

Press Release



Berlinale 2004: Competition Selection Now Complete

The selection of films for the *Competition* of the 54th Berlin International Film Festival is now complete. 23 of the 26 films screening in the *Competition* will compete for the Bears. The other three will be shown out of competition. The films are from eighteen countries; nineteen are world premieres, two are directing debuts.

The films chosen to complete the *Competition* programme revive one of the screen's oldest themes: they tell about people's longings and aspirations, yet without deteriorating into dream-factory clichés. Rather, in confronting life, these hopes are often destined to be dashed. In *Samaria (Samaritan Girl)*, bodies are prostituted to finance a journey to lands of greater prosperity. In the Argentinean competition entry *El abrazo partido (Lost Embrace)*, some of society's losers try to improve their lot by changing their nationality. In Sylvia Chang's *20 : 30 : 40*, three women from Taipei dream of another life. In *Maria, Ilena eres de gracia (Maria Full of Grace)*, the main character Maria takes on a job as drug runner to escape her gloomy existence. And in the last film of the *Competition*, *25 degrés en hiver (25 Degrees in Winter)*, the hero yearns for a reunion with his beloved. "Dreams, attainable and especially unattainable ones, are what viewers have in common with the characters on the screen, they are what connects them most acutely with one another", Festival Director Dieter Kosslick remarks.

The Korean star director Kim Ki-Duk will present the world premiere of his film *Samaria (Samaritan Girl)* in the competition. Two teenage girls turn to prostitution to earn money for a trip to Europe. Jae-Young sells her body, while Yeo-Jin takes care of the business side. During a meeting with one of her clients, there is a tragic accident in which Jae-Young dies. Yeo-Jin then meets with her friend's former clients. She offers herself to them and is even willing to pay them for their time. The leading roles are performed by Uhl Lee, Ji-min Kwak and Min-jung Seo.

Another world premiere screening in the competition is the Hong Kong production *20 : 30 : 40* by Sylvia Chang. Set to the bustling city of Taipei, it is about three women in different phases of their lives: a young woman at 20, another at 30 and a third at 40, are each pursuing their dreams. Director Sylvia Chang, who is herself an extremely popular actress and entertainer in Asia, co-stars in her own film with Ren Liu and Lee Sinje.

**54. Internationale
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Two productions in the competition represent this year's special focus on Latin America:

Daniel Burman, one of the most famous directors of New Argentine Cinema, will present the world premiere of *El abrazo partido* (*Lost Embrace*) in the competition. His protagonist's world is the small, seedy shopping center in Buenos Aires where his mother runs a laundry – a world of despair and decay from which many young people try to escape by reclaiming the nationality of their European ancestors. The film features Daniel Hendler, Sergio Boris, Adriana Aizenberg and Jorge D' Elia.

The US-Columbian co-production *Maria, llena eres de gracia* (*Maria Full of Grace*) by Joshua Marston will also be screened in the competition. Seventeen-year-old Maria lives in a small town near the Columbian capital of Bogotá. The young woman feels oppressed by the strict work regime at a flower plantation and the cramped situation of her family. In a desperate attempt to escape these conditions she becomes a drug runner. The main roles are played by Catalina Sandino Moreno, Virginia Ariza, Yenny Paola Vega and Guilied López.

The 26-year-old Lebanese director Omar Naïm, who is based in the United States, will present the world premiere of his directing debut, a futuristic thriller entitled *The Final Cut*. In a near future, organically implanted microchips record a person's life and are removed and edited by a "cutter" postmortem to create a reel depicting the life of the departed for a commemorative ceremony, called a Rememory. One "cutter", played by Robin Williams, discovers a dangerous secret that forces him to question the power of his own memories, and re-evaluate his own life. Robin Williams, Jim Caviezel and Mira Sorvino co-star in this film.

In *Lightning in a Bottle*, Antoine Fuqua – famous for his brilliant cop thriller *Training Day* – documents a concert at the New York Radio City Music Hall, where musicians of all genres and generations gathered to pay homage to the Blues. The film will be screened hors concours. Over fifty of the greatest performers, including B. B. King, Solomon Burke, Natalie Cole and The Neville Brothers, joined in to salute the blues. Fuqua combined stage scenes with interviews, rehearsal impressions and archive material on the history of the Blues. The film was co-produced by Martin Scorsese, who recently produced a seven-part TV series on the Blues; his own film *The Last Waltz* has become one of the most legendary concert films ever.

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The *Competition* will conclude with the world premiere of the Belgian-French-Spanish co-production *25 degrés en hiver (25 Degrees in Winter)* by Stéphane Vuillet. His first full-length feature film is an urban road movie with comic undertones. The Spaniard Miguel lives alone with his daughter in Brussels and longs to see his wife again, who is now in the USA. But one day he gives a ride to a young Ukrainian woman who then asks him to hide her from the police. The leading roles are played by Jacques Gamblin, winner of a Silver Bear in 2002, the star of Spanish cinema Carmen Maura, as well as Ingeborga Dapkunaite and Raphaëlle Molinier.

The award ceremony of the 54th Berlin International Film Festival will be held on February 14, 2004.

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The *Competition* programme of the Berlinale 2004 includes:

1. 20 : 30 : 40, Sylvia Chang, Taiwan/Hong Kong
2. 25 degrés en hiver/25 Grad im Winter/25 Degrees in Winter, Stéphane Vuillet, Belgium/France/Spain
3. Ae Fond Kiss, Ken Loach, Great Britain
4. Beautiful Country, Hans Petter Moland, Norway/USA
5. Before Sunset, Richard Linklater, USA
6. Cold Mountain/Unterwegs nach Cold Mountain, Anthony Minghella, USA (out of competition)
7. Confidences trop intimes/Intimate Strangers, Patrice Leconte, France
8. Country of my Skull, John Boorman, Great Britain
9. Die Nacht singt ihre Lieder/Nightsongs, Romuald Karmakar, Germany
10. El Abrazo Partido/Lost Embrace, Daniel Burman, Argentina
11. Feux rouges/Schlusslichter/Red Lights, Cédric Kahn, France
12. Forbrydelser/In deinen Händen/In Your Hands, Annette K. Olesen, Denmark
13. Gegen die Wand/Head-On, Fatih Akin, Germany/Turkey
14. La vida que te espera/Your Next Life, Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón, Spain
15. Lightning in a Bottle, Antoine Fuqua, USA (out of competition)
16. Maria, llena eres de gracia/Maria voll der Gnade/Maria Full of Grace, Joshua Marston, USA/Columbia
17. Monster, Patty Jenkins, USA
18. Om jag vänder mig om/Morgengrauen/Daybreak, Björn Runge, Sweden
19. Primo Amore/First Love, Matteo Garrone, Italy
20. Samaria/Samaritan Girl, Kim Ki-Duk, Korea
21. Something's Gotta Give/Was das Herz begehrt, Nancy Meyers, USA (out of competition)
22. Svjedoci/Die Zeugen/The Witnesses, Vinko Brešan, Croatia
23. The Final Cut, Omar Naïm, USA
24. The Missing, Ron Howard, USA
25. Trilogia: To livadi pou dakrisi/Trilogie: Die Erde weint/Trilogy: The Weeping Meadow, Theo Angelopoulos, Greece/France
26. Triple Agent, Eric Rohmer, France