Culture



Saorise Ronan portrays Rona in "The Outrun." Based on the life and writing of memoirist Amy Liptro, it's one of many films with female leads released this season. (Sony Pictures Classics/Anne Binckebnack)



by Princess Jones

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If you're among the Catholics disappointed by the synod on synodality's failure to sufficiently amplify the voices and perspectives of women, you might take heart in one (or all) of the many female-led films being released this fall. At the box office or on your home streaming service, women are taking center stage with tales of adventure, strength, hope and love.

Led by actresses whose storytelling offer incredible range, these films reflect diverse female experiences and prove that women's narratives are more captivating and important than ever.

'The Substance'

Released Sept. 20, "The Substance" has emerged as the most successful film to date from arthouse distributor Mubi, grossing an impressive $14.8 million at the global box office in just 10 days. The gripping body-horror tale stars Demi Moore as Elisabeth Sparkle, an aging Hollywood star so desperate to reclaim her former glory that she resorts to taking a black-market drug that transforms her into a younger woman, portrayed by Margaret Qualley. But what begins as a dream come true quickly spirals into a nightmare.

Directed by Coralie Fargeat, "The Substance" has garnered praise for its social commentary on the challenges women face regarding age and appearance. Blending horror and reflection, the film resonates deeply with contemporary audiences, making it a standout release this fall.

'The Outrun'

"The Outrun" follows the story of a young woman who has lost her way — and herself — due to alcoholism and drug addiction. Based on the life and writing of memoirist Amy Liptrot, the story follows Rona (four-time Oscar nominee Saoirse Ronan) as she returns to her childhood home in Orkney, embarking on the nonlinear road to recovery. Directed by Nora Fingscheidt, "The Outrun" released in the U.S. Oct. 4.

'Blitz'

Saoirse Ronan continues her streak of powerful female roles in "Blitz," a World War II film set in London during the German blitzkrieg bombings. Ronan plays Rita, a determined and protective mother of 9-year-old George, played by Elliott Heffernan. The story follows Rita's heart-wrenching decision to send George to the countryside for his safety — and George's defiant determination to make his way back home to London. In a gripping scene, Rita demands, "Why can't you tell me, where's my boy?" — a powerful moment that captures a fierce maternal strength. Directed by British filmmaker Steve McQueen ("12 Years a Slave"), Blitz will be available on Apple TV starting Nov. 22.



Saoirse Ronan, Elliott Heffernan and Paul Weller star in "Blitz," premiering in theaters Nov. 1 and on Apple TV+ Nov. 22. The movie is set in London during the German blitzkrieg bombing of World War II (Apple)

'Wicked'

The long-awaited "Wicked" is finally coming to the big screen in November. A prequel to "The Wizard of Oz," the story follows the unlikely friendship between two powerful witches — Elphaba (Tony Award winner Cynthia Erivo), a misunderstood witch with green skin; and Glinda (pop superstar Ariana Grande), the pretty, popular girl who craves approval from her peers. "Wicked" has become a pop culture phenomenon, starting with Gregory Maguire's best-selling 1995 novel and its later adaptation into the award-winning musical.

Both lead actresses have powerhouse vocals worthy of the show's iconic songs. Directed by Jon Chu, the film will be released in two parts, with the second installment coming in 2025. "Wicked" (Part 1) premieres in theaters Nov. 22.

'Moana 2'

Princess Moana is back for another adventure alongside our favorite demigod, Maui. In this sequel, the Polynesian princess answers the call of her ancestors, embarking on a journey to unite her people while also navigating her new role as a big sister. Hawaii native Auli'i Cravalho returns to voice Moana, while Dwayne Johnson reprises his role as Maui.

Cravalho has expressed her excitement about continuing Moana's story. "I want to be known as someone who represents my culture everywhere, and Moana lives in my bones in the same way," the actress said of the Disney animated film. "Moana 2" will hit theaters Nov. 27.

'Nightbitch'

"Nightbitch," based on Rachel Yoder's novel of the same name, offers a unique and darkly comedic look into motherhood, exploring the transformation of a woman into a mother — and something much more. Amy Adams stars as an unnamed former bustling artist who becomes a stay-at-home mom unexpectedly developing canine instincts. Director Marielle Heller had just given birth to her second child when she took on the project, and she attests to her personal experience having shaped the writing of the film. "When people ask me what the movie is about, I'm like, 'It's about motherhood and rage.' And you either get that or you don't," Heller explained. "Nightbitch" is set to hit theaters Dec. 6.

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'The Six Triple Eight'

Kerry Washington stars in "The Six Triple Eight," the untold true story of World War II's only Women's Army Corps unit of color. This historical drama follows the predominantly Black women of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, who were tasked with sorting through a staggering 17-million-piece backlog of mail, bringing hope to soldiers and their families. The group's motto: "No mail, low morale." The film highlights the women's resilience in the face of war and racial tensions.

Tyler Perry wrote and directed the film. He was inspired to make the film after meeting Lena Derriecott King, a member of the 6888th, who died in January at age 100. "We sat in her house for a couple of hours just talking, having a great conversation," Perry recalled in a tribute video to King. "And when I left, I had a whole movie in my mind that I wanted to write for her." The film will be released on Netflix Dec. 6.

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