

## Press Release



### International Forum of New Cinema 2004: Looking ahead

The selection of films for the 34th *International Forum of New Cinema* has now been completed. An extensive programme of works from 23 countries presents new focuses, little-known filmmaking countries and many debuts from around the globe. Thirty of the films – more than half of the programme – are world premieres.

The Wolfgang Staudte Award Jury – which this year includes filmmakers Catherine Breillat (France) and Thomas Arslan (Germany) as well as Imruh Bakari (Tanzania), the director of the Zanzibar Film Festival – will have to choose between more than 20 directorial debuts and "second films".

Because the Berlin International Film Festival is focusing on South Africa this year, the *Forum* programme features ten films produced by young South African filmmakers as part of the umbrella *Project 10: Real Stories from a Free South Africa*. The works of directors from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds courageously present intimate snapshots of life in this forward-looking country. Uncompromisingly, with eyes wide open and from numerous perspectives, they draw a true picture of the trials and triumphs of the Rainbow Nation's fledgling steps to freedom. Never before has South African filmmaking been presented in such depth and breadth. The programme is supplemented by the three-hour German-South African documentary *Memories of Rain* by Gisela Albrecht and Angela Mai, which looks back at the struggle against Apartheid.

Prolific filmmaking country India has often caught the *Forum's* attention, whether through its "alternative cinema" or "Bollywood" musicals. This year's Indian films show that the antagonism between art and commerce is slowly dissolving. A new generation of Indians is starting to rediscover political and socially responsible filmmaking using the tools of popular cinema. Of particular interest is Partho Sen Gupta's debut *Hava aney dey (Let the Wind Blow)*, an apocalyptic film about the deceptively carefree attitudes of spoiled youngsters set against the backdrop of India's conflict with Pakistan. The melodramatic film *Hazaaron khwaishein aisi (A Thousand Dreams Such as These)*, by Sudhir Mishra, tackles the revolutionary student movement of the Indira Ghandi era. The violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims in the Indian state of Gujarat is the subject of the longest film in the 34th *Forum*, Rakesh Sharma's 218-minute documentary *Final Solution*, a shockingly precise analysis of the political wheeling and dealing that led to the gruesome slaughter of thousands of defenceless Muslim villagers two years ago.

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Other entries from India include Vishal Bhardwaj's Macbeth adaptation *Maqbool* and the musical *Kal ho naa ho* by Nikhil Advani.

For the first time ever, the *Forum* programme includes no less than three films from Thailand. And they couldn't possibly be more different. Nonzee Nimibutr's *Baytong*, the melodramatic story of a Buddhist monk who falls in love with the girlfriend of a Muslim extremist, picks up on the year's omnipresent topic: terrorism. *Fan Chan (My Girl)*, a joint project by six young directors, was a surprise hit in Thailand last year. The film is about childhood memories, young love, two quarrelsome hairdressers and the dangers of sleeping in. While the well-known writer-director Apichatpong Weerasethakul brings us *The Adventures of Iron Pussy*, a garish transvestite comedy.

Of course, the German cinema has a firm place in the *Forum* programme alongside that of other European countries (including unusual new films by Yolande Zaubermann, Dominique Cabrera, Lehmuskallio/Lapsui, Davide Ferrario and others). Ulrike Ottinger's 198-minute comedy *Zwölf Stühle (Twelve Chairs)* was made in Ukraine and is a blend of boulevardesque elements mixed with colourful natural backdrops and documentary impressions. The film is based on the novel of the same name by Ilya Ilf and Yevgeni Petrov, an amusing description of the turbulent conditions in the young Soviet Union of the 1920s. *Dieses Jahr in Czernowitz (This year in Czernovicz)* is something like Volker Koepp's follow-up to *Mr Zwilling and Ms Zuckermann*, only this time focusing on the later generations who have taken the legacy of this former Jewish centre around the world. One of these second-generation émigrés is the actor Harvey Keitel.

The works of these two renowned filmmakers are set against two impressive directorial debuts: Minze Tummescheit reflects on two female Russian traders in Warsaw in her documentary, *Jarmark Europa*, while Till Hastreiter's film *Status Yo!* leads us into Berlin's energetic hip-hop scene, interweaving numerous stories from the city's clubs and bars into a dense portrait of a long night and the dramatic following day.

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