters with a connection to the property. Elegantly structured and increasingly savage, the film makes an impassioned case for responsible stewardship of the land in the face of development which, like the fire, destroys everything it touches and places intolerable stresses on both ecosystem and

community.

This is the third feature from Pinto, following his 2010 debut *América* and 2020 follow-up *Mosquito*, the latter of which opened Rotterdam and won the Critics' Award for Best International Film at São Paulo. Following its world premiere in the main competition at Tallinn, *18 Holes To Paradise* will screen in competition at Mar Del Plata. Further festival interest seems likely and, with sufficient critical support, the picture could find a home with arthouse distributors or streaming platforms.

The three central characters, from whose points of view each chapter is told, are all women. The first, Francisca (Margarida Marinho), all boho, flowing robes and artisan jewellery, is one of the three adult daughters of the house. She, like her two siblings, spent much of her childhood there. But only she retains a strong emotional connection with the place, arguing for keeping it in the family rather than cashing in and selling to someone who will bulldoze the olive groves and install an 18-hole golf course.

The second chapter focuses on her sister, Catarina (Beatriz Batarda), a chic author with a wealthy husband who has clearly lost all interest in her. Catarina sees only the ravages of time. Her eye is drawn to the cracked pool tiles and the damaged bone handle of the cutlery at lunch; she jogs doggedly in the sweltering heat in the hope of keeping her figure. Catarina, like her brother Lourenço (Jorge Andrade) is in favour of selling. But as the heat builds, the danger mounts and the water supply fails, Catarina starts to lose her grip on reality.

Finally, there's Susana (Rita Cabaço), the daughter of the family's housekeeper who now has a life in Lisbon with a young daughter and a job as a nurse. But her mother is drifting into dementia and, if the sale goes through, will be homeless. Susana is determined to force the owners to do the right thing by her parents. But this is a conversation that nobody seems willing to have.

There are thematic parallels here with Lucrecia Martel's study of decaying privilege, *La Cienaga*, as well as with Christian Petzold's *Afire*. Accompanied by a relentless, percussive score from Ginevra Nervi, the terrible heat seeps into the changing moods of the film. At times, the characters seem languid and semi-comatose; at others, nerves snap like the crackling flames in the undergrowth.

As the smoke turns the light a hellish red and ash flakes float into the pool, the picture takes on an almost hallucinatory quality. An arresting final sequence, shown in ultra slow motion (the better to capture the panic and terror) strips back any remaining layers of artifice and reveals the characters for who they truly are.

Posted on Screen's [X](#) page 135K followers



18 Holes To Paradise' Tallinn review: Savage Portuguese satire sees a home threatened by fire and feud. By @wendyide #PÖFF29



From screendaily.com

12:15 pm · 14 Nov 2025 · 897 Views



14 November - [Projected Figures](#) positive review

Quotes:

“a microcosm of the crumbling, beleaguered world”

“a story of the quiet apocalypse”

18 Holes to Paradise (18 Buracos para o Paraíso) had its world première at Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival, 13 Nov 2025

The opening credits of João Nuno Pinto’s 18 Holes to Paradise (18 Buracos para o Paraíso) play over a long series of shots showing Francisca (Margarida Marinho) driving her car along a dusty dirt road in Alentejo in south-central Portugal. The sequence is uneventful, even dull – until there is a loud, unexpected thud, and Francisca’s carefree journey is brought to a sudden, alarming stop. When we next see her, she has managed to get back with the car to her home, the large, beautiful country estate of Lagariça, and as she staggers about looking dazed and traumatised, her ageing long-term housekeeper Alma (Lluísa Ortigoso) and Alma’s adult daughter Susana (Rita Cabaço) come over to find a duck bloodily embedded in the windscreen of the vehicle. This prologue bears witness to how, on life’s rocky road, even the most seemingly cocooned bourgeois life can come at any time into violent collision with nature – although it is the proletariat that is typically left to face the consequences and to clean up the ensuing mess.

Although the title of 18 Holes to Paradise might suggest otherwise, this is not a film about golf. Rather it concerns the social and ecological conditions that underlie such a privileged pastime.

For Francisca's sister Catarina aka 'Kiki' (Beatriz Batarda) and brother Lourenço aka Lori (Jorge Andrade) have come to Lagariça with their various children in tow to discuss the selling off of the family property and the division of the spoils – and there is speculation that an interested party from abroad may want to turn the estate into a golf course.

