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Venice film festival 2016: The Young Pope, starring Jude Law

BY EVA MACKEVIC
1ST JAN 2015 FILM & TV

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Jude Law stars as the subversive Holy Father in Paolo Sorrentino's new HBO TV drama series *The Young Pope*. Intrigue, power struggles and sinful thoughts ensue.

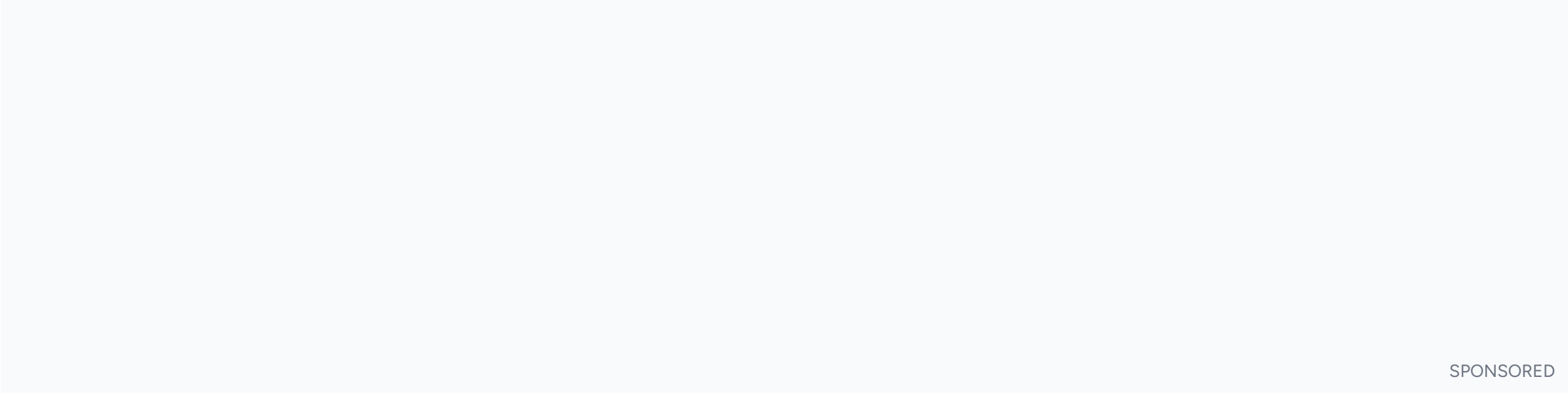
The Oscar-winning director Paolo Sorrentino has made the currently trendy move among directors to venture into the world of television, following in footsteps of the Coen Brothers, David Lynch, David Fincher and [Woody Allen](#) —to name but a few. He made quite the entrance too, flaunting crucifixes, papal garbs, [cigarettes](#) and celibacy struggles—all of which are recurrent motifs of *The Young Pope*.



Image via Sky Atlantic

A joint production by HBO, Sky and Canal+, starring Jude Law and Diane Keaton, it is a project of great grandeur. Apparently, Sorrentino does not feel like there is a big divergence between cinema and television, describing both as “an exercise of freedom” in a recent interview with *The Guardian*. His imagery still holds all of its visual opulence and sleekness, filled with wide angles, extreme close-ups, dynamic panning shots and gorgeous Italian architecture.

For Jude Law, it is probably the most exciting, meatiest role he has had since Dickie Greenleaf in *The Talented Mr Ripley*. Playing the first American pope in history, Pius XIII, aka Lenny Belardo, he does an amazing job of pulling off a naïve acolyte-turned-manipulative dictator, who's struggling to make sense of his own faith, family background and place in the Vatican.



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"Jude Law's meatiest role since *The Talented Mr Ripley*"

The cardinals initially select Lenny for the post based on his perceived naiveté and sheepishness which would be easy to control. Or so they hope. Once in charge, Lenny makes a drastic reverse manoeuvre in character, revealing his manipulative, double-crossing nature: turns out he has had a plan of his own all along and he won't let anyone stop him.

