



EVERYTIME (2026) CANNES FILM FESTIVAL ★



MAY 18TH, 2026

Author: Meredith Taylor

Dir: Sandra Wollner | Fantasy Sci-Fi | 121'

Sandra Wollner's ***Everytime*** is a quiet yet deeply unsettling meditation on grief, artificial intimacy, and the blurred boundaries between human and technology, a follow-up to her 2020 *The Trouble With Being Born* with similar themes but more restrained in its exposition.

To be honest, *Everytime* is a deliberately disorienting work of psychological drama because the Austrian director refuses to stabilise the film's reality long enough for us to feel fully oriented. That sense of "total confusion" isn't a side effect — it is essentially the film's organising principle — as a result I found it far less enjoyable than her previous feature..

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not her partner, particularly as she seems to act like his mother. But that's just one of the elements set to bemuse us.

Heading off for a 'pseudo' holiday in Tenerife (which apparently never happened), Jesse enters their lives and the emotional structure of the family begins to lose its boundaries. What should be clear about the relationships — parent, child, stranger — repeatedly slip into something harder to define, and far less satisfying as a result. The craggy Moon-like landscapes and raging seas threaten to flood over the hotel compound only adding to the sense of destabilisation and other-worldliness, and giving the impression that another life could be lost at any minute — and two kids are indeed reported missing in the heavy swell.

One of the film's most striking features is how it withholds clarity about identity and role. Jesse, the baby they encounter, also appears as a adult who seems to have died falling off a building, and even Lux himself serves the narrative in ways that resist easy categorisation. The film refuses to identify who belongs to whom; who is remembering, and who is being imagined? What is present, and what is reconstruction? This uncertainty accumulates rather than resolves, producing a sustained cognitive unease. For some viewers this may be intellectually challenging, others may just find it plain annoying.

The film's visual language reinforces this instability. Bright, almost overwhelming sunlight in Tenerife contrasts with the emotional opacity of the characters. Instead of illuminating meaning, the light exposes how little can actually be grasped. Scenes feel less like events unfolding in sequence and more like episodes, or fragments possibly from false memory, unreliable narration, or different emotional states overlapping without clear transitions.

Ella seems to be bearing up to her grief with a resigned acceptance, although she is repeatedly encountering versions of her own loss in different forms. Lux's presence complicates this further, not because of what he does, but because of how his emotional position seems inconsistent, at times passive, at times tearful, behaviour that destabilises the idea of a coherent parental unit. Sometimes grief does surge up after grief or loss, to take us unawares in surprising ways, so this is understandable.

Jesse's role is especially important in generating confusion. She becomes a kind of emotional mirror: sometimes childlike, sometimes independent, sometimes strangely central to the couple's dynamic. The effect is not

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anchored in a single shared reality. The appearance of the baby girl, playing with a toy lorry in a car part entrance could represent a flashback, a shard of memory from a bygone trip abroad, or it could be wishful thinking shaped by grief, especially when Ella picks the child up and transports her back to hotel bedroom. But the film never resolves this into a clear psychological explanation either. Instead, it sustains multiple incompatible readings at once.

This refusal to settle is what defines the experience. The audience is left without the usual stabilisers of narrative cinema: clear chronology, reliable identity, or confirmed causality. What remains is a drifting structure of emotional impressions that continually reorganise themselves without locking into place.

As a result, *Everytime* is less a story about loss than an experience of being unable to fully organise loss into story. Its power lies in that resistance — and its frustration lies in the same place. It is a film that makes comprehension feel perpetually just out of reach, and it never fully acknowledges whether that distance is meaningful, deliberate, or simply unresolved. *Everytime* is an intellectual ‘film school exercise’ that may seem clever to some, but as a piece of cinema entertainment it doesn’t really work in the same enjoyable way as *The Trouble* which was avant-garde but also stimulating, bracing and exciting.

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