

Press Release



Berlinale *Competition* 2004: Five entries already confirmed

The opening of the Berlinale is still more than two months off – yet Festival Director Dieter Kosslick is pleased to be able to announce the first films in the *Competition*. Five entries are definite and they range “from tragic love story to political psychodrama, from historical thriller to intimate family saga”, as Kosslick explains. The entries are from Germany, Spain, Denmark, Croatia and the USA, and their celebrated directors, such as Romuald Karmakar or Academy Award-winner Ron Howard, are a guarantee for “a versatile programme, both in theme and style”, the Festival Director adds.

Die Nacht singt ihre Lieder (Nightsongs) is the title of Romuald Karmakar’s most recent film. The German director has set this intensely atmospheric love tragedy about a young couple in Berlin’s popular Mitte district. Their disappointments, expectations and different aims in life bring both tension and suspense into the story, which Karmakar developed from a play by the successful Norwegian writer Jon Fosse. The cast is top-notch, with Frank Giering, Anne Ratte-Polle, Manfred Zapatka and Marthe Keller in the main roles.

With his *Competition* entry *La vida que te espera (Your Next Life)*, Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón, one of Spain’s best-known directors, will present a tragic love and family saga set in a remote rural area. Featuring Juan Diego, Marta Etura, Luis Tosar and Celso Bugallo, Gutiérrez Aragón drafts a compelling anthropological portrait. The exceptional landscape of Valle del Paz in northern Spain is more than just an attractive backdrop. With *La vida que te espera*, Gutiérrez Aragón will be participating in the Berlinale *Competition* for the sixth time. This grand master won the Silver Bear for Best Director in 1977 with his film *Camada negra*.

The *Competition* film *Svjedoci (Witnesses)* by Vinko Brešan is from Croatia. Brešan has won countless prizes and awards in his own country, and with *Svjedoci* he has been nominated for the Oscar for best foreign film. Already during production, the movie triggered a fierce debate in Croatia: set against the war in Yugoslavia, this young director portrays the fatal psychological impacts of war and violence in three parallel tales. The film is based on motifs from the bestseller *The Plaster Sheep* by Jurica Pavičić. Alongside the famous Serbian actress Mirjana Karanović, the film stars Leon Lučev and Alma Prica.

With her debut film *Minor Mishaps*, Annette K. Olesen was a huge success at the 2002 Berlinale *Competition*, where she received the Blue Angel for the Best European Film. In her second film *Forbrydelser (In Your Hands)*, the Danish director has created a sensitive study about an encounter between a young

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woman pastor, who works in a women's prison, and a prisoner, who is trying to cope with her guilt. The film features famous Danish stars, such as Ann Leonora Jørgensen and Trine Dyrholm; the editing was done by Molly Malene Steensgaard, who is also Lars von Trier's cutter.

With Ron Howard, an Academy Award-winner will be coming to Berlin, too. The American director's film *The Missing* is running in the *Competition*. The movie is based on Thomas Eidson's novel *The Last Ride*. It tells the story of a young woman who runs a small farm in the lonesome and lawless desert of New Mexico around 1885. After her daughter is kidnapped, she is forced to team up with her detested father to pursue the culprits. In a mix between a thriller and a Western, *The Missing* depicts a painful father-daughter conflict and lives greatly from the performances of its leading actors, Hollywood stars Tommy Lee Jones and Cate Blanchett.

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