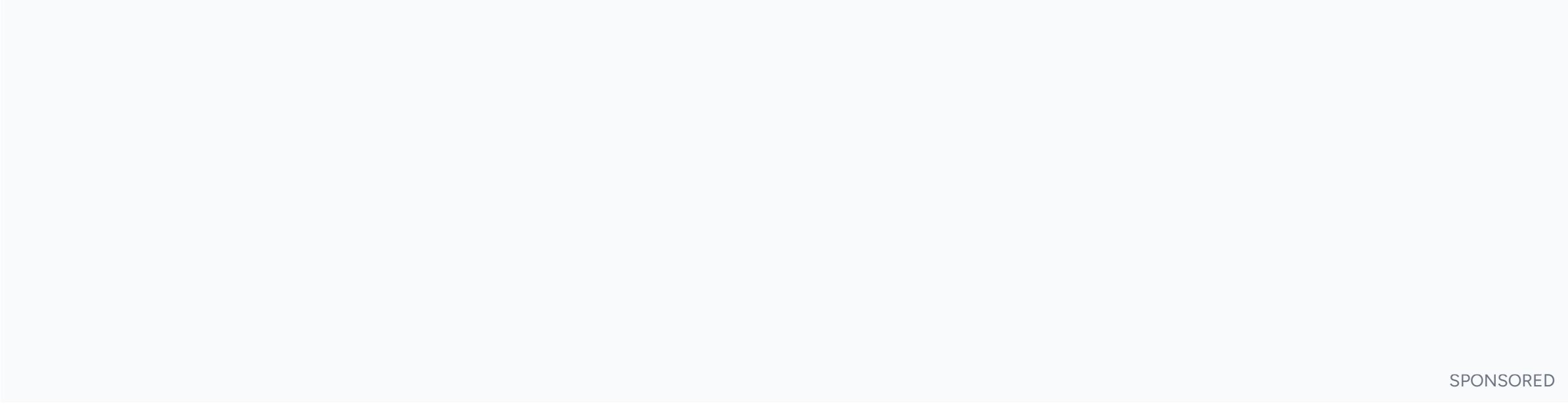
Diane Keaton is the nun who looked after Lenny as a young orphan—another character not deprived of a healthy dose of hypocrisy, ulterior motives and a streak of subversive drive. Accompanying Keaton are the fabulous supporting performances of Javier Cámara and Silvio Orlando as the polarising spiritual dignitaries trying to solve the puzzling mystery of Lenny Belardo.



Image via Sky Atlantic

The simultaneously electrifying and haunting electro/opera soundtrack gives the series an extra seductive edge and Law's playful but commanding presence keeps you constantly interested. His trenchant one-liners that leave those around him speechless, are extremely entertaining, e.g. shrugging off a lavishly set up breakfast table and requesting nothing but a Cherry Coke Zero.

While the subject matter and the way it is delivered are extremely provocative and controversial, Sorrentino himself claims that he has no desire to shock his viewers; rather, the main objective of the series is "to bring in the feelings, thoughts and emotions of these men of the church who are used to only showing us their public dimension, aseptic and polite."



