

## 'Fault In Our Stars' Ansel Elgort To Tickle The Ivories In Cold War Saga 'Van Cliburn'

By MIKE FLEMING JR Monday June 23, 2014 @ 9:59am PDT



**EXCLUSIVE:** [Ansel Elgort](#), hot off the male lead of Augustus Waters in [The Fault In Our Stars](#), has signed to play the title role in [Van Cliburn](#), a feature that is being mounted by Temple Hill

partners Wyck Godfrey and Marty Bowen along with Crystal City Entertainment in association with The

Johnson Group. Godfrey and Bowen, who worked with Elgort on *The Fault In Our Stars*, will produce with Ari Daniel Pinchot and Robert M. Johnson is exec producer. Andrew Stern will write the script.



The film is based on the Howard Reich book *Van Cliburn*, and Elgort will play the pianist in his formative years when, at age 23 in 1958, he emerged from out of nowhere to win the Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition in Moscow. It was the first time the tournament was held, and was organized by the USSR after it had caught up to the U.S. in the nuclear arms race and

completed the first successful space launch with Sputnik. Nikita Khrushchev saw the competition as a way to lord Soviet superiority at a time when tensions between the two superpowers were sky high. The lanky pianist from Texas who graduated Juilliard but was taught by his neighborhood piano teacher mother, had a very unorthodox instinctive style that bowled won over the Russian judges and the proletariat crowd that followed every note of the competition. Although some tried to marginalize him so they could knock him from the competition, Cliburn made it to the finals. Judges, fearing exile to Siberia, brought in Khrushchev as they deliberated. The Soviet premier asked them if he was the best, and told them to give him the prize when they answered yes. This was credited with bridging the

Cold War gap. Cliburn became a favorite among Russian audiences, and he played for U.S. presidents as well, until he abruptly stopped publicly performing in 1978. The one-time prodigy died last year of bone cancer at 78.

Elgort, a graduate of LaGuardia High School of the Performing Arts, started as a dancer and yes, he can play the piano. He appeared in the *Carrie* remake and co-starred with Shailene Woodley in *Divergent*, before they starred together in *Fault*. They are currently shooting the *Divergent* sequel *Insurgent*. Elgort also has wrapped Jason Reitman's *Men, Women & Children*, opposite Adam Sandler. He also is a DJ and producer of electronic dance music under his Ansolo logo (and Twitter handle @Ansolo\_Music). With all the EDM projects percolating in Hollywood, and young EDM fans filling arenas and festivals, can a movie in that area be far behind?



For Temple Hill, that puts the producers in business with both the male leads from *Fault*, the sleeper summer hit for Fox 2000. They are adapting the John Green novel *Paper Towns* as a star vehicle for *Fault* co-star Nat Wolff, with Michael Weber and Scott Neustadter again adapting a bestseller by the author and social-media star. Elgort is repped by CAA and Brookside Artist Management's Emily Gerson Saines.

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