

## Press Release



### Restored “Heaven’s Gate” as Special Screening in the Forum

The *International Forum of New Cinema* presents a special screening of the restored original version of *Heaven’s Gate*. Michael Cimino’s monumental anti-Western from 1980 is still regarded as Hollywood’s biggest financial flop – and, mainly by critics outside the USA, as a masterpiece. As a supplement, the documentation *Final Cut: The Making and Unmaking of “Heaven’s Gate”* by Michael Epstein will be shown as a European premiere.

In legendary truth to detail, *Heaven’s Gate* tells the story of the brutal Johnson County Wars of the 1890s, in which wealthy cattlemen, aided by government agents, drove European immigrants out of the American West. Not least because of its critical historical-political content, the film is one of the most controversial in the history of Hollywood – and is seldom seen. The *Forum* is showing the 225-minute original cut, restored thanks to the great efforts of MGM/United Artists archivist John Kirk. After the film’s world premiere in New York in November 1980, *Heaven’s Gate* was savaged by the critics and branded “un-American”; it disappeared almost immediately from the movie theaters. The director, Michael Cimino, cut more than an hour from the film and entered this version in the Cannes Competition in 1981. The Venice Film Festival screened the original version for the first time in Europe in 1982. This version was last seen in 1983 in the *Forum* of the Berlinale; it was never released to commercial cinemas in Europe.

The film’s lack of success with the American public and critics and the production costs – estimated at 100 million dollars – spelled the financial ruin of United Artists (UA), the legendary studio founded in 1919 by Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, and David W. Griffith.

A wide range of rumors circulate about what precisely went wrong in the production of *Heaven’s Gate*. The documentary film *Final Cut* examines these theories in a very engaging and entertaining way. Michael Epstein’s interview partners include the leading actors Kris Kristofferson and Jeff Bridges, cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond and Steven Bach, at that time Vice President of UA and one of those responsible at the studio and more recently the author of the book “Final Cut: Art, Money, and Ego in the Making of ‘Heaven’s Gate’, the Film that Sank United Artists”, which provided the basis for this film.

During the *Forum*, Steven Bach, John Kirk and Michael Epstein will be present in Berlin; a joint panel discussion is planned for February, 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Steven Bach will already be available for interviews in the run-up to the festival.

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