

Press Release



Berlinale 2004: A Universe of World Premieres Minghella's *Cold Mountain* Will Open the Festival

Love and war are the eternal themes of the cinema, and they will also usher in the Berlinale on February 5: *Cold Mountain* – an epos about the American Civil War by Anthony Minghella which is already being treated as a hot contender for the Oscar – is to be the first highlight of the festival. Alongside the director, leading actors Nicole Kidman and Jude Law are expected to stroll up the red carpet for the opening ceremony at the Festival Palast.

The remaining programme of the 54th Berlin International Film Festival (Feb 5 – 15, 2004) is also taking on increasingly concrete contours. Among the 18 productions selected for the *Competition* so far, 12 are world premieres. There is also a remarkable number of politically committed films: in *Country of my Skull* John Boorman explores the story of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission which aspires to help people deal with the crimes of apartheid; Eric Rohmer will bring the political thriller *Triple Agent* to Berlin; Theo Angelopoulos will present *Trilogia: To livadi pou dakrisi (Trilogy I: The Weeping Meadow)*, the first of three films conceived by him to tell the epic story of Greece; in *Beautiful Country* Hans Petter Moland accompanies a young Vietnamese on his search for his American father; and Ken Loach recounts in *Ae Fond Kiss* a love story set to the backdrop of cultural conflicts in contemporary Scotland.

The *Competition* of the Berlinale 2004 will ultimately include a total of 26 films, 22 of them will compete for the Golden and Silver Berlin Bears. At the 54th Berlinale German cinema will be well represented once again. A total of 56 German productions will be screened in the different festival sections. The entire Berlinale programme will be available on January 26, 2004 at www.berlinale.de.

As customary for director Anthony Minghella (*The English Patient*), the opening film *Cold Mountain* is a powerful, star-studded epos. At the end of the American Civil War, violence and destruction mark the landscapes which the wounded Confederate soldier and deserter Inman (Jude Law) has to traverse on foot to reunite with his sweetheart Ada (Nicole Kidman). The ravages of war have deeply branded the land and souls of its inhabitants. *Cold Mountain* will be screened out of competition. Leading actors Jude Law and Nicole Kidman are expected to accompany the director to Berlin for the opening of this year's festival.

Great Britain will be represented in this year's competition by the world premieres of two master directors: In *Ae Fond Kiss* Ken Loach, who is famous for

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his socially committed works, recounts the love story between a Catholic woman and a Pakistani immigrant in Glasgow. His portrayal of the cultural and family conflicts involved in this relationship mirrors contemporary life in Great Britain. Eva Birthistle and Atta Yaqub co-star in the film.

In *Country of my Skull*, John Boorman focuses on one of the most explosive political and historical developments on the African continent. Ten years ago, the first free elections were held in South Africa; Nelson Mandela became president and initiated the transition from the apartheid regime to a democratic state. In *Country of my Skull*, a black US journalist encounters a white South African journalist at the public hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Their joint experience of these deeply distressing accounts draws them closer together. Boorman's film is based on Antjie Krog's book of the same name. It features Samuel L. Jackson and Juliette Binoche.

Swedish director Björn Runge will present the world premiere of his film *Om jag vänder mig om (Daybreak)* in the competition. A single evening changes the lives of four friends. With an unusual sense for grotesque details, three episodes unfold about delusions, lies and other human weaknesses. The leading roles are performed by Pernilla August and Jakob Eklund.

The three films from France are all world premieres:

Master director Patrice Leconte will present *Confidences trop intimes (Intimate Strangers)*, a comedy about psychologists. A young woman wants to overcome her marital problems by consulting a therapist. Yet when she goes to her first session, she takes the wrong door and so confides to a tax consultant. Fabrice Lucchini, Sandrine Bonnaire and Anne Brochet star in the film.

With *Feux Rouges (Red Lights)* French director Cédric Kahn presents the film version of Georges Simenon's 1953 novel of the same name. Kahn has set this tale of a married couple, however, in the midst of a crisis in present-day France. After quarrelling, the couple, performed by Carole Bouquet and Jean-Pierre Darroussin, continues their journey to pick up their children at holiday camp separately. Independently from one another, they both encounter an escaped criminal.

Eric Rohmer will present a political thriller in the competition. *Triple Agent* is set to historical events in 1936, when the Spanish Civil War is troubling Europe. Fiodor, a young Russian, takes refuge with his Greek wife in Paris. He openly admits to being a spy, but keeps mum about whom he is working for. The principal characters are played by Serge Renko, Katerina Didaskalu, Amanda Langlet and Emmanuel Salinger.

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Greece's best-known contemporary director Theo Angelopoulos will present the world premiere of his new film in the competition: the Greek-French co-production *Trilogia: To livadi pou dakrisi (Trilogy: The Weeping Meadow)*. In this story about the relationship between a man and a woman over decades, Angelopoulos traces the history and often tragic fate of the Greek people in the 20th century. The film is the first in a trilogy; part one begins as the Red Army enters Odessa in 1919, i. e. with the exodus of the Greek community, and ends with the Greek civil war after World War II. Alexandra Aidini, Nikos Poursanidis and Georgios Armenis star in the film.

The Italian production *Primo amore* by Matteo Garrone will also be a world premiere. It is the story of a man who is victim to his own instincts and forces his partner into a destructive relationship. The screenplay is based on a true story. Vitaliano Trevisan and Michaela Cescon play the leading roles.

Norwegian director Hans Petter Moland will present *Beautiful Country* in the competition. The film describes the odyssey of a young Vietnamese who has set out to find his American father. He arrives in New York as an illegal refugee. This US-Norwegian co-production is based on a screenplay by Sabina Murray and depicts a man's search for his own roots as well his encounter with a foreign culture. The film features Damien Nguyen, Nick Nolte, Tim Roth and Bai Ling.

The international premiere of *Monster*, a US production, will also be screening in the competition. Patty Jenkins' directing debut is based on the true story of a prostitute, Aileen Wuornos, who was executed in 2002 for murdering seven men. *Monster* also depicts the difficulties Aileen has in her love affair with a woman. Charlize Theron plays Aileen Wuornos, Christina Ricci co-stars.

Independent director Richard Linklater will be showing *Before Sunset* and so reunite audiences with his protagonists from *Before Sunrise*, winner of a Silver Berlin Bear in 1994. Jesse (Ethan Hawke) and Céline (Julie Delpy) meet again in Paris, nearly ten years after their romantic encounter in Vienna. They spend an afternoon together and tell each other about their experiences in the meantime. *Before Sunset* is a world premiere in competition.

The romantic US comedy *Something's gotta give* will be screened out of competition in the official programme. With a twinkle in her eye, director Nancy Meyers stages the battle of the sexes in quite caustic dialogues. Her all-star cast includes Jack Nicholson, Diane Keaton, Keanu Reeves and Frances McDormand.

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