

Press Release



Berlinale: Kinderfilmfest and 14plus Confirm Programme for 2004

The programme of the 27th *Kinderfilmfest* is now complete, more than two weeks before the festival begins. This year's *Kinderfilmfest* competition and the new *14plus* competition will include a total of 20 feature films and 19 short film productions from 24 countries.

On February 6, 2004 the 27th *Kinderfilmfest* will be opened by the actor and singer Dominique Horwitz. It will start off with the British film *Wondrous Oblivion*, whose screening will be attended by its director, Paul Morrison, and its young leading actors, Sam Smith and Leonie Elliott. This highly emotional story is set in England during the 1960s and depicts how an eleven-year-old cricket enthusiast comes into conflict with his increasingly racist surroundings. Alongside Sam Smith as David, Delroy Lindo – known to us from *MalcolmX*, *Get Shorty* and *Ciderhouse Rules* – gives a particularly compelling performance.

Die Blindgänger (The Blindgänger), the German competition entry, is Bernd Sahling's first feature film. In his previous documentary work he has already focused on the world of the blind and visually impaired. This time he sensitively portrays a crucial phase in the life of the blind girl Marie who is convincingly played by the partially sighted actress Ricarda Ramünke. Once again Dominique Horwitz gives a brilliant performance, this time as a private tutor with an unusual approach to teaching. In collaboration with Deutsche Hörfilm GmbH, the film will also be presented with audio description for the visually impaired at 2 p.m. on Saturday, February 7, 2004.

A film from Kazakhstan is certain to enthrall the youngest viewers. In *Sagan kushik kerek pe? (Do you need a puppy?)* director Kanymbek Kassymbekov shows that there are challenges which children have to master independently of their origins and age.

With the feature film *La Prophétie des Grenouilles (Raining Cats and Frogs)*, a production from the French studio Folimage will once again be presented in Berlin. In his reinterpretation of the biblical Flood, screenwriter and director Jacques-Rémy Girerd directs his detailed attention to how the carnivores and herbivores get along on the ark, which has been converted from a barn. A wonderful, charmingly animated masterpiece whose voice cast includes Michel Piccoli and Annie Girardot.

**54. Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
05. – 15.02.2004**

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Entertaining French cinema at its purest is offered by Richard Berry's warm comedy *Moi César, 10 ans ½, 1m39 (I César)*. For three urban kids in search of adventure, their hometown of Paris has come to feel too cramped and so they set off on a secret mission to London.

The Indian film *Heda Hoda (The Blind Camel)* by Vinod Ganatra takes place near the Pakistani border and examines the current political conflict between the two countries from the perspective of two children. Brother and sister Sonu and Lakhmi are proud to have been finally given a chance to look after the family's herd of camel. When the animals stray into Pakistan, Sonu has to sneak over the border under cover of darkness.

The Philippine melodrama *Magnifico* by Maryo J. delos Reyes is about an extraordinary childhood. A nine-year-old boy appears to be the only one aware of the sufferings of those around him, which is why he neither shirks from caring for his disabled sister nor from making a coffin for his beloved grandma. A moving record of a foreign culture and a universal fable about life and death.

With *Capricciosa* from Sweden, the young director and screenwriter Reza Bagher, who was born in Iran, presents his second feature film. After his mother dies, 17-year-old Henrik is forced to witness how his father succumbs to alcohol. Torn between his own sense of responsibility and a burden too great for him, he tries to care for his younger siblings. Carried by the charismatic Rolf Lassgård, known in Germany for his role as Police Commissioner Wallander, and Linus Nilsson as Henrik, the film is a precise psychological study of a family in danger of falling apart.

The world premiere of a new film by Ella Lemhagen, double prizewinner at the *Kinderfilmfest 2000*, can be anticipated with excitement. With zest but without sentimentality, the Swedish-Norwegian co-production *Tur och Retur (Immediate boarding)* presents a classic comedy of mistaken identity. Amanda Davin plays a double role in what is one of this year's most remarkable performances.

Dutch director Ineke Houtman's new film *Polleke* provides insight into the complicated structure of a modern Western European family. Eleven-year-old Polleke gradually fights her way through the continual chaos caused by the adults in her life.



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La volpe a tre zampe (The three-legged Fox) from Italy is an homage to the grand days of Italian cinema. Director Sandro Dionisio recounts a tale of everyday life in Naples during the 1960's. Seen through a child's eyes, the film slowly drifts away into a fantasy world. German actress, Nadja Uhl, (winner of a Silver Berlin Bear in 2000) plays the part of the mother.

Naoko Ogigami, a young Japanese filmmaker, has conceived her feature film debut *Barber Yoshino (Yoshino's Barber Shop)* as a timeless parable. Due to their skirmishes with an overbearing barber, a gang of boys upsets the traditions of an entire village. Chosen from over 3500 applicants, the director will also take part in this year's *Berlinale Talent Campus*.

The Belgium film *Hop* was produced in 2002 and is therefore running out of competition. In persuasive black-and-white images, director Dominique Standaert tells a tense story which takes place in the fringes of society. Justin, an illegal African refugee boy, succeeds in jolting an old anarchist out of his lethargy so they can intercede together on behalf of Justin's deported father.

In four sets, the Short Film competition will present a much larger international selection of outstanding short films than in previous years. Alongside animated films from Russia, Slovenia, Canada, France and Sweden, four works from German film schools will be participating: Andreas Krein's *Hochbetrieb (Nuts and Bolts)*, winner of this year's Short Tiger Award, and Derek Roczen's artful *Captain Bligh* are both from the Film Academy in Baden-Württemberg. The HFF Konrad Wolf is contributing two promising animated works: Felix Gönnert's unusual film *Lucia*; and Susanne Seidel's touching *Pantoffelhelden (A Slippery Tale)*, for viewers of all ages.

14plus – films for the young generation

Due to the large number of convincing entries, a total of eight films are now to participate in this new competition. German actor Denis Moschitto (*Verschwende deine Jugend; Die Klasse von 99; Nichts bereuen*) is the special opening guest at the 14plus kick-off on February 7, 2004.

The Wooden Camera by Ntshavheni Wa Luruli will be screened as this year's contribution to the Berlinale's special focus on South Africa. In this French, British, South African co-production a black boy and a white girl attempt to escape the spiral of violence, and to develop new and different concepts for their lives.

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Petter Næss, Norwegian director of the unexpected arthouse success *Elling*, will compete for this new award for the best youth film with *Bare Bea (Just Bea)*. This time he has made a sumptuous and sensuous comedy about the youthful turmoil caused by love and sex.

Helmiä ja sikoja (Pearls and Pigs) by Finnish director Perttu Leppä is a hilarious family tragedy in which four brothers learn about the more tender sides of life from their little sister. Torn between depression and karaoke, a family which is temporarily without a father maneuvers its way through the everyday realities of Finnish life.

There will also be a special screening from the *Panorama* programme for Aage Rais-Nordentoft's *Kick'n Rush*.

Thanks to the Disney Channel's support, many of the young actors will once again be able to come to Berlin for the festival. "Due to our partnership with the Berlinale, we have been able to intensify our on-going commitment to German and European children's film", Michael Kreissl, managing director of Disney Channel, was pleased to announce the collaboration.

In conjunction with Volkswagen's Youth Lounge Zoon.com, the *Kinderfilmfest* will for the first time invite viewers to participate on eight festival evenings in live chats online. At www.zoon.com actors and directors will be available to answer questions about their films.

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January 20, 2004