Artist Francisca is against the sale, which would entail losing both her home and the seat of her childhood memories, but Kiki and Lori, who share those memories but live in Lisbon, are keen for the sale to take place, and to cash in before the already somewhat dilapidated, expensive-to-maintain property becomes unsellable in a region ever more damaged by drought. Francisca's staff and neighbours, of course, know that such sales only contribute to environmental damage in the region, as outsiders without local knowledge either rapidly deplete the soil with inappropriate crops, or build water-guzzling amusements for outside élites who contribute little to the community.

18 Holes to Paradise is a domestic saga told from three occasionally overlapping points of view (Francisca's, Kiki's and Susana's) which together paint a bigger, more panoramic picture of this affluent family and its many connections to its environment, even as it expressly looks forward to the climate change that will affect all our lives. The film instantiates this dramatically in a raging wildfire that gets ever closer to the property, trapping the whole community – rich and poor – together, if not on equal terms. Written by Fernanda Polacow, Pinto's film may show all of these siblings referring sentimentally to ageing, Alzheimer's-afflicted Alma – who raised them – as 'family', but despite her increasingly addled state of mind, Alma understands how she has been exploited across the generations, even as Susana's ever more assertive demands that Alma get the retirement she is owed fall on repeatedly deaf ears.

In the end Lagariça is a microcosm of the crumbling, beleaguered world that the monied classes have made, and that the working class must equally endure. Indeed its final, panicky scenes unfold in slow-motion in front of a mural depicting a long history of colonial rapine. 18 Holes to Paradise is an allegory of a national and indeed global ecosystem in rapid decline, where it may be too late for class conflict, blind optimism, racist scapegoating or selfish indifference to stop what has been set in motion, as inevitable and destructive as a low-flying duck to a car's windshield. The film's scale may be reduced to the upstairs-downstairs clashes of an entitled clan and those who serve them, but ultimately this is a story of the quiet apocalypse coming to us all.

strap: Property is theft: João Nuno Pinto's family saga shows a microcosm of a world in flames, obviously lit and fanned by monied élites

19 November - [Film Fest Report](#) - Interview with João Nuno Pinto

"We are walking to the edge of existence and it doesn't stop," João Nuno Pinto observes, as his third feature 18 Holes to Paradise examines family, legacy, and society's slow unraveling through a poetic, satirical lens.

João Nuno Pinto's exciting and extravagant look at the decline of a family and society as a whole impresses with intricate characters and satisfying storytelling. The atmosphere of the film continuously pulls back into the past so that at times it feels like being in a classical novel with very contemporary consequences. 18 Holes to Paradise is part of the main competition at

Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival and we had a chance to speak to the director about his third feature.

Ramona Boban-Vlahović: I'm really looking forward to talk to you about your beautiful movie, 18 Holes to Paradise. How did the themes of this movie inspire you and why are the themes you included important to you?

João Nuno Pinto: I think that the themes are of this moment that the world is going through. Not just now, because it has been building up for a while now. It seems like we are heading to the edge, to this collapse of society, not just as an environmental issue, society, as a whole. It's something that we've all witnessed happening for a while. And this theme of the world collapsing, the clashes in society and how the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. And there's nothing changing.

We aren't changing anything. We are just in a mode of surviving as individuals thinking about ourselves. How can I survive in this madness? So these issues have been in my head for a long time and growing and the film came up when me and Fernanda, who is the scriptwriter, and also my wife, my partner in life. She also wrote Mosquito, my previous film, so we worked together.

During Covid times, we moved to Alentejo, to this region where the film is set. And it was the best thing that happened to us and to our family was to move there, to this beautiful region. We moved to a caravan; we didn't have a house. We just tried to figure out how we could take our kids and to the countryside and be away from the city and give them this freedom and nature and everything to our kids. And so, we moved to Alentejo and we stayed there.

It was supposed to be just for the quarantine. And it was okay to live in a caravan during the lockdown. But we just loved being there and we stayed there for three years living in this caravan. And while we were there, we witnessed how climate changed, severe summers, how the lack of water was impacting local communities. And at the same time, we saw all these big properties being sold to these hedge funds and to these rich foreigners that had money to buy these places and to build hotels and golf courses. We saw people who didn't have water to feed the animals, but at the same time, the water was being used for golf courses. And so, all these were themes that we said, okay, that's what we're going to talk about in our next film.

