

# WWD FRIDAY

## Jarmusch: In Full Bloom

**NEW YORK** — Jim Jarmusch, the enfant terrible of American cinema, is obsessed with life's great unknowns.

"I love Native American philosophy. If you translate the name of the Lakota god into English, it means 'The Great Mystery,'" he mused in his slow, coarse voice while sitting on the terrace at his favorite restaurant, Ballato's, in NoLiTa. "To me, the mysteriousness of things is the highest power."

In his signature meditative style, the 52-year-old director explores the miscommunication between men and women in his new film, "Broken Flowers," a lyrical road trip that sends his hero, Don Johnston, played by Bill Murray, across the country in search of a few old flames (portrayed by Sharon Stone, Tilda Swinton and Jessica Lange). The film won the prestigious Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival in May.

"Jim has a particular style of allowing time, space and room for people and music," explained Jon Kilik, the movie's producer and an old Jarmusch pal. "His style allows things to happen, it allows the music and the cameras to participate in this experience. Then you get swept up in it, you believe it. It's honest and strong, emotional and meaningful."

In a way, the poetic chaos that Kilik described has always been at the center of Jarmusch's movies. The director's conversational style often allows randomness and chance to enter the game, challenging traditional conceptions of narratives where the author dictates emotions, thoughts or political opinions to the viewer.

With "Broken Flowers" — which some critics call his most commercial work to date — Jarmusch refused to find a solution to Johnston's circuitous quest to find the mother of his child. For him, what really matters is Johnston's search for identity. "I like the idea of someone having an insight into what their life might have been by something they didn't choose," explained the director.

"Why? I don't know," he continued, "maybe because I don't do that myself. I don't like looking back, I don't look at my own films once they're finished. I don't like analyzing things or regretting things. I like going forward, because that's all you have."

The idea for "Broken Flowers" started flowing about six years ago, when Jarmusch's friends gave him a story pitch they had decided to pass on. Around the same time, the director started collecting the Afro-funk Ethiopian music of Mulatu Astatke, which later inspired the character of Johnston's neighbor, played by Jeffrey Wright. The script itself was speedily written in two-and-a-half weeks. Following his traditional writing ritual, Jarmusch isolated himself in his Catskills chalet with some classical music, reggae and rock and scribbled some open-ended sequences in a notebook.

"The real question in the movie," said Jarmusch, who has been making movies for 25 years, "is the fact that love is not really analyzable. It's mysterious, and so is life in general. Questions about love and life are not always answerable — and maybe that's their beauty."

— Shirine Saad



Murray on the "Broken Flowers" set with director Jim Jarmusch.