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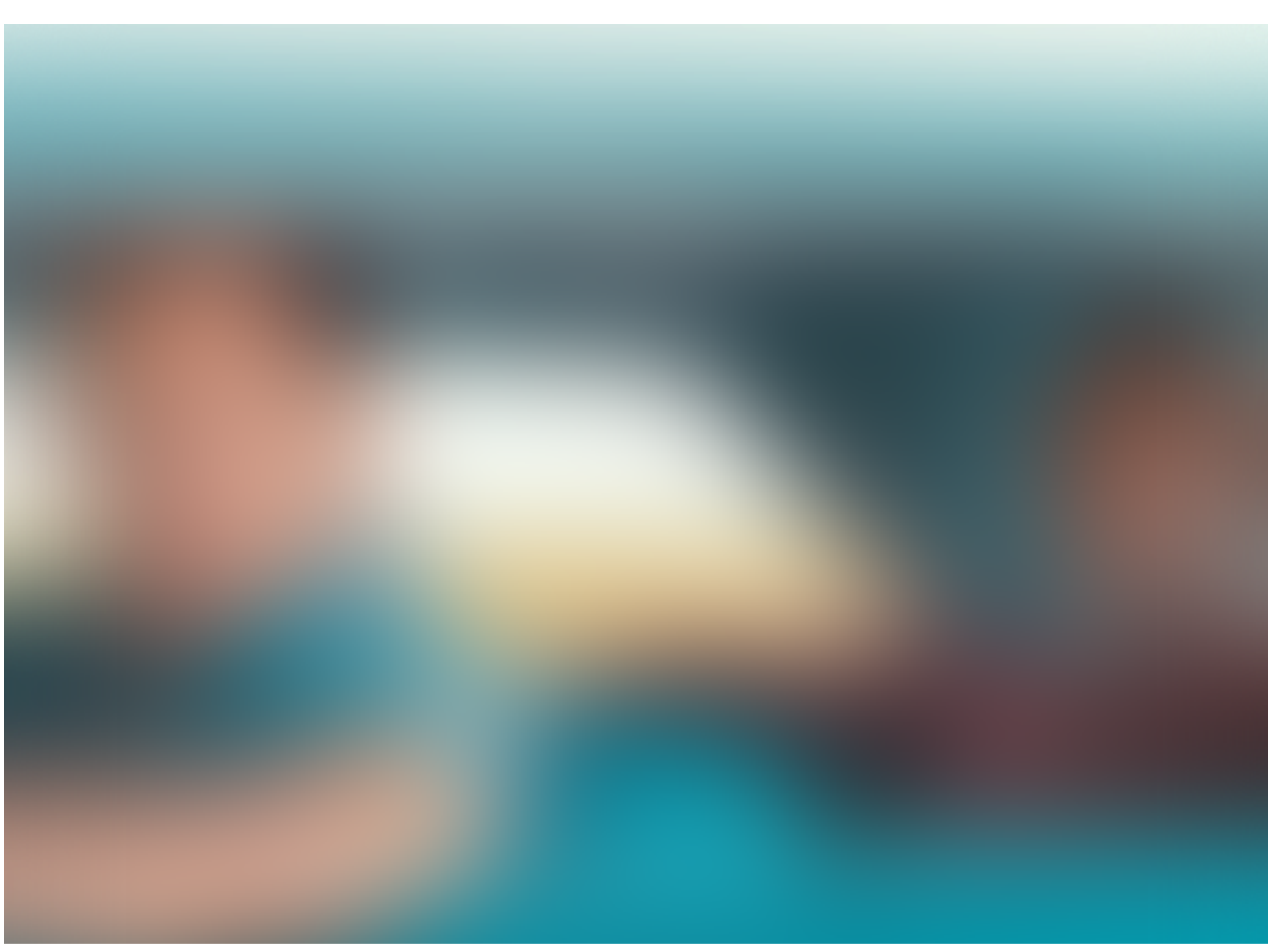
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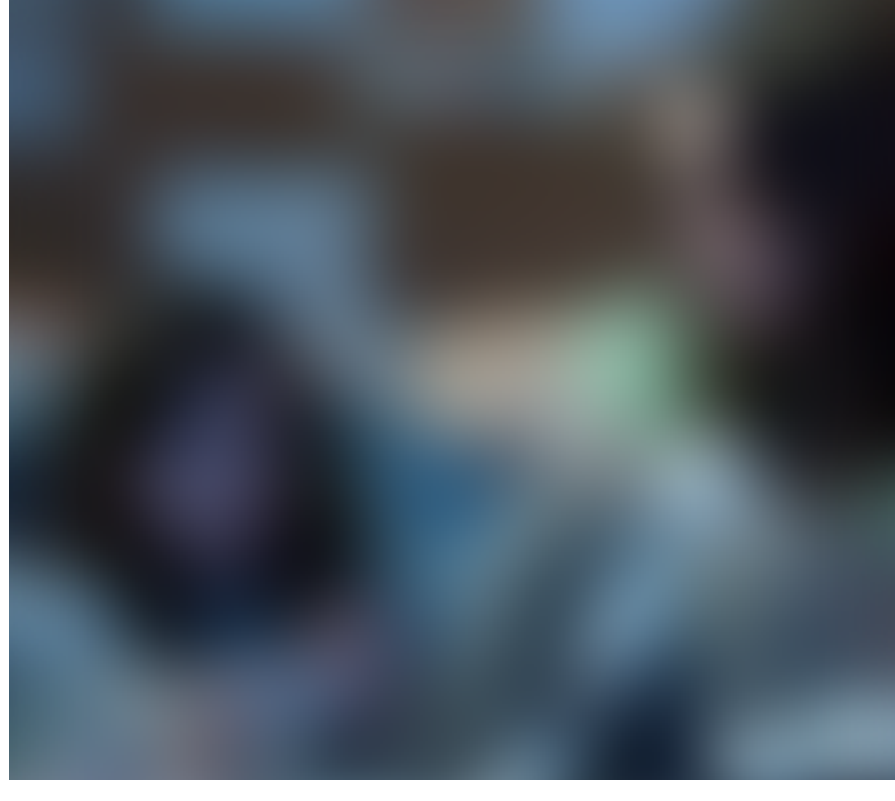