Ramona Boban-Vlahović: You really succeeded because I recognize all of the themes you mentioned in the film, but they are not forced on you. You just notice them on the sidelines which is the most important thing to really believe the story.

This film, when it starts, it reminds me a little bit of Call Me By Your Name. It's an idyllic setting, you're always having family lunches and swimming and so on. But the atmosphere changes very fast. And it's completely different. This family is bitter and dysfunctional and sometimes aggressive compared to this ideal place where they are located. Why is this setting important?

João Nuno Pinto: In the film and we wanted to talk about all of the problems present in the world through the family. And you have two families and the conflict between them. But the family concept, it was very dear to me and Fernanda. Fernanda grew up in this old, big property in Brazil, so she has many memories of these lunches on the porch, of the swimming pool, all this comes from her own backstory. And for me also, the family is central to my own life and existence. I grew up having big family reunions, so for us this memory of the idyllic summer with all the family in the house resonates in our own lives and memories as when we were children.

We don't come from the same background of these people, so it was our vision to setup this nice, idyllic place and idyllic memories of the old days, of a time that doesn't exist anymore. But we try to maintain those memories. And it's important also because that is the main conflict

between Francisca and Katarina from the two sisters because Francisca still wants to hold to those memories which is why she doesn't want to sell the house and for Katarina it's the opposite. She wants to put away those memories. So, it leads to where we wanted to go to the film about how you can have different perspectives of the same issue.

Ramona Boban-Vlahović: It's interesting the way you interpreted Francesca because to me she also wants to hold on to the legacy, the status of what the property gives her. But you're right, also the nostalgia and the memories, while her sister is more concerned with how much status and importance money can bring her. And then Susanna is also connected to the property as well. To her, it's a way of surviving, especially for her mother, because she can't afford somewhere for her mom to live.

João Nuno Pinto: For us, it was really interesting to approach this story because the selling of the property is just an excuse for us to to make a broader reflection about all these problematics.

Ramona Boban-Vlahović: To include a bit of conflict.

João Nuno Pinto: Francisca is the artist of the family. She has an artistic soul. She has a more sensitive, more nostalgic, more romantic vision of the whole thing. And we can relate to that. So, as a character, we can relate to that part of her argument. She shouldn't sell this because this is her legacy. This is everything her father's built. You'd want your children to live there to give them also the freedom and the privilege of having this space. But at the same time, Francisca is in denial of everything that is happening and she's a bit narcissist also. She's too focused on herself and her suffering and her misery, but you can understand also that she doesn't have anything else. If you take that property from her, she will die, her soul will die because she doesn't have anything else. Her son doesn't talk to her, she's alone. She's a woman alone in that place.

Katarina, she doesn't live there, so you can see that she has run away from all that pretty soon and she is more pragmatic. She's a journalist, she's a writer, she's very informed, and she knows that that place is going to die, it's going to dry, and it's very expensive to maintain that, and they don't have that money anymore. They used to have it when their father was alive, but not anymore. She wants to sell it because she needs the money. So, each one has their own reasons that you can relate to.

19 November - [GAZETTELY](#) review

Quotes:

“fierce and elegant”

João Nuno Pinto's third feature, *18 Holes To Paradise*, shapes a fierce and elegant social satire that speaks directly to a global conversation about environmental decay and class conflict. The drama unfolds in the drought-stricken Alentejo region of southern Portugal, where the stately but aging family estate, Lagariça, becomes the focal point. Three adult siblings gather there to decide the fate of the property, now targeted by developers who plan an 18-hole golf course.

The core struggle lies between the pull of family memory and the lure of financial gain. That debate plays out under the immediate threat of a raging wildfire that moves steadily closer. The ecological danger, paired with suffocating heat that seems to seep into every frame, intensifies the psychological warfare among the relatives. The film engages directly with questions of

responsible land stewardship and the destructive momentum of elite-driven development, capturing a portrait of privilege in visible decline.

The film adopts a clear three-chapter structure, each segment aligned with the perspective of a key woman, which builds a layered view of the estate and those who claim it. This narrative framework reveals different degrees of entitlement and a consistent distance from the world beyond the family walls.

Francisca, one of the adult daughters, anchors the first chapter. Her gaze rests on nostalgia and emotional attachment to her childhood home. Her efforts to preserve the estate are bound up with the preservation of her memories. That connection appears early in the prologue, where her careless behavior leads to a fatal bird strike, a small but telling sign of an instinctive disregard for the land she insists she loves.

The second chapter reshapes the story around Catarina, the chic author. Her viewpoint carries deep distaste and a cool, detached sense of entitlement. She reads the estate only through its signs of decay, from cracked pool tiles to broken furniture. Preoccupied with her personal battles, she argues for the sale and refuses to acknowledge the worsening catastrophe outside the property.

Her inner negativity spreads across her perception of the world, so the entire environment seems decomposed. The final chapter shifts to Susana, the housekeeper's daughter. This change in vantage point exposes the siblings' greed and ignorance with sharp clarity. Susana focuses on the injustice faced by her mother, Alma, who spent decades raising these children and now faces homelessness without a dignified retirement.

18 Holes To Paradise operates as a precise critique of entitlement to wealth, land, nature, and the labor of the working class. The siblings argue over a multi-million-euro sale, while Susana fights for something far smaller but morally weighty: secure retirement for her mother. Lagariça becomes a miniature version of a wider collapsing world. The film traces a class conflict in which wealthy heirs benefit from past and ongoing exploitation, while the working class, represented by the locals who actively battle the fire, must absorb the damage.

Arguments over issues like an old family chair reveal how trivial the rich siblings' concerns feel next to the direct, life-threatening danger that staff and community members face. Requests for basic decency meet indifference or irritation.

That strain in social relations mirrors the ecological emergency pressing in from outside. The oncoming wildfire, the drought, and the water shortages link clearly to the environmental impact of development projects such as water-hungry golf courses and unsuitable crops driven by external profit. Economic harm to the land unfolds alongside the social harm inflicted on the people who depend on it.

Pinto's direction guides the film through shifting tonal registers, moving from languid, heat-heavy states where characters appear half-stunned to bursts of high tension when nerves give way. The design of these shifts echoes other cinematic studies of decaying privilege, including Lucrecia Martel's *La Cienaga*, which the film directly recalls. Ginevra Nervi's relentless, percussive score heightens this pressure. The visual atmosphere matters just as much. Thick smoke stains the air a hellish red, and drifting ash gives certain scenes a hallucinatory quality

that matches the characters' growing panic.

From a formal standpoint, the film presents a mixed visual experience. The choice of a 4:3 aspect ratio has attracted debate, with some viewers describing the image as cropped rather than carefully framed to express confinement, which produces a sense of visual fracture. Even with this tension, *18 Holes To Paradise* reaches its peak in a striking final sequence.

21 November - [CINEUROPA](#) overall positive review

"Stark moments that punctuate the film's more quotidian pacing become the work's highlights, as does the final scene that becomes the pinnacle of what the filmmaker seems to be examining."

"To sell or not to sell? Reminiscent of the oozing sarcasm embedded in its title, *18 Holes to Paradise* is complete with snarky relations between members of an extended family who meet to decide what to do with the family mansion: a prime property in the heart of beautiful southern Portugal. But who cares about the olive groves that grow splendidly on the land? Maybe it would be better off as an 18-hole golf course.

Lisbon-based director João Nuno Pinto makes this premise into his third feature-length film, which has just world-premiered in the Official Competition of the 29th Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival. His last film, *Mosquito [+]* (2020), opened International Film Festival Rotterdam.

18 Holes to Paradise unfolds loosely in three parts, following three women embedded in this family dynamic and their respective plights. There is the alternative Francisca (Margarida Marinho) and the fashionable Catarina (Beatriz Batarda), both sisters who are the daughters of the late patriarch: the former wants to keep the house, while the latter would prefer to sell. The odd one out emerges as Susana (Rita Cabaço), the daughter of the family's housekeeper, the one who ultimately has the deepest stakes, given her more precarious personal and financial situation – she will have nowhere to live if the house is sold.

A collective threat looms over them: a raging wildfire that begins to consume the area, just as their water supply is cut off and all of their livelihoods are mutually endangered – a fire means neither mansion nor viable land for anyone, should it reach the house. With this plot point, *18 Holes to Paradise* is a thematic reminder of the Locarno entry *Balearic [+]* by Ion de Sosa, where complacency and petty arguments threaten to overtake the potential of real action.