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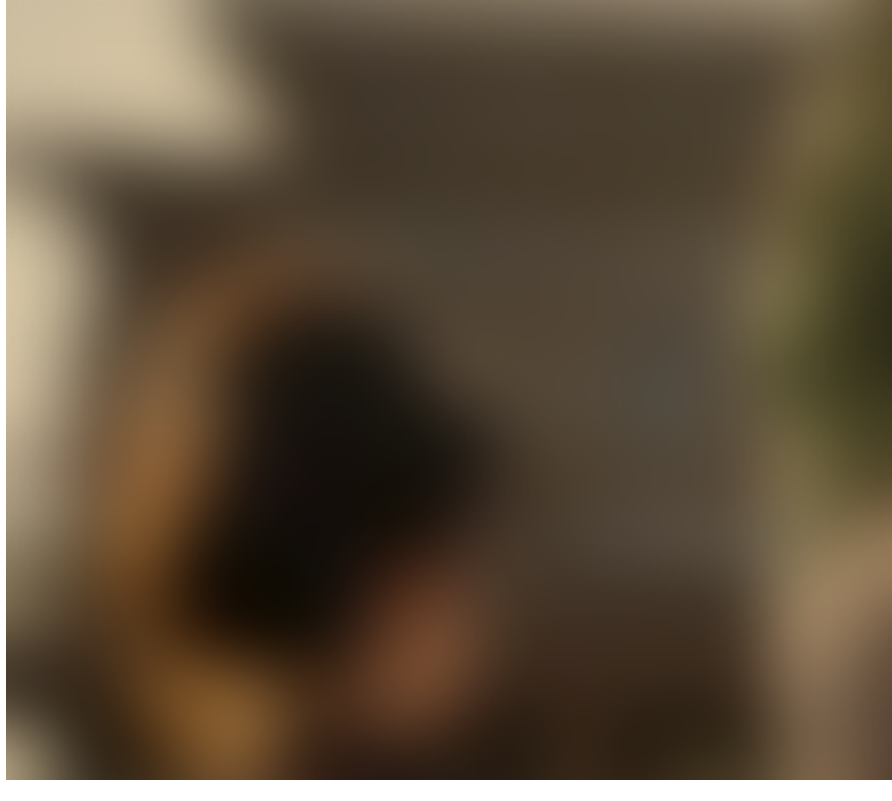
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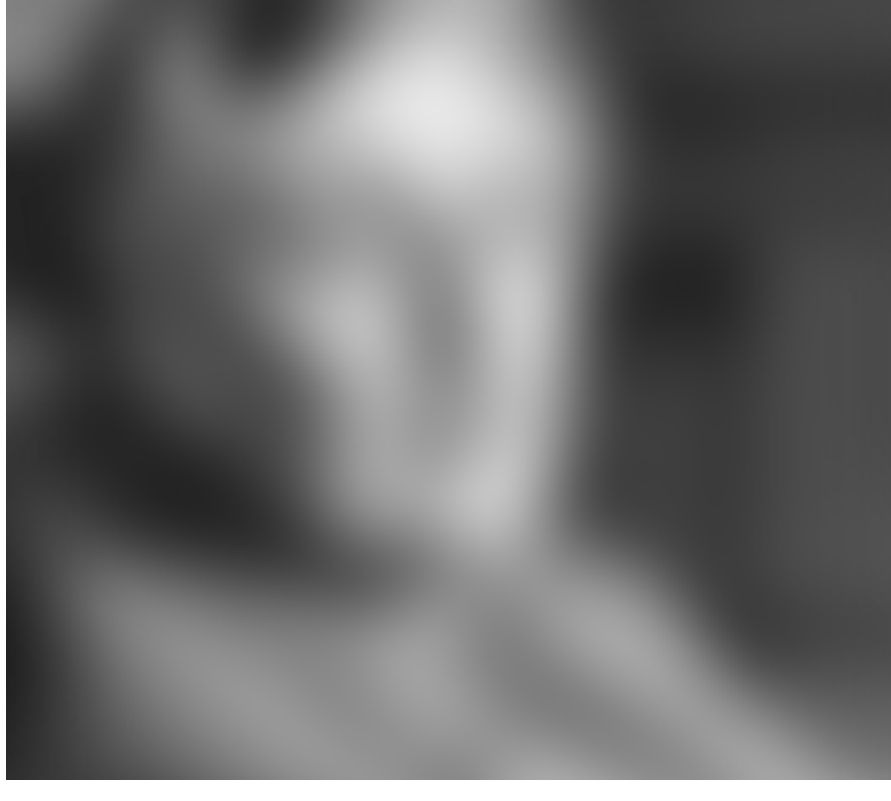
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