As the smoke drifts nearer, the orange-hued visuals contribute further to the urgency of their situation. The intrusion of the fire further brings a much-needed turn of the screw to the story, which begins to drag in its midsection and would have benefited from a bit of narrative concision, with a large amount of dialogue bogging down the story. Stark moments that punctuate the film's more quotidian pacing become the work's highlights, as does the final scene that becomes the pinnacle of what the filmmaker seems to be examining.

Situated between socioeconomic classes and varying levels of sanity, put crudely, the three interwoven stories are an intriguing take on the "late patriarch means dividing the wealth" genre

(think *Succession*, perhaps, but more intimate). Nuno Pinto places his emphasis not solely on the implications of the decision, but also on the dynamics between the family members, keeping the drama grounded in realism despite the spinouts that occur."

18 Holes to Paradise is a production by Portugal's Wonder Maria Filmes, Italy's Albolina Film and Argentina's Aurora Cine. Alpha Violet holds the rights to the film's world sales.

21 November - [JOURNEY INTO CINEMA](#) positive review

João Nuno Pinto's third feature, Competition entry 18 Holes to Paradise (2025), starts with an image you can't shake.

Francisca (Margarida Marinho) is driving the backroads of southern Portugal, towards the family ranch their parents left behind, when a duck slams into her windshield. The glass shatters inward, the bird's head and beak poking through — a sudden, brutal reminder that nature doesn't wait for anyone. That collision sets the tone for the whole film: a family drama that keeps getting interrupted by the world outside.

She's heading to meet her sister Catarina (Beatriz Batarda), her brother Lourenço (Jorge Andrade) and their kids. The plan is no sentimental reunion; it's to decide whether to keep or sell the house. Francisca wants to hold on; the other two want to cash out; meanwhile, a wildfire moves in from the hills. As the smoke thickens, their arguments start to sound ridiculous. The house they're bickering over might burn down before anyone signs anything.

The film is full of smart and subtle surprises, not just in terms of plot, but also in its structure and who the story is really about. This tale of three siblings could easily be split into three neat sections, but Pinto refuses that, focusing on the perspectives of three women, one of whom is not a member of the family. He mostly pushes the obnoxious, heartless Lourenço to the side and hands the real weight to Susana (Rita Cabaço), the daughter of the family's longtime housekeeper, who's now drifting into dementia. Susana has come back to make sure her mother isn't screwed over one last time. To her, the house represents decades of unfair wages without a real safety net.

Pinto also plays with time in a way that throws you at first. By the end of the opening act — Francisca's stretch — the fire feels minutes away: smoke everywhere, orange light, ash drifting across the lens. Then the film cuts to bright morning, clear sky, the house still standing. It's safe to take another dip in the pool. It takes a second to realise we've gone backwards and switched to Catarina's point of view. The fire is still coming; we're just watching it approach again, from a different angle, trapped in purgatory with these people a little longer.

Holding all this together — a big cast, shifting perspectives, looming disaster — without losing control is impressive. The score by Ginevra Nervi never lets us relax, with tight, restless percussion that keeps ratcheting up, like the film itself is getting nervous on behalf of its characters.

This is a film that brushes up against a range of urgent issues — exploitative labour

arrangements, environmental collapse, inherited privilege, the violence of capitalism — without ever slipping into lecture mode. Pinto lets these pressures emerge naturally through the way the family talks around their past and the fragments of history that surface in their arguments. Even the sly, ironic title points outward: land across the Iberian peninsula being carved into golf courses for the wealthy, kept impossibly green despite worsening drought. How do you maintain acres of manicured “paradise” when there’s barely enough water left to drink?

18 Holes to Paradise echoes other films — an early pool scene that brings Lucrecia Martel’s *La Ciénaga* (2001) to mind, or the recent *Balearic* (Ion De Sosa, 2025), another movie about privileged people swimming while the hills burn. Yet Pinto’s film is sharper, more contained, angrier in a quieter way. Underneath the surface calm, there’s a steady fury at waste, at blindness, and especially at the refusal to see who actually keeps these places running. It ends with a question it never quite answers out loud: when the smoke finally clears, what’s going